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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**ROBERT LEE 'NIGHTHAWK' McCOLLUM TO BE
HONORED WITH BLUES TRAIL MARKER**

FRIARS POINT, MS (December 5, 2007) — Governor Haley Barbour today announced Friars Point will be included on the Mississippi Blues Trail, which is dedicated to preserving the state's musical heritage through more than 100 historical markers and interpretive sites. The Mississippi Blues Trail marker for Robert Lee McCollum will be placed at Hirsberg's, located at 649 2nd Street on December 13 at 2:00 p.m.

"This talented Mississippian made a huge contribution to development of that unique genre of music, the Mississippi blues," Governor Barbour said. "I am pleased Nighthawk's imprint on the blues scene, which is still heard through the tunes of modern-day blues artists, will be recognized with his inclusion on the Mississippi Blues Trail."

Robert Lee McCollum, better known as Robert Nighthawk, was one of the foremost blues guitarists of the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s. Although he was a restless traveler who rarely stayed long in one town, he called Friars Point home at various times throughout his career, and was married there in 1936.

In 1940 he recorded "Friars Point Blues," singing of his home "Down in Sweet Old Dixie Land." His son, Sam Carr, became one of the Delta's most renowned blues drummers, working with Nighthawk, Sonny Boy Williamson, and the Jelly Roll Kings, among others. Carr and his wife Doris have been mainstays of the Delta blues scene for years and now live in Lula.

Nighthawk was born in Helena, Arkansas, in 1909. He began recording under the name Robert Lee McCoy in 1937 and became known as Nighthawk after the release of his first record, "Prowling Night-Hawk." He was a well known entertainer throughout Chicago as well as Mississippi and Arkansas.

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During the 1940s, and on occasions afterwards, he had radio programs in Clarksdale and Helena, and for a time he lived at the Riverside Hotel in Clarksdale. Here, other roomers included several performers from his band such as his wife Hazel; girlfriend and vocalist Ethel Mae Brown; and young Ike Turner, who played piano.

Nighthawk was famed for his slide guitar technique, which consisted of employing a piece of metal tubing to slide along the frets of his guitar.

His best known records included Annie Lee, Black Angel Blues, The Moon is Rising, and Crying Won't Help You, as well as a posthumously released album recorded live at Chicago's Maxwell Street outdoor market which critic Greil Marcus rated as one of the 10 best rock 'n' roll albums of 1980.

Nighthawk died in Helena in 1967.

During Nighthawk's time, blues musicians (including the legendary Robert Johnson) played at juke joints and house parties in Friars Point as well in front of stores, such as Hirsberg's on Second Street. Sometimes merchants hired musicians to attract crowds of potential customers; other times performers would just set up on the sidewalks or street corners and play for tips. But, according to drug store owner Robert Hirsberg, the merchants sometimes complained when the crowds were so thick that no one could get into or out of the stores, especially in the 1940s and earlier, when Friars Point was a bustling center of river commerce and a weekend shopping mecca for residents of the countryside.

For further information on the Mississippi Blues Trail, go to www.msbluestrail.org.

The Mississippi Blues Trail markers are funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by support from the Coahoma County Tourism Commission, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, Delta State University and the Mississippi Development Authority.

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