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Features

BEEF INDUSTRY
The total value of production for Mississippi’s beef industry was $191 million in 2007. Come with us as we learn more about this important agricultural commodity.

SOLVE THE MYSTERY
Which Mississippi town is named for General John Coffee? Read the clues and make your guess.

FARM BILL TIMELINE
At presstime, more questions than answers remained concerning the new farm bill. Public Policy Director Derrick Surrette looks at possible options facing Congress in completing this important bill.

RURAL LIVING
Come with us as we visit Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill in Tate County, The Banjo Shop in Jasper County, and the historic town of Holly Springs.

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ON THE COVER
Cattle producer Mark Rogers grazes 800 stocker calves each winter. He says the calves fit in well with his row crop operation near Collins. For more information, see pages 8 and 9.
We Can Be Proud of Our Beef Farmers

By David Waide • President, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation

This issue of Mississippi Farm Country is focused around the only commodity that is grown commercially in all 82 counties. We can all be proud of what our beef farmers in Mississippi accomplish. But more importantly, we can be proud of the fact that they have provided us with a wholesome, high source of protein that is so essential to our ability to function as human beings.

As I think back over the years, I cannot remember a time when we didn’t have cattle on our family farm. I can tell you they have been the mainstay. In the hill sections, bankers do not like to loan production money based solely on the returns from a hill row crop operation. I can truthfully say that those individuals who were diversified and had beef cattle as part of their mix of commodities were most assured of getting production loans and being able to carry on their family operations.

QUALITY BEEF

We in the United States have come to appreciate quality beef. We know that genetics makes a lot of difference in the ability we all have as cattle farmers to produce quality beef that brings a premium price. It cannot be said enough how important the genetics that goes into cattle production is to the bottom line of the producer.

A lot of producers get hung up on various breeds and believe that one breed is superior to another. I guess I have come to believe, over the course of my dealing with the different breeds, that it really does not matter the breed of cattle. It is the genetic makeup of the herd bull and the brood cow that makes the difference as to whether or not you are able to produce the quality that the consumer demands.

We are more sensitive today in the beef cattle industry than we have ever been over what the consumer is willing to purchase. We have come to realize that they prefer tender beef and they prefer marbling in beef that makes it such a delicious product.

Through research, we have discovered we can produce the type beef that is most acceptable to consumers in a safe manner that is indeed healthy and can cause us to get our protein from something we all enjoy as much as we do beef.

HIGH GRAIN COST

The paradigm of feeding beef is obviously shifting. There has been a lot of controversy over feed versus fuel. One of the problems in the cattle industry now is over the extremely high cost of grains. This is causing a hike in the price in the cattle markets. It will have a real effect on long-term beef consumption because, as grain prices go higher and the cost of getting a calf finished increases, the long-term net effect will be higher beef prices.

While I believe the shift that has occurred in the beef industry will cause the cattle feeding industry to move more toward where grains are grown, the likelihood of this having a detrimental effect long-term is probably not very likely.

One of the things that our land-grants do so well is research, and the distillers grain that comes from the production of fuel will eventually be formulated into a product that will substitute and probably be of lesser cost than whole grain corn for cattle feed. The entire agriculture industry will change as a result of our becoming more self-sufficient in fuel. Certainly, this is not a bad thing.

EXCITING TIMES FOR AG

We are indeed living in exciting times in agriculture. We are seeing a tremendous increase in the utilization of our grain crops, and more importantly, we are seeing our cellulosic crops increase in value as a result of those changes that are occurring in agriculture in general. What will be the long-term net effect? We can only assume that research will solve all the problems that will confront agriculture.

My belief is that, regardless of the commodity an individual produces, the positive impact of having a safe, abundant commodity will increase the bottom line for all farmers who do a good job of managing. This will include the cattle industry, even though we have experienced higher prices than we are currently experiencing. But necessity is always the innovator as we solve the problem of how we as Americans will feed and clothe ourselves.

While we are currently in a real dilemma with the downward spiral of the economy that has been created primarily by the slump in real estate and housing values, nobody can argue that the American consumer has a tremendous desire to have a high protein diet. Beef, our commodity of the month featured in this magazine, will be a viable part of that high protein diet.

Waide to serve on Tax Study Commission

Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation President David Waide was recently appointed by Governor Haley Barbour to serve on a public-private commission that will study Mississippi’s tax system on a comprehensive basis, including how federal and local tax structures affect Mississippi citizens and businesses.

“These individuals represent a wide range of expertise in this important subject matter. They come from business, legal, academic and legislative backgrounds. They also share a common bond in that they are all Mississippi taxpayers. I appreciate their voluntary service on this commission and know they will do an excellent and thorough job in carrying out this study,” Governor Barbour said.

The group is expected to report its findings by Aug. 31, 2008 to the governor, the Legislature and the public.
Jim Watson, DVM, State Veterinarian

In last month’s article, I talked about some of the struggles that have been encountered in implementing the National Animal Identification System or NAIS. Several of you contacted me with comments and concerns about the program, which I greatly appreciated. Hopefully, most of you received a form in the mail recently from NAIS asking you to participate in our Mississippi Animal Disease and Disaster Preparedness Program. Thank you to those who have responded. If you did not get a form, contact my office and I will be happy to send one.

This month, I would like to talk about the new business continuity plan recently released by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the direction of the U.S. Congress last year. As I mentioned last month, animal traceability is a crucial component in our ability to respond to disease outbreaks.

There are two important reasons to rapidly eliminate these diseases. The first reason is to prevent or reduce the huge economic loss to our farmers when there is a disease such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) that is very contagious and may require the destruction of large numbers of their animals to control the disease. The second reason is to prevent or minimize the huge losses to the economy as a result of these diseases.

As seen in the UK during their FMD outbreak, the collateral losses to businesses unrelated to livestock were much greater than the losses to the livestock industry. Hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions were closed as a result of the disease, causing loss of jobs and bankruptcy for many businesses.

Another aspect is the increase in export of poultry and livestock to other countries. Not only is the shipment of live animals stopped from a country affected by FMD, but all fresh and frozen products from cattle, pork, and sheep are halted as well. Until the disease has been contained and documented to the satisfaction of the trading partners, these shipments remain prohibited. Therefore, the speed with which the disease is controlled determines the amount of damage and loss to the farmer and the economy.

The new business plan has seven implementation strategies, which I would like to briefly discuss. For the full report please call my office.

- **Strategy 1: Prioritize Species/Sectors** – The USDA has established the primary commercial food animal industries – cattle, poultry (chickens and turkeys), swine, sheep, goats – as well as the competition horse industry as top priorities. Additionally, sectors within these species have been prioritized to direct additional emphasis. For example, beef and dairy breeding herds are the highest priorities within the cattle sector.

- **Strategy 2: Harmonize Animal Identification Systems and Strategy 3: Converge NAIS Data Standards in Disease Programs and Regulations** – There are a lot of disease programs in the United States, some of which are administered by states and others administered by USDA, and very few of them can communicate with each other. These two strategies call for standardization of the systems so that the data can be shared between systems and prevent duplication of energy. In Mississippi, as an example, we will begin to use farm registration numbers on Health Certificates and Coggins Tests. In addition, we will begin requiring a farm registration number for livestock entering the state from other states. Also, we are beginning the process of offering electronic Health Certificates for veterinarians to use if they so desire.

- **Strategy 4: Integrate Automated Data Capture Technologies with Disease Programs** – USDA will support the effort to integrate electronic data capture and reporting technologies into existing disease programs by using NAIS-compliant Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) devices and integrating handheld computers/readers to replace paper-based forms. The electronic collection of data will increase volume and speed quality, minimizing data errors, and speed data entry into a searchable database.

- **Strategy 5: Partner with States, Tribes and Territories** – USDA will continue to work with states by providing funding through cooperative agreements to continue educational outreach and implementation efforts.

- **Strategy 6: Collaborate with Industry** – USDA has awarded cooperative agreement funds to organizations such as NCBA, Angus Breeders and Southeastern Livestock Network to fund activities that encourage farm registration and animal identification activities.

- **Strategy 7: Advance Identification Technologies** – USDA will continue to sponsor development of new technologies that provide the ability to integrate animal identification into databases for traceability purposes.

As we move forward into the new year, the Mississippi Board of Animal Health continues to work with all willing partners such as Farm Bureau to prepare Mississippi livestock and poultry producers for the challenges that are ahead. The competition horse industry has now been identified as a priority to include in the process, so you will see more and more information targeted towards that group.

As I mentioned previously, we will begin to integrate farm registration into Health Certificates and Coggins Tests, as well as our other disease programs. We will continue to provide financial support to voluntary disease programs such as BVD and Johne’s by providing official electronic ear tags for those wanting them. We will also continue to support cattle health assurance programs that are used to help increase the value of market calves by providing official electronic ear tags. An example is the Mississippi Veterinary Cattle Health Assurance Program (MS-VCHAP).

For more information on any of these programs, or if you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 888-646-8731. You may email me at jimw@nda.state.ms.us. You may print the forms off of our website at: www.mba.h.state.ms.us/AnimalID/cattlebrochure.pdf

In summary, let me say that, while the basic components of the plan stay the same, there will be a renewed focus on disease issues and high risk activities with livestock production. Don’t wait for disease to strike. Go ahead and register today by calling my office or going by your county Extension office.
Corn Acreage Down in 2008

By: Webb Bozeman, MFBF Corn, Wheat & Feed Grains Advisory Committee Chair
Terry Norwood, MFBF Commodity Coordinator for Corn, Wheat & Feed Grains

The 2008 corn crop is in the ground, but until the United States Department of Agriculture has completed its counting, the size of the crop is unknown. Projections are that there will be 750,000 acres of corn this year. Last year, Mississippi’s record crop was near 1,000,000 acres.

Many factors led to the decline in the amount of this year’s acres. Among them were the exorbitant cost of nitrogen, the availability of preferred seed varieties, and glyphosate prices that have doubled. Available storage was also a factor, with some farmers planting soybeans if seed was available.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Renewable energy is still the catch phrase for many Americans. Ethanol, of course, is in high demand. Cellulosic ethanol technology is still a product of the future and will come into the mix. However, grain ethanol, primarily corn, is here. Production plants are coming online to produce it, and a dedicated pipeline from the Midwest to New York and other large cities in the Northeast is already in the works.

This dedicated pipeline will deliver 10,000,000 gallons of ethanol per day to these markets. This will cause a huge demand for Midwest corn, which will put more demand on Mid-South corn for use in our animal feeding industry, with the poultry industry using the most.

GRAIN SORGHUM AND WHEAT

Grain sorghum is still one of the state’s minor crops, with only 115,000 acres in 2007. However, these acres are projected to increase to 125,000 acres in the 2008 crop year. The advantages of planting grain sorghum are that it is drought tolerant and the amount of nitrogen that has to be used is low. This makes grain sorghum a good choice of crop to double up with wheat, which will see an increase in demand in the near future.

Wheat acreage has certainly increased for the 2007-2008 crop year, with some estimates at over a half-million acres for the state. Market prices for wheat have closed over ten dollars for June delivery. Barring a major catastrophe, wheat growers will make some progress this year as they should.

It has been several years since wheat has been this attractive to Mid-South farmers, even with the higher input costs. Some cattle grazers have even discussed pulling their calves off of winter wheat pastures to harvest their wheat for grain.

CORN PROMOTION BOARD

The Corn Promotion Board is working hard for Mississippi’s corn growers. Collections for the 2007 crop year were estimated to be over $1,000,000. The board elected to fund several programs of interest to the corn growers of the state. These include:

• A corn verification program. This year will be the first in a series of years dedicated to developing a corn verification program (similar to the soybean SMART Program). This will be done by a private consultant group and monitored by Dr. Eric Larson, Mississippi State University’s corn specialist;

• A grant to evaluate weed control technology after harvest season;

• A grant to evaluate early season insect control and midseason fungicide applications on corn yields;

• A two to three-year study of genetics in corn to secure lines of resistance to alpha-toxins and to better utilize nitrogen and other fertilizers.

The state’s Corn Promotion Board consists of twelve producers appointed by Governor Haley Barbour. Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation recommends three producers to serve three-year terms. These producers include Webb Bozeman of Madison County, Mike Pannell of Union County and Sid Ayers of Benton County.
Contraction in the U.S. housing market, which started in 2007 with the subprime mortgage crisis, is the number one factor influencing timber prices in Mississippi. Stumpage prices are expected to continue a downward trend in 2008.

Mississippi timber markets are greatly influenced by the residential construction sector because the primary use of pine timber is for solid wood products used in construction, such as lumber and plywood. Housing starts (the number of new residential constructions started in a given month as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau) are a good indicator of future price trends for Mississippi timber.

Housing starts have declined since the summer of 2007 and are continuing a downward trend into 2008. The events associated with the subprime mortgage crisis and continuing housing contraction have greatly reduced demand for solid wood products. This reduced demand for solid wood products has contributed to production curtailments for sawmills and wood panel manufacturing across the country and in the South.

Obviously, this will impact Mississippi timber prices. Most economists anticipate that the residential construction sector will not begin to improve until 2009. Some analysts aren’t expecting improvements until 2010. Thus, forest landowners may not see improved timber prices until our national economy sorts through the mortgage crisis and we begin to see some improvement in the residential construction sector.

On a positive note, the decline in solid wood production has created a deficit in the amount of residual wood chips, which has helped to increase demand for pulpwod. Woods chips produced as a byproduct of solid wood production are used by the pulp and paper industry. While solid wood production is experiencing some cutbacks, the pulp and paper industry is doing quite well and maintaining production levels despite lower domestic demand.

The weak U.S. dollar is a primary reason for continued production demand in the pulp and paper industry. When the dollar depreciates compared to other currencies, exports of U.S. products increase, and the pulp and paper industry is currently benefiting from this situation. However, residual wood chips from solid wood production are not very plentiful right now, increasing demand for pulpwod. As a result, the pulp and paper industry has to obtain more wood chips the old fashioned way — by buying more pulpwod. This increase in demand for pulpwod is evidenced by the recent gains in pulpwod prices.

The “2007 Mississippi Harvest of Forest Products Report,” recently published by the Mississippi State University Extension Service, indicates a greater harvest volume and value for pulpwod in 2007 as compared with 2006. Again, this gain in pulpwod volume and value resulted from a weak U.S. dollar combined with reduced residual wood chips.

Increased demand for pulpwod appears to continue into 2008 as the pulp and paper industry strives to maintain production. This is good news for landowners needing to conduct thinning operations on their pine plantations. So, while solid wood markets and timber prices are down because of the housing contraction, pulpwod markets appear to be improving.

Article by James Henderson, Ph.D., Assistant Extension Professor. Approved as Publication No. FO369 of the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, Mississippi State University.
Mark Rogers has built a successful commercial stocker calf operation that fits in well with the cotton he grows on his farm near Collins. He also farms cotton and peanuts in partnership with his father.

Rogers gets his calves in the fall when they are between four and seven months old and grazes them on ryegrass during the winter months when other farm work is practically nonexistent. He sells the cattle in May.

Rogers purchases his calves from cow/calf operations in Mississippi and central Florida. He sells them as feeder cattle to other producers. When they are 1 to 1 ½ years old, feeder cattle are generally sold to feedlots, where they are fed grain and fattened up before they are sold to packing plants. The resulting beef products are marketed for consumption.

TRUE PASSION FOR CATTLE

Rogers, who majored in poultry science at Mississippi State University, never thought he’d end up with cattle. But stocker calves have a quick turn around as far as profit is concerned, and this type of business is easier to get into than a poultry operation because you don’t need to build numerous, costly poultry houses.

“In 1998, I was looking for another source of income,” Rogers said. “By the first of December, I didn’t have anything much for my employees to do until March, so I wanted something mainly for the winter months. I decided that a stocker calf operation had the potential to work well, and I was right.

“I love this,” he added. “I like growing cotton and peanuts, but my true passion is cattle. I can watch a 300 to 350-pound calf double in size in six months, and that’s satisfying.”

His first season, Rogers bought 85 calves. He made enough profit off them to purchase fencing, a small trailer and a chute with about $1200 left over. He was so pleased that he bought twice that number of calves the next season and continued to add to his operation in subsequent years.

Rogers now grazes 800 stocker calves annually. He believes this is a good number. He says he currently employs two full-time farm workers and would need to hire another if he were to increase the number of calves he grazes.

THE PROCESS

“When we get our calves, it’s the first time they’ve been away from their mamas, and they’re not that strong,” Rogers said. “They’re more likely to get sick, so we really have to tend to their health during those first six to eight weeks. It takes a lot of time and effort.
“But the medicines available now are stronger and last longer than what was available 10 years ago, and that has cut the death loss from 5 percent to 2 percent,” he said. “The medicines cost more now, but they work much better, and that has made life a lot easier for me.”

Rogers says his calves represent every kind of breed imaginable. He has tried in the past to buy all the same breed, but he says this takes longer and is more expensive. Rogers rotates his calves onto fresh fields of ryegrass periodically. He also supplements their diets with feed. He says south Mississippi is ideally suited for raising stocker cows because ryegrass grows so well down there.

“We can grow ryegrass here because we have a longer growing season. Plus, we always seem to get timely rains,” he said.

“Another important plus is the number of poultry operations in this area. We have ready access to chicken litter, and that works well on ryegrass. Chicken litter helps to offset the cost of commercial fertilizer.”

Rogers sells his calves by taking bids from cattle producers who either visit his farm or phone him. Many have done business with him before and are assured of high quality cattle.

“In the last few years, I’ve ended up selling to the same individual each year because he’s consistently the highest bidder or right in there with the others,” he said. “He has a huge operation, and he usually resells the cows.”

Rogers has always been able to net a profit despite the rising costs of fuel, fertilizer and feed. He points out that, whereas, a ton of ammonia nitrate in 1998 cost about $160, it now costs about $430 to $450. And, whereas, diesel fuel was selling for about $1.30 a gallon in 1998, it now sells for around $3 a gallon.

**IMPORTANT ISSUES**

As with any state commodity, the beef industry has its share of issues and challenges. In addition to high input costs, a major issue of interest to state cattle producers is the Animal ID Program. Rogers says he supports it.

“It will be more time-consuming for the cow/calf producer, but the records they keep on their end will make life easier for me,” he said. “Plus, these types of records will make it easier for us to identify cows should an issue come up.

“Records of this type should also help us when we deal with lending agencies,” he added. “A lot more lending agencies would lend money to cattle operations if they could title each individual cow to track them.”

(See page 5 for information on the Animal ID Program.)

Rogers says an unstable market is currently a cause for concern among state cattlemen.

“Right now, the market is following corn, but believe it or not, wheat affected the market last year,” he said. “A lot of stocker buyers will keep their calves three months and then send them to Texas to graze on wheat for three months. But wheat was bringing such a good price last year that many of those Texas producers decided to combine it and sell it. So the cattle had to go into feedlots early, and that affected the amount of profit the producers made.

“But all of that helped me,” he added. “I was actually able to buy my calves cheaper this year.”

As for competition from other beef-growing countries, Rogers is confident that most consumers want U.S. grain-fed beef.

“The quality of our beef here in America is the highest and most consistent of any other country,” he said. “We have consumers from other beef-producing countries demanding our beef.”

**AS LONG AS HE CAN**

As long as he can make a profit, Rogers says he will continue to raise stocker calves.

“I love this, but if I ever start losing money, I might decide to get out,” he said.

“And although I’m not in this to make a lot of money, I still have to make something because the risk is so high.”

Mark is chairman of the Covington County Farm Bureau Beef Advisory Committee. Mark and his wife Jamie, an elementary school teacher, have three children: Katie, 11; Anna, 6; and Drew, 3.

The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Commodity Coordinator for Beef Cattle is Jon Kilgore. For more information, contact Kilgore at 1-800-227-8244, ext. 4230.
The value of production for Mississippi’s beef industry was $191 million in 2007. Beef ranks seventh among our state’s agricultural commodities, and Mississippi is a major beef-producing state.

FROM FARM TO PLATE

Today’s beef industry is consumer-driven. Every segment of the industry works toward developing products that will appeal to today’s health conscious, busy consumer. Leaner cuts of beef and microwaveable meals are just some of the products now available in the marketplace.

The beef cattle industry consists of these segments: (1) purebred breeders; (2) commercial producers; (3) backgrounder or stocker operators; (4) feeders; (5) packers; (6) retailers; and (7) consumers.

Commercial cow/calf operations produce the calves that are sold to the stocker (or backgrounder) operators. Stocker operators graze calves on various forages—supplemented with some feed—then sell them as feeders to other cattle producers. After feeder calves gain adequate weight in stocker operations, they are generally shipped to feedlots, where they are fed grain and fattened up before they are sold to packing plants. The resulting beef products are sold for commercial consumption.

CATTLE STATS

According to figures from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Statistics Service, all cattle and calves in Mississippi totaled 990,000 head as of January 2008. That is up 1 percent from a year earlier.

All cows and heifers that have calved, at 540,000 head, were unchanged from the previous year. Beef cows, at 519,000 head, were up 1,000 head from a year earlier; and milk cows, at 21,000 head, declined 5 percent from Jan. 1, 2007. The 2007 calf crop is estimated at 445,000 head, up 1 percent from the previous year.

In the United States, the inventory of cattle and calves totaled 96.7 million head, slightly below the 97.0 million on Jan. 1, 2007.

Mississippi has about 21,000 cattle operations, according to Extension Beef Cattle Specialist Justin Rhinehart, Mississippi State University. In 2005, the top five beef-producing counties were Hinds, Jones, Panola, Lincoln and Newton.

Cow/calf and stocker operations are scattered throughout the state and many management practices and forage bases differ depending on location.

“Many new stocker operators are focusing on value-based marketing, intensive forage management and economics of scale,” Rhinehart said.

MSU RESEARCH & EXTENSION

Mississippi State University offers research and Extension programs designed to help state cattle producers improve their operations and remain competitive in the marketplace.

“What we try to do here at Mississippi State University is help producers optimize input costs while maintaining the same level of quality so that they generate more profit with their product,” Rhinehart said. “We try to figure out ways producers can make more money on both the input and marketing ends of the equation.”

As far as specific research is concerned, Rhinehart says Mississippi State University has conducted nationally-recognized studies that investigate cattle temperament. Rhonda Vann, a research scientist in Mississippi State University’s (MSU) Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, has led these studies that demonstrate how managing cattle for temperament can increase performance.

MSU is also conducting research on forage management and investigating alternative forages such as chicory and alfalfa. One researcher at the Brown Loam Branch Experiment Station in Newton County plans to investigate the value of using distillers grain to supplement replacement heifers. Distillers grain is an ethanol co-product.

Trent Smith, also a research scientist in the MSU Animal and Dairy Sciences Department, is conducting a study to verify the value of genetic selection based on DNA markers.

BEEF CATTLE PROGRAM

The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Beef Cattle Program is designed to help state cattle producers surface and address beef industry issues. The program also assists cattle producers in shaping the resolutions that will become the policies that will guide our organization in its efforts in the Legislature and U.S. Congress.

Farm Bureau has county beef committees and one beef committee on the state level. Doug Rogers is chair of the state committee, and Jon Kilgore is the MFBF Commodity Coordinator for Beef Cattle.

For more information about Farm Bureau’s Beef Cattle Program, contact Kilgore at 1-800-227-8244, ext. 4230.

For more information about MSU-Extension Service programs for state cattle producers, contact MSU-ES Beef Cattle Specialists Justin Rhinehart and Jane Parish at (662) 325-3516.
Programs Help State Cattle Producers

Mississippi’s beef cattle industry is important to the state’s economy. The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, Mississippi State University Extension Service, Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association and Mississippi Cattlemen’s Association offer programs designed to help state cattle producers improve their operations and remain competitive in the marketplace.

Here are some of the major programs:

- **FARM TO FEEDLOT PROGRAM.** This project is sponsored by the Mississippi Cattlemen’s Association, the Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association and the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Leadership for the project is provided by the Animal and Dairy Sciences Department at Mississippi State University. This program evaluates feedlot and carcass performance of beef cattle produced in Mississippi. It has allowed producers to evaluate performance and carcass characteristics of their cattle and make profitable changes in their breeding, health and management programs. The program also provides educational information to beef producers regarding retained ownership as a marketing alternative. Over the last fourteen years, beef producers have enrolled over 7,000 head of cattle through the Farm to Feedlot Program.

- **MISSISSIPPI BEEF CATTLE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION (MBCIA).** Established in 1968, the MBCIA focuses on promoting genetic improvement and encouraging good management practices while cooperating with other like-minded organizations to emphasize the economic importance of beef cattle production in Mississippi. The MBCIA is a member of the Beef Improvement Federation, and MBCIA hosted the Beef Improvement Federation Annual Meeting for the first time in its 40-year history in Choctaw, Mississippi, in April 2006. MBCIA encourages the production and identification of genetically superior animals by purebred breeders and promotes the purchase and use of these animals by commercial producers through various sale offerings, including the spring and fall Annual MBCIA Bull Sales. The association works closely with the Hinds Community College Bull Test to promote performance testing and identifying and marketing quality beef cattle genetics.

- **MISSISSIPPI BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM.** The Mississippi Beef Quality Assurance (MS-BQA) Program identifies areas in beef production where defects in quality occur. The MS-BQA Program is a cooperative effort among beef cattle producers, veterinarians, and professionals from the Mississippi Cattlemen’s Association, Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, Mississippi State University Extension Service and Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine. The program asks everyone involved with beef production to follow the FDA/USDA/EPA guidelines for product use and to use common sense, reasonable management skills and accepted scientific knowledge to avoid product defects at the consumer level. After all, consumers purchase what they trust, and their confidence is the basis of our industry’s and our children’s future.

- **BEEF CHECKOFF PROGRAM.** The Beef Checkoff Program is designed to strengthen the position of beef in the marketplace and to maintain and expand domestic and foreign markets and uses for beef and beef products. The program is funded by a mandatory assessment of $1-per-head collected each time cattle are sold. Assessments under this program are used to fund promotional campaigns and to conduct research studies. The program is administered by the Cattlemen’s Beef Promotion and Research Board, which has 100 members representing 35 states and four geographical units, with one additional unit representing importers.

- **MFBF BEEF CATTLE PROGRAM.** The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Beef Cattle Program helps state cattle producers surface and address beef industry issues. The program works with state cattle producers in shaping the resolutions that will become the policies that will guide our organization in the Legislature and U.S. Congress. Beef Verification Solution is a service-to-member program that helps producers make better herd and animal management decisions and increase profitability. It is a member-driven, confidential program developed by Ag Solutions in conjunction with AgInfoLink, USA.

- **HEIFER DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.** This new Mississippi State University project, which starts in October 2008, will help producers better manage their heifers and divert resources from heifer development to the brood cow herd. Heifers will be received as consignments in October, bred in December, confirmed pregnant, and will be available for sale or return to the herd in April. The consignment fee will be based on current cost of feed and forage management and is expected to range from $400 to $450 per heifer (not including sales commission).

- **FEEDER CALF BOARD SALES.** This program was developed under the direct consultation of Mississippi beef cattle producers and is facilitated by the MSU Extension Service, along with Mississippi livestock marketing agents. The first sale will be held in August with delivery arranged for August through October. The objective of this program is to provide different marketing avenues for feeder calves that capture added value from improved management.

- **MISSISSIPPI ANIMAL DISEASE AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM.** All state agricultural organizations work with the Mississippi Board of Animal Health in support of this program. The objective of the program is to register farms and ranches with livestock in the state veterinarian’s office to improve response time and efficacy in the event of an animal health emergency such as a natural disaster or disease outbreak.

For more information about MSU-Extension Service programs, contact MSU-ES Beef Cattle Specialists Justin Rhinehart and Jane Parish at (662) 325-3516. For more information about the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Beef Cattle Program, contact Jon Kilgore at 1-800-227-8244, ext. 4230. For more information about the Mississippi Cattlemen’s Association, contact Sammy Blossom at 601-354-8951.
Back when Virgil Walker was a child, his father grew row crops and cattle on an 80-acre farm in the Dry Creek Community near Mt. Olive. The farm provided enough income to sustain the family throughout the year.

“My parents raised nine children on that farm,” Virgil said. “When I moved back here with my own family and discovered that the place had begun to grow up, I was dismayed.”

Virgil and his son Charles sat down and tried to figure out what to do with the beloved farmstead. They considered growing timber, but Virgil says he knew that his father didn’t want the place to completely grow up. After much deliberation, they decided to try cattle.

“We started off with 10 or 12 head that first year and had in mind to go into the registered Angus business,” he said. “But that didn’t work out. There wasn’t a lot of demand locally for buying cattle like when I was a boy.”

A commercial beef cattle operation has proven to be a better fit. The Walkers buy calves from local farmers, graze them on ryegrass (supplemented with feed), and sell them through sales barns in Hattiesburg and Brookhaven.

“Each year, we raise about 115 to 120 head of various breeds of cattle,” Virgil said. “We also own registered Charolais bulls, which we breed with our cows, and we recently bought a registered Angus bull at a sale at Hinds Community College.

“We’d like to get into the Angus-cross commercial beef business,” he said. “But with input costs so high and rentable land so hard to find, we’ll have to see how that goes.

“When my dad and I were farming, you could buy 100 pounds of fertilizer for $1. Now, 100 pounds of fertilizer will cost you $30,” he said. “That’s the difference between then and now. Now it’s so expensive to try and have a larger operation. The risk is so high.”
PART-TIME FARMERS

The Walkers’ commercial beef cattle operation includes the farm’s original 80 acres plus some nearby rented land. Charles does most of the physical labor and is the farm’s primary owner while Virgil helps out with the decision-making process.

Virgil has always had an off-farm job, working as an electrician. His son does refrigeration/air conditioning work for a business in Collins and also for himself part-time. Virgil and Charles are part-time farmers as is so often the case with small family farmers.

“When I was a boy coming up, our cows made money for us a couple of times a year,” he said. “In fact, we paid for this farm with them.

“Most of the income from our farm goes to my son, and he is able to subsidize some of his family’s expenses once the cows are paid for, simply because he has no debt. But it’s hard for a small family farmer to make it full-time nowadays. You must either grow larger or take a job off the farm.

“That’s also why it’s better to plant pines and let Mother Nature do the work,” he said with a smile. “But my son loves cattle. He’s a born farmer. Even his wife loves it. She’ll ride all over the farm in the tractor with him.”

Virgil says Hurricane Katrina dealt the farm a huge blow in 2005. The damage it sustained made the Walkers think hard about whether they wanted to carry on.

“We’re still fixing fences,” Virgil said. “And, believe it or not, trees are still falling.”

Virgil says he’ll never forget how Farm Bureau helped the farmers of Covington County after Hurricane Katrina. He says the organization really came through for area farmers.

FARM BUREAU FAMILY

“Farm Bureau is all I knew growing up,” he said. “My father Charlie was a longtime Covington County Farm Bureau member. When my wife and I married, I was already acquainted with the county Farm Bureau staff and many of the members around here, so it was on an easy decision to join.”

In December 2007, Virgil was asked to serve on the Covington County Farm Bureau Board of Directors.

“They asked my son first, but he’s so busy with his family, his farm and his volunteer work that they asked me,” Virgil said. “I said I would be glad to do it. I know the people, and that makes it easy to be a part of the group.

“I’m looking forward to attending all of the commodity meetings,” he added. “I attended the Winter Commodity Conference and learned so much. Farm Bureau is a great organization. It is just like family.”

Virgil is also a deacon at Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church. He is a member of the Covington County Cattlemen’s Association Board, representing Ward 4, and he serves as a board member of the Northwest Covington Volunteer Fire Department in Mt. Olive. His wife Ernestine is a nurse for a private medical practice in Hattiesburg. Their daughter is a nurse at Baptist Hospital in Memphis.
It is no secret that feeder calves from the southeastern United States are often regarded as inferior to calves originating from other parts of the country. Even though this is completely inaccurate, the stereotype still remains and serves as an excuse to buy calves from some southeastern states at a discount compared to the national market.

This discount has been overcome in some states by aggressively pursuing alternative marketing methods that either build a good reputation for their cattle or capture the benefits of proper management and genetic selection through retained ownership.

The most recent nail in the coffin of this misconception comes from a study presented at the Southern Section Meeting of the American Society of Animal Science. The study concluded that calves from the Southeast required fewer health treatments during the feeding phase and were $11.32/head more profitable than calves from the Midwest.

The trial was conducted from 2002 to 2007 by the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity (TCSCF) and included a total of 27,538 steers and heifers. Fifteen states were represented: Southeast: Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida, West Virginia and Kentucky; Midwest: Iowa, Missouri, Indiana, Illinois and Minnesota.

The cattle were fed a common ration in ten different feedlots in southwest Iowa. Similar implant and health protocols were maintained in each lot. Within four days of arrival, each of the calves was vaccinated, weighed, implanted and body condition scored. A “warm-up” period of 28 to 35 days allowed the cattle to become acclimated to the ration and new environment. After the warm-up period, they were weighed and considered on-test.

The first thing that was noticed was that the age and weight at delivery were different for the two regions. The Southeastern cattle were older and slightly heavier than the Midwestern calves. Morbidity, treatment cost and mortality rates were also different, with Southeastern calves lower in each category.

Midwestern calves performed better in the feedlot, having a higher overall average daily gain, and were heavier at harvest. Some aspects of carcass value also differed between the groups. Midwestern cattle had a larger ribeye area and lower calculated yield grade. There was no difference in percent Choice, but a larger percentage of the Southeastern cattle qualified for Certified Angus Beef (CAB).

The argument can be made that the Southeastern cattle represented in this study are managed more intensively than average because producers who retain ownership through the feeding phase are more concerned with practices that improve feedlot performance. However, the same would be true for the Midwestern calves. This makes the comparison and results valid. Furthermore, this illustrates one of the best methods to capture the added value of genetic and health management: retained ownership.

### Effects of Region on Feedlot and Carcass Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Southeast</th>
<th>Midwest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Head</td>
<td>18,228</td>
<td>9,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrival Weight*</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delivery Age (Days)</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>253</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Weight*</td>
<td>1067</td>
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<td>15.22%</td>
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<td>Treatment Cost ($/hd)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mortality Rate*</td>
<td>1.43%</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot Carcass Weight*</td>
<td>723</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fat Cover (in.)*</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ribeye Area (in.)*</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>12.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calculated Yield Grade*</td>
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<td>2.78</td>
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<tr>
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<td>58.6</td>
<td>63.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>% YG 3*</td>
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<td>% YG 4&amp;5*</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>% CAB*</td>
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<td>19.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Profit ($/Head)*</td>
<td>$48.63</td>
<td>$37.31</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(* indicates statistical difference)

### Southeastern Calves Compared to Midwestern Calves Were:

- Heavier on delivery (11 lbs.)
- Older on delivery (71 days)
- Health treatments were less (5.5%)
- % Choice or better was not different
- CAB acceptance was greater (2.5%)
- Returns were greater ($11.32/head)
At Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, we are committed to a healthier Mississippi. Our Blue Care benefit plans help make that commitment a reality in the lives of thousands of Mississippians. Blue Care includes Healthy You! — an annual wellness screening at a network provider with no out-of-pocket cost.

The most important part of the family farm is the family — and we want your family to be healthy. Contact your local Farm Bureau Agent for more details about Blue Care and Healthy You!

Rated A (Excellent) by A.M. Best Company
If you put together a few old farmers with good memories for an afternoon of swapping tales, you’re bound to set in motion a good time for all, especially when the anecdotes involve our so-called domesticated farm animals.

We got into that recently with Maurice Layton on his farm in the Dry Creek Community near Magee. When it comes to stories about raising livestock, the 78-year-old, third generation cattle producer knows whereof he speaks. Layton’s relationship and activities with cows is long-term.

Here’s one of Maurice’s more memorable tales.

THE VENGEFUL COW

When he was just a kid, Layton’s family added a small cow to their milk cows, and his father turned the milking duties over to him. The youngster had never seen this rare, tiny cow before and described her as “a little, black-striped Guinea cow, kinda beefy with an extremely large udder for her size. The cow had a tail that had a long switch that almost reached the ground.”

The cow could be used for both milk and meat, and on an icy winter morning in January of 1945, the cow was in a bad mood because the Laytons had recently butchered one of her calves for beef. The temperature was around 14 degrees but felt more like...
zero in a high wind, when Maurice and his father headed to the barn. A brisk 25 to 30-mile-per-hour wind enveloped them.

“Time I got to the crib, I was almost stiff,” he said. “I got the feed while Daddy let the cows in. We fed them cotton seed hulls, cotton seed meal and crushed ear corn. On a cold day, there is nothing colder than cotton seed meal. Time we mixed the feed, my hands were numb.”

Maurice’s dad fed the Guernsey, and Maurice gave the new cow a big bucket of feed, washed the cow’s udder and set about milking her.

“I milked a few squirts, and she switched her tail, hitting me on the shoulders. The water from the day before in her tail was frozen and her switch was heavy,” he said.

Undaunted, Maurice continued, milking with both hands, holding the bucket between his legs, sitting almost flat on the ground. Things were going well, and he was about two-thirds finished when the little cow switched that wet, cold, nasty tail again and hit him squarely in the face.

“I hollered at her, and what I said wasn’t nice,” Maurice said with a grin. “I heard my father from the other stall remind me, ‘Boy, you know better than that.’”

Maurice started back milking, and when the 10-quart bucket was three-fourths full, he rose up, patted the cow on the back and started out of the stall, saying, “Good cow.” But before he knew what had happened—WHOP!—the cow’s foot had caught him in the back side of his knees and tripped him. The milk went up in the air and rained down on his head and in his face.

“By the time I got back to the house, my pants were frozen stiff and the milk on my face was beginning to freeze,” he said. “I knew there would be no milk to sell to get my sis and me lunches at school. But worse, I had quite a chore cleaning up to go to school that morning. People looked at me funny all day, and I didn’t know if I smelled that strong or what.”

THE CROSS COW

Maurice shared other memories, including one about a Hereford cow named Sylvia that turned mean whenever she had a calf. That tale brought to my mind a memorable story told to me by the late Gordon White of Lauderdale County.

One day in the cafeteria at the state office, Gordon started telling a group of Farm Bureau employees about a cow of his that had tried to impart some wisdom to a visitor with the usual cow signs, but the visitor was neither listening nor looking. Both Gordon and his visitor soon regretted that oversight.

Gordon’s cross between a Charolais and Brahma, he allowed, was a mean ol’ cuss with a bad streak that went clear though. In fact, this cross was cross all the time, but Gordon’s visitor hadn’t been educated yet. He just had to go out in that pasture where the onery animal reigned supreme.

The first warning that all was not well came in the form of a little pawing and head bobbing with a snort or two thrown in for emphasis. The visitor wasn’t impressed. Gordon was, and suggested that they best be moving on.

Now, that is when the scenario roughened up a bit. You have to be careful how you turn your back on a mean cow. The pair heard the sound of hooves falling on the ground behind them and spun around to see the ol’ girl bearing hard toward them with a lowered head and horns at the ready position.

Gordon White was no novice in the world, and he decided to intervene for his visitor. He wheeled around to face the oncoming, full-blasting bovine as he suggested to the uninitiated to make tracks. As Gordon wheeled, he extended his arms and shouted loudly at the cow. What he said was unintelligible, but what he meant was, “Stop you !***! dumb beast or I will whale the daylights out of you.”

Now, he was bluffing, as you might imagine with your power of reasoning things out, but the cow put on brakes suddenly to consider the strange new turn of events.

Gordon held this stance for a moment as the cow nervously edged forward toward him, just a-pawin’ and a-switchin’ her tail while manifesting all the visible signs of deep volatile emotion. Gordon continued to face the cow and backedpedaled in the direction in which his friend already had disappeared.

Out of the corner of his eye, Gordon caught a glimpse of the fence behind him and calculated his present and future alignment with it. Suddenly, he wheeled again and sped at top speed for the fence. He hit the ground and rolled beneath the bottom wire just as the riled cow arrived to snort and pace the ground he had just slid over.

Gordon had won his physical victory, but it was soured by the lack of grace and style in his inordinately hasty exit from the pasture.

THANKS TO ALL

The Laytons and I concluded our afternoon visit well-pleased with our mutual stories about the behavior of cows. I’d like to thank them for taking the time out of their busy day to visit with me. Maurice and Ann are a remarkable couple, who’ve meant a lot to state agriculture and the Farm Bureau organization.

I’d also like to thank you, my readers, for your many expressions of concern following my recent heart surgery. For an 82-year-old, I’m mending well. Much obliged.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CARCASS QUALITY AND TEMPERAMENT IN BEEF CATTLE

Dr. Rhonda Vann, Brown Loam Experiment Station, Raymond, is conducting research with feedlot steers to determine the relationship between carcass quality and temperament in beef cattle.

Her findings thus far are that cattle with wilder temperaments exhibit lower weight gain, produce tougher meat and yield increased amounts of bruise trim due to injuries acquired during transportation.

“These findings indicate that disposition needs to be a consideration, along with the other selection traits, when making bull or mature cow or replacement heifer purchases which bring new animals into your cattle operation,” Vann said.

“This research is ongoing, and in the near future, we will be including investigations on the effects of temperament on immunity and health status of the animal as well as the effects on reproductive efficiency in beef cattle,” she said.

“Our hope is that producers and the cattle industry will utilize disposition in selection of animals, which will be more productive in their respective environments (i.e. choose which steers will perform better in a feedlot situation, choose replacement heifers, etc.),” she said.
By Larry Jefcoat, President  
Mississippi Beef Council

While we as beef producers can’t stand by the grocery store meat case to promote our products, a tool is being tested that may be able to do it for us…and do it well.

For the past several years, the Beef Checkoff has been studying whether or not on-pack nutrition labeling influences retail shoppers’ purchasing habits and attitudes when it comes to beef. These studies continue to support the notion that an informed beef customer is a satisfied and loyal beef customer.

In a 2007 study, the percentage of consumers who said they believed beef was healthier than they’d previously thought jumped 45 percent following a beef on-pack nutrition labeling test in several retail outlets. Nearly 15 percent of respondents said they’d be more likely to shop at stores that featured nutrition-labeled meat. During the 16-week test period, retailers’ dollar and pound beef sales rose measurably.

No doubt, more consumers than ever are purposely reading food labels. Labels appear to catch the consumer’s eye and generate a positive response. For example, in a recent checkoff-funded study, 29 percent of respondents rated beef packages with nutrition and cooking information as new and unique, while only 16 percent thought that about the retailer’s existing on-pack labeling.

The case for on-pack, detailed labeling is pretty clear and could have a significant impact on how consumers learn about, and buy, our product. But checkoff researchers had yet another question: Is there any specific type of labeling that would be more likely than others to motivate a beef purchase?

To test that question, checkoff researchers conducted interviews with just over 1,000 beef buyers on a major retailer’s online shopper panel. All respondents bought beef at least two times a month at this retailer. The sample was balanced for factors such as age, income, gender, education and so forth.

Consumers looked at online mockups of five label types: (1) the retailer’s existing Nutrition Facts label; (2) a Nutrition Facts label highlighting beef’s protein; (3) a Nutrition Facts label highlighting protein and how it benefits the body; (4) an Easy Fresh Label highlighting the protein content of beef and providing cooking tips/recipes; and (5) an Easy Fresh label highlighting protein, its impact on building muscle and cooking facts.

Results showed strongest purchase intent (65 percent) among consumers who looked at label #4, which married beef’s taste and versatility appeal with its nutritional profile. The combined taste/nutrition information reached the largest number of consumers most effectively.

Moving forward, the checkoff will continue to fund research testing alternate ways to enhance package labels to promote beef’s benefits. The beef industry isn’t required to label products like the examples given above, but we don’t need to wait for the government to mandate fresh meat labeling. With a product as good as ours, it’s just good business sense.

Label testing is another way checkoff investment continues to work for us, long after our cattle are sold and our thoughts have already turned to next year’s plan.

SOYBEAN RUST HOTLINE

The Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board and BASF annually fund a toll-free soybean rust hotline for producers in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Producers can call (866) 641-1847 to learn the latest information on rust and current management recommendations for each state. The hotline will be activated early in the 2008 production season.

KOGER NAMED SOYBEAN SPECIALIST

Mississippi State University’s (MSU) Extension Service has named Trey Koger as the state specialist to assist Mississippi’s soybean growers.

Koger most recently served at MSU’s Delta Research and Extension Center (DREC) in Stoneville.

Koger will maintain offices at the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville and on campus in Starkville. He can be contacted in Stoneville at (662) 686-3238 or in Starkville at (662) 325-8616, or by e-mail at tkoger@drec.msstate.edu.
Which North Mississippi town was named for General John Coffee? Gen. Coffee was given the assignment of surveying the boundary lines between area Chicksaw and Choctaw Indian nations and keeping peace. He and his soldiers established a camp on a high hill overlooking what would soon become this town.

Read the clues and make your guess

A COUNTY SEAT

Incorporated in 1836, this town is one of Yalobusha County’s two seats of government. The other is Water Valley. This town grew and prospered during a time when cotton was king and lots of railroads came through town. President James K. Polk owned a cotton plantation south of this town.

Agriculture is still important to the area. Family farmers grow row crops and raise cattle and horses. Some farmers have begun planting sweet potatoes.

Today, this town numbers about 1,200 residents and boasts two industries. Avery Outdoors makes hunting apparel and K & D Cultured Marble makes marble counters and bathtubs.

This town has a bank, a public library, a weekly newspaper, grocery stores, a flower shop, a tea room, a barbecue restaurant and L & M Baskets (soon to be called Jonathan’s), which sells antiques, ironworks and crystal imported from all over the world.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Recreation is a growing industry. This town is near Enid Lake, George Payne Cossar State Park and is only five miles from the backwaters of Grenada Lake. The National Foxhunters Association’s Field Trials have been held near this town since 1993.

This town has a public school and athletic teams that have done well. Outstanding high school athletes, Belton and Marcus Johnson, played football at Ole Miss and went on to play professional football.

This town has an active Chamber of Commerce, Women’s League and Women’s Progressive Club, which was formed in 1926 and still meets. This town participates in the Yalobusha County Economic Development District.

This town boasts many historic churches and homes. The Russell Bailey Home was used as a hospital during the Civil War. Some of the original window panes bear etchings of the names of Civil War soldiers. Two important Civil War battles were fought near this town.

This town also boasts a beautiful and historic cemetery, where a man is buried standing up. In 1859, the man fell off of the courthouse while working on it. When he realized he was dying, he requested that he be buried standing up. His request was honored.

Most of this town’s residents are descendants of the original settlers, who migrated here from the Carolinas and Maryland. This town is a close and caring community. Name this town.

CORRECT GUESSES

Mail guesses to Solve the Mystery, Mississippi Farm Country, P. O. Box 1972, Jackson, MS 39215. You may also e-mail your guesses to FarmCountry@MSFB.com.

Please remember to include your name and address on the entry. Visit our Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Web site at www.msfb.com.

When all correct guesses have been received, we will randomly draw 20 names. These 20 names will receive a prize and will be placed in the hat twice.

At the end of the year, a winner will be drawn from all correct submissions. The winner will receive a Weekend Bed and Breakfast Trip, courtesy of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

Families may submit only one entry. Federation staff members and their families are ineligible to participate in this contest.

The deadline for submitting your entry is May 31.

MARCH/APRIL

The correct answer for the March/April Solve the Mystery is Mississippi River.
GREG GIBSON NAMED DIRECTOR OF MEMBER SERVICES

Greg Gibson has been named Director of Member Services for the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF). He will be responsible for administering the following programs: Training, Ag Marketing, Women’s Program, Member Benefits, Graphic Arts, Public Relations/Multimedia and Publications.

Greg began his career with the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation in 1980 and has served as the Public Relations/Multimedia Coordinator for a number of years.

“I am confident Greg will do a tremendous job in guiding our Member Services Department to even greater heights in being of service to our members,” said MFBF President David Waide. “We wish him much success in his new role with our organization.”

Greg and his wife Ruth Ann have a son and daughter, Grant and Sheridan. The family resides in Clinton, and they are members of the First United Methodist Church of Clinton.
As I write this article in mid-March, more questions than answers remain concerning the next farm bill. When will Congress complete its work and send a bill to the president? Will the president sign the bill? Or will the current farm bill be extended until next year? Hopefully, by the time this article reaches your mailbox, there will be more answers than questions, and farmers can begin to operate with greater certainty.

The House passed its version of the 2007 farm bill, H.R. 2419, last July. This version changes some aspects of the current commodity support system and other farm programs. Later in December, the Senate passed its version of the 2007 farm bill. Conference negotiations between the House and Senate were anticipated to start in early January 2008. However, conference on the Senate and House bills has been delayed, in most part, because of the differences between Congress and the administration on how to pay for the farm bill legislation.

The Bush administration is calling for additional reform and a reduction in the overall spending. Because of the prolonged delay, multiple short-term extensions have been necessary to keep certain provisions of the farm bill from expiring. Additionally, farmers have been forced to enter a new crop season without knowing the final outcome of the farm bill negotiations. Without a farm bill in place, it is very difficult for agricultural producers to predict marketing, finance and crop decisions.

Here are possible options facing Congress as the timeframe for completing a farm bill this year nears:

- Complete action on a new farm bill by April 18 or further extend the 2002 farm bill by several weeks in order for Congress to complete action this year.
- Allow the 2002 farm bill to expire and revert to 1949 permanent law, which covers only basic commodities and not any other programs in current law.
- Extend current law for a year or more, postponing further consideration on a few farm bill until the next Congress.

A timeline of the 2007 farm bill, provided by the Congressional Research Service, is listed below. The timeline dates back to the very beginning of the farm bill talks in May 2005.
MEMBER BENEFITS

Take advantage of these benefits available to Farm Bureau® members ONLY. If you are not a member, joining is simple. Contact the Farm Bureau office in the county where you live, pay your membership dues, and start enjoying these benefits today!

- **ACCIDENTAL DEATH** - Provides for accidental death benefit of $750 for children and $1500 for adults. Benefit increases $150 each year for the member and spouse if the current membership year’s dues are paid before November 1. Maximum benefit is $3000. Benefit does not apply to deaths caused by accident while occupying any vehicle which is required to be licensed under applicable state motor vehicle laws; arising out of military activity occurring within a combat zone; suicide; or occurs during, or is the direct or indirect result of injuries incurred during the commission of a felony by a person covered under this member service.

- **ADT HOME SECURITY** - Southern Security Services is offering an ADT Home Security System installed at no charge (36 month monitoring contract required). Please call 1-800-960-9119.

- **AGRISTAR GLOBAL INTERNET** - A high speed internet service that can reach all parts of the state – even rural areas. Please call 1-888-777-0440 or you can visit www.agristar.com.

- **AMERLINK LOG HOMES** - Mississippi Farm Bureau Members are eligible for a 25% discount on the purchase of a log home package from AmerLink Ltd. AmerLink offers a standard line of over 75 residential models as well as garages, commercial designs, outbuildings and barns. Give us a call at 800-872-4254 and start making your dream home a reality. We invite you to visit our Website for MS Farm Bureau members at www.amerlink.com/msfb.

- **CHILD SAFETY SEAT PROGRAM** - Members can pick up order forms for $25 car seats and $15 booster seats at their local county office.

- **ATV DISCOUNTS** - The following ATV discounts are available to Farm Bureau members: Got Gear ATV of Ridgeland — $500 discount on ATVs, motorcycles and 4-wheel utility vehicles. Greenville Motorsports — Receive up to $750.00 in Free Accessories or $500 Discount Coupon. Hattiesburg Cycles — $750 in Free Accessories or $500 Discount Coupon. Oxford Outdoors — $500 discount off MSRP on the purchase of ATVs, utility vehicles, and motorcycles. Powersports Plus of Flowood — 10% Discount Coupon. Discounts apply to ATVs 400cc or greater and motorcycles 800cc or greater. OTHER EXCLUSIONS DO APPLY. You must have a coupon. To receive a coupon or additional information, call Dedra Luke at 1-800-227-8244, ext. 4169, or 601-977-4169.

- **CHOICE HOTELS** - 20% off published rack room rate at any participating location of their brand hotel locations. This discount is based on availability at any Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality, Sleep Inn, Clarion, Main Stay Suites, Econo Lodge and Rodeway Inn.

- **CIMARRON MORTGAGE** - Save $150 off closing costs when you finance your home mortgage through Cimarron Mortgage Company, a Mississippi-based national lender. Please call 1-800-949-6699.

- **DODGE DISCOUNTS** - Pick up a $500 rebate certificate before you purchase your Dodge vehicle. Certificates are limited to Dodge trucks, Durango, selected vans, and selected sedans.

- **CONNECTION LONG DISTANCE SERVICE** - Connection is a full service, long distance program designed exclusively for Farm Bureau members.

- **GATEWAY TIRE & SERVICE CENTER** - Gateway Tire and Service Center is offering a 10% discount on Tires and Automotive Service to Mississippi Farm Bureau members. Just present your Farm Bureau membership card at any Gateway Tire location. To find the Gateway Tire Center nearest you, visit us at www.Gateway-Tire.com. This discount cannot be used with special promotions.

- **GRAINGER INDUSTRIAL SUPPLY** - Save 10% off industrial products by using discount number 8182248000.

- **MEAN MALLARD** - Members receive a 10% discount at the Mean Mallard store in Ridgeland. Not applicable to guns, optics, or ammunition and cannot be used in addition to any other sales or discounts. To receive this coupon: Call Dedra Luke at 601-977-4169 or 1-800-227-8244 extension 4169 with your Farm Bureau membership number.

- **MISSISSIPPI FARM COUNTRY MAGAZINE** - The official publication of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. It is published bi-monthly and spotlights one particular area of agriculture each issue. It also contains information on agricultural issues and Farm Bureau programs.

- **MISSISSIPPI FARM BUREAU FEDERATION** - All Mississippi Farm Bureau Members receive 10% of all accessories, apparel, excluding golf balls. 5% off all hard goods iron, drivers, fairway, wedges, and putters. Excluding Ping & Callaway, see store for details. Not valid with any other offer.

- **PASS KEY SOLUTIONS** - Members receive a sizable discount on pharmacy, eye care, hearing, and health and wellness products. Please call 1-800-800-7616 for additional information. Group number is 39211.

- **PUBLIC POLICY** - Farm Bureau’s role on both the state and national level is to keep members informed with good and factual information concerning Farm Bureau policies and farm issues.

- **RENTAL CAR** - various discounts through Hertz #00337777 1-800-654-3131 and Avis #A298824 1-800-331-1212 or Budget #Y775724 1-800-527-0700.

- **SCHOLARSHIPS** - Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation offers several scholarships to young people interested in furthering their education in agriculture. These scholarships are offered through the Young Farmer & Rancher Program and the Women’s Programs. For more information, contact: Greg Shows at 601.977.4277 or E-mail: gshows@msfb.com or Clara Bilbo at 601.977.4245 or E-mail: cbilbo@msfb.com

- **SUPERIOR OUTDOOR SUPPLY** - Members receive a 10% discount on the “Mobile Hunter” or the “Trail Hunter” from Superior Outdoor Supply, LLC (SOS). For more information, contact: Troy Davis at 601-214-9880 or Kenneth Davis at 601-616-1042 or visit their Website at www.theroadhunter.com

- **THEFT REWARD PROGRAM** - Members can offer a $500 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone committing theft, arson or vandalism against their property.

- **WYNDHAM HOTELS** - Receive an additional 10% off the “Best Available Rate” at participating locations. Advanced reservations are required. Offer is subject to availability at participating locations and some black out dates may apply. Wyndham Hotel Group, Inc. is one of the world’s largest lodging companies under the AmeriHost Inn®, Days Inn®, Howard Johnson®, Knights Inn®, Ramada®, Super 8®, Travelodge®, and Wingate Inn® brands. Super 8 (800) 889-9706 all other hotels - (877) 670-7088.
One of the most important things any of us needs to understand is how our laws are written and interpreted. Laws are the backbone of our society and should provide a clear and logical course of action. When legislative action is ambiguous, overreaching or too narrowly focused, it leads to unintended consequences that often outweigh the original intent of the law. No matter how important a legislative action is to protect the welfare, health and safety of our society, it should be written to provide the greatest amount of protection without infringing on the rights of citizens.

An example of a good idea gone bad is circulating through Congress right now. A bill titled “The Clean Water Restoration Act of 2007” (CWRA) (H.R. 2421) in the United States House of Representatives claims to restore the original intent of the “Clean Water Act of 1972” (CWA). Actually, it is one of the largest expansions of federal jurisdiction in the last three decades and could extend federal jurisdiction to everything from ditches to gutters to groundwater.

This legislation seeks to remove the term “navigable waters” and replace it with the all-encompassing term “waters of the United States.” This new term is defined as “all waters subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, the territorial seas, and all interstate and intrastate waters and their tributaries, including lakes, rivers, streams (including intermittent streams), mudflats, sandflats, wetlands, sloughs, prairie potholes, wet meadows, playa lakes, natural ponds, and all impoundments of the foregoing, to the fullest extent that these waters, or activities affecting these waters, are subject to the legislative power of Congress under the Constitution.”

Obviously, we are all concerned about the health of our nation’s waters. As a matter of fact, we recently celebrated the 35th anniversary of the CWA. Under the CWA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) prevents the discharge of 690 billion pounds of pollutants each year into our nation’s waters. Wetland losses were 458,000 acres from 1950-1970; however, between 1998 and 2004, wetlands increased at a rate of 32,000 acres per year.

The EPA, states, tribes, and industries are working together to cleanup impaired waters through the development of total maximum daily loads (TMDL’s) that provide a clear plan forward to ensure that water quality standards are met. The CWA is an effective law that continues improving water quality standards through best management practices, cooperative agreements among regulatory agencies and industries, and individual permits to limit pollution discharges with the best available technologies.

The CWRA was meant to clear up confusion over what waters are to be federally regulated based on the outcome of two Supreme Court decisions: SWANCC v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2001 and Rapanos v. United States in 2006. These decisions have raised significant questions as to what waters are regulated by the federal authorities. Unfortunately, the CWRA tries to answer the questions by extending authority to virtually all waters. The language in this bill will extend federal jurisdiction to waters that are solely within states’ borders, would cover lands, ditches, and streams that are only wet for short periods of time, and give federal authority over all “activities affecting these waters,” public or private, regardless of whether the activity occurs in water or whether the activity actually adds a pollutant to the water. The “savings clause” of the CWRA would also eliminate the existing regulatory exemptions for prior converted cropland and waste treatment systems.

Opposition to a particular piece of legislation doesn’t necessarily mean opposition to the purpose of the legislation. Our families drink, swim, fish, and bathe in these waters. Unnecessary regulations by the federal government increase the burden on understaffed and underfunded regulatory agencies, limit the power of the states to regulate their own waters, and infringe on private property rights.

While some in Congress wish to restore what they perceive is the intent of the Clean Water Act, let them not forget the intent of our Constitution: a limited federal government and states’ rights.
Listen to the sound of children laughing just down the way, catch the smell of frying bacon floating light on the morning breeze, and hear the soft whir of bicycle tires as they roll along asphalt – this could be descriptive of any Mississippi state park on any given morning. Add to those sounds the “plunk” of a fishing lure on the water or the whisper of wings overhead, and the attraction of Mississippi’s parks comes into clearer focus. From the sound of a golf ball finding the bottom of the cup to the murmur of conversation on a cabin porch, a park near you has so many wonderful sounds to enjoy.

Mississippi has 25 parks offering activities as challenging as mountain biking and rock climbing and as simple as wildlife watching. While the phrase “something for everyone” gets well used, it has never been truer. Consider the value received for the dollars spent, and a day at the park is a bargain. Add to this the fact that a Mississippi state park is only a short drive away from every state resident, and it becomes an even greater value. With gasoline prices rising sharply, less money spent on gas equates to more money for family fun at a park.

If you are a frequent park visitor, then you have a good idea what each park has to offer. While no two parks are identical, all have a common theme … a quality outdoor experience for the individual, family or group.

Overnight visitors have options of renting a cabin, motel room or RV parking pad or pitching a tent in a primitive area. For that matter, you don’t have to have a tent if sleeping under the stars is more to your liking. A few parks offer restaurant-style dining and snack bars. All have grills in the campgrounds, where one can grill a steak to perfection or heat a hotdog to taste.

Each cabin has a kitchen stocked with all the basic cooking utensils, coffee pot, microwave, oven, refrigerator and stove. Bed and bath linens are supplied as well. Many cabins have fireplaces and screened porches.

Every state park has a fishing opportunity within the park or nearby. Fishing is allowed year round unless the lake is closed for renovation. The Fisheries Division of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks is continually stocking and monitoring fishing in park lakes. Largemouth bass, bream, catfish and crappie are popular among anglers at park lakes. Fishing can be done from a boat, one of the constructed fishing piers, or from the bank. Sorry, boats are no longer rented at state lakes. You’ll have to furnish your own.

If golf is your game, look to I-55, as four golf courses along this busy interstate are found in state parks. From the north, Mallard Pointe at John Kyle and The Dogwoods at Hugh White offer a challenging 18-hole turn on the links. Further south, LeFleur’s Bluff is a fast nine in the Capital City. Near McComb, Quail Hallow at Percy Quinn covers the rolling hills like soft morning dew. Each course has carts as part of the green fees.

In 2006, the Parks Division began an online reservation service to allow visitors to reserve and pay for cabins and camping spaces well in advance of the planned visit. It’s so simple to do. Just visit www.mdwfp.com, click on parks and destinations, then click on the Mississippi map. If the internet is not available, check out the Mississippi Outdoor Digest and call the park directly.

Article and photos courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.
Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill is reminiscent of an earlier time in our state’s history when farmers and their families could purchase from one store just about everything they would need to run their homes and farms throughout the year. Country stores were also popular gathering places, where neighbors could visit and catch up on the latest news.

Although Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill no longer offers a diverse enough inventory to keep a farm going, customers can still find a variety of merchandise. Along with a few standard grocery items, including old-timey hoop cheese and souse, the store sells gasoline, snacks and meals. The store’s proprietors are friendly, and you’re sure to see your neighbors. Just like in the good old days.

Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill sits at the crossroads of Highways 305 and 306 in Tate County, where the town of Independence (once known as Bucksnort) is now located. Independence was called Bucknort back in the 1800s because some of its rowdier citizens would ride horses into town, bucking and snorting, every Saturday night.

**FAMOUS FOOD**

Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill opens around 4 a.m., and breakfast is served beginning at 4:30 a.m. The parking lot is generally full at breakfast time. Customers arrive regularly throughout the day, and lunch is served around noon. Chance closes the store at 8:30 p.m.

The food at Bucksnort’s Country Store and Grill has quickly gained a following beyond the community. The hamburgers are made with fresh ground beef. The fried catfish and chicken are hand-breaded and the barbecue is homemade.

The store offers a special deal that includes a 2-pound burger and a pound of fries. If you can eat all of that in eight minutes, you can have it for free.
Chance and Misty, who cook up breakfast and lunch for literally hundreds of hungry folk every week, plan to open a restaurant in the near future that will specialize in steaks and ribs. They have purchased and renovated a building not far from their store.

**Everything Fell Into Place**

“Everything just kind of fell into place with this store,” Chance said. “The original owner was Francis Hawkins, who built the store in the 1960s, when the area had a lot of dairies. At that time, the community had two other country stores.

“Originally, we were partners with my father-in-law, John Burford, Jr.,” he said. “When he got tired of having a store, Misty and I were able to purchase it from him. We rent the building from the original owner’s son.

“We’ve had the store for six years, and our clientele is steadily growing,” Chance added. “That’s because the area is growing. People are moving down here from Memphis to live in the country.”

The Belks estimate that around 5,000 people now live in their community.

**We Stand for the Lord**

Chance and Misty work hard. They keep consistent hours, and their food is top notch. People know they can depend on them, but they also know they will enjoy visiting with them. Customers are constantly coming and going on the morning of my visit.

Misty cooks and Chance works the store (along with several other employees). This type of interaction gives him an opportunity to visit, something he loves to do because he’s such an outgoing individual. But it also gives him a chance to witness. He is a devout Christian and member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

“Misty and I stand for the Lord,” he said. “We put Him first, and everything else just falls into place. The Lord has given us the opportunity to own this business, but more than that, He’s given us a chance to evangelize.”

T-shirts with religious slogans and Bible verses are sold in the store. Chance also has plenty of Bibles, in both English and Spanish, which he gives away for free.

**Keeping It in the Family**

Misty says her great-grandmother, Margarite Burford, helped start the Tate County Farm Bureau many years ago. Misty and Chance are, themselves, longtime Tate County Farm Bureau members.

The Belks love their church, their family, their community and store. They have two children, Emma Grace, 4, and Landon, 2, and hope the store will still be around when they are grown.

Bucksnot’s Country Store and Grill has been featured on Channel 13 in Memphis and in the *Mississippi Business Journal*. Now you are reading about it in *Mississippi Farm Country* magazine.

Next time you’re in the area, make a point of visiting Bucksnot’s Country Store and Grill. Or give Chance and Misty a call at 662-233-4687.
The first time M.B. Green heard bluegrass music on the radio in 1939, it captured his attention and his heart. The longtime Jasper County Farm Bureau member went on to become an accomplished bluegrass musician, teacher and master instrument builder, influencing the lives and livelihoods of many generations of Mississippi musicians.

The Banjo Shop, Green’s humble business near Louin, is a testament to his love of bluegrass music and his skill at building the stringed instruments that make it. On the walls hang numerous banjos, fiddles, guitars, dobros, mandolins and harps. A few are name-brand instruments, but most are hand-crafted by Green.

WHAT HE DOES BEST

Green, 77, estimates he makes about six or seven banjos, three or four guitars, a couple of dobros and a mandolin each year. It takes him about six weeks to make just one banjo, so his hobby keeps him busy. He loves it. “It’s relaxing to me,” he said. “Plus it improves my concentration.”

Green’s banjos run the gamut from professional and intermediate models to an all-wood banjo for beginners. In addition to the banjos and other instruments, he also makes upright basses. Over the last two years, he’s made eleven washtub basses.

Green builds his instruments in a cluttered workshop adjacent to The Banjo Shop. He uses some precut pieces but cuts most of the pieces himself. He buys the wood at a local sawmill. The primary types of wood he uses include mahogany, sycamore and walnut.

Green uses a band saw to cut out the pieces, but the rest of his work is done by hand. He sands the wood then meticulously fits the parts together. Sometimes, he will add custom mother-of-pearl inlays, and sometimes, he will outfit his banjos with gold-plated parts. Whatever the customer wants, he tries to oblige.

Green’s instruments look good and sound even better. Before retiring from a local electronics firm, he rebuilt Conn organ tone generators for over three decades. He possesses an ear for sound and is willing to experiment to come up with the very best sound possible.
Green has sold his instruments to musicians from other states and countries, but most of his customers are Mississippians.

“We have a lot of talented musicians right here in Mississippi,” he said proudly.

FARM BOY AT HEART

Raised on a farm in SoSo in Jones County, Green says he caught the guitar bug from a great-aunt, who was an accomplished guitarist. His father bought him a used guitar, and Green took lessons from J. B. Coates, a gospel songwriter who lived just down the road.

Back then, Coates was a writer for the Stamps-Baxter publishing house. His song, “Where Could I Go But to the Lord,” was recorded by Elvis. Coates taught Green timing by playing the piano while the boy played the guitar.

“J.B. Coates and my family attended Antioch Baptist Church together,” Green said, a light in his eyes. “We were great friends.”

As an adult, Green formed a bluegrass group called The Grassmen that performed at bluegrass festivals in the 1970s and again in the 1990s, often on the same program with such notables as Bill Monroe, The Sullivan Family and Lester Flatt.

Green has been featured in numerous publications and on Mississippi Public Broadcasting Television’s Mississippi Roads. He has had visitors from across Mississippi and from other states and nations.

“I get a lot of satisfaction from making these instruments, but I also enjoy visiting with my customers,” he said. “We have the best time.”

A TALENTED VISITOR

As a member of the Mississippi Arts Commission, Green is proud of one visitor in particular. In 1984, renowned instrument builder Scott Didlake was awarded a grant that enabled him to study with Green for a year. Scott’s specialty was gourd banjos.

“Scott was very talented,” Green said. “Unfortunately, he passed away in 1994 at a young age. His gourd banjos are now considered works of art.”

Green is currently working on a gourd banjo of his own. It has a calfskin head, wooden pegs and is fretless, the way these instruments were made around the time of the American Civil War.

A FINE LEGACY

Green’s legacy will live on in the lives of the musicians whom his own life has touched. But what makes him most proud is the fact that his grandchildren love music. Five of his grandsons play the guitar and one granddaughter plays the harp really well.

“It’s been a great life,” he said, taking me on a tour of the new shop his sons and grandsons are building for him right next to the original shop. “People have been mighty good to me through the years. It’s just been a great blessing.”

For more information, call Green at (601) 739-3155. Or write him at 996 CR 16, Louin, MS 39338-4655.
Holly Springs: A charming, historic town

By Glynda Phillips

If you enjoy history and fine architecture, you should visit Holly Springs. Some of the best-preserved antebellum homes and buildings in the Mid-South can be found there.

In the mid-1800s, Holly Springs was an important commerce, law and agricultural town that was regarded by many as being the capitol of North Mississippi. Back then, the town boasted 10 schools, 36 doctors and 40 lawyers.

Down through the years, Holly Spring benefited from the area’s successful cotton industry and thrived as the seat of Marshall County government. Today, cotton is no longer king in Marshall County. Most area farmers grow corn and soybeans, and lumber is big business. Because of the Balance Agriculture with Industry law passed by Mississippi in 1936, the county is home to approximately 28 factories.

Despite all the changes, Holly Springs’ lavish antebellum homes and beautiful churches remain as a testament to a more prosperous time in its history.

“Cotton was so important to us,” said Lois Swanee, curator of the Marshall County Historical Museum and author of several history books. “But insects like the boll weevil and the tobacco budworm devastated our cotton crops. Today, we don’t grow cotton here, and we no longer have gins in the county.”
TOURISM IMPORTANT

Tourism is a growing industry in Holly Springs. Many of its 60 antebellum homes and gardens are open to the public.

History buffs will also enjoy visiting Hillcrest Cemetery. Soldiers representing ten wars, including seven Confederate generals, are interred there as is the state’s first African American senator, Hiram Revels.

Holly Springs produced 11 Confederate generals, nine members of the Confederate Congress and seven adjutant generals. The area around Holly Springs was the site of 62 Civil War skirmishes. Holly Springs was one of three towns in Mississippi to be federally occupied during Reconstruction, which lasted for some 10 years. The other two towns were Vicksburg and Jackson.

Visitors can learn more about Holly Springs by visiting the Marshall County Historical Museum, located on the downtown square and open five days a week. Other Holly Springs museums include Graceland Too, dedicated to Elvis Presley memorabilia; the Ida B. Wells Museum, dedicated to the life and work of civil rights pioneer and activist Ida B Wells-Barnett; and the Kate Clark Art Gallery, dedicated to one woman’s paintings and the only gallery of its kind in the world.

You may also visit the Akia Record Shop, supposedly the biggest shop of its kind in the world.

RUST COLLEGE

A visit to Holly Springs would not be complete without stopping by Rust College, the second oldest historically African American college in the U.S. Founded in 1866 for freedmen, the school sits on a former slave yard. Its administration building is a facsimile of Independence Hall in Pennsylvania.

Rust College is a private liberal arts college that is affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

While in Holly Springs, you must also visit its historic churches. Four of the churches were originally antebellum structures, including the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist and Catholic churches.

HOLLY SPRINGS TODAY

Today, Holly Springs boasts a population of about 8,000 citizens. Growth has remained stable in recent years. Although many businesses have moved out of the downtown area, the picturesque square still bustles with activity. Among the downtown businesses are an old-timey hardware store and drug store as well as the Marshall County Farm Bureau and the Marshall County Historical Museum.

Holly Springs boasts a beautiful downtown park and walking track, an airport, two railroads and a weekly newspaper, the South Reporter. It is also home to a correctional facility.

Near town, you will find the Kirkwood National Golf Club as well as Fitch Farms- Galena Plantation, a working plantation and wildlife preserve. Also close by are Chewalla Lake Recreation Area, Holly Springs National Forest, Sardis Lake Recreation Area and Wall Doxey State Park.

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center encompasses 2,500 acres of diverse wildlife habitat and boasts 15 miles of walking trails for exploring fields, forests and wetlands.

The center has more than 200 species of birds, extensive native plant gardens, the antebellum Davis House (1851), and a Hummingbird Migration Celebration, held each year on the weekend following Labor Day in September.

Phillips Grocery, a former saloon, is now a rustic country store/restaurant and home to world famous hamburgers, according to USA Today newspaper and Gourmet magazine.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Each year, Holly Springs hosts a Spring Pilgrimage Tour and a Christmas Tour of its historic houses and churches. It also holds an annual Kudzu Festival and an annual Hummingbird Migration Celebration.

For more information, call the Marshall County Historical Museum at 662-252-3669.

A special thanks to Lois Swanee, without whose help this article would not have been possible.

Left page top: Walter Place Estate, Cottages and Gardens (1859). Bottom from left: Montrose (1858); Arliewood (1985); Lois Swanee, Marshall County Historical Museum; Rust College (1866).
We often think of safety when it comes to our jobs. Safety with our tractors and farm machinery, in our warehouses, and on our jobsites is a top priority. But, how often do we really think about safety at home? Is your home safe from fire? What about the homes of your family members and friends? Are they safe?

Here in Mississippi, we have the highest death rate from fire of any state in the country. Fire is a serious problem in this state. The truth is, we can no longer afford to sit by and let houses and, worse yet, lives be destroyed by fires that are often preventable.

A new movement is sweeping across the state – it’s called Safe at Home: Preventing Fires in Mississippi. I encourage you to learn about this program and share with others the lifesaving information it provides. This program is designed to give all of us tips on how to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe at home. The program offers simple, yet important, tips that we all can use to protect against fires in our homes. Churches, schools, community leaders and others all across Mississippi are part of the Safe at Home campaign. They are sharing information about preventing fires with the people they reach.

I hope all of the members of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation will do the same. I urge you to share the Safe at Home tips and resources with others in your community. These materials can be downloaded at www.safeathome-ms.org. If you would like to host a brief presentation on Safe at Home, or would like materials to display and distribute, feel free to call 1.888.MS FIRE1 for additional information.

**SAFE AT HOME FIRE SAFETY TIPS**

**TAKE CARE WHILE COOKING:**

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stovetop.
- Keep clothes, towels, paper, and children away from the stovetop.
- In case of a pan fire, slide a top over your pan and turn off the stove.

**KEEP YOUR FAMILY SAFE AND WARM**

- Keep heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn.
- Never use extension cords for electric heaters.
- Turn heaters off when you leave the room and when you go to bed.
- Never heat your house with your oven.

**DON’T MIX SNOOZING AND SMOKING**

- Never smoke in bed or when tired.
- Stay alert when smoking.
- Smoke outside and always use wide, deep ashtrays.

**BE PREPARED**

- Install smoke alarms – test each month and change batteries twice a year.
- Practice your escape plan with everyone who lives with you.
- Choose a safe place to meet outside so that you know where everyone is.
- If there is a fire in your house, get everyone outside, then call 911.
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 5
Dairy Commodity Conference
Walhalla County Farm Bureau Office
Tylertown

June 10
Ag in the Classroom Workshop
North Mississippi Research and Extension Center, Tupelo

June 11
Ag in the Classroom Workshop
Covington County Multipurpose Building
Collins

June 12
Ag in the Classroom Workshop
MFBF Building, Jackson

June 15-18
Southern Region Commodity Conference
Beau Rivage, Biloxi

June 23
Swine Commodity Conference
Oktibbeha County Farm Bureau
Starkville

June 26
Beef Commodity Conference
R&E Center, Raymond

July 8
Peanuts Commodity Conference
Extension Office, Lucedale

July 11
Region One Young Farmer Meeting
Clarksdale

July 22
Cotton Commodity Conference
Grenada County Extension
Service Auditorium, Grenada

July 22-24
Youth Safety Seminar
Kamp Kumbaya, Eupora
Clockwise (from left) Karis Gutter, Legislative Director with Congressman Bennie Thompson’s office, addresses Farm Bureau members during the annual membership tour; Senator Roger Wicker speaks to members during the annual luncheon; West Higginbotham, Agriculture Aide for Senator Thad Cochran, talks with members about agriculture issues, including the farm bill; Mark Keenum, Under Secretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service, visits with a group of members (shown are members from Bolivar County); and Senator Thad Cochran addresses luncheon attendees.
Vardaman sweet potato growers Stephen and Kisha Bailey recently won the United States Junior Chamber (Jaycees) Outstanding Young Farmers Award 2008. They received an expense-paid trip to Madison, Wisconsin, for the 52nd National Outstanding Young Farmers Awards Congress and $1,000.

John Deere is the national sponsor of the Outstanding Young Farmers program. Supporting the program are members of the Outstanding Young Farmers (OYF) of America fraternity, which is comprised of former state OYF winners who are interested in the continuance of this program. Also supporting the program are members of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents.

The United States Junior Chamber administers the program throughout the year, culminating with the presentation of the national awards in the early spring.

The Baileys are the 2007 Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Young Farmers and Ranchers State Achievement Award winners. Stephen also won the 2007 MFBF State Discussion Meet.

YOUTH SAFETY SEMINAR DEADLINE

Registration deadline for the annual Mississippi Farm Bureau Youth Safety Seminar is July 7. The seminar will be held July 22-24 at Kamp Kumbaya in Eupora.

Participants must be entering the ninth through twelfth grades this fall. If you know someone who is interested in attending, contact your county Farm Bureau office or call the state office at 1-800-227-8244, ext. 4242.
Miss Farm Bureau-Mississippi Ashley Helton of Tishomingo County participated in the Dixie National Parade in Jackson. She is pictured with her escort Ronnie West.

Participating in the Country Women’s Council (CWC) Conference, held in Springfield, Illinois, were Kay Perkins, Region 2 Women’s Committee Chair; Louise Nichols, Area President; Patricia Altshuler, Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) United Nations Representative; Judy Bender, CWC Chair; and Dott Arthur, State Women’s Committee Chair.

Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) recently arranged a 3-day tour of South Mississippi farms for Tara Smith, Director of Congressional Relations, American Farm Bureau Federation. She is pictured with, from left, John Kilgore, MFBF Region 7 Manager and Commodity Coordinator for Beef; Reggie Magee, MFBF Vice President-South Mississippi; and Doug Rogers, a Collins cattle producer and chair of the MFBF Beef Cattle Advisory Committee.

Each February, in honor of Food Check-Out Day, the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation State Women’s Committee collects food, household items and cash donations for delivery to the Ronald McDonald House in Jackson. Pictured, from right, are Ruth Ann Allen, Executive Director of the Ronald McDonald House in Jackson; Ronald McDonald; MFBF State Women’s Committee Chair Dott Arthur and MFBF President David Waide.

The 2008 Winter Commodity Conference enjoyed participation from producers from across the state. A panel of experts talked about the farm bill then fielded questions from the audience. Experts included Jim Sartwelle, American Farm Bureau Federation; Craig Brown, National Cotton Council; Jody Lefcourt, Bunge North America; and Steve Martin, Mississippi State University.

2008 State Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference attendees toured some of the farming enterprises of Tupelo farmer and businessman Mitchell Scruggs. The annual conference enjoyed great participation this year.

Miss Farm Bureau-Mississippi Ashley Helton of Tishomingo County participated in the Dixie National Parade in Jackson. She is pictured with her escort Ronnie West.
STATE WOMEN’S COMMITTEE ENJOYS DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation State Women’s Committee members served refreshments at the Capitol as a part of their annual “Day at the Capitol” event in February. The committee also visited with Lieutenant Governor Phil Bryant; House Ag Committee Chair Greg Ward; and Senate Ag Committee Chair Cindy Hyde-Smith.

State Women’s Committee members include Lil Gant, Region 1; Kay Perkins, Region 2; Peggy McKey, Region 3; Betty Mills, Region 4; Betty Edwards, Region 5; Billie McCully, Region 6; Carolyn Turner, Region 7; and Wanda Hill, Region 8.

Dott Arthur is the State Women’s Committee Chair, and Shelby Williams is the State Women’s Committee Vice-Chair. Clara Bilbo is Women’s Program Coordinator. Also pictured is Jan Holley, Itawamba County Women’s Chair.
In addition to its many familiar programs and services, Farm Bureau also offers many other benefits you may not know about. For more information, see page 23 and start taking advantage of the valuable benefits offered by your Farm Bureau membership!
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