

By 1900, Meridian was the center of the lumber industry, shipping more than 120 million feet of manufactured lumber by rail to the large northern markets. Directly below, this photo from 1900 shows the original depot (destroyed in the 1906 tornado, rebuilt,

partially torn down and now reconstructed as the Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center). In the bottom photo, the same scene today. Note that the building on the left is now being restored as Montana's Restaurant.



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MERIDIAN'S 21ST CENTURY MAYOR JOHN ROBERT SMITH AT THE E.H. DIAL HOUSE, RESIDENCE OF MERIDIAN'S MAYOR IN 1900. THE HOUSE, LOCATED NEAR ANTEBELLUM MERREHOPE, IS IN NEED OF RESTORATION.



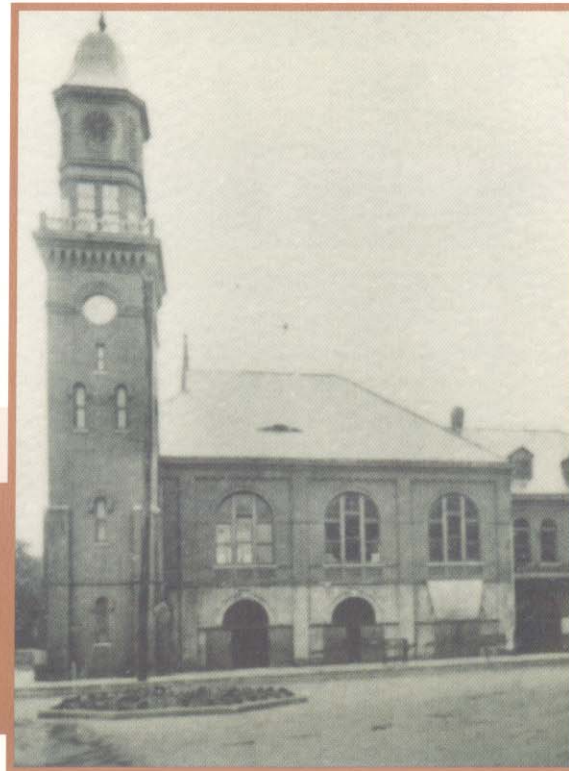
To the City Council and the People of Meridian:

At the turn of the 20th Century, under the leadership of Mayor E.H. Dial, the people of Meridian were infused with a sense of excitement about the future and were involved in important community projects. Streets and sidewalks were being paved, an electric street railway system went into

operation and the first sewage system of its kind in the state was constructed. Mayor Dial also led the effort to compile a code of laws for the city.

The pride of the community was the Grand Opera House, which played host to some of the best entertainers in the country. How fitting, then, that exactly 100 years later, we are poised to restore our magnificent theatre and create in the Marks Rothenberg building an arts education and conference center that will be heralded regionally and nationally. Beginning with a \$10 million grant from The Riley Foundation, the \$26 million in construction funding is in place. In partnership with the city, the county and local schools, Mississippi State University will develop this unique facility that will enrich the lives of our young people through arts education.

At Union Station, a near replica of the one built just after the turn of the 20th Century during Meridian's heyday as a railroad center, the number of Greyhound and Amtrak travelers continues to grow and this Front Street hub is bustling with



IN 1900, MERIDIAN'S CITY HALL—PLUS THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, THE FIRE STATION AND THE CITY-SANCTIONED MEAT MARKET—WERE LOCATED IN THIS BUILDING, WHICH IS CURRENTLY THE SITE OF TRUSTMARK NATIONAL BANK AND THE THREEFOOT BUILDING (SEE NEXT PAGE FOR PHOTO OF HOW THIS LOOKS TODAY). IN THE FOREGROUND, A FLOWER BED ARRANGEMENT SHOWS THAT EVEN IN 1900 THE CITY BELIEVED IN BEAUTIFICATION.

community meetings and social events. When Amtrak begins its new service from Meridian to Dallas in early 2001, new employees and even more travelers will be added.

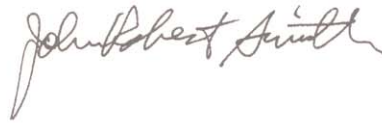
As in 1900, another important sewer project is being developed. After some delays because of routing considerations, our project to provide sewer service to Naval Air Station Meridian is moving forward. Privatization of sewage service is strongly supported by the Navy and is a good investment for the community, because it will enhance NAS Meridian's military value and put the base in good stead in the event of future base closures.

Like the Meridianites of 100 years ago, we are constantly looking for new and creative ways to expand our economy and make full use of our resources. Lauderdale County's acquisition of land for a much-needed new industrial park is a strong and necessary step toward that end. And we have just recently received official notice that Meridian will be the site of the proposed Southern Arts and Entertainment Center. Although state funding is unlikely in this legislative session, a center to showcase the creative genius of Mississippians is the right idea and Meridian's Bonita Lakes is the right place.

To ensure that the beginning of this new century is another period of growth for our community, I have formed the Grow Meridian

Team, a group of community leaders who will study our community's strengths and weaknesses and make practical recommendations about how to grow our population and our economy.

Just as Mayor Dial and his constituents faced the 20th Century with confidence, so are we taking steps to make the 21st Century even better.



WHERE THE ORIGINAL CITY HALL STOOD IN 1900, TODAY THE SAME VIEW SHOWS THE DOUGHBOY MONUMENT, TRUSTMARK NATIONAL BANK AND THE THREEFOOT BUILDING RISING IN THE BACKGROUND.

THE MERIDIAN CITY COUNCIL, STARTING FROM THE TOP:

GEORGE THOMAS, WARD 1

MARY PERRY, WARD 2

BARBARA HENSON, WARD 3

JESSE PALMER, SR., WARD 4 • COUNCIL PRESIDENT

BOBBY SMITH, WARD 5

