

Travel Through Delta History

So much of the history of the Mississippi Delta is not about its structures as it is about its people and its land. Relatively speaking, the Delta is just not that old. Settlements started rising up in early 1800s and by the 1820s towns were being incorporated. With the rise of King Cotton some even became fairly large cities. Little remains, however, of the physical history of the Delta prior to the Civil War. Take your time and get know the Delta's incredible history. Our history includes interpretation of the Native American experience, the rise of agriculture, the Civil War, Civil Rights and of the incredible music known as the Delta Blues.

- Hernando DeSoto, the first European to travel the mighty Mississippi River arrived in what is now DeSoto County in 1542. The 41-acre **Hernando DeSoto River Park** is located just north of Lake Comorant on the banks of the Mississippi River. After getting up close and personal with Old Man River stop by the **DeSoto County Courthouse** in Hernando to view murals depicting DeSoto's arrival to the area. Erected shortly after the end of the Civil War, the **DeSoto County Confederate Monument** is one of Mississippi's oldest. The monument is located in the Hernando Memorial Cemetery.
- In operation since 1944, **the Riverside Hotel** in Clarksdale was formerly the G.T. Thomas Afro-American Hospital. In 1937 the legendary Blues artist Bessie Smith was injured in an automobile accident near Clarksdale and was refused treatment at the whites-only hospital. She was taken to the Riverside where she died of her injuries. As one of the few hotels in the state that allowed African-Americans, the hotel hosted greats such as Duke Ellington, Sonny Boy Williamson II and Ike Turner. John Kennedy, Jr. was also once a guest of the Riverside Hotel.
- **The Clark Mansion** was built by the founder of Clarksdale, John Clark. Construction on the Colonial Revival style home started just before the Civil War. Clark refused to use slave labor to build his house and hired Northern workers who fled with the outbreak of war. The home was not completed until after the war.
- **Emmett Till / The Mississippi Freedom Trail** – On the night of August 28, 1955, 14-year old Emmett Till, an African-American visiting from Chicago was brutally murdered by two white men for flirting with a white woman, the wife of one of the assailants. The acquittal of the accused and the state's refusal to arrest them on charges of kidnapping outraged the nation sparking the acceleration of the Civil Rights movement in Mississippi. **The Mississippi Freedom Trail** has placed a marker at Bryant's Grocery in Money, Mississippi where the horrific incident began.
- **The Blue Front Café, Bentonia, Mississippi** – Located a few miles southeast of Yazoo City in Bentonia, the Blue Front Café opened in 1948 and became famous for their buffalo fish, moonshine whiskey and the Blues. Its informal authenticity has made it a premier destination for Blues enthusiasts from around the world.
- **Yazoo City's Town Center Historic District** – Yazoo City's entire downtown is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Downtown businesses are painted in a bouquet of vivid colors.
- **The Triangle Cultural Center / Sam Olden Yazoo Historical Society Museum** – Housed in the old Main Street School, built in 1904, the Sam Olden Yazoo Historical Society Museum chronicles the diverse history of the region with exhibits containing 45,000-year old fossils to the lives of Yazoo's celebrity sons and daughters.

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- In Greenwood, **The Museum of the Mississippi Delta** focuses on the five “A’s” – art, archaeology, agriculture, antiques and animals. The collection includes an impressive collection of Mississippi artwork. The Native American exhibit includes the largest collection of trade beads in the southern United States.
- **The Battle of Fort Pemberton** – Located 3 miles west of Greenwood, Fort Pemberton was the only fort on the Yazoo River to resist the attack of Union forces during the Civil War. A model of the March 1863 battle at the fort can be seen at the Museum of the Mississippi Delta in Greenwood.
- **The Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial and Garden** – Fannie Lou Hamer was a pioneer Civil Rights activist who faced great peril and personal injury in her efforts to register to vote and to gain equal rights for African-Americans in the Delta and in the nation.
- **The Amzie Moore House** – Amzie Moore has been a celebrated figure in the Bolivar County as a Civil Rights warrior whose efforts united a movement that changed the Mississippi Delta and the nation.
- **Dockery Farms** – It is impossible to pinpoint the birthplace of the Blues, but, if you had to pick one Mississippi Delta location it would be Dockery Plantation near Cleveland. A number of early Blues pioneers lived and worked on Dockery Plantation including Howlin’ Wolf, Willie Brown, Tommy Johnson, Roebuck “Pops” Staples and Charley Patton, the most important early Delta Blues musician.
- **The Charley Patton / The Mississippi Blues Trail** – Charley Patton was considered to be the “Father of the Delta Blues”. His enduring body of music inspired Delta Blues musicians of his time. Musicologist Robert Plant considers Patton to be one of the most important American musicians of the 20th Century. A **Mississippi Blues Trail** marker is located at his gravesite at Holly Ridge, near Leland.
- **Club Ebony** – One of the South’s most important African American nightclubs was built just after WWII. Club Ebony hosted Ray Charles, Count Basie, B.B. King, Bobby Bland, Little Milton, Albert King, Willie Clayton and many, many other legendary acts.
- **Winterville Mounds / The Mississippi Mound Trail** – A National Historic Landmark, the Indian mounds at Winterville constitute one of North America’s most significant pre-Columbian archeological sites. Twelve mounds, including the massive 55-foot tall Temple Mound, contrast dramatically with the endlessly flat landscape of the Delta. The location dates from 1,000 – 1,450 A.D. **The Mississippi Mound Trail** links a number of the best studied and most accessible Indian mounds in the state. Winterville is located 4 miles north of Greenville.
- **The Greenville History Museum** – Provides a unique glimpse into life in Greenville from the late 1800s through the 1970s. The collection includes memorabilia, artifacts, photographs and newspaper clippings detailing the Great Flood of 1927 day by day.
- **The 1927 Flood Museum** – On Thursday, April 21, 1927, at 7:45 a.m. the Mississippi River levee broke 8 miles north of Greenville resulting in the most destructive river flood in the history of the United States. Over 27,000 square miles were inundated up to a depth of 30 feet. The museum is housed in the oldest building in historic downtown Greenville.
- **The Vicksburg National Military Park** – On July 4, 1863, Confederate General John C. Pemberton ended a horrendous 47-day siege with the surrender of Vicksburg to Union General U.S. Grant. The Vicksburg National Military Park’s 1,880 acres are dedicated to memory of those who served during the Siege of Vicksburg.
- **The Old Court House Museum** – Built circa 1858, the Old Warren County Court House faced demolition when in the 1940s a new courthouse was constructed across the street. Eva Davis was determined that the building would be saved and started to work on the creation of the Old Court House Museum. The Greek Revival structure is Vicksburg’s most iconic. Exhibits detail the history of the region from Native American cultures to the mid-1900s.
- **The Jesse Brent Lower Mississippi River Museum and Riverfront Interpretive Site** – The newest addition to Vicksburg’s catalog of museums, the exhibits allow you to explore life along the Mississippi River. The museum examines the efforts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to control flooding along the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

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