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Editor’s Note

The articles for this issue of Arkansas Review came together by serendipity. We had commissioned economist Gary Latanich to do a piece on Delta economics as part of our continuing series which is looking at the seven-state Mississippi River Delta from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, but the other articles were unsolicited submissions from scholars who have been working on the business of the Delta, especially tourism and entertainment.

Robert Alexander’s study of the “boats-in-moats” campaign, which resulted in Missouri’s legalizing gambling in vessels situated in artificial basins, highlights one of the ways in which some Delta states are enhancing their tourist appeal. Keith Sculle’s case study of a family-owned lodging in Memphis, a Delta city known for its role in the tourist accommodations industry, provides a perspective of the way such an establishment evolved over time particularly in the shadow of the growth of chain hostleries, several of which had their beginnings in Memphis. Ronald W. Johnson offers insights into a way government can contribute to the Delta tourism: by doing basic research into the region’s potential and by offering some suggestions for realizing that potential. Stephen Koch’s interview with entrepreneur Al Bell rounds out this set of papers. Bell, whose success in the music industry has made him a model of individual initiative, continues to explore new ways to achieve economic success—with results that have not only a personal impact, but that enhance the economic image of the whole region.

Alexander, Sculle, Johnson, and Koch are answering some of the challenges articulated by Latanich. They show how one aspect of the Delta economy, that oriented toward entertainment and tourism, is flourishing and can be encouraged to flourish more.