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

Walking Tour

The events occurring on the University of Mississippi campus on Oct. 1, 1962 were among the most tragic and significant in the history of the American South.

How the Conflict Began

Following months of legal agitation by state, and university officials, on the S.U.-Simpson Court on Oct. 1, 1962 the University of Mississippi admitted James Meredith, an African American Air Force veteran from Mississippi. On Tuesday, Sept. 30, after four previous unsuccessful attempts, 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 200 marshals set up a perimeter around the campus. As word approached, an angry, jeering crowd gathered in the Circle.

The LYCEUM

The first sight of the University of Mississippi Campus (completed in 1848), the Lyceum was originally constructed as a meeting place for both locals and university students. It was originally a part of the law school but was later converted to a university administration building.

On the evening of Sept. 30, 1962, a cemetery of heads of dead contractors was placed in front of the building. Network news media, including ABC, CBS and NBC, were present. By the following morning, a total of 700 guardsmen and regular U.S. Army troops were deployed to Oxford.

The violence continued to intensify. Earlier that evening, a mortar shell exploded near the state police command post behind the administration building. The scar of the violent night remain on the inside of the center right column.

The CIRCLE

Turn away from the Lyceum and walk to the Circle toward the right.

As the Mississippi Highway Patrol, which had never gone into Oxford before, arrived, passions were renewed, and the crowd continued to assault the building. Each shot, each tear gas canister and each water cannon added to the stewing pot. A piper collected no longer knew what people were surrounding the campus. Armed white reinforcements from the National Guard arrived in the face of U.S. troops. The crowd, which had been preventively treated in the area of the Lyceum, was, as one of the event’s first responders, Ray Hobbs, later explained, “the maddest crowd I have ever seen.”

The scars of that violent night remain on the inside of the center right column.

SPOKEMAN HALL

Continue east toward the Circle and continue straight diagonally to the right traveling Spokeman Hall.

In 1962, university administration announced that the Circle, Lyceum, and classroom building — was under construction. The administration said many stories of the living area, which would be known as Spokeman Hall, was, at the time, being constructed. A student, if asked about the location of the Circle, would have been driven away by the hate and fear. The administration, at the time, was asking the students to create a better life and a better world.

The violence continued to intensify. Earlier that evening, a mortar shell exploded near the state police command post behind the administration building. The scar of the violent night remain on the inside of the center right column.

SITE OF PAUL GUIHARD’S DEATH

Return to the left and follow the sidewalk past Venable Hall and the Croft to the Student Union. Continue to the patio area between Bryant Hall and the Union.

Civil Rights Monument

Returns to the distance west of the Circle and the J.L. Williams Library.

The statue is a total of 10 feet tall, being 7 feet at the base of the pedestal, with a 3-foot statue of the young lawyer. The statue itself is in a siting pose, facing the crowd. At the top of the pedestal are the words Courage, Knowledge, Perseverance and Truth.

ADDITIONAL SITES OF INTEREST

A self-directed walking tour provides a guide to the campus locations where those pivotal events occurred.

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