

A visitor to the Cotton Museum may wonder what squidges and snakes have to do with the cotton trade. A tour of the museum will soon explain that this historic area was once filled with apprentice cotton classers (squidges) and snakes, long bags of sample cotton discarded on the street.



museum's founder and president, The Cotton Exchange was the "coffee shop" of the day, "a confluence of sellers (farmers) and buyers (merchants and mills) for more than 130 years." Visitors use an iPod to listen to the area's history and hear simulated activity of a street buyer looking at samples of

From Field to Fabric Cotton Museum's new audio tour tells all

The museum, situated on the trading floor of the Memphis Cotton Exchange, recently developed and produced an audio walking tour of Front Street, known as Cotton Row, which allows visitors to get outside the Exchange's 3,000 square foot building and get on street where the bigger story is told. The audio tour is 30 minutes long, covers nine stops on Front Street, and incorporates oral histories from local industry legends. It includes narration by Jimmy Ogle, a native Memphian and history buff who leads free Downtown walking tours. The new tour was funded by a Save our History grant from the HISTORY Channel.

The tour takes visitors through downtown's Cotton Row, where people came daily to trade, socialize and gain information about the industry and about what was happening in others parts of the Delta and the world. According to Calvin Turley, the

500 pound bales of cotton. Colorful markers designate each stop along the tour, which begins in the lobby of the Cotton Exchange building and ends on the floor of the museum. "The history of cotton commerce—from field to fabric—is inextricably tied to the history of this region. Our mission is to share that history with the broader community," shares Turley. He suggests that museum patrons take the audio tour first to get the physical dimension and feel for the market and then go inside to explore the rich details of the museum. The Cotton Museum is open Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5. 65 Union; 901.531.7826 memphiscottonmuseum.org

Celebrate the cotton harvest and raise funds for the Cotton Museum at the Harvest Party. Earnestine and Hazel's, Saturday November 7; food, open bar, music \$75 per person. ●

-Laura Netten

as seen in...

