

September: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Delta Heritage

The story of the Mississippi Delta is the American story shrunk in time and space. It is the story of the clearing of the wilderness and the taming of the Mississippi River. It is the story of newly emancipated slaves and their children looking for new lives, of entrepreneurs looking to make new fortunes, of farmers looking for fertile land and abundant water. It is the story of immigrants and laborers, who came from Northern Europe, China, Italy, Syria, Russia and Mexico; Christian, Jew, Taoist, and Moslem melding together in one place. It is the story of the rise of plantations and sharecropping, of men and mules, and later of men and machines, now guided by satellites and controlled by computers, producing a cornucopia of corn and soybeans and rice and cotton and catfish. It is the story of the rise and subsequent fall of small town economies and the migration of people in search of new opportunities, either for personal liberty or employment. It is the story of the peopling of Chicago and Gary and Detroit. It is the story of man against nature and man against man, and the story of survival, struggle, triumph, failure and success.

October: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Music

Jazz great Mose Allison grew up in Tipso, took his poetry and piano playing to New York, and has fans across Europe and Asia. County music’s best known African American singer, Charlie Pride, was born to a share-cropper’s family in Sledge, played for the Grand Ole Opry in 1946 and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2001. Jerry “The Iceman” Butler was born in Sunflower, joined Curtis Mayfield in The Impressions, and became one of America’s favorite soul singers and songwriters. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1991. Sam Cooke was born to the family of a Baptist minister in Clarksdale and is considered by many to be one of the founders of soul music, although he also performed R&B and gospel. He was inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame during their very first induction in 1986. Ike Turner, also born in Clarksdale, became the “Father of Rock „n“ Roll” after recording *Rocket 88* with Jackie Brenston and the Kings of Rhythm in 1951. Ike and his former wife Tina were inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1991. Mary Wilson was born in Greenville in 1944 and was the only member of The Supremes to stay with the group from its formation to its end. And Reverend Clarence LaVaughn Franklin, known to the world as C. L. Franklin, was born in Sunflower County and preached in Cleveland, Mississippi, before heading north to Detroit. He is remembered as “The Man with the Million Dollar Voice” for his many albums of sermons and gospel songs, and as the father of R&B, pop and gospel great Aretha Franklin.

But the Delta is best known for its Blues. Literally hundreds of Delta natives have been recorded on Blues albums. Charley Patton, Tommy Johnson, and Willie Brown are all viewed as “Fathers of the Delta Blues” and all played or lived at Dockery Farms, which is viewed around the world as “The Birthplace of the Blues.” Chester Burnett, better known as Howlin’ Wolf, lived much of his early life in Sunflower County, and his rival McKinley Morganfield (better known as Muddy Waters) lived at Stovall. One of the best

known bluesmen of all times, Robert Johnson, lived and died around Greenwood. His music has been performed in almost every imaginable genre, and university classes have focused on the poetry of his lyrics. Rock legends like Keith Richards, Robert Plant, and Eric Clapton credit Johnson (and other Delta Bluesmen) as their inspiration. And of course the King of The Blues is the great B. B. King, born near Indianola, and soon to be featured in the B. B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center.

November: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Food

While it is true that most foods eaten in the Delta are eaten elsewhere, it is also true that the brand name “Mississippi Delta” can be applied to a unique set of foodways that has grown out of the fusion of ethnic traditions that reflect the Delta’s singular heritage. African slaves and freedmen brought okra, black eyed peas, watermelon and sorghum from Africa. Chinese brought rice, soybeans, and bananas. Indigenous Americas contributed corn, peppers, peanuts, sweet potatoes, tomatoes and squash. Italian and Lebanese brought pasta, and collards greens and Mexicans brought tamales. The Mississippi itself added catfish. All of these ingredients melded together in a recognizable cuisine: cornbread, yams, fried fish and chicken, okra and tomatoes, rice, and banana pudding, along with biscuits, barbecue, slaw, pimento cheese, chicken spaghetti, and sweet tea, a cuisine loved by all Delta citizens regardless of ethnicity, color, age or class.

The Delta is not only known for its menu, but also for its contribution to the foodways of America. Delta citizens carried their tastes with them during the great migration, introducing “food for the soul” to the American palate. Indianola native Craig Claiborne grew up eating in his mother’s boarding house and became the Food Editor of the New York Times and author of numerous cookbooks. More recently, Greenville’s Gayden Metcalfe celebrated Delta foods in her book *Being Dead is No Excuse*. Greenwood based Viking Range produces some of the finest kitchen appliances and equipment available anywhere and sells its Delta-made products worldwide. Its Alluvian Hotel, Alluvian Spa,

and the Viking Cooking School draw visitors from the around the globe who want Delta dining experiences in the place where the cuisine began. The Culinary Institute of America, in conjunction with the Southern Foodways Alliance and Viking Range has offered a food tour of the Delta, the only American food tour ever offered by the Institute, which normally takes its clients to Europe or Asia. Doe’s Eat Place in Greenville won a prestigious James Beard Award this year for serving some of America’s finest steaks and Delta restaurants span the spectrum from fine dining to funky. And the Delta Hot Tamale Heritage Trail not only debuted recently on-line (www.tamaletrail.com) but resulted in tamale tasting tours that draw an increasing number of travelers to the region.

The Delta continues to produce unique and ever-changing food innovations. Fried dill pickles are spreading across the nation, and the new Kool-Aid-marinated dill pickle, or koolickle, has recently been featured in the New York Times and in Associated Press articles. It may not be everyone’s ideal of good taste, but they sure

are popular with Delta children, and probably will be popular with the rest of America's children soon. Both fried and marinated pickles show the creativity that springs from the fusion of culinary approaches found in the Delta.

December: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Religion

December is the month in which The DSU Year of Delta Heritage focuses its attention on the rich religious heritage of the Mississippi Delta. Probably the second question strangers to the Delta are asked (after “Where you from?”) is “What is your church family?” The Delta is a church oriented place and church families play important roles in people’s lives. While there is no question about this, David Cohn, one of Greenville’s greatest journalists, did feel that he had to qualify the situation somewhat when he wrote: “This is a church-going and whisky-drinking society.”

Churches range in size and grandeur, from imposing brick edifices to single-room white frame structures that are little more than shotgun houses. Some have impressive stained glass, others have simple clear windows. Some are storefronts. All are beautiful in their own right, and all have attracted the attention of photographers and painters, as have Delta cemeteries, with grave markers that range from the imposing to the hand-made. Delta baptisms are known around the world through the works of photographers and painters.

Churches (and cemeteries) are probably the most segregated places in the Delta, with very few exceptions. Again the situation may need qualification. Visitors of any ethnicity are likely to find welcome in any church, but membership still divides the Delta’s churches by race.

The Delta is overwhelmingly Protestant, with considerable diversity among congregations and sects. Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian Churches are commonly represented in Delta towns, but so are various evangelical beliefs, ranging from Primitive Baptist through Church of the End Times. Much has been written about social competition between, and disagreements among, sects over everything from acceptance of drinking to the use of packaged cake mixes and the acceptance of gay marriage or priests, but there is no question that all these groups are devout. Catholic Churches are more common than elsewhere in the south, a reflection of the many Italian, Lebanese and Syrian immigrants who came as farm laborers. Most Delta towns had thriving Jewish communities since most dry-goods stores were once Jewish owned, and many towns had attractive Temples although some have closed as the population has dwindled. Most Christian Deltans view the Temples as just another form of “church”, and the discrimination that Catholics and Jews experienced elsewhere in the US is not part of the Delta’s heritage. Some Delta towns had Chinese Baptist or Presbyterian churches in the past, taking advantage of retired missionaries who returned home with

Chinese language skills, and some of these churches included schools for Chinese students, but out-migration has caused both schools and churches to close.

The older churches in the Black community include the Missionary Baptists (MB) and African Methodist Episcopalians (AME) who trace their origin back to 1788 when they were founded by Freedmen. The Delta also played a critical role in the origin of a derivative of the black Baptist church. Charles Harrison Mason, after meeting on courthouse steps in Jackson and in private homes, established the Church of God in Christ in a gin house in Lexington, Mississippi, Holmes County, in 1897. A small but permanent church was built later that year. Mason had originally been ordained a Missionary Baptist. After reorganization, the church, now known by the initials COGIC, moved its headquarters to Memphis. In 1920, the Church of God in Christ (Holiness) officially split off and established headquarters in Jackson.

The Delta has a rich religious heritage, and is a land where faith- in God, in the future, in grace, and in ultimate redemption – unify all people.

January: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Heroes

January is the month in which The DSU Year of Delta Heritage focuses its attention on the heroes of the Mississippi Delta. The Delta has produced many heroes. Early settlers like Mary Hamilton braved bears, poisonous snakes, malaria, and floods as they moved into America’s final frontier. Visionary businessmen like Will Dockery and Leroy Percy created huge vertically integrated international businesses as they built their plantations and brought railroads and banks to the Delta. Journalists like David Cohn and Hodding Carter, Jr., and writers like Richard Wright changed the ways America thinks. Civil rights activists like Aaron Henry and Fanny Lou Hamer led a social revolution that brought voting rights and political power to all Americans. And hundreds of thousands of field hands toiled heroically, although perhaps unrecognized, as they built the Delta’s economy by raising cotton.

Many of the months in our Year of Delta Heritage celebrate Delta heroism by focusing on musical, political, or artistic heritage. One area that is not covered elsewhere concerns sports, and the Delta has many sports heroes.

Archie Manning was born in Drew. He played college football at Ole Miss and professionally for the New Orleans Saints, Houston Oilers, and Minnesota Vikings. He was also a professional bowler for two years before fathering a dynasty through sons Peyton and Eli. Archie Moore, born in Benoit, was a professional boxer for 27 years, with more knockouts (141) than any other professional boxer in history. He is the only boxer to have fought both Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali. Margaret Wade effectively made women’s basketball into an intercollegiate sport while coaching at DSU. She had three AIAW national championships (1975-77) and a 93-4 record that included a 51-game winning streak and her name is now given to the women’s basketball equivalent

of the Heisman Trophy. Jerry Rice began his football career playing for Mississippi Valley State University and went on to the San Francisco 49ers, winning Super Bowls in 1989, 1990 and 1995. He later played with the Oakland Raiders and Seattle Seahawks, setting 38 NFL records. David "Boo" Ferriss, born in Shaw, pitched for the Boston Red Sox from 1945-50 before becoming a coach at Delta State and was inducted into the Red Sox Hall of Fame in 2002. Charley Pride was born in Sledge, and played baseball professionally for the Memphis Red Sox Negro League before becoming a country music great. He has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and is the first African American member of Grand Ole Opry. Lusia Harris-Stewart, born in Minter City left Delta State to become an All American and an Olympian during the first year women's Basketball was an Olympic sport. She is the only woman to be drafted by a men's basketball team (New Orleans Jazz) and the first woman inducted into Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Other Delta sports heroes include Sank Powe, long time coach at East Side and Cleveland High Schools and scout for the St. Louis Cardinals; "Chuckin" Charlie" Conerly who left Clarksdale for the NY Giants and the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame; Floyd "Porkchop" Womack (Cleveland, MS, to the Seattle Seahawks); Dorsett Davis from Shelby (Denver Broncos); Ken Lucas (Cleveland, MS, to the Seattle Seahawks and Carolina Panthers); Kent Hull (Greenwood High School to the Buffalo Bills); Robert "Gentle Ben" Williams of Yazoo City, first black football player at Ole

Miss, first black "Colonel Reb," and All Pro with the Buffalo Bills; George "Boomer" Scott (Greenville, to the Boston Red Sox, Kansas City Royals, New York Yankees, and Milwaukee Brewers); Eddie Tucker (Greenville, to the Boston Astros and Cleveland Indians); and Bob Aylward (Pace, to Executive VP Business Operations, Seattle Mariners). And of course we can't forget the Fighting Okra of Delta State, the only vegetable mascot in America, and a mean one to boot.

Delta citizens have played heroic roles in the development of sports in America, as is the case in other aspects of American culture. Whether we're talking about music, civil rights, literature, food, business, military or political leadership, the Mississippi Delta has produced many heroes that we can all be proud of.

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February: The Year of Delta Heritage Celebrates Political Leadership and Civil Rights

In 1964, two of the most powerful leaders in America lived a few miles apart from each other in Sunflower County. Both represented the Democratic Party, but there the similarity ended. One was a long serving U.S. Senator, a University of Mississippi educated lawyer, cotton farmer and plantation owner, and ardent defender of segregation. The other was a former share cropper with a sixth grade education, a strong singing voice, and an unstoppable will to vote and change the world. He was Senator James O. Eastland and she was Mrs. Fanny Lou Hamer. He prevailed in 1964, but she ultimately won the civil rights revolution that swept America.

February is the month in which the DSU Year of Delta Heritage celebrates political leadership and civil rights. The Delta has been home to many great leaders, often representing diametrically opposed causes. Nathan Bedford Forrest, former slave trader and Brigadier General (CSA) as well as founder of the Ku Klux Klan, owned plantation property in Bolivar County; yet the Klan was asked to leave Greenville by Leroy Percy, former Senator and iconic leader of Delta society, in a public debate on March 1, 1922. The White Citizens Council that opposed integration and spread across the southern states was founded by Robert 'Tut' Patterson in Indianola in 1954; yet the struggle for voter's registration and civil rights was led by Delta citizens like Aaron Henry (Clarksdale), Amzie Moore (Cleveland), Fanny Lou Hamer and Charles McLaurin

(Ruleville), and Sam Block (of Cleveland, but most active in Greenwood), not to mention Marion Barry, born in Itta Bena and four term Mayor of Washington, DC.

Blanch Kelso Bruce, the first African American US Senator to serve a full term lived in Rosedale. Isiah Tecumpsa Montgomery, born a slave south of Vicksburg, founded Mound Bayou as an all-black municipality and, as a member of the state legislature in 1890, voted for a Constitution that disenfranchised black voters. His eulogy was preached by Walter Sillers, Sr., his friend, and confirmed advocate of segregation. Walter Sillers, Jr., went on to serve in the Mississippi House of Representatives from 1916 to 1966 as one of the most powerful members and as Speaker for his last 22 years. Charles (Charlie) Capps, Jr., known to many as Mr. Chairman, carried on the tradition of political leadership by serving in the House of Representatives between 1971 and 2005. Senate Concurrent Resolution 596, passed in 2005, commends him for many activities, including his support for higher education, and describes him with these lines: "...as a "Gentleman Statesman" possessing a congenial nature, the ability to listen effectively and a good sense of humor -- qualities which have enabled him to resolve volatile and controversial situations;...."

Bennie G. Thompson, currently serving his eighth term as US Congressman for Mississippi's Second District, Chairs the Homeland Security Committee. Mike Espy was the first African-American to represent the Second District, a district in which Fanny Lou Hamer originally challenged Jamie Whitten in 1963. Mike Espy (born in Yazoo City) went on to become the first black Secretary of Agriculture, appointed by President Bill Clinton. Largely because of the Delta, Mississippi today has more black public officials, including Mayors, County Supervisors, Aldermen, and State Senators and Representatives, than any other state, something that truly amazes many Americans.

No discussion of political leadership would be complete without mentioning Haley Barbour, current Governor of Mississippi and Yazoo City native. Barbour was the Chair of the Republican National Committee, and had run for the US Senate, prior to becoming Governor in 2004. Among his initiatives are establishing a Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, and a Civil Rights Heritage Trail throughout the state.

The Delta has a long and glorious heritage of political action and leadership, and many of the struggles that define our country took place here. It is hard to imagine what

America's human and civil rights situation would be today without the people and events that happened in the Mississippi Delta.

Luther Brown

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March: "The Year of Delta Heritage" Celebrates the Visual Arts

The philosopher Edward S. Casey has written extensively about the ways in which *place* is represented in painted landscapes, photographs and maps. Among his arguments is the contention that truly successful representation of *place* requires that the artist move from simply drawing the physical identity of the *place* (called topographic representation) to a more sublime "topopoetic" representation, capturing the emotional poetry of the *place*. The Delta is a *place* of great emotional poetry, with glowing sunrises, misty cypress brakes and oxbow lakes, vast fields of cotton and rice, the River, heat, humidity, and all the emotional conflict, contrast and turmoil that is summed up in *The Blues*.

Many visual artists have re-presented this poetry through their photographs and paintings. Although many of these artists have been associated with the Delta State University Art Department and owe some allegiance to Malcolm Norwood as their teacher, it is the Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood that has fostered a true *School of Delta Art*. The Alluvian, together with the Alluvian Spa, has done this not by promoting a single genre or style of painting, or even by promoting artists trained by a single school, but rather by sponsoring artists who capture the "topopoetry" of the Delta. They have commissioned works by some three dozen Delta artists, asking for specific themes like "Delta Land," and "Delta air," and "Delta tranquility." The result is a spectacular collection of original works that allow hotel visitors to see the poetry of the Delta through the eyes of the Delta's artists, artists whose work would not have been so abundant or prominently displayed if not for the patronage of the Viking Range Corporation.

Artists in the Alluvian collection currently include Pat Brown, Marion Brown, Langdon Clay, Taylor Bowen Ricketts, Barbara Baine, Jane Rule Burdine, Mary Rose Carter, Maude Schuyler Clay, Jeff Cole, Gerald DeLoach, Jerry Lee "Duff" Dorrough, Bill Dunlap, Amy Evans, Deborah Fagan, Aubrey Falls, Sheila Gourlay, Pryor Buford Graeber, Alice Hammell, Stephanie Harrover, Will Jacks, Dolores Justus, Richard Kelso, Bill Lester, James Lindsey, Pam Matthews, Gloria Norris, Collier Parker, Chesley Pearman, Kathleen Robbins, Mary Ann Ross, Kim Rushing, Susan Russell, Nan Sanders, Maude Schuyler Clay, Jim Seale, Mickie Turner, Shawn Whittington, Steven Yee. All of these artists belong to the "*Delta School*" in that they recreate the image and the feel of the Delta, the poetry of *place*.

The visual arts also include three dimensional representations. McCarty's and Peter's Potteries, in Merigold and Mound Bayou, respectively, have become icons of the Delta in their own right, and many Delta tables are set with dishes glazed in green and brown. These art potters draw customers from Jackson, Memphis, and points beyond. They also

provide excellent examples of how the fine arts can anchor communities by providing economic stability.

Delta State University recently unveiled the Jimmy and Hazel Sanders Sculpture Garden, bringing another dimension to the visual arts in the Delta. This collection of free-standing sculptural works is arrayed in front of the Bologna Performing Arts Center amid

landscaping and a fountain. Another DSU visual arts collection will be unveiled on the first of this month. This permanent exhibit, titled "*A Cast of Blues*" is a collection of almost 60 life-casts of the faces of blues performers. Each sculpture was made directly from the face of a living blues performer by sculptor Sharon McConnell, creating a life-sized three dimensional image of their face. *A Cast of Blues* includes the faces of Hubert Sumlin, Robert Lockwood Jr., R.L. Burnside, Pinetop Perkins, David Honeyboy Edwards, Bo Diddley, Henry Townsend, Bobby Rush, Koko Taylor, Little Milton, Bobby Blue Bland, Willie King, and many others who have lived the Blues. It is on permanent display in the foyer of Ewing Hall on the DSU campus. While neither the sculpture garden nor the Cast of Blues collection focus exclusively on the Delta, both resonate with the place and culture of the Delta.

The Mississippi Delta is truly a place of scenic beauty and great emotional poetry. The artists of the Delta interpret both these aspects of place through their paintings, photographs, ceramics, and sculptures. Paintings of Delta landscapes, pottery pieces with a twist of river running through them, and the faces of the men and women who lived the Blues all interpret and reflect the topopoetry of "This Delta, this land." Collectively, Delta artists have re-presented the *place* of the Delta, allowing any viewer to feel the sun on their skin, smell the cotton gin and the fried catfish, hear the snow geese overhead and the voices of the people, and touch the river as it meanders south.

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April: "The Year of Delta Heritage" Celebrates the River

The River created this Delta. Over the course of millennia, the River flooded the land, annually depositing alluvium and incrementally deepening the rich soil by adding another layer transported from some far reach of the continent. The River preserved this Delta, watering and fertilizing it, and supporting first its great forests and then its cotton plantations and today's modern farms, and in the process, supporting cities like Memphis and Vicksburg that grew along the River's banks. Occasionally, the River destroyed this Delta too, breaking through the levees and flooding vast expanses, reclaiming the land that it formerly created. Ultimately, the River is responsible for forming this "cradle of American culture." Without the River, we simply wouldn't have had the alluvial soils that David Cohn described as "...endlessly deep, dark, and sweet," soils that allowed the rich cultural heritage of the region to develop.

The Mississippi River is the lord of the Delta. William Alexander Percy wrote “With us, when you speak of “the river,” though there be many, you mean always the same one, the great river, the shifting, unappeasable god of the country, feared and loved, the Mississippi.”

The river is also a physical reality, the greatest geologic force in North America. It is some 2,300 miles long and flows at an average speed of 3 miles per hour as it passes New Orleans. It drains waters from 31 states and two Canadian provinces, and carries an average of 436,000 tons of sediment every day of the year. It has a maximum depth of about 200 feet. The Mississippi has much more water in it as it passes the Delta than it does by the time it reaches New Orleans because much of the water flows to the Gulf through the Atchafalaya distributary rather than through the Mississippi River.

Living in the Mississippi Delta means living in the River, not the main channel of the River, but in its lair, its home. This entire Delta has been flooded repeatedly by the River

throughout its history, right up to recent years, something that’s easily forgotten today. In fact, it is often difficult to even see the River today since it is hidden behind the massive earthworks of the levee system, walled off out of sight and out of mind, and often protected further by “no trespassing” signs. But the river remains, recalling T. S. Elliott’s description of the “strong, brown god – sullen, untamed and intractable” that is “watching and waiting.”

May: “The Year of Delta Heritage” Celebrates Delta Agriculture

May is the month in which the DSU Year of Delta Heritage celebrates Agricultural heritage. Agriculture has always been the primary economic engine in the Delta, and it is the reason people moved here in the first place. Early settlers sold timber for immediate profit, but cotton was their ultimate objective. Cotton was “King.” For over 100 years, it was the most valued commodity in the Western world, and cotton required many field hands, who flooded into the Delta in search of work. Most of these hands were African Americans, but Italians, Chinese, Mexican migrant workers, and some Hill country white Mississippians also moved into the Delta to farm cotton. Some farmed on land of their own but most farmed as tenants working on shares and living on large plantations like Dockery Farms, Hopson Plantation, or Delta and Pine Land, which at one point was the largest cotton plantation in the world. By the 1940’s, tractors had replaced some of the need for men and mules, and in 1942, the mechanical cotton picker was publicly demonstrated. Within two decades, cotton was completely mechanized and the tens of thousands of field hands who had worked the cotton had largely moved off the land, and many had left the Delta altogether. Today, cotton is still farmed in the Delta, but the old equation of one man and one mule per ten acres has given way to the new one of one man and one tractor per thousand acres.

Soybeans were popularized following the flood of 1927 in an attempt to reap some harvest in a year that would not see much of a cotton crop. Rice was first commercially

grown in the Delta in 1948. Corn was grown by Native Americans long before the arrival of black and white settlers, and was important as mule feed from the beginning of cotton culture but has taken on new importance as ethanol production has expanded. Catfish were first farmed in the Mississippi Delta in 1965.

In 2006, almost 900,000 acres of cotton were grown in the Delta, but this dropped by almost 60 percent in 2007 as farmers turned to corn and planned for the demands of biofuels. Acreage planted in corn was almost 300% greater in 2007 than in 2006. In 2007, the Delta also supported some 1.2 million acres of soybeans and 81,000 acres of catfish ponds. As corn and bean prices have continued to rise, cotton acreage continues to shrink.

Today it is difficult to find share cropper shacks, although they once lined the Delta's roads. The company towns that supported hundreds or even thousands of people on plantations are now gone, along with the field hands themselves. Satellites and computers coordinate today's precision agriculture and the land itself is often artificially leveled to provide optimum growing conditions.

Delta Council was founded in 1935 "to promote the economy of the area" largely by focusing on issues faced by agriculture in the Delta. The Council continues to be a major force at local, state and federal levels and holds its annual public meetings at Delta State each May, this year on May 23. Council headquarters are in Stoneville, Mississippi, home to one of the largest agricultural research centers in the world. Stoneville supports

major research efforts focused on hardwood forests, cotton, soybeans and catfish, among other things agricultural, and scientists and agronomists come from all over the world to visit Stoneville. Similarly, Delta and Pine Land Company in Scott, Mississippi, continues its own tradition of research into bean and cotton production that it started around 1915, even though it was recently bought by Monsanto. And Staplcofn, based in Greenwood, is the largest producer owned cotton cooperative in the US, with an inventory of over 4,000,000 bales annually. It traces its history back to 1919. Agriculture is truly the heritage of the Mississippi Delta, and it continues to be the primary economic engine of the region.

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