

First Annual

Tommy Johnson

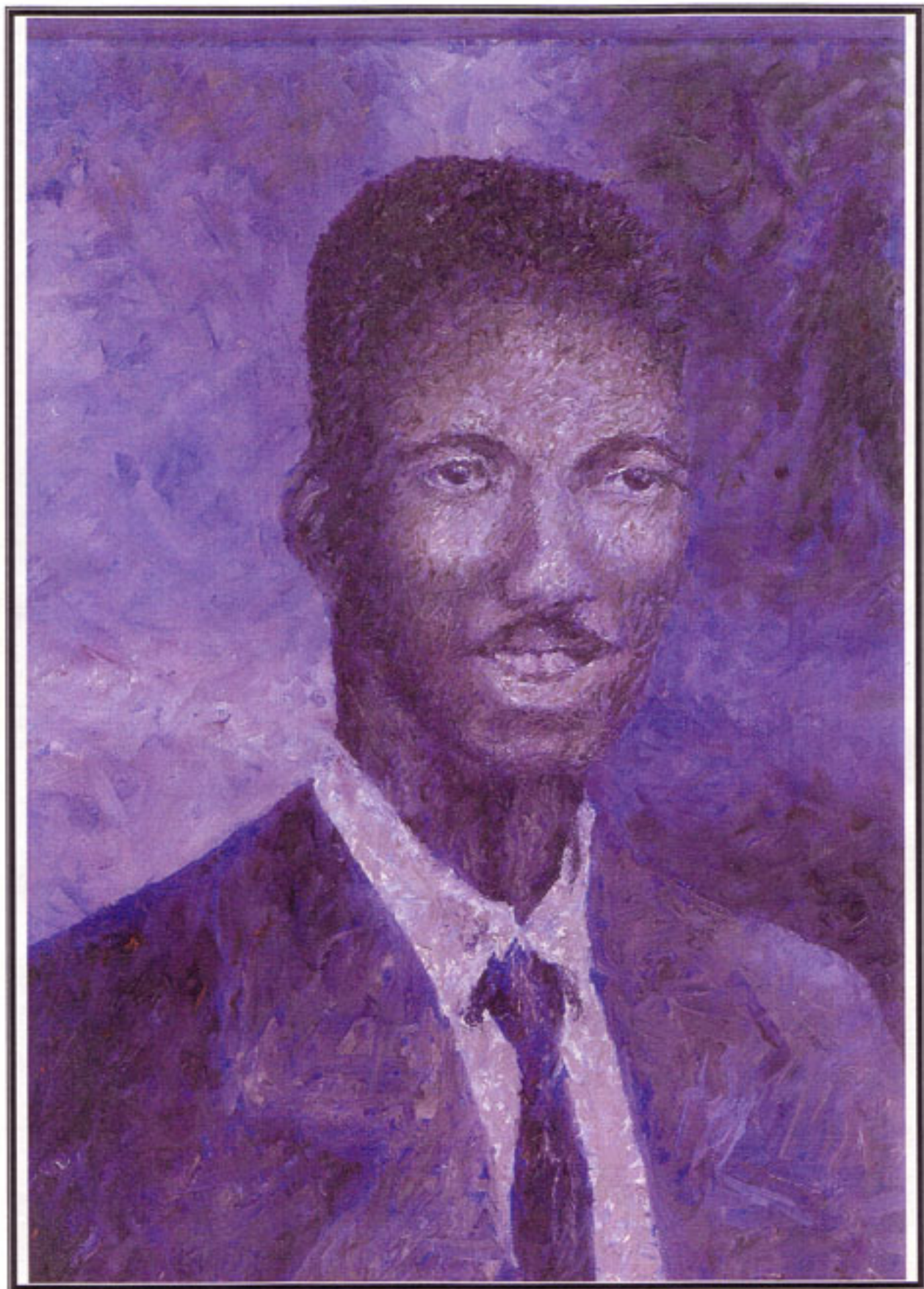


Celebration

October 19-21, 2006

Jackson and Crystal Springs, Mississippi

Presented by
Tommy Johnson Blues Foundation



~About Tommy Johnson~

Tommy Johnson was born circa 1896, on George Miller's Plantation near Terry, Hinds County, Mississippi. One of thirteen children, Tommy and his family moved to Crystal Springs, Copiah County, Mississippi around 1910.

Tommy's uncle and brothers Mager and LeDell played guitar, while other relatives played in a brass band. LeDell taught Tommy the rudiment about guitar about 1910, and by 1914 the Johnson brothers were supplementing their sharecropping incomes by playing parties in the Crystal Spring area.

In 1916, Tommy Johnson married Maggie Bidwell and the couple moved to Webb Jennings' Plantation near Drew, in Mississippi's Yazoo Delta region close to Dockery's Plantation. Although Johnson had several wives, it was his first whom he later immortalized in the song "Maggie Campbell Blues." Johnson fell under the spell of Dockery resident Charley Patton and local guitarists Dick Bankston and Willie Brown. He lived there for a year, learning the nuances of the Delta before moving on to hobo around Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Johnson, now an alcoholic and womanizer, moved back to Crystal Springs in 1920, resuming his musical partnership with Mager and LeDell.

He also returned to life as a sharecropper, playing at parties on the weekends or on the streets of Jackson and nearby towns for tips. During the fall cotton harvest season, Johnson travel back to the Delta, playing for sharecroppers who had just been paid. During the early 1920s he gigged with Charley Patton in Greenwood and nearby Moorehead. The later is famous for its railroad crossing Where the Southern Crosses the Dog, heralded in W. C. Handy's "Yellow Dog Blues."

Johnson cut his first records with guitarist Charlie McCoy in February 1928 at the Memphis Auditorium for the Victor label. These sides sold well enough to prompt a follow-up session in August of that year. That session yielded the notorious "Canned Heat Blues," in which he admitted to drinking Sterno to satisfy his alcohol cravings. The theme of alcoholism would be touched upon again in "Alcohol and Jake Blues," waxed during his final recording session for the Paramount label in December 1929.

Tommy Johnson died of a heart attack after playing a party on November 1, 1956. He is buried in the Warmed Springs Methodist Church in Crystal Springs, Mississippi.



Songs by Tommy Johnson

Big Road Blues

Canned Heat Blues

Bye-Bye Blues

Big Fat Mama Blues

Cool Drink of Water Blues

Maggie Campbell Blues

I Wonder to Myself

Slidin' Delta

Black Mare Blues

Alcohol and Jake Blues

Ridin' Horse

Lonesome Home Blues

Morning Prayer Blues

Boogaloosa Woman

~Scheduled Events~

Thursday, October 19, 2006

*7:00 p.m. – Gospel Explosion
Masonic Temple – J. R. Lynch Street
Jackson, Mississippi
Songs of Joy
South Liberty Baptist Church Mass Choir
Joan Bell
Torie Wade
Reverend Theodis Horton – Toledo, Ohio
Reverend William Smith – Toledo, Ohio*

Friday, October 20, 2006

*6:00 p.m. – Reception
Regency Hotel – Jackson, Mississippi
Speaker: Dr. William Woods, Chairman
Department of History – Tougaloo College*

Saturday, October 21, 2006

*10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. – Carnival/Blues Festival
Railroad Avenue
Crystal Springs, Mississippi*

*Featuring: Bob Long of London, England
Little Lee,
Lewis “Gearshift” Youngblood,
Ben Payton,
Jesse “Guitar” Robinson*

Reception

Friday, October 20, 2006

6:00 p.m.

*Regency Hotel
Jackson, Mississippi*

Mistress of Ceremonies ~ Joan Bell

Tommy Johnson Family Slide Presentation

*Greetings – Bertha Cooper
Great-Great Niece of Tommy Johnson*

Solo

Introduction of Speaker – Dr. Edgar Smith

*Speaker – Dr. William Woods, Chairman
Department of History
Tougaloo College
Tougaloo, Mississippi*

*Presentation of Official Portrait of Tommy Johnson
Presented by Vera Johnson Collins
Niece of Tommy Johnson*

Acceptance of Portrait – Dr. William Woods

~ Sponsors ~

\$500.00 – \$1,000.00

Bob Long

John Tefteller

Bobby Rush

Leland Speed

Terry Collins

J. B. Martin, Jr.

The Jones Family

Percy Johnson

John and Sherwin Harris

The Cooper Family

Walter Harris, Jr.

\$100.00 – \$300.00

J. C. Wells

Howard Catchings

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Lela B. Dorsey and Family

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Maggie Tanner

Eddie Jean Floyd

David Evans

Alice Reed and Sibblings

Mae Young and Family

Sylvia's

Gloria Swanigan

James A. Moore

Dorothy Johnson

