

1961-1964 **FREEDOM** SUMMER TRAIL



Palmer's Crossing Community Center



Hattiesburg Cultural Center (Formerly Public Library)

HATTIESBURG'S HISTORIC PATH OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Created in partnership with the City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi Development Authority, The University of Southern Mississippi's University Libraries and Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Historical photos provided by the Herbert Randall Digital Collection in the McCain Library & Archives.

FREEDOM SUMMER 1964

Historians regard the 1960s Civil Rights Movement as one of the three most important eras in the United States' domestic history, with the others being the Civil War and Great Depression. Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Freedom Summer played a prominent role in the progressive movement, and the 1964 Freedom Summer Trail and its audio tour commemorates the city's journey. Marking these historic sites honors those who made history by proudly sharing their stories.

Hattiesburg was the largest Freedom Summer site in Mississippi with more than **90 volunteers from out of state, 3,000 local participants, and up to 675 Freedom School students**. In 1964, the Council of Federated Organizations – COFO – launched the statewide voter registration drive known as Mississippi Freedom Summer.

FREEDOM DAY
JANUARY 22, 1964 Freedom Summer began with the South's initial Freedom Day on January 22, 1964. On this day, hundreds of African-American residents stood all day in the rain waiting to enter the Forrest County Courthouse in an attempt to register to vote. Peaceful demonstrations such as this continued in front of the Courthouse throughout the spring. These protesters were supported by volunteers from across the nation,

including 50 pastors from the National Council of Churches.

In July and August 1964, COFO workers and volunteers established Freedom Schools in seven area African-American churches. Mass meetings were held and the congregations opened their homes to volunteers, housing and feeding them at the risk of violence and economic reprisal.

Freedom Schools offered classes in subjects like civics and Negro History that were not taught consistently in the public schools. Enrollment in local Freedom Schools was so large that Hattiesburg was referred to as **"the Mecca of the Freedom School World."**

Palmer's Crossing Freedom School students authored the "Declaration of Independence" that was adopted at the statewide convention of Mississippi Freedom Schools held in Meridian in 1964. The "Declaration" was also included in the platform of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that same year.

The success of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States is attributed to the awakening of the conscience of Americans who watched what happened in Mississippi on nightly news programs and in their newspapers.



Volunteers and Locals Gather at Priest Creek to Register for Freedom School

TRAIL MAP

MAP IS NOT TO SCALE



1964 FREEDOM SUMMER TRAIL
HBURGFREEDOMTRAIL.ORG

Audio tour, directions, and
more photos available online.



Locals and Volunteers Gather at St. John UMC

AUDIO DRIVING TOUR

Visit **HBURGFreedomTrail.org** to find a more in-depth description of each stop, the driving map, and audio tour. Locate the stop you wish to learn about, and click play on the audio tour to hear an account of that site's role during Freedom Summer.

We recommend you allow 90 minutes for the full tour.

General audio narrated by Cameron Rackley.

START YOUR TOUR – Visitors Center

5 Convention Center Plaza, Hattiesburg, MS 39401

[10 Minutes] - Turn left out of the Visitors Center onto US Hwy 49 S. Travel 0.8 miles and turn left at the second stoplight onto Hwy 42 bypass. Travel 2.4 miles to Dewey St. and turn right. Your destination is 0.1 miles on the left at a four-way stop.

#1 – True Light Baptist Church

1101 Dewey St.

True Light Baptist Church offered a place of worship to community members and volunteers. It served as a Freedom School under the leadership of Reverend W.D. Ridgeway.

Historical Narration: Sandra Adickes

[Less than 1 Minute] - The next marker is directly across the street, beside True Light Baptist Church.

#2 – Hattiesburg Community Center

1100 Dewey St. – demolished, now a vacant lot

Not only a Freedom School, the Hattiesburg Community Center served as an auditorium, a health care facility, and a planning site for Freedom Summer activities.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Kensley Keys on behalf of Larry Blackman

[2 Minutes] - Continue on Dewey St. Turn left onto E 10th St. Turn right onto Memphis St. at the fork. Continue for 0.3 miles, and turn left onto E 7th St. Drive 0.1 mile, where St. James Church will be on the left.

#3 – St. James Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

408 E 7th St.

One of the oldest existing buildings in the Mobile Street area, St. James was used as a mass assembly site for planning and reporting incidents.

[1 Minute] - Continue on E 7th St. and take the next right onto Mobile St. The vacant lot where the building once stood is on the right in 0.1 miles.

#4 – Hattiesburg Ministers Union Headquarters, Masonic Lodge No. 115

522 Mobile St.

This building housed the Hattiesburg Ministers Union, which organized activities and housing for local and visiting pastors taking a lead in the movement.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Alyce Loyd on behalf of Raylawni Branch

[1 Minute] - Just ahead on the left is 507 Mobile St., now marked by a City park.

#5 – Woods Guest House

507 Mobile St. – destroyed by fire Sept. 17, 1998

Located in the heart of Mobile Street, the Woods Guest House was a hotel for African Americans, housed the local COFO office, and acted as a Freedom Library.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Beverly Hopson on behalf of Peggy Jean Connor

[2 Minutes] - Continue on Mobile St. and take the immediate right onto E 5th St. The large, brick church is 0.3 miles on the left. You may stop in the parking lot behind the church to listen to the tour.

AUDIO DRIVING TOUR

#6 – St. Paul United Methodist Church

215 E. 5th St.

One of the few churches in the Mobile-Bouie area that has remained in its original location, St. Paul was a mass assembly site and Freedom School.

Historical Narration: Charles Davis

[2 Minutes] - Continue on E. 5th St. to Main St. Turn left onto Main St. and travel 0.5 miles to the Cultural Center on your left. Turn left at the stoplight to enter the parking lot, where you may pause to listen to the tour.

#7 – Hattiesburg Public Library

723 Main St. - now the Hattiesburg Cultural Center

Reflecting the ideologies of a segregated society, the Hattiesburg Public Library only allowed white citizens to check out books and use its services.

Historical Narration: Umoja Kwanguvu

[1 Minute, Driving / 3 Minutes, Walking] - The next two Freedom Summer sites are at the same location.

Returning to the stoplight, turn left onto Main St. Continue 1.5 blocks on Main St. to the Forrest County Courthouse on the right.

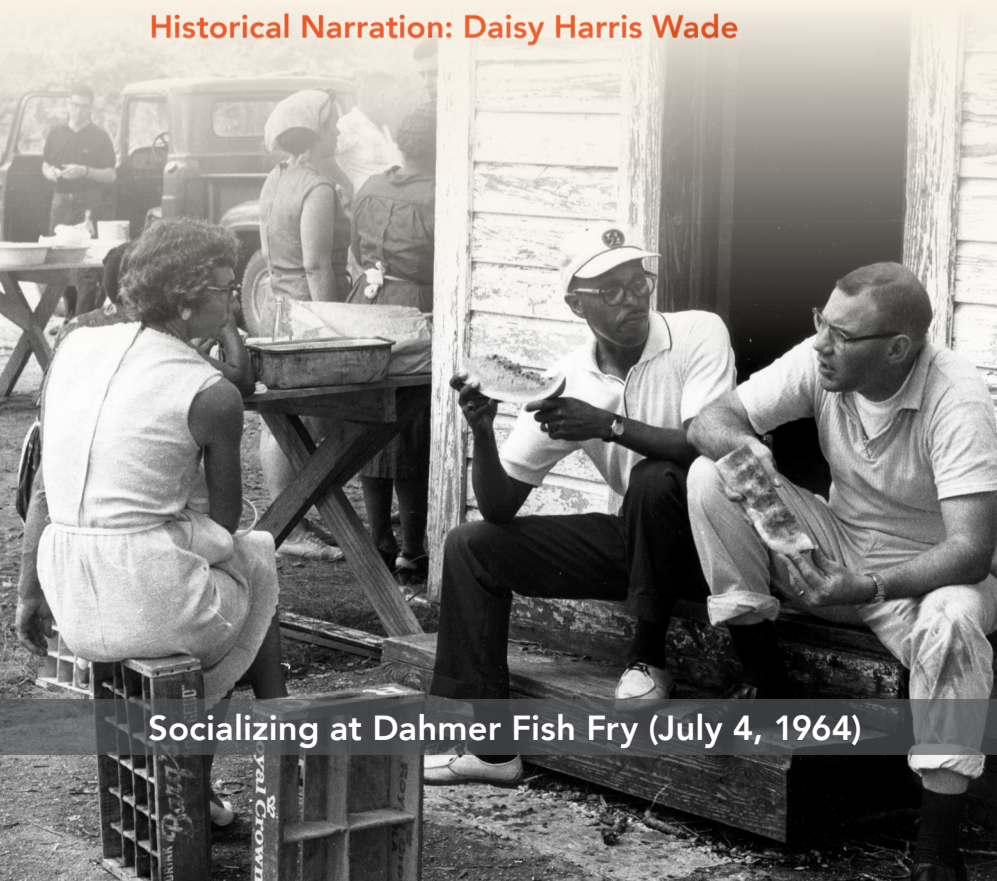
#8 – Forrest County Courthouse

630 Main St.

Beginning on Freedom Day in 1964 and continuing throughout the summer, a “perpetual picket line” of peaceful demonstrators marched in front of the Courthouse for African-American voting rights.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Demyus Martin on behalf of Rev. John Cameron

Historical Narration: Daisy Harris Wade



Socializing at Dahmer Fish Fry (July 4, 1964)

#9 – Vernon Dahmer Memorial

630 Main St.

A local African-American businessman and NAACP president, Vernon Dahmer fully supported the Civil Rights Movement until he was tragically killed in 1966 by the Ku Klux Klan.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Cynthia Rackley on behalf of Ellie Dahmer

PRO TIP: If taking the tour during the lunch hour, we suggest taking a break to enjoy a meal in Downtown Hattiesburg before continuing.

[6 Minutes] - Continue south on Main St. for 0.3 miles. Turn left onto Buschman St. and then right onto River Ave. at the stop sign. River Ave. turns left and becomes E Hardy St. Travel 0.4 miles and turn right onto Klondyke St. Travel 0.3 miles and turn left onto Elizabeth Ave. Morning Star Baptist Church will be on your left.

#10 – Morning Star Baptist Church

1406 Elizabeth Ave.

With the hope of passing the voting registration test, African Americans received free, alternative education at Freedom Schools like the one at Morning Star Baptist Church.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Lois Donald on behalf of Cheryl Outlaw

[5 Minutes] - Return to Klondyke St. and take the first right onto Rebecca Ave. Travel 0.4 miles and turn left onto Williams St. Travel 0.2 miles and turn right onto James St. At the traffic light, turn left on Edwards St. Drive 0.2 miles and turn right on Milton Barnes Ave. Mt. Zion will be 0.4 miles on your left at the corner of Spencer St.


#11 – Mt. Zion Baptist Church

901 Spencer St. – original demolished in 1993

Two weeks before his death, Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, which is known locally as the “Civil Rights Church” for its efforts not only during Freedom Summer but before and after as well.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Jonella McGowan on behalf of Dorris Gaines

[4 Minutes] - Turn left back onto Spencer St. and continue for 0.2 miles. Turn right onto Ruby Ave. and continue for 0.5 miles. Turn left onto Martin Luther King Dr. In 0.2 miles, turn right onto Breland Ave. The church is at the corner of Breland Ave. and J.C. Killingsworth Dr.



Volunteer Dick Landerman Explains Registration to Resident Hattie P.

AUDIO DRIVING TOUR

#12 – Bentley Chapel United Methodist Church

611 Breland Ave.

One of the first churches to open its doors to the Movement, Bentley Chapel is credited with organizing and equipping the community to take action during Freedom Summer.

Historical Narration: Retelling by April Jackson on behalf of Jeanette Smith

PRO TIP: Be on the lookout for the MS Blues Trail Marker for Hi Hat Club on the way to the next site.

[10 Minutes] - Turn left onto J.C. Killingsworth Dr. Continue straight at the traffic light onto Tuscan Ave. and drive 0.8 miles to a T-intersection. Turn right onto Edwards St. and travel 2 miles. Turn left onto Old Airport Rd. and travel 1.4 miles. Turn right before the railroad tracks onto Sullivan Dr. The church is on the right.

#13 – St. John United Methodist Church

121 Sullivan Dr.

Another Freedom School, St. John held literacy and debate classes and taught students to understand the U.S. Constitution and their rights.

Historical Narration: Retelling by Kiara Brown on behalf of Lillie Easton

[1 Minute] - Return to Old Airport Rd. As you cross the railroad tracks, this street becomes Tatum Rd. Drive 0.1 miles to the church on the right.

#14 – Priest Creek Missionary Baptist Church

228 Tatum Rd.

Although similar to the other churches, Priest Creek in Palmer's Crossing dedicated its efforts to giving lessons in safety and civil disobedience to those who attended this Freedom School.

Historical Narration: Sandra Adickes

[Less than 1 Minute] - The next destination is directly across the street.

#15 – Palmer's Crossing Community Center

225 Tatum Rd. – original demolished and rebuilt

Serving not only as an auditorium and health care facility, the Palmer's Crossing Community Center offered a library and exhibit area for student artwork.

[15 Minutes] - Return to Old Airport Rd. and travel 1.4 miles north to Edwards St. Turn left on Edwards St., which will bring you to the intersection of US Hwy 49. Turn right at the intersection to travel north on US Hwy 49 for 4.1 miles to The University of Southern Mississippi. At the intersection of Hwy 49 and Hardy St., turn left using the 2nd lane from the left. Enter campus through the main entrance by turning right at the traffic light. Continue straight through the intersection. Unless parking and leaving your vehicle, you will not need to stop at the information booth for a parking pass. Kennard-Washington Hall will be the 2nd building on the right and has an open green space in front of it.

#16 – Kennard-Washington Hall at Southern Miss

University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Dr.

Revealed in February 2018, this Mississippi Freedom Trail marker memorializes Clyde Kennard, who was the first African-American student to apply for admission to The University of Southern Mississippi.

THIS MARKS THE END OF THE TRAIL.

**“IF YOU DON'T VOTE,
YOU DON'T COUNT.”**

– VERNON DAHMER

Local NAACP President
and Civil Rights Activist