

The University of Mississippi

Remembering the
Events of 1962 on
The University of
Mississippi Campus



A SELF-GUIDED
WALKING TOUR

The events surrounding the integration of The University of Mississippi by James Meredith on October 1, 1962 were among the most tragic and significant in the institution's history. This self-directed walking tour provides a guide to the campus locations where those pivotal events occurred.

How the Conflict Began

Following months of legal opposition by state and university officials, the U.S. Supreme Court in September 1962 ordered the admission of James Meredith, an African-American Air Force veteran from Kosciusko, Mississippi.

On Sunday, September 30, President John F. Kennedy ordered U.S. marshals to escort Meredith to the campus in preparation for his registration the following morning. Meredith arrived Sunday afternoon, and more than 100 marshals set up a perimeter around the Lyceum. As evening approached, an angry, jeering crowd gathered in the Circle.

1 The tour begins on the sidewalk in front of the Lyceum.

The Lyceum

The oldest structure on the campus (construction was completed in 1848), the Lyceum remains the symbol of The University of Mississippi. During its history, it has housed offices and classrooms and served as a hospital where both Union and Confederate wounded were treated during the Civil War. Today it is the university's main administration building.

On that September evening, the Lyceum served as headquarters for federal officials as the crowd laid siege to the building, hurling metal pipes, bricks and Molotov cocktails at the marshals ringing the structure. Many of the 300 injured that night were treated in the halls inside the building.

The marshals began firing tear gas at about 8 p.m. to drive the crowd back. Later that night, unidentified snipers began firing at the marshals. The scars of that violent night remain on the columns at the Lyceum's front entrance. The pockmarks can be seen on the inside of the far right column about 14 feet up and at the same height on the inside of the center right column.

2 Turn away from the Lyceum and walk to the Circle toward the flagpole.

The Circle

As the Mississippi Highway Patrol, which had been given conflicting orders, watched passively, the crowd continued to assault the marshals, slash tires, set fire to parked cars and vandalize university buildings. The state police no longer were preventing people from entering the campus.

Armed white supremacists from throughout the region, stirred up by defiant words from Governor Ross Barnett, descended on the campus and soon outnumbered students, the majority of whom did not participate in the rioting. A rumor (which proved to be untrue) spread that a popular female student had been killed, further agitating the mob that filled the Circle.

Several students circulated through the crowd pleading for calm. It was reported that one student climbed onto the base of the flagpole urging the crowd to stop the violence. Hecklers drove him away. Fifty yards to the east at the Confederate Monument, the Right Rev. Duncan Gray Jr., then-rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Oxford, appealed to the mob's conscience. He, too, was driven away by their anger.

3 Continue east to the Confederate Monument and turn diagonally to the right facing Shoemaker Hall.

Shoemaker Hall

In 1962, Shoemaker Hall—a science laboratory and classroom building—was under construction. The rioters used many of the bricks, pipes and other construction materials from the site as weapons. At about 11 p.m., Ray Gunter, 23, an Oxford resident, was watching the conflict with a friend from atop a pile of construction debris. The crowd suddenly surged toward them, and, as Gunter turned to leave, he was struck in the head by a bullet and died. The violence continued to intensify. Earlier that night, a convoy of Mississippi National Guardsmen from the Oxford armory crossed the University Avenue bridge, where they were met by an angry mob that showered them with bricks and bats. They pushed on to the Lyceum to support the marshals and were later joined by more guardsmen and regular U.S. Army troops. By the end of the next day, almost 30,000 combat troops were deployed to Oxford.

4 Turn to the left and follow the sidewalk past Ventress Hall and the Croft Institute to the Student Union. Continue to the patio area between Bryant Hall and the Union.

Site of Paul Guihard's Death

A reporter for the French news organization Agence France-Presse, Paul Guihard, 30, was one of several hundred reporters who arrived in Oxford to cover Meredith's enrollment. At about 9 p.m., students heard Guihard moaning and found him here in some bushes. He had been shot in the back at close range and died soon after. No one ever came forward to identify his killer(s).

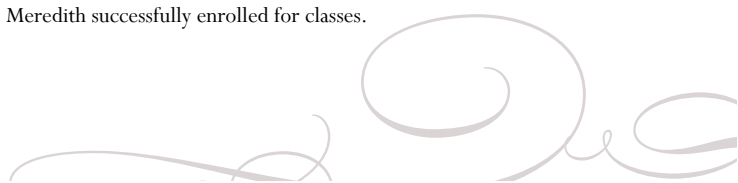
5 Return to the ellipse between the west side of the Lyceum and the J.D. Williams Library.

Civil Rights Monument

The idea for a civil rights monument on the Ole Miss campus grew out of discussions in a graduate folklore class in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Engraved at the top of the monument are the words Courage, Knowledge, Perseverance and Opportunity. The monument also features a statue of a young James Meredith striding purposefully toward the center of the university. The Civil Rights Monument is intended as a place for people to pause and reflect on the words spoken by former Governor William Winter at its dedication ceremony: "This is a marker that tells us not only where we have been, but where we need to be going."

The Meredith sculpture is by Oxford artist and Ole Miss graduate Rod Moorehead. The monument was designed by James H. Eley, FAIA, of Eley Associates/Architects.

The monument was dedicated on October 1, 2006, 44 years to the day that Meredith successfully enrolled for classes.



Additional Sites of Interest

In the Fall of 2011, the Black Student Union discussed its desire to acknowledge James Meredith's contribution to student life. This conversation evolved into an idea to mark the first day of Mr. Meredith's campus experience. Three markers sponsored by the Black Student Union have been placed on campus to highlight his journey on his first day.

—The 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Black Student Union

Baxter Hall: Now the campus telecommunications center, Baxter Hall in 1962 was a men's residence hall. When Meredith was brought to the campus, he was taken here to spend the night under guard, out of sight and almost out of earshot of the events in the Circle.

Bondurant Hall: Meredith attended his first class, Colonial American History, on October 1 in Bondurant Hall. That classroom (then Grad 29) is now C208. Meredith also took a French class in Bondurant in Grad 25E, which is now E203, a faculty office.

Peabody: On his first day as an Ole Miss student, James Meredith came to this building, where he was enrolled in a mathematics class in Peabody "15." It is now Peabody 311 and used as faculty offices.

Silver Pond: The late James W. Silver was honored with the dedication of Silver Pond, a new body of water near the intersection of Sorority Row and West Jackson Avenue. Following the admission of James Meredith, Silver offered personal support and friendship to the embattled student.



A student, Curtis Wilkie, drew this map the morning after the riot and sent it in a letter to his mother. Wilkie referred to what is now called the Circle as The Grove.



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