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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AVALON, Miss. – Mississippi John Hurt, a giant of American music and a hero to guitarists everywhere, has been honored with a state historic marker at Avalon, the hamlet where he spent most of his life.

It reads: "John S. Hurt, 1893-1966, was a pioneer blues and folk guitarist. Self-taught, Hurt rarely left his home at Avalon, where he worked as a farmer. Although he recorded several songs in 1928, including "Avalon Blues" and "Frankie," he lived in relative obscurity before he was rediscovered in the blues revival of the 1960s."

The green sign, bearing Mississippi's state flower, the magnolia, was installed July 7 on the west side of state Highway 7 between Grenada and Greenwood. A small installation ceremony at the site featured live performance of Hurt songs by Art Browning, curator of the Mississippi John Hurt Museum; Steve Cheseborough, a Greenwood musician and author of Blues Traveling; and Phil "Delta Dan" Ratcliffe, a Scottish zoologist who was visiting the area. There also were appearances by local dignitaries and remarks by Hurt's granddaughter, Mary Hurt Wright.

"This sign marks an important period in my life, because it confirms the historical and heroic attempt my grandfather made toward a completion of life," Wright said. "It confirms what an individual can do if he or she believes in himself and his willing to sacrifice enough to accomplish his dreams. I hope people, as I have, use my grandfather as an example to continue to endeavor and persevere in whatever their dreams may be."

The sign and installation were sponsored by the Mississippi John Hurt Foundation, which had just held the second annual Mississippi John Hurt 4th of July Blues and Gospel Festival. The festival is held next to the Hurt Museum, which is housed in a shotgun shack that Hurt lived in for decades.

The museum's latest major acquisition is an oil painting of Hurt by artist G. Bilger. It also recently acquired a plaque from the Folk Alliance, giving Hurt a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Wright said it was not Avalon itself, but Hurt's art and determination, that matter. "It could be Anyplace USA – everybody has a beginning and an end," she said. "Whatever circumstances you're born in, if you dream the difference you can make the difference."

Photo by Susie James. Subjects of photo, L to R: Art Browning, Steve Cheseborough, Phil "Delta Dan" Ratcliffe.