



Timber Tough

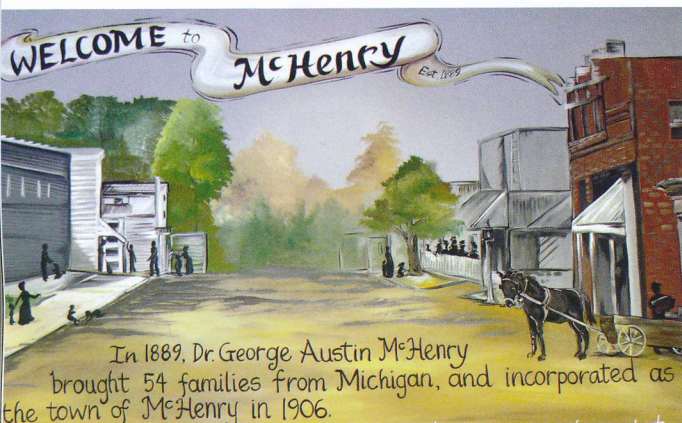
## *The Murals of* **STONE COUNTY**

All of us have a story. Those collective stories, gathered over time, become our history. Our history is personal; yet, those personal stories describe our past as individuals and as community and, in doing so, explain who we are today. If the stories are lost, part or all of our identity is lost as well.

The journey to collect Stone County's stories began in 2004 with a walk through Wiggins' iconic Blaylock Park. For many years, this property bordered by 2nd and 3rd Streets and Pine and College Avenues, was home to Wiggins School. If you listen carefully as you walk through the park, you hear voices on the playground, the creak of swings, the crack of a baseball bat, distinct sounds of learning coming

Story by Cille McHenry Litchfield





McHenry Library Mural

through the windows. The stories were begging to be told. From that walk, the dream to somehow collect and tell the stories of Stone County was born.

The dream became The Telling Trees Project, a project to research, document, and present the stories of people, places, culture, and time of Stone County through the gathering of oral histories and sharing of these through storytelling and the arts. Per Kathryn Lewis, director of The Telling Trees Project, "It is our story of home." "Tellers"

(adults) and "Seedlings" (students) tell or perform the stories in schools, through art and science education, through other forums. However, early on, The Telling Trees realized that the stories must be told even if the "teller could not be there" to personally share the story.

The solution: The Murals of Stone County. The murals celebrate the people of Stone County: who they are, where they live, and the culture, industry, and habitat that are Stone County's foundation. They celebrate the p's of Stone





History of Perkinston Elementary School

County - people, pickles, paper, pine, paper, poles, pecans, paper chips, pellets, and pottery. They tell how the virgin pine forests of the area were and are the life blood of the Stone County economy (the source of turpentine, paper chips and wood pellets, poles, and lumber) and of when Wiggins was home to the largest pickle factory in the world! To date twenty-six murals are complete, an additional one planned honoring Stone County's veterans is funded, and others are yet in the planning phase.

The Murals of Stone County are either mosaic tile or painted. They are found everywhere

across the county - Blaylock Park, the "Dizzy Dean" Welcome Center on Highway 49, every county school as well as the Perkinston Campus of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, churches, libraries, post offices - literally some place you might be on any day of the week. There are even a couple of murals that travel throughout South Mississippi telling Stone County's story where ever they go.

The Murals are funded through grants and private donations. Partners are many and include government agencies, corporations, and non-profits as well as

local citizens digging deep in their personal pockets to help this effort. Artists include Pat and Nancilee Bodine, Sandra Cassibry, Kym Garraway, Nancy Ria, Elizabeth Veglia, MGCCC visual and graphic art students, Stone County school students, and Stone County citizens. It is a labor of love of many.

Murals are only a part of The Telling Trees Project. Adults and children alike are involved in plays and storytelling projects throughout South Mississippi. Teaching materials compliant with Common Core Standards telling the science and history of the Longleaf Pine (The Longleaf



"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land..." *Aldo Leopold*



Water, Bogs, Creeks, and the Reservoir

and Me...A-Z) and the Pascagoula River Water Basis (The Watershed and Me....A-Z) habitats are now in use in school systems throughout the southern part of the State. Other related activities include the planting of "Moon Pine Trees" in honor of Stone County residents John Guthrie and Bill Mauldin who, as their stories tell, had a part in the sending of pine seeds to orbit around the moon with Astronaut Stuart Roosa on Apollo 14 and cultivating those seedlings into second and third generation trees as well as supporting other historical efforts that have taken hold in Stone County.

While the partners and partici-

pants are many, the brains and heart behind it all is Kathryn Lewis, director of The Telling Trees Project and recipient of the 2013 Governor's Arts Award for Art in Education. Effective May 1, 2012, via Senate Resolution 643, the 2012 Mississippi Legislature declared that Stone County is Mississippi's Mural County. Kathryn's love of community bloomed during that walk those years ago and now her dream is being fully realized.

For more information, contact The Telling Trees, P. O. Box 1213, Wiggins, Mississippi 39577 or <http://www.stonecounty.com/tourism-attractions.htm>.—OS

