



# Strawberry Plains Audubon Center: Four Centuries of a Mississippi Landscape

*Hubert H. McAlexander*

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In 1982, sisters Ruth Finley and Margaret Finley Shackelford made wills bequeathing 2,500 acres and two antebellum houses in Marshall County, Mississippi, to the National Audubon Society. Early in 1998, the surviving sister Margaret Shackelford invited the society to open its state headquarters at the family home in Holly Springs and to begin working at Strawberry Plains, the plantation where she lived four miles north of town. At her death late that year, the society took full possession of the sisters' bequest, and Strawberry Plains Audubon Center was established. *Strawberry Plains Audubon Center: Four Centuries of a Mississippi Landscape* documents the unique and complex history of the land encompassed by the center.

With a large cast of characters from many generations, this book richly delineates life on a tract of land in north Mississippi. It tells a fascinating story involving famous historical figures like Hernando de Soto and William Tecumseh Sherman, but concentrates on those who owned and worked this land and their changing fortunes. Through their individual stories, the author conveys the larger sweep of history in the South and tells an uplifting saga of stewards of the land, conservators whose vision led to the creation of a lasting legacy for people and wildlife.

Hubert H. McAlexander is Josiah Meigs Professor of English at the University of Georgia. His previous books include *Peter Taylor: A Writer's Life* and *Conversations with Peter Taylor* (published by University Press of Mississippi), and his work has appeared in numerous periodicals.

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