

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
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## NEWS RELEASE

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### ARCHITREATS: FOOD FOR THOUGHT PRESENTATION *THE COTTON STATE* BY J. MILLS THORNTON AT THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

ArchiTreats: Food for Thought celebrates the *Year of Alabama History* through a series of sequential lectures in Alabama history by leading experts in the field. Join us at **noon on Thursday, April 16** as **J. Mills Thornton** presents *The Cotton State*. This presentation will be held at the Alabama Department of Archives and History.

While many think of antebellum Alabama as a state of magnolias and cotton plantations, that picture tells only part of the story. This program will show how three groups – white yeomen farmers, planter elites, and enslaved African Americans – together created the “cotton state” in Alabama. It will begin with a description of the differences between life in the yeoman sections of the state – the hill counties and the Wiregrass – and life in the plantation areas – the Black Belt and the Tennessee Valley. Each of these groups contributed to and shaped Alabama society and antebellum politics. The program will examine some of the “hot” political topics of the time – the state bank, congressional districting, taxation, state aid for railroads, and secession from the Union.

Montgomery - native J. Mills Thornton is a professor of history at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Professor Thornton received his bachelor’s degree with high honors from Princeton University in 1966, and his doctorate from Yale University in 1974, joining the faculty of the University of Michigan in that year. His book, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860*, published in 1978, received the Dunning Prize of the American Historical Association. His second book, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma*, published in 2002, received the Liberty Legacy Prize of the Organization of American Historians. During 2007-08, he served as the Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions at the University of Cambridge in England.

This ArchiTreats presentation is made possible by the Friends of the Alabama Archives and a grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The public is invited to bring a sack lunch and enjoy a bit of Alabama history. Coffee and tea will be provided by the Friends of the Alabama Archives. For more information, call (334) 353-4712.

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