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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:***

## **Greenwood To Unveil Blues Trail Marker For Robert Johnson**

JACKSON, Miss., (May 8, 2007) -- Greenwood will hold a Mississippi Blues Trail marker unveiling at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 16, 2007, at the gravesite of blues progenitor, Robert Johnson. The marker will be placed near the cemetery at Little Zion Church.

A seminal figure in the history of the Delta blues, Robert Johnson synthesized the music of Mississippi blues pioneers such as Son House with outside traditions and influenced artists such as Muddy Waters and Elmore James. Johnson's compositions, notable for their poetic qualities, include the standards "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Dust My Broom." Johnson's mysterious life and early death continue to fascinate modern fans.

Known as one of the most famous and legendary Delta blues musicians, Robert Johnson recorded only twenty-nine songs at two recording sessions in 1936 and 1937 and his work has been included in the repertoires of countless blues and rock musicians since. Johnson's songs "I Believe I'll Dust My Broom," "Cross Road Blues," "Love in Vain Blues," "Traveling Riverside Blues" and "Sweet Home Chicago" became well known via the recordings of Elmore James, Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and many others.

Johnson was born in Hazlehurst, Mississippi, but by 1920 he was living near Robinsonville, just south of Memphis. He traveled around the Delta and to other parts of the country including Memphis, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and even Canada. He went from one jook to another, never settling in one place, although he did have a home in Helena, Arkansas, for a time. Late in 1938, impresario John Hammond planned to present Johnson as part of the "From Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall, an appearance that would have undoubtedly made him an international star. Unfortunately, Johnson died before that event.

He was allegedly poisoned and died on Star of the West Plantation just south of Little Zion Church on August 16 and was buried there the following day. Some believe the myth that Johnson sold his soul in exchange for remarkable guitar-playing skills that would make him famous, and the story of his fateful meeting with the devil at a rural crossroads is an enduring blues theme.

(more)

"Tourists and blues enthusiast from all over the world come to this gravesite to pay homage to Johnson," said Alex Thomas, Heritage Trail Director. "Even though his early death was a mystery, he still lives through the music he left us to cherish."

The marker site is located on Money Road in Leflore County and a printable map can be viewed at <http://www.msbluestrail.org>.

The Mississippi Blues Trail markers were funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and by support from the Greenwood Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Mississippi Development Authority.

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### **About Mississippi Development Authority**

Mississippi Development Authority is the State of Mississippi's lead economic and community development agency. More than 250 employees are engaged in providing services to businesses, communities and workers in the state. While the agency is best known for its efforts to recruit new businesses to Mississippi, MDA provides services to promote tourism, help communities improve their quality of place, help existing employers identify and meet opportunities and challenges and help workers improve their skills – all with the goal of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of Mississippians. For more information, visit MDA's website at [www.mississippi.org](http://www.mississippi.org).