



## A Place Called Mississippi (Heritage of Mississippi)

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Filled with serendipitous connections and contrasts, this volume of Mississippiana covers four hundred years. It begins with a selection from "A Gentleman from Elvas," written in 1541, and ends with an essay the novelist Ellen Douglas wrote in 1996 on the occasion of the Atlanta Olympic games. In between is a chronology of some one hundred nonfictional narratives that portray the distinctiveness of life in Mississippi. Most are reprinted, but some are published here for the first time.

Each section of this anthology reveals an aspect of Mississippi's past or present.

Here are narratives that depict the settlement of the land by pioneers, the lasting heritage of the Civil War, the pleasures and the pastimes of Mississippians, their food, art, rituals, and religion, the terrain and the travelers, and the conflicts that brought enormous changes to both the landscape and the population.

In its wide cultural perspective *A Place Called Mississippi* includes an early description of the Chickasaws, a narrative of a former slave, "Soggy" Sweat's famous "Whiskey Speech" on Prohibition, and an account of how W. C. Handy discovered the blues in a deserted train station in Tutwiler, Mississippi.

Among the selections are narratives by Jefferson Davis, Belle Kearney, Walter Anderson, Ida B. Wells, Richard Wright, Craig Claiborne, Richard Ford, William Faulkner, and Eudora Welty. Written by and about blacks, whites, Native Americans, and others, these fascinating accounts convey a variety of impressions about a real place and about real people whose colorful history is large, ever-changing, and ever-mystifying.

Marion Barnwell is a professor of English at Delta State University.

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