

A SELF-GUIDED

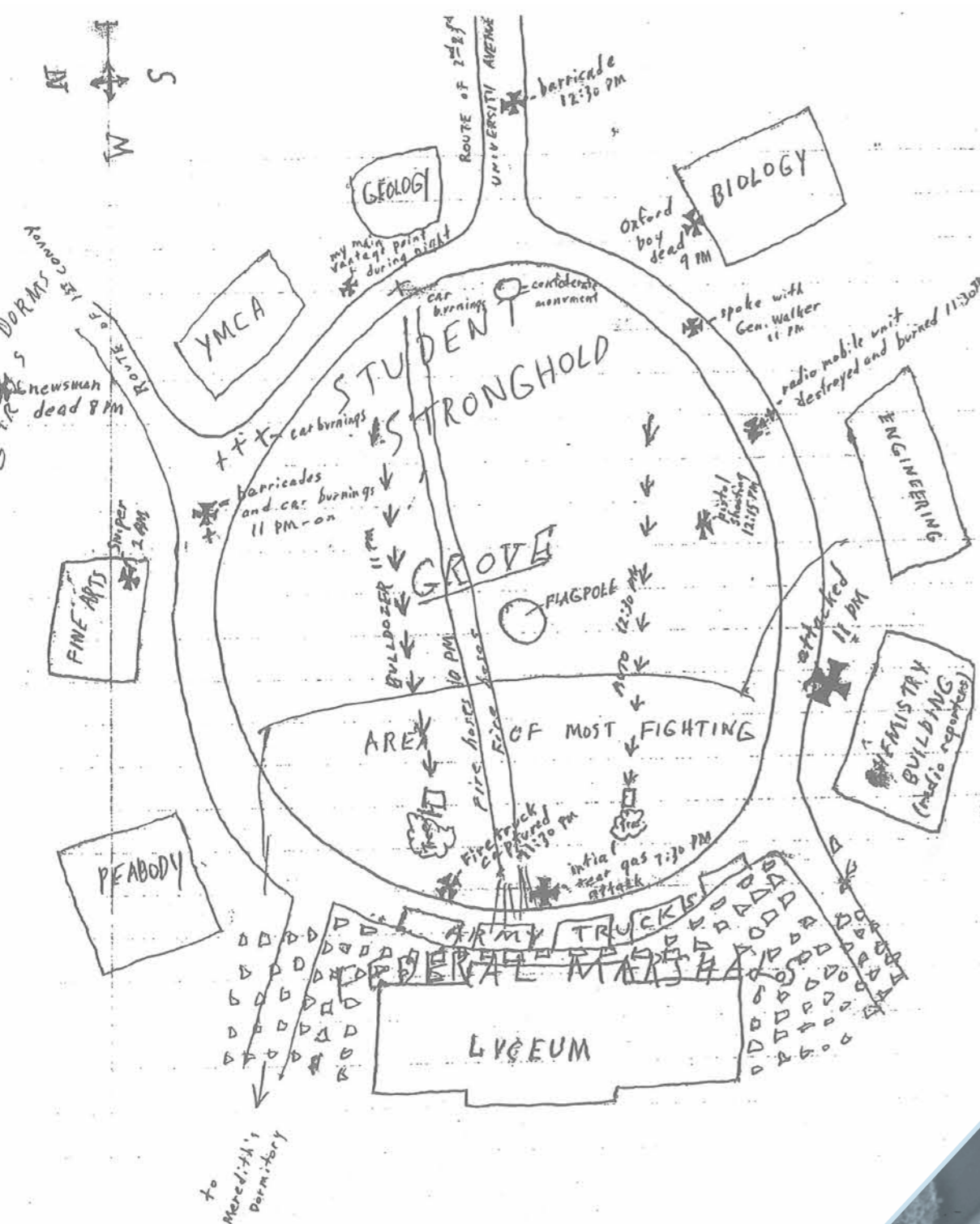
# Walking Tour

Remembering the events of 1962 on the University of Mississippi campus

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 institution's history. This self-directed walking tour provides a guide to the campus locations where those pivotal events occurred.

## How the Conflict Began

Following months of legal opposition by state and university officials, the U.S. Supreme Court in September 1962 ordered the University of Mississippi to admit James Meredith, an African American Air Force veteran from Kosciusko. On Sunday, 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 100 marshals set up a perimeter around the Lyceum. As evening approached, an angry, jeering crowd gathered in the Circle.



A UM student, Curtis Wilkie, drew this map the morning after the riot and sent it in a letter to his mother. Wilkie referred to what is now called the Circle as the Grove. He went on to become a reporter for the Boston Globe, a professor of journalism at UM and a historian of the American South.

### 1 THE LYCEUM

The tour begins on the sidewalk in front of the Lyceum.

The oldest structure on the University of Mississippi campus (completed in 1848), the Lyceum has housed offices and classrooms and served as a hospital where both Union and Confederate wounded were treated during the Civil War. Today it is the university's main administration building.

On the evening of Sept. 30, 1962, the Lyceum served as headquarters for federal officials as the crowd laid siege to the building, hurling metal pipes, bricks and Molotov cocktails at the marshals ringing the structure. Many of the 300 injured that night were treated in the halls inside the building.

The marshals began firing tear gas at about 8 p.m. to drive the crowd back. Later that night, unidentified snipers began firing at the marshals. The scars of that violent night remain on the columns at the Lyceum's front entrance. The pockmarks can be seen on the inside of the far right column about 14 feet up and at the same height on the inside of the center right column.

### 2 THE CIRCLE

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

As the Mississippi Highway Patrol, which had been given conflicting orders, watched passively, the crowd continued to assault the marshals, slash tires, set fire to parked cars and vandalize university buildings. The state police no longer were preventing people from entering the campus.

Armed white supremacists from throughout the region, stirred up by defiant words from Mississippi Gov. Ross Barnett, descended on the campus and soon outnumbered students, most of whom did not participate in the rioting. A rumor (which proved to be untrue) spread that a popular female student had been killed, further agitating the mob that filled the Circle.

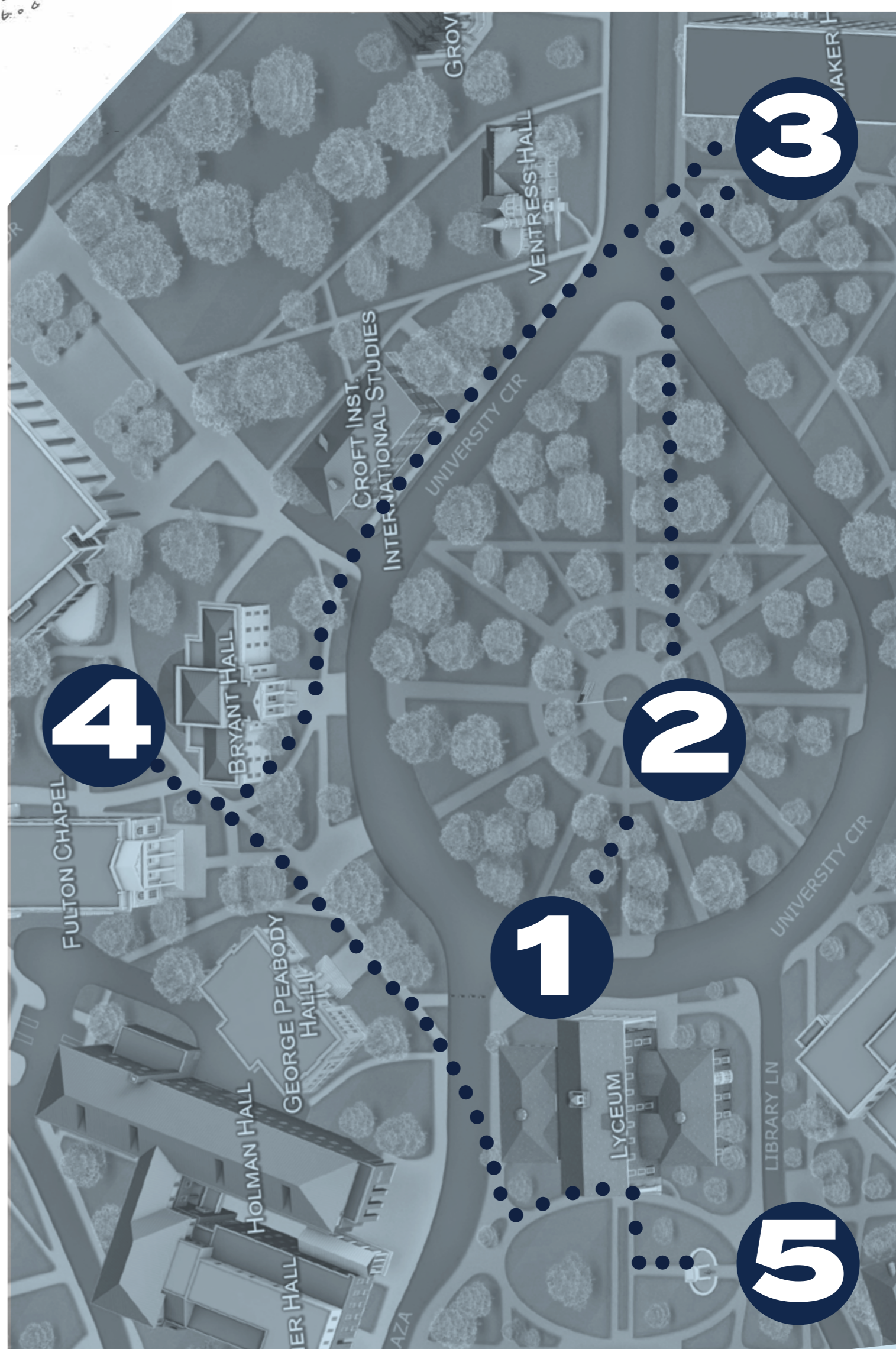
Several students circulated through the crowd pleading for calm. It was reported that one student climbed onto the base of the flagpole urging the crowd to stop the violence. Hecklers drove him away. Fifty yards to the east at the former location of the Confederate Monument (it was moved to a Civil War cemetery on campus on July 14, 2020), the Right Rev. Duncan Gray Jr., then-rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Oxford, appealed to the mob's conscience. He, too, was driven away by their anger.

### 3 SHOEMAKER HALL

Continue east toward Ventress Hall and turn diagonally to the right facing Shoemaker Hall.

In 1962, Shoemaker Hall — a science laboratory and classroom building — was under construction. The rioters used many of the bricks, pipes and other construction materials from the site as weapons. At about 11 p.m., Ray Gunter, 23, an Oxford resident, was watching the conflict with a friend from atop a pile of construction debris. The crowd suddenly surged toward them, and, as Gunter turned to leave, he was struck in the head by a bullet and died.

The violence continued to intensify. Earlier that night, a convoy of Mississippi National Guardsmen from the Oxford armory crossed the University Avenue bridge, where they were met by an angry mob that showered them with bricks and bats. They pushed on to the Lyceum to support the marshals and were later joined by more guardsmen and regular U.S. Army troops. By the end of the next day, almost 30,000 combat troops were deployed to Oxford.



### 4 SITE OF PAUL GUIHARD'S DEATH

Turn to the left and follow the sidewalk past Ventress Hall and the Croft Institute to the Student Union. Continue to the patio area between Bryant Hall and the Union.

A reporter for the French news organization Agence France-Presse, Paul Guihard, 30, was one of several hundred reporters who arrived in Oxford to cover Meredith's enrollment. At about 9 p.m., students heard Guihard moaning and found him at this location in some bushes. He had been shot in the back at close range and died soon after. No one ever came forward to identify his killer(s).

### 5 CIVIL RIGHTS MONUMENT

Return to the ellipse between the west side of the Lyceum and the J.D. Williams Library.

The idea for a civil rights monument on the Ole Miss campus grew out of discussions in a graduate folklore class in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Engraved at the top of the monument are the words Courage, Knowledge, Perseverance and Opportunity. The monument also features a statue of a young James Meredith striding purposefully toward the center of the university. The civil rights monument is intended as a place for people to pause and reflect on the words spoken by former Mississippi Gov. William Winter at its dedication ceremony: "This is a marker that tells us not only where we have been, but where we need to be going."

The Meredith sculpture is by Oxford artist and Ole Miss graduate Rod Moorhead. The monument was designed by James H. Eley, FAIA, of Eley Associates/Architects, and was dedicated on Oct. 1, 2006, 44 years to the day that Meredith successfully enrolled to take classes.

### ADDITIONAL SITES OF INTEREST

In fall 2011, the Black Student Union discussed its desire to acknowledge Meredith's contribution to student life. This conversation evolved into an idea to mark the first day of Meredith's campus experience. Three markers sponsored by the Black Student Union have been placed on campus to highlight his journey on his first day.

**Baxter Hall:** Now the campus telecommunications center, Baxter Hall in 1962 was a men's residence hall. When Meredith was brought to the campus, he was taken here to spend the night under guard, out of sight and almost out of earshot of the events in the Circle. It was here that Meredith lived during his time as a student.

**Bondurant Hall:** Meredith attended his first class, Colonial American History, on Oct. 1 in Bondurant Hall. That classroom (then Grad 29) is now C208. Meredith also took a French class in Bondurant in Grad 25E, which is now E203, a faculty office.

**Peabody Hall:** On his first day as an Ole Miss student, Meredith went to this building, where he was enrolled in a mathematics class in Peabody "15." It is now Peabody 311 and used as faculty offices.

**SPJ Historic Plaques, Farley Hall:** The Society of Professional Journalists designated campus a national historic site in journalism in honor of Paul Guihard and the more than 300 reporters who were on campus to cover Meredith's enrollment. The UM site was the 100th such designation by SPJ. One plaque is located in front of Farley Hall with a second plaque housed inside the building.

**Paul Guihard Memorial Bench:** Located between Farley Hall and the Honors College, the bench was erected in 2009 by the UM chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists with funds provided by SPJ through a campus chapter grant.

**Silver Pond:** The late James W. Silver, a professor of history at the university from 1936 to 1964, was honored with the dedication of Silver Pond, a body of water near the intersection of Sorority Row and West Jackson Avenue. Following the admission of Meredith, Silver offered support and friendship to the embattled student. He published *Mississippi: The Closed Society in 1964*, just two years after witnessing Meredith's turbulent admission to the university. Silver was later forced to leave the University as a result of his support of Meredith and civil rights in Mississippi.

