

“Portraits of the Past”

Tishomingo County, Mississippi’s Bicentennial Celebration



Under the direction of educators, the Superintendent Student Advisory Council met with local artist, Mr. Tony Bullard, and Mrs. Cindy Nelson, Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society Executive Director, to plan the visual scheme for a bicentennial mural to be painted in the town of Tishomingo. Over the course of meetings, students made the final decision on what images to include in the mural to best depict the history of Tishomingo and its impact on Mississippi.

The artist reported visitors from the local area, as well as area, state, and national visitors. The mural is located at the 4-way stop in the town of Tishomingo adjacent to US Highway 25 at 1302 Main Street. Approximately 100 students visited the mural during art classes and other times.

In Tishomingo County schools, under the direction of educators, students acted as scholars when presenting the life of selected Mississippi icons during school activities at Iuka Elementary, Iuka Middle, and Burnsville School. Approximately 500 parents and other visitors attended the events held at the schools. Approximately 2,900 students were involved in the programs.

- Famous Mississippians and Mississippi’s birthday were celebrated through a musical program performed by 4th grade Iuka Elementary School for the entire student body and community members in attendance. Students conducted research and shared information through the use of puppets from Jim Henson’s Muppets (conducted by teacher Lyndon Cain).
- A living wax museum was presented at the conclusion of the annual community Veterans Day program at Iuka Middle School. Famous Mississippians depicted in by students were interviewed, and student research was used in responses to inform the audience about their accomplishments. Each grade conducted research and posted a timeline of history for the state for public viewing. Students also created a mural for display for the town of Iuka’s history.
- Burnsville Elementary held an entire day-long celebration to promote Mississippi’s birthday. Students and teachers created food stations (with slug burgers and Coca-Cola), state college stations, state park stations, state/local authors, living wax museums, history stations, entertainment stations, and local industry stations for observation. Students,

teachers, and community celebrated all aspects of Mississippi's history and culture during the day.

- Belmont School led a celebration for Mississippi during research projects as well as a visit to one of Mississippi's oldest hotels, the Belmont Hotel. While visiting the hotel, students were able to view historical artifacts from various time periods, including an original phone booth donated by local historian Howard Lomenick. The students were given commemorative Coca-Cola bottles as well as candy that originated on the date of Mississippi's statehood. Also, Belmont art students traveled to the Tishomingo mural painting by local artist Tony Bullard, where they learned from his art technique presentations, and participated in painting the mural.
- Tishomingo Elementary focused on historical research and art of Mississippi. Students reproduced artwork from famous Mississippi artists. They also created displays on Mississippi authors, entertainers, sports figures, and leaders.
- Tishomingo County High School conducted state research through Mississippi Studies classes. Also, art students traveled to the mural painting by local artist Tony Bullard, learned from his art technique presentations, and participated in painting the mural.
- The Career and Technical Center researched various industries in the state. Our primary goal was to engage students in Mississippi's history and culture over the past 200 years.

While our youth were our primary focus, this project has touched lives and brought healing to hurting and aging individuals. It has inspired the citizens and made them proud of their small home town, according to Mayor James Tennyson. Likewise, it has created a desire for other towns to explore their heritage and display it as proudly as this small town in northeast Mississippi has done.

This important project will go a long way toward our efforts to help our students to remain focused academically and to develop confidence, self-esteem, and leadership as they grow. As a result of this Portraits of the Past initiative, Tishomingo County Heritage and Culture programming is expected to expand tremendously over the next five years and reach out to more children in all grades. The program as a whole benefited all ages as parents, grandparents, visitors and travelers by witnessed the painting of the mural and participated in the planning or attended the school programs. Through discussions with historians, teachers, students, artists, and others, this unity will develop public programming that will enhance their professional artistic development, leadership development, and technical skills.

People from all walks of life, all ages and all races either have or will experience the mural. The artist reports that while creating the mural, people would get out of their vehicles and walk over and shake hands with him, commending him on what the mural meant to them. Elderly people came by and shared their memories of some of the historical scenes on the mural. Families would bring their children by as he worked. One Mother from near Fulton was passing through. She stopped by with her daughter to see the artist at work. He handed the girl a brush and let her paint on the mural for a little bit. She was blown away that she could be a part of it. One guy stopped in the road telling me that this mural is the best thing that's happened in this area in 50 years. People have told me that this mural will bring people from different areas just to see it. This

is already happening. I believe this mural will be a landmark for decades to come for people to come and see in person. This should easily boost revenue to Tishomingo as these people stop in the area to buy fuel or eat out somewhere nearby.

People are coming to have their pictures made in front of the mural. It is quickly becoming a destination stop for a lot of people, and we know this will only grow. Local people have constantly told us that this mural is "the talk of the town". People from Tishomingo and surrounding counties are excited about it. The mural has been all over social media as we shared updates and included new mural photos. The local people have said this mural has really boosted the morale in the Tishomingo area. They are excited that the town of Tishomingo was chosen for this project. We believe the positive impact of this will live on for decades.

The most significant result of the "Portraits of the Past" Bicentennial project was the appreciation of history (both Mississippi and local) that permeated throughout each experience. From the beautiful mural that students helped create and paint to the presentations at each school, students will remember these learning events for the rest of their lives. The comments heard from our community, faculties, students, and parents have proven that the effort was worthwhile and effective.

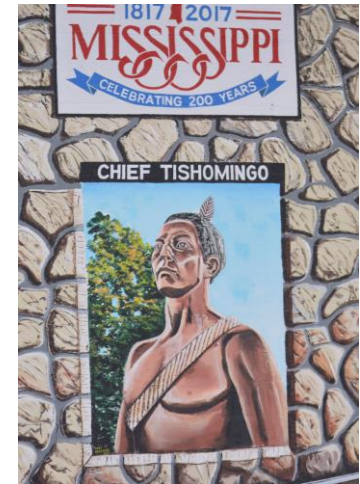
This project was made possible by funding from the Mississippi Humanities Council and the Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society.

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Bicentennial Mural in the Town of Tishomingo









Tishomingo County Bicentennial School Celebrations



