

# Soak Up Some Yazoo History

## At the Oakes African-American Cultural Center

The Oakes House was home to the Oakes family for almost 125 years. Today it houses the Oakes African-American Cultural Center, where visitors can take a glimpse into the lives and heritage of an outstanding African-American family.



An important stop on the  
African-American Heritage Trail.





# The Oakes House

## A Living History

The Oakes African-American Cultural Center's most impressive exhibit is the home itself, along with the family letters and business papers that span several generations. All rooms in the home are open and visitors can view period architectural elements. A beautiful staircase leads to upper rooms and archives and exhibits are constantly changing and growing.





# African-American Contributions and Achievements

The works of many Yazoo artists and craftsmen, such as A.J. Muhammad, wood sculpture; Tampa Wilson, oak baskets; and Otesia Harper, quilts, are on display at the Oakes House. The accomplishments of other outstanding African-American Yazoo natives are highlighted as well, including Dr. Robert Harrison, first Black member/president of the State of Mississippi College Board; Mike Espy, first Black in Mississippi elected to the U.S. Congress, who later served as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture; T.J. Huddleston, founder of the first hospital for African-Americans in the state; and "Gentle Ben" Williams, first Black Colonel Reb at Ole Miss.

The Center hosts numerous visiting exhibits, as well as maintaining permanent exhibits such as "Living Legends in Black," a collection that focuses on outstanding African-Americans in Yazoo County, "Yazoo Blues," and countless old books, journals, and photos.

The Oakes African-American Cultural Center stands as a testament to the remarkable 136-year history of the Oakes family and the numerous outstanding contributions of other African-Americans to the history and heritage of Yazoo City. It also functions as a living classroom to educate visitors – both children and adults – about local and regional African-American history.







# The Oakes Family Home

## Its History and Legacy

The Oakes family moved from South Carolina to Yazoo City in 1853 after John Oakes bought the freedom of his wife Mary and her two children. In 1866 the family purchased a lot with a one-room structure that would remain the home of members of the Oakes family until 1989. By 1930, the one-room structure had grown to the regal two-story home that stands today.

The careful restoration of the Oakes House, which occurred during the 1990s, preserved the uniqueness of the construction and it is now listed on the Mississippi and the National Register of Historic Places. The house has many architectural features that are unusual and remarkably well preserved. The leaded-glass entrance doors, original mantels, chimneys, walls, and stairs are especially interesting. The house stands high on a hill overlooking historic downtown Yazoo City.



*A.J. (Gus) Oakes, III, deeded the Oakes family home to the Yazoo County Fair and Civic League in 1990. Mr. Oakes died in 2001.*





## **The Oakes African-American Cultural Center**

is open weekdays, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon and  
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Open at other times and  
on weekends by appointment.

**Admission is FREE. Donations are welcomed.**

The Oakes African-American Cultural Center  
312 South Monroe Street, Yazoo City, MS  
662-746-5038 or 662-746-7984

Visit  
*Yazoo*

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