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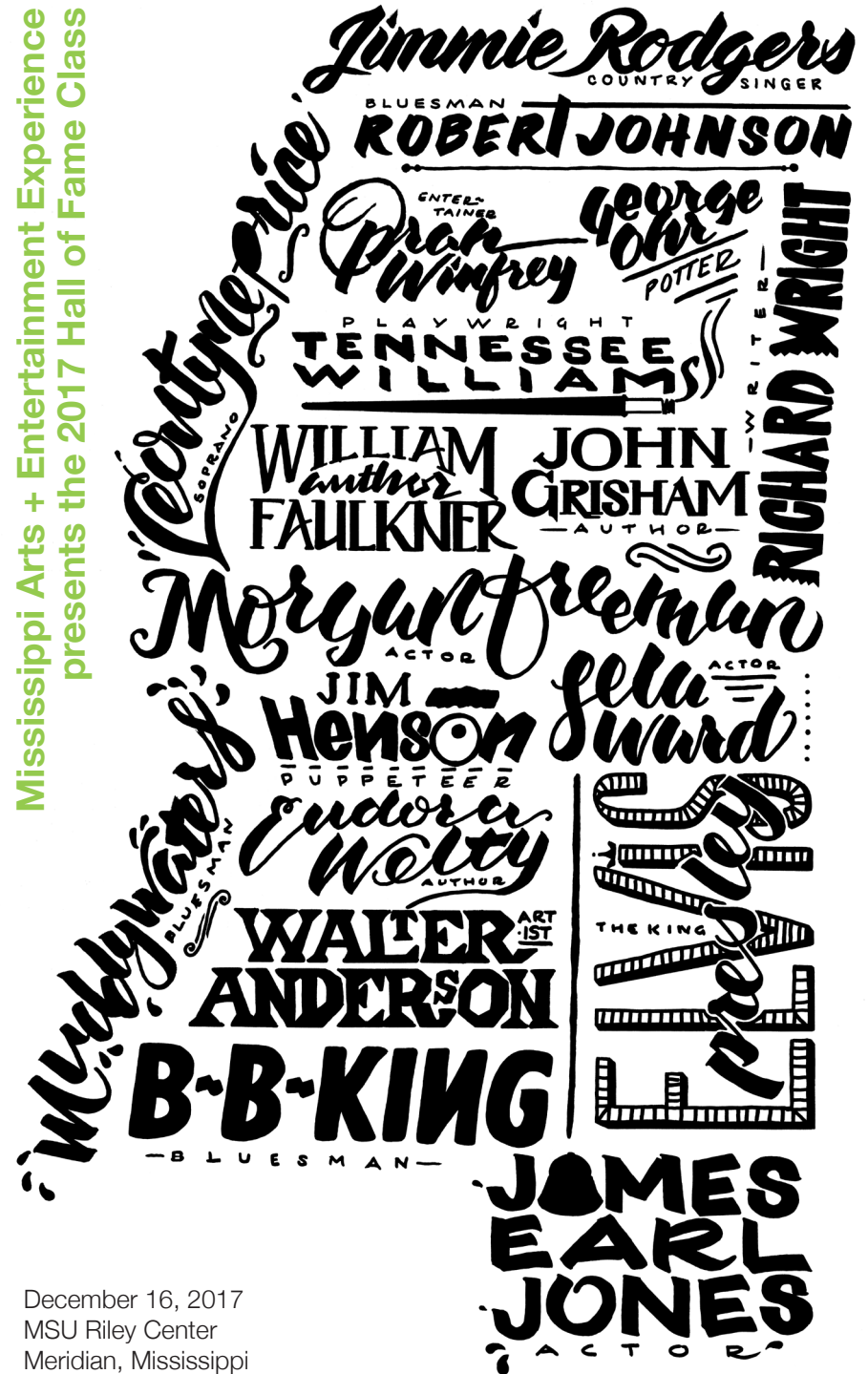
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Cover artwork  
 by Molly Smith

Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience  
 presents the 2017 Hall of Fame Class



December 16, 2017  
 MSU Riley Center  
 Meridian, Mississippi



## Hall of Fame Award Ceremony Inaugural Class 2017

*Tonight, The MAX proudly welcomes you to a ceremony honoring our 18 Hall of Fame inductees. These legendary, influential artists represent the countless creative talents who have called Mississippi home. And when The MAX opens on April 28, 2018, guests will experience its awe-inspiring, two-story Hall of Fame gallery, where the stories of tonight's inductees come alive.*

Welcome  
**Marty Gamblin**, Director of The MAX Hall of Fame

Introduction | Presentation of Inductees + Awards  
**Walt Grayson**, Host of MPB's *Mississippi Roads*

Inductee: **Jimmie Rodgers**  
Accepting award: James Court,  
Great grandson of Jimmie Rodgers  
President of Jimmie Rodgers Properties, Inc.

Inductee: **Robert Johnson**  
Accepting award: Michael Johnson,  
Grandson of Robert Johnson  
CEO of the Robert Johnson Blues Foundation

Inductee: **Muddy Waters** (McKinley Morganfield)  
Accepting award: Mercy Morganfield,  
Daughter of Muddy Waters  
Administrator of the Muddy Waters Estate

Inductee: **B.B. King**  
Accepting award: Verna Ransom,  
Coordinator/executive assistant  
The B.B King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center

Inductee: **Leontyne Price**  
Accepting award: General (Retired) George B. Price,  
Brother + manager of Leontyne Price

Inductee: **Elvis Presley**  
Accepting award: Bill Morris,  
Shelby County, Tennessee Sheriff + Mayor (Retired)  
Close personal friend of Elvis Presley  
Representing Elvis Presley Enterprises

Inductee: **James Earl Jones**  
Accepting award: Ida B. Tomlin,  
The MAX Director of Operations (per Mr. Jones' request)

Inductee: **Jim Henson**  
Accepting award: Cheryl Henson,  
Daughter of Jim Henson  
President of The Jim Henson Foundation

Inductee: **Morgan Freeman**  
Accepting award: Ward Emling,  
(Retired) Director of the Mississippi Film Commission

Inductee: **Oprah Winfrey**  
Accepting award: Stacey Wilson,  
The MAX Curator of Exhibitions (per Oprah's request)

Inductee: **Sela Ward**  
Accepting award: Sela Ward

Inductee: **George Ohr**  
Accepting award: Kevin Ohr,  
Executive Director, Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art

Inductee: **Walter Anderson**  
Accepting award: John Anderson,  
Son of Walter Anderson

Inductee: **William Faulkner**  
Accepting award: Lee Caplin,  
Executor, William Faulkner Literary Estate

Inductee: **Richard Wright**  
Accepting award: Malcolm Wright,  
Grandson of Richard Wright  
Writer + consultant of *Native Son* film in production

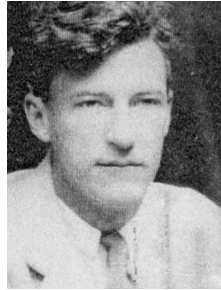
Inductee: **Eudora Welty**  
Accepting award: Mary Alice White,  
Niece of Eudora Welty  
Former Director of the Eudora Welty House  
Secretary of the Eudora Welty Foundation Board of Directors

Inductee: **Tennessee Williams**  
Accepting award: Nancy Carpenter,  
Executive Director, Columbus-Lowndes CVB  
Executive Director, Columbus Cultural Heritage Foundation

Inductee: **John Grisham**  
Accepting award: John Grisham

Message from the President  
**Mark Tullos**, President | CEO,  
Mississippi Arts + Entertainment Experience

Reception



**Walter Inglis Anderson**  
Ocean Springs

Walter Inglis Anderson was born in New Orleans in September 1903, but would call the Mississippi Gulf Coast home for most of his life. He studied art at New York's Parsons Institute of Design, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and won a scholarship to study in France.

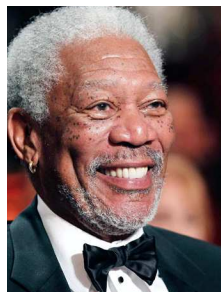
In 1940, he moved with his family to "Oldfields," the family home of his wife, Agnes "Sissy" Grinstead. This was one of his most prolific periods, as he drew inspiration from his children and the fairy tales they loved, carving block prints and illustrating some of his favorite novels.

The Anderson family returned to Ocean Springs in 1947. Anderson spent much of his time isolated in his cottage studio and on the uninhabited barrier islands of the Mississippi coast. He immersed himself in nature — creating thousands of works portraying the area's flora and fauna.

After his death in November 1965, Anderson's family discovered a treasure of artworks hidden away in his cottage. His art went virtually unnoticed during his lifetime. Today, he is considered by many to be the South's greatest visual artist. You can learn more about Walter Anderson and view his fascinating body of work at The Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs.

*"True success is always the last of a string of failed attempts to get it right."*

Walter Inglis Anderson



**Morgan Freeman**  
Charleston

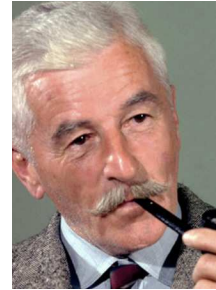
Actor Morgan Freeman was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in June 1937, and spent his childhood in Charleston, Mississippi. From early on, it was clear that he had a natural talent for acting. However, Freeman delayed his career until after a stint in the U.S. Air Force.

After serving in the Air Force, Freeman moved to Hollywood looking for acting opportunities. He soon left California for New York City, where he landed a part in an all-African-American production of *Hello, Dolly*.

National exposure for Freeman followed in 1971, when he appeared on the children's television show *The Electric Company*. In 1987, he was cast in the film *Street Smart*, earning an Academy Award nomination for Best Supporting Actor. He earned another Academy Award nomination and

*"My approach to acting is that I am totally intuitive. I read the script and I get it. If I don't get it, I can't do it."*

Morgan Freeman



**William Faulkner**  
New Albany | Oxford

Born in September 1897, William Faulkner grew up in Oxford but left to join the U.S. Army, only to be declared 4-F. He changed the spelling of his name from Falkner to Faulkner, fabricated his place of birth, and enlisted in the Canadian Air Force. After sustaining a leg injury in World War I, he returned to Oxford to attend the University of Mississippi.

Faulkner left university after a year and eventually found his way to Hollywood, where he worked as a screenwriter on films such as *The Big Sleep* and *The Long Hot Summer*. After extensive travels, he returned home.

In 1949, Faulkner received the Nobel Prize for Literature "for his powerful and artistically unique contribution to the modern American novel." *The Sound and the Fury*; *As I Lay Dying*; *Absalom, Absalom*; *Light in August*; and numerous other works depicted the decay and decadence of the American South and exemplified his employment of stream-of-conscious writing. He is the only Mississippian to win the Prize.

He was also a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner.

One of America's and the world's most revered authors, his works are studied in high school and university classrooms, and his books adorn shelves in countless libraries and homes.

Faulkner died in July 1962.

*"To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi."*

William Faulkner

won a Golden Globe Award for his performance as Hoke in *Driving Miss Daisy*, a role he reprised from the original off-Broadway stage play. His performance in *Million Dollar Baby* earned him an Academy Award and a Screen Actors Guild Award in 2005. He portrayed Nelson Mandela in *Invictus*, earning yet another Academy Award nomination in 2009. Freeman was also awarded the Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Award and the National Medal of Arts.

Freeman's other films include *Unforgiven*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Seven*, and the *Dark Knight* Batman trilogy.





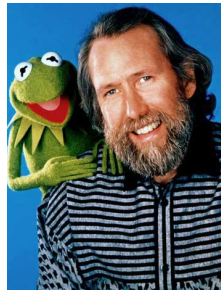
**John Grisham**  
Southaven | Oxford

John Grisham was born in Jonesboro, Arkansas, but eventually settled in Southaven, Mississippi with his family. He studied accounting at Mississippi State and earned his law degree at Ole Miss. Grisham would spend nearly a decade practicing law and served in the Mississippi House of Representatives from 1983–1990.

In a courthouse in Desoto County, Grisham overheard the testimony of a young rape victim and was inspired to write a novel exploring what would have happened if the girl’s father had sought revenge. This became his first novel, *A Time to Kill*, published in 1988. His next novel, *The Firm*, was the bestselling novel of 1991, spending 47 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

*“I always try to tell a good story, one with a compelling plot that will keep the pages turning.”*

John Grisham



**Jim Henson**  
Leland

The Muppets. *Labyrinth*. *Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas*. What do all of these have in common? Each sprang from the imagination of Jim Henson, who was born in September 1936 in Greenville and spent much of his childhood in Leland.

From a young age, Henson felt pulled to the arts. In his freshman year of college, his series *Sam and Friends* gave birth to an early version of Kermit the Frog. In 1969, Henson began working for *Sesame Street*, for which he created beloved characters such as Big Bird, Bert and Ernie, and Oscar the Grouch.

His biggest claim to fame, however, came in 1976 with the premiere of *The Muppet Show*. During its five-year run, the show reached 235 million viewers in over 100 countries and earned three Emmys. Its success led to spin-offs such as *The Muppet Movie* and *Jim Henson’s Muppet Babies*, which earned four consecutive Emmys for Outstanding Animated Program.

In the 1980s, Henson created the series *Fraggle Rock* and developed new characters and techniques. His final completed project was Jim Henson’s Muppet Vision 3D in the Disney parks in California and Florida.

Jim Henson died in May 1990. In 1991, he was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame; Kermit’s induction followed in 2002. Disney released *The Muppets* in 2011, a film which introduced Henson’s characters to a whole new generation.

*“As children, we all live in a world of imagination, of fantasy, and for some of us that world of make-believe continues into adulthood.”*

Jim Henson

The success of Grisham’s following novels, *The Pelican Brief* and *The Client*, were adapted to film and solidified his position as a master of the legal thriller. Other film adaptations include *The Rainmaker*, *The Chamber*, and *Runaway Jury*. In 2003, one of his rare non-legal novels, *A Painted House*, became a Hallmark Hall of Fame film, which Grisham narrated.

Currently, over 300 million John Grisham books are in print worldwide, translated into over forty languages. His writing has earned him a Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award and two Harper Lee Prizes for Legal Fiction.



**Robert Johnson**  
Hazlehurst

One of the greatest blues performers of all time, Robert Johnson has become known as the King of the Delta Blues Singers.

Born in Hazlehurst in May 1911, not much is known about Johnson’s life. It is known that around 1936, he went to Jackson to seek out a talent scout, resulting in a recording session that produced the 29 songs that are the basis for his career. Johnson traveled across the country playing wherever he could.

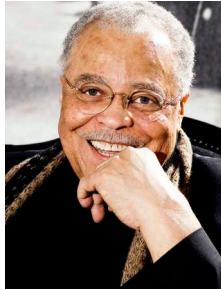
Mystery and myth surround Johnson’s life. According to legend, Johnson took his guitar to the crossroads of Mississippi Highways 49 and 61 and made a deal with the devil: amazing guitar ability in exchange for his soul.

Johnson died in August 1938. His music later came to the attention of many during the 1960s and again in the 1990s, when a collection of his work was released, selling millions of copies and winning a Grammy for Best Historical Album. He was a member of the inaugural classes of both the Blues Hall of Fame and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Four of his songs are on the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame’s list of “500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll.” In 2010, he was ranked fifth on *Rolling Stone*’s list of the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time.”

*“I dabbled in things like Howlin’ Wolf, Cream and Led Zeppelin, but when I heard...Robert Johnson, it blew my mind. It was something I’d been missing my whole life. That music made me discard everything else and just get down to the soul and honesty of the blues.”*

Jack White





**James Earl Jones**  
Arkabutla

With a career that spans over sixty years, James Earl Jones is one of film's most recognizable actors.

Jones, born in January 1931 in Arkabutla, began his career on stage, performing in numerous Shakespeare productions. His Broadway debut came with a role in *Sunrise at Campobello* in the late 1950s. It was in 1968 that he was cast in his breakout role of boxer Jack Jefferson in the stage production of *The Great White Hope*, earning him his first Tony. He reprised the role two years later in the film version of the play, earning an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor and a Golden Globe Award for Best New Star of the Year.

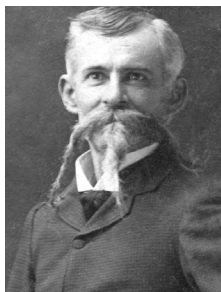
Jones performed in numerous Broadway shows in the 70s and 80s, winning a second Tony for his performance in *Fences*. On television, he won an Emmy for his role in *Gabriel's Fire* and another for his supporting role in *Wave*, making him the first actor to win two Emmy's in the same year within the same drama category.

More success came with roles in dozens of films, including *Field of Dreams* and *Coming to America*. Jones has lent his distinctive, basso profundo voice to Darth Vader in *Star Wars*, two sequels, and *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. He has also voiced Mufasa in Disney's *The Lion King*, and will reprise that character in its 2019 CGI/live-action remake.

Throughout his career, many accolades have been bestowed upon Jones, including a Kennedy Center Honor, an honorary Academy Award, and the Voice Arts Icon Award.

*"I was as content Off-Broadway as I was in a big Hollywood movie, and, I just try to be content wherever I am, you know."*

James Earl Jones



**George Ohr**  
Biloxi

George Ohr, a child of German immigrants, was born in Biloxi in July 1857. At the age of 14, he moved to New Orleans, where he worked at a multitude of odd jobs, including apprentice potter.

Returning to Biloxi, Ohr built a pottery shop. It soon became a popular tourist attraction. The "Mad Potter of Biloxi" who crafted wildly eccentric pottery drew fascinated crowds.

In 1894, a fire destroyed Ohr's shop. He gathered up his charred pottery and built a new shop, Biloxi Art Pottery Unlimited. His unique pottery was in stark contrast to the beige, controlled Victorian pottery that was popular at the time. While

*"I'm making pottery for art's sake, God's sake, the future generation and—by present indications—for my own satisfaction . . ."*

George Ohr



**B.B. King**  
Itta Bena

The name B.B. King is synonymous with the blues. Born in Itta Bena in September 1925, Riley B. King, in his younger days, worked on a cotton plantation, earning barely over \$20 a week, and played music on street corners for change.

After serving in World War II, B.B. King moved to Memphis to pursue his dream. His big break came when he performed on Sonny Boy Williamson's radio show in 1948, a performance which led to a 10-minute spot on the WDIA radio station. "King's Spot" became so popular that it was expanded and renamed the "Sepia Swing Club." This led to his famous nickname, as he went from being called Beale Street Blues Boy to Blues Boy King and, finally, B.B. King. King and Lucille, his beloved Gibson Guitars, toured nationally after "Three O'clock Blues" became a number-one hit.

King played everywhere from juke joints to concert halls to international venues. In 1984, he was inducted into the Blues Hall of Fame and into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987. That same year, he was awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Through the years, B.B. King continued to tour, age and time never diminishing his passion for the blues. By the time he died on May 14, 2015, he had earned 20 Grammy Awards and released over fifty albums, the contents of which define blues music as we know it.

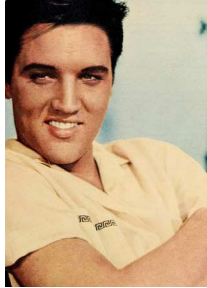
*"Blues is a tonic for whatever ails you. I could play the blues and then not be blue any more."*

B.B. King

many found the pottery intriguing, Ohr's wild works – and their prices – prevented him from obtaining profit and recognition.

In 1909, Ohr retired and his shop became Biloxi's first auto repair shop. Nine years later, he died from cancer. Fifty more years passed, and James W. Carpenter, a New Jersey antiques dealer, discovered the pottery in the Ohr Boys' Auto Repair Shop. He purchased the entire collection for \$50,000. As the pieces came into the market, they were sold for thousands of dollars, and art historians began to reevaluate the importance of Ohr's work.

Today, Ohr has received the recognition he always dreamed of and is considered a cult figure in the art world.



**Elvis Presley**  
Tupelo

From an early age, Tupelo's Elvis Presley had a great interest in music, influenced by the pop and country hits of the day, gospel songs he would hear at church, and R&B music performed on Beale Street (his family moved to Memphis in 1948).

In 1954, Presley's musical career was launched when he recorded a song with Sun Records. It took only two years for the young singer to become an international sensation. He released "Heartbreak Hotel" and made his film debut in *Love Me Tender* in 1956. He would go on to star in 32 films.

The way Presley sang, performed, and challenged social and racial barriers made him the leading figure of rock and roll music.

*"Before Elvis, there was nothing."*

John Lennon



**Leontyne Price**  
Laurel

When Laurel native Leontyne Price was a girl, she attended a recital in Jackson by Marian Anderson and realized that she wanted to be an opera singer. Years later, she attended the College of Education and Industrial Arts in Ohio, then headed to New York City to attend the Julliard School on a full scholarship.

In 1952, Price debuted on Broadway as St. Cecilia in the revival of *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Immediately following, she was cast in a production of *Porgy and Bess*, dazzling audiences with her flawless vocals. She starred in the NBC Opera Theatre's televised production of *Tosca*, making her the first African-American in a leading role in a televised opera. Two years later, she had her stage debut at the San Francisco Opera House.

Price toured Europe and wowed audiences at venues such as Covent Garden in England and La Scala in Milan. She made her debut at the New York City Metropolitan Opera House in 1961, marking the beginning of her residency as one of the opera's principal sopranos. She was widely regarded as the first African-American singer to gain an international reputation in opera.

Price delivered her farewell performance at the Met in 1985, hailed as one of the most successful operatic performances in the Met's history. Price's talent earned her numerous awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 20 Grammys, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and numerous honorary degrees.

*"The power and sensuousness of Leontyne's voice were phenomenal — the most beautiful Verdi soprano I have ever heard."*

Placido Domingo

He helped to pave the way for not only a new era of American music, but a new era of popular culture. He was The King.

He received 14 Grammy nominations, three Grammys and the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and he was featured in the first globally broadcast concert.

In August 1977, at the age of 42, Elvis Presley died in his Memphis home, Graceland. But death did not diminish his influence. He has been inducted into numerous halls of fame, sold over 1 billion records globally, and is recognized as one of America's most influential and important icons.



**Jimmie Rodgers**  
Meridian

Born in Meridian in September 1897, Jimmie Rodgers – known as the Father of Country Music, the Singing Brakeman, and the Blue Yodeler – learned to sing at church and taught himself to play guitar. At the age of 14, he started working as a water boy for his father's railroad crew, spending the next 12 years of his life working on the railroad.

In 1924, Rodgers contracted tuberculosis and turned his attention to music. He joined the Tenneva Ramblers in 1927; a talent scout offered them a recording session. It was here that Rodgers recorded "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," the solo hit that made him famous.

Rodgers continued to record songs that would become country-music classics and rock-and-roll forerunners. The most popular were his 12 different sequels to the song "Blue Yodel No. 1 (T for Texas)."

In 1933, he traveled to New York to record new songs. During this session, he recorded "Mississippi Delta Blues" and "Years Ago" – his last recordings. On May 26, 1933, Jimmie Rodgers died.

Though his career spanned only six years, Rodgers had a profound, lasting impact. He has been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Songwriters Hall of Fame, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Blues Hall of Fame. His song "Blue Yodel No. 9" was selected as one of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's "500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll," and Rodgers himself was ranked number 33 on CMT's 40 Greatest Men of Country Music.

*"Jimmie Rodgers, of course, is one of the guiding lights of the Twentieth Century, whose way with song has always been an inspiration to those of us who have followed the path."*

Bob Dylan





**Sela Ward**  
Meridian

Meridian native, actress, author, and producer Sela Ward attended the University of Alabama, where she double-majored in fine arts and advertising. After graduating, Ward moved to New York City and began modeling. She later moved to California to pursue an acting career.

Her breakthrough came in 1991 when she was cast in the series, *Sisters*. Her performance as free-spirited Teddy Reed earned her a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series. Ward has also appeared in the TV drama series *House* and *CSI: NY*. Her work has earned her numerous awards, including a CableACE, a second Primetime Emmy, and a Golden Globe Award.

Ward has also appeared in films including *The Man Who Loved Women*, *The Fugitive*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, *The Stepfather*, and *Gone Girl*.

Ward has made a name for herself not only through acting but also through her activism and philanthropy. In 2000, she developed and produced a documentary, *The Changing Face of Beauty*, which explored America's obsession with youth and the effect this obsession has on women. That same year, she founded Hope Village for Children, which provides care to abused or neglected children.

Today, Ward continues her acting career, appearing as the President of the United States in the film *Independence Day: Resurgence* and Margaret Graves in the Epix political comedy *Graves*.

*"And so much of my life has been about returning home and longing for home, wanting my children to know about my roots."*

Sela Ward



**Eudora Welty**  
Jackson

Neither of Eudora Welty's parents were originally from the Deep South, which perhaps is what allowed her to later become such a careful observer of Southern life.

Welty spent two years at the Mississippi State College for Women (Mississippi University for Women) and two years at the University of Wisconsin, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She also studied advertising at the Columbia University Graduate School of Business in New York.

Welty returned to Jackson in 1931. She began using her experiences as a journalist and photographer for the Works Progress Administration as inspiration for short stories. In 1936, "Death of a Traveling Salesman" was published and, from there,

*"The art that speaks [truth] most unmistakably, most directly, most variously, most fully, is fiction."*

Eudora Welty



**Muddy Waters**  
Issaquena

As a young boy in Issaquena County, McKinley Morganfield loved to play in mud puddles, which earned him the nickname Muddy Waters. He taught himself to play the guitar by listening to the music of Mississippi legends Charley Patton, Son House, and Robert Johnson.

In 1943, Waters moved to Chicago, where his uncle gifted him an electric guitar, an instrument that allowed him to develop his legendary style, combining Mississippi blues with big city vibes. In 1946, he began recording with RCA, Columbia, and Aristocrat (later Chess Records). Songs like "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "Got My Mojo Working" won over crowds, and "Rollin' Stone" became so popular that it would later become the name of both a major music publication and one of the most famous rock bands in history.

Waters continued to record and perform throughout the 1960s and 1970s, earning his first Grammy in 1971 for *They Call Me Muddy Waters*. His last public performance was in 1982, when he sat in with Eric Clapton's band. He died in April the following year.

By the end of his life, Waters had received six Grammys (including the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award) and countless other honors. He was inducted posthumously into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and the Blues Hall of Fame. He was awarded the Blues Foundation Award five times, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame listed four of his songs among the "500 Songs that Shaped Rock and Roll."

*"You get a heck of a sound from the church. Can't you hear it in my voice?"*

Muddy Waters

her work continued to garner attention. In 1941, Welty published her first book, a collection of short stories entitled *A Curtain of Green*. She went on to write critically acclaimed works such as *The Golden Apples* and *The Optimist's Daughter*, for which she won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Welty's writing is renowned for its attention to detail, focus on themes of community and relationships, and naturalistic descriptions of Southern life. In 1984, her autobiography, *One Writer's Beginnings*, sold over 100,000 copies.

Welty received numerous honors throughout her career, including the National Medal of Arts and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Eudora Welty died on July 22, 2001, at the age of 92, in her hometown of Jackson.





**Tennessee Williams**  
Columbus

Born in March 1911 in Columbus, Thomas Lanier “Tennessee” Williams spent much of his childhood growing up in Clarksdale. He later moved with his family to St. Louis, Missouri, and from 1929 to 1931 attended the University of Missouri, studying journalism. During his junior year, his father pulled him out of school and put him to work. Williams hated his job and retreated into writing.

At age 28, Williams moved to New Orleans and changed his name to Tennessee. His first play was not a hit, but Tennessee persisted, revising it as *Orpheus Descending*. It later was adapted for the cinema as *The Fugitive Kind*.

On March 31, 1945, *The Glass Menagerie* opened on Broadway and was hailed by critics and audiences. Two years

later, *A Streetcar Named Desire* opened, followed by *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *Camino Real*. In total, Williams’s work would earn him four Drama Critic Circle Awards, as well as the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1979, Williams was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame.

Tennessee Williams died in New York City on February 25, 1983. Today, he is considered one of America’s foremost playwrights – remembered for his remarkable characters and honest writing style.

*“If the writing is honest, it cannot be separated from the man who wrote it.”*

Tennessee Williams



**Oprah Winfrey**  
Kosciusko

Kosciusko’s Oprah Winfrey had a troubled adolescence and left Mississippi for Nashville to live with her father. She enrolled in Tennessee State University in 1971 and began working in radio and television broadcasting.

In the early 1980s, she began hosting *A.M. Chicago*. It became a success, leading Winfrey to nationwide fame. A role in 1985’s *The Color Purple* followed and earned Winfrey a nomination for an Academy Award.

*The Oprah Winfrey Show* entered national syndication in 1986 and became the highest-rated talk show in television history. The show was broadcast in more than 100 countries worldwide in its 25 year run. In 1988, Winfrey established Harpo Studios, making her the third woman in the American entertainment industry to own her own studio. Her monthly publication, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, debuted in 2000 and is still in publication. She helped give new life to *The Color Purple* in 2005, eventually winning a Tony for Best Revival of a Musical.

Winfrey has received many honors, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom and *TIME* magazine’s “100 Most Influential People in the World” from 2004-2011. It was announced in January 2017 that she will be joining *60 Minutes* as a special contributor and her memoir, *The Life You Want*, is scheduled for publication later this year.

*“The biggest adventure you can take is to live the life of your dreams.”*

Oprah Winfrey



**Richard Wright**  
Natchez

Although Richard Wright only made it through the ninth grade, he was incredibly intelligent and proved to have a gift with words at a young age. Wright was born in Roxie in September 1908, later moving to Memphis, where he worked at a series of odd jobs and spent his free time focused on literature.

Wright later moved to New York, where he published a short-story collection, *Uncle Tom’s Children*. His novel *Native Son* followed. A stage version was adapted from the novel, and Wright played the lead role in a film version made in Argentina. *Black Boy*, an autobiography based on Wright’s own youth, was published in 1945.

In 1947, Wright moved to Paris, where he remained for the rest of his life. He continued to write, creating *The Outsider*, *The Long Dream*, and over 4,000 haikus.

Richard Wright died on November 28, 1960, of a heart attack and was buried in the Père Lachaise Cemetery. His works remain some of the most honest accounts of the violence and discrimination towards African-Americans during the late-19th and mid-20th centuries. Today, they are considered vital parts of America’s historical, sociological, and literary realms, and they are believed by many to have helped change race relations in the U.S.

*“Whenever my environment had failed to support or nourish me, I had clutched at books...”*

Richard Wright,  
*Black Boy*

