West Baton Rouge Historical Association
Annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series Recap

Authors Faye Phillips and Chip Landry were guest speakers for the West Baton Rouge Historical Association's annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series on Sunday, November 1, 2020 at the West Baton Rouge Museum. It was no coincidence that they were invited to speak on Historic Magnolia Cemetery on this date which happened to be All Saint's Day. A reception and book signing followed their presentation.

Chip Landry is the chairman of the Board of Trustees of Historic Magnolia Cemetery and the sexton of Historic St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery. Faye Phillips, named professor emerita upon retirement from Louisiana State University Libraries, is currently a library consultant.

As a note of remembrance, ECD Chair, Dr. Evva Wilson arranged for the speakers and the program date before she passed away.

Special thanks to the Hospitality Committee for providing refreshments and to Andrea Normand for designing a lovely thematic table scape.

This lecture series is held annually in memory of Ethel Claiborne Dameron, founder of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association and West Baton Rouge Museum.

2021 Membership Dues Are Now Due
Make check payable to: WBRHA
Mail to: WBR Historical Association
845 North Jefferson, Port Allen, LA 70767
See Membership form on Page 8 for dues amount.

West Baton Rouge Historical Association
Burny Myrick Fundraiser Drawing

The West Baton Rouge Historical Association was graced with a generous fundraising opportunity by collectors, Gerard and Selma Ruth of Baton Rouge who offered works of art from their collection for a drawing to support the HA and its mission: to foster an interest in parish history, encourage and pursue research, and collect and preserve materials illustrating past and present parish activities.

Winning tickets were drawn following the annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture held at the museum on Sunday, November 1, 2020. The first place winner, Ruth Stanley, received an original Burny Myrick water color. Among the other prizes included three numbered Burny Myrick prints which were awarded to Tom Acosta, Mary Bennett, and Beth Kleinpeter. Lastly, before the drawing was complete, a signed copy of The Timeless River: A Portrait of Life on the Mississippi 1850-1900 went to Joe Beaud III, a Cleveland Stewart original went to Tom Acosta, a Beth Watson original went to Mary Bennett, and a copy of George Rodrigue's book, The Cajuns was won by Alice LeBlanc.
FROM OUR PRESIDENT
AROUND OUR ASSOCIATION

My first thought as I began this missive is to wish everyone a happy, blessed, and healthy 2021.

After navigating what seemed like “Mr. Toad’s wild ride” in 2020, I think we can look back with a sense of achievement for the continuance and maintenance of the mission of the Historical Association. If 2020 demonstrated anything, it is that with the fortitude, flexibility, and innovativeness of our staff, goals can be met and accomplished.

This is my final letter in the Ecoutez as president of the Association. I have to admit my term did not play out exactly as I imagined and this year will definitely be remembered as one of note. In the fluid position presented to us by COVID, we did manage to offer a myriad of experiences for our members and the general public. As we worked our way through wearing masks, social distancing, quarantining, sanitizing and, yes, even hand washing, exhibits were still displayed, the lecture series program was held, music still emanated from the Juke Joint, and our ongoing programs and special events were held as scheduled and were well attended. Of course, CDC guidelines were put into place to inscribe the safety of all attendees.

On a sadder note, 2020 was also the year when we lost three of our staunchest volunteers. Evva Wilson, Jane Brou and Wilhemenia DeCuir all passed away during the year. These three ladies were the epitome of what volunteerism means. For many years they all donated their time, energies and talents into making the Historical Association an integral part of parish. They will be missed. It was a privilege to have worked with each one and I know you join me in prayer that they rest in the peace of our Lord.

Since I am not only bidding adieu to my role as president, I am also rotating off the HA Board of Directors. Over the past six years I have been fortunate to serve with friends, make new acquaintances and friends, and discover for myself what it means to volunteer in such a worthwhile organization. My only hope is that I was able to give the association a fragment of what I feel it has afforded me.

As I close, I know I will continue to be interested and involved in this treasure to our parish. I can assure you I will never be too far from the museum doors. (I live right down the street.) Thank you to all who continue their support through their membership. Let’s continue to encourage others to become members and join us in this vital organization—The WBR Historical Association.

Mary
Mary Bennett

Where history has a name.

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM

From Our Director

Dear Friends,

As we continue to keep an eye on the pandemic and the history being made around us, I think it’s safe to say that we are all glad to have last year behind us and are hopeful for the New Year!

We have two exciting exhibits that opened in January, Queen Zulu: Rose Roché of Port Allen and A. Hays Town and the Architectural Image of Louisiana. If you are blue about missing Mardi Gras this year (for only the 3rd time ever in Louisiana history), check out our Facebook and YouTube channel on Mardi Gras Day for an interview with royalty from our hometown. Share in Rose Roché’s experience as she recounts the revelry of her reign twenty-five years ago in the short film “The Tale of a Zulu Queen.” We will also post a festive storytelling segment complete with carnival craft activities online for families to celebrate the season at home. In conjunction with the A. Hays Town exhibit, we are grateful for our friends at the West Baton Rouge Presbyterian Church, an A. Hays Town building, for hosting a reception following a gallery talk at the Museum with Town’s granddaughter, Leslie Gladney on Wednesday, February 24 at Noon. Both of these exhibits feature items of local historical significance as well as artifacts that have been offered to the WBRHA’s Permanent Collection such as Mr. Town’s blueprints offered by the Presbyterian Church and the stunning parade costume offered by Ms. Roché.

In 2021, we will be rolling out a number of videos in our Rural Roots of Music series with the National Parks Service. We began this project last year when we closed our doors for COVID-19 in an effort to continually record local cultural traditions, support local artists, and find innovative ways to stay connected with the community. Creating content such as this has helped us have a greater online presence as well.

As we closely monitor governmental regulations, many of our programs, including National History Day will be held virtually this year. We are working toward offering our Lunchtime Lecture Series in person with an option to tune in virtually as well. We are pleased to welcome visitors for small group tours and at our monthly Café Français (1st Fridays) and our Second Sunday Old Time Jam. For now, we are still hosting our Blues After School program in an open air space with safety protocols in place and are prepared to meet remotely if need be.

Please follow us on social media for updates on what’s going on at the WBR Museum as well as all of our online programs.

We hope to see you soon! Until then, stay safe and stay connected with the West Baton Rouge Museum!

Sincerely,

Angélique Bergeon
 Kirby Guerin retires after 17 years of service at the West Baton Rouge Museum. Mr. Kirby has a wealth of talents from farming and tending to the museum’s sugar cane patch, to woodworking for building repair and building anything and everything the curators needed for exhibits. Mr. Kirby has an inventive mind and would frequently disassemble equipment and reassemble it better than before. In another life he would have been an engineer. Louisiana Creole was his first language and visitors sought him out to converse with him in this unique language. (He was one of the main reasons I was excited to join the WBRM Team. He was mon professor Creole). He was a true treasure and we miss him dearly but enjoy hearing tales of how he is spending his retirement days. Angelique Bergeron, WBRM Museum Director

Save the Date
Christmas in July Card Party

Plans are underway for the 15th annual Christmas in July Card Party fundraiser set for Monday, July 26, 2021. The West Baton Rouge Historical Association hosts the annual fundraiser event which begins at 10:00 a.m. at the West Baton Rouge Community Center in Port Allen.

Card players are invited to try their luck at bridge, bouree, canasta, dominoes, hand and foot canasta, pokeno, sequence, Shanghi rummy and other parlor games. Spread the word to your card playing friends and family. More information to follow.

Curators’ Corner:

Upcoming Exhibits

The WBRM Museum will host its latest traveling exhibit, A. Hays Town and the Architectural Image of Louisiana from January 16 to March 7, 2021. Mr. Town was a Louisiana architect whose career spanned over six decades. His designs, which had French, Spanish, and Caribbean influences, gained national recognition and were sought after by many all over the South. His beloved and often imitated homes are evocative of the archetypal residential architecture of Creole Louisiana. The exhibit features a collection of drawings, photographs, architectural models, and archival records. It is on loan from the Hilliard Museum and was guest curated by architectural historian, Dr. Carol McMichael Reese, Professor in the School of Architecture at Tulane University, where Town studied.

Also on display is, Queen Zulu: Rose Roché of Port Allen. In 1996, Rose A. Lee Roché made history when she became the first queen not from New Orleans to preside over the famous Mardi Gras krewes known as the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. Roché is a West Baton Rouge native and graduate of Cohn High School. She later attended Southern University and worked there for many years before becoming Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of Port Allen. The WBRM is proud to feature Queen Zulu Rose Roché’s costume, photographs, memorabilia, vintage coconuts, throws, and posters. For the first time, eleven sketches by the legendary Mardi Gras costume designer Anthony Colombo and his wife Shirley for various Zulu Queens will be on exhibit. Visitors will learn about the unique experience of being Queen Zulu and the history behind one of America’s largest and most popular carnival krewes, the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. The exhibit closes February 28, 2021.

The story of quilts of New Orleans artist Cely Pedeselxaelux will be featured in an exhibition, Centered Around Culture at the West Baton Rouge Museum March 6 through May 30, 2021. Cely was inspired at an early age by family members who were seamstresses. Her colorful multi-layered quilts reflect various styles of crocheting, beading, and tatting that she learned from these women. Her contemporary quilts have been displayed in France, Italy and China as well as museums and cultural centers around Louisiana.

The West Baton Rouge Museum will host a traveling exhibit, Wandering Spirits: African Wax Prints, from March 20th to May 2nd. This exhibit will feature wax cloths from local community members and other items featuring the prestigious wax cloth. The history of the African wax print is a history paved along colonial trade routes and globalization in the post-colonial era. Though not originally African, these textiles have become ingrained in African culture and society, and loved and identified as their own. This exhibit is on loan from ExhibitsUSA and was curated by Gifty Benson.
West Baton Rouge Historical Association
Awarded Funds for the Blues After School Program

It is with special thanks to the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation that the 2020 – 2021 Blues After School program can be offered free of charge to local middle and high school students who meet at the West Baton Rouge Museum’s Juke Joint weekly throughout the school year to learn about the culture, tradition and history of West Baton Rouge Blues music and music legends. In the fall of 2020, Director of Programs, Jeannie Luckett applied for grant funding through the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation’s Community Partnership Grants program to help pay professional teaching fees of music educators from Rockin’ Mozart Academy LLC who provide instrument and ensemble instruction. The HA is proud to be the recipient of this funding opportunity in support of Blues After School for a second year in a row.

Tune In to Social Media on Mardi Gras Day for “The Tale of a Zulu Queen”

The good times may not roll this year with parade floats but carnival season can still be celebrated in different ways in an effort to keep the culture and tradition alive and well. So, instead of standing in a crowd, cozy up on the couch and watch the debut of a new film short on Mardi Gras Day, Tuesday, February 16. Simply go to www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org, Facebook(@TheWBRM), Twitter(@WBRM), or Instagram(@wbr_museum) to attend this virtual screening. Revelers, in a relaxed way, will be entertained as they hear about the exciting experience enjoyed by a local royal in “The Tale of a Zulu Queen.” The film will tell the story of Rose Roché, the first queen not from New Orleans to preside over the famous Mardi Gras krewe known as the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. Roché noted as a parade goer, there are so many amazing details that the public doesn’t often hear about, and she’s elated to share her tale.

Rose Roché is a West Baton Rouge native and graduate of Cohn High School. She later attended Southern University and worked there for many years before becoming Director of Community and Economic Development for the City of Port Allen.

This film, produced by FantomLight Productions, is offered in conjunction with the current exhibit, Queen Zulu: Rose Roché of Port Allen on display at the WBR Museum though February 28, 2021.
A. Hays Town Gallery Talk, Tour and Reception

Join Leslie Gladney, granddaughter of famed Louisiana architect, A. Hays Town on Wednesday, Feb. 24 at Noon at the WBR Museum. Gladney will present a luncheon Gallery Talk to accompany the current traveling exhibition, A. Hays Town and the Architectural Image of Louisiana on loan from the Paul and Lulu Hilliard Museum. Immediately following the presentation, guests are invited to visit the West Baton Rouge Presbyterian Church which was designed by A. Hays Town. There, enjoy a brief tour and light reception. The church is located minutes and only a few blocks away from the museum.

This program is free and open to the public. Masks are required and social distancing protocol will be followed.

West Baton Rouge Museum Announces Promotions and New Hires

In this tumultuous time, the West Baton Rouge Museum is pleased to announce recent promotions and new hires, including Lauren Hawthorne as Curator of Collections, Ferin Jones as Exhibits Curator, André St. Romain as Educator, Laura Crook as Administrative Assistant, Amanda Moak as Director of Visitor Services and Patrick Martin as Museum Maintenance.

Curator of Collections Lauren Hawthorne has served the WBR Museum as Registrar and Exhibits Coordinator since 2011. Prior to that, she was Director of Visitor Services at the Alexandria Museum of Art. While Registrar, Hawthorne curated current and past exhibitions for the WBR Museum, including The Collectible Life of Mignon Faget (with Nolde Alexius) and The 50th Anniversary of A Charlie Brown Christmas. A fine arts graduate of Louisiana State University, Hawthorne has illustrated two books, Georges, The Goose From Toulouse Who Only Ate Couscous and Georges, The Goose from Toulouse Who Slurped His Juice. She has a third book currently in publication. Hawthorne was an independent artist at Bienville Studios and volunteers at Rural Life Museum and the Baton Rouge Symphony League and Orchestra. She is the proud mother of Olivia, Millicent, and Amelia (with her supportive husband, Trippe), all frequent volunteers for museum programs.

Exhibits Curator Ferin Jones began work as a part-time Tour Guide at the WBR Museum in 2015. She has since held various titles, including Camp Counselor, Millennial Consultant, Social Media Manager, and Public Relations. She joined the WBR Museum staff full-time in 2020 after completing a Master’s Degree in History from LSU, with a thesis entitled, African-Americans Abroad: Josephine Baker and the Controversy Surrounding African-American Figures Outside of America. While at LSU, Jones served as Graduate Assistant for the African and African-American Studies Program. She is a member of the Association of African American Museums, the American Alliance of Museums, and the American Association of State and Local History.

Educator André St. Romain began work as a bilingual educational consultant at the WBR Museum in 2019 assisting with French language tours and programs. He has taken on numerous additional roles during the pandemic and was promoted to full-time Educator in January 2021. St. Romain has a Master’s of Science in Counselor Education from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Originally from Pointe Coupee, he studied and worked in France and Canada prior to joining the West Baton Rouge Museum team. St. Romain is an artist, musician, and avid gardener who enjoys tending to his fruit trees and vegetable garden in the Chenal of False River.

Recent hire Laura Crook serves as the West Baton Rouge Museum’s part-time Administrative Assistant. A long-time resident of West Baton Rouge Parish, Crook brings extensive accounting experience with her both in the Attorney General’s Office and as an Accounting Instructor in the Louisiana Technical College System. She brings combined State service of 39 years. Proud grandmother. In her spare time, Crook enjoys working horse sorting events.

Amanda Moak has been promoted to Director of Visitor Services and will serve as the Historical Association liaison, replacing Alice LeBlanc who has retired. Amanda has been hanging around the West Baton Rouge Museum since 2015; first as a volunteer (and was Volunteer of the Year in 2017), then as an intern, and finally joining our staff in the summer of 2018. She has served as an interdepartmental liaison assisting with programs, tours, and exhibits. Most recently she has worked in visitor research and evaluation. We joke, but she truly was the missing link in our Museum team.

West Baton Rouge Parish native Patrick Martin returned to the museum as Maintenance Manager following the retirement of Mr. Kirby Guerin during the summer. Martin previously served as Guerin’s assistant and was a careful student of historical carpentry repairs. In his spare time, he enjoys video games and woodworking.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2 – February 28 – Exhibition – Queen Zulu: Rose Roche of Port Allen

January 16 – March 7 – Exhibition – A. Hays Town – This exhibit on the works of A. Hays Town will be open through March 7th in the Whitehead Gallery.

January 18 – MLK Day – The West Baton Rouge Museum will be open to receive tours on this day of remembrance as a place for families to reflect on the past.

January 22-23 – Birth and Wellness Retreat – Join Nanette McCann of A Caring Season Doula and Dr. Sears Certified L.E.A.N. Coach as she presents a two part retreat for expectant mothers at the museum in a welcoming women's only environment where expectant mothers can draw strength and encouragement from each other and from historical tales of mothers and midwives, modern day pregnancy and postpartum pointers, and relaxing meditative activities. Space is limited and advanced reservations are required. $65

January 31 – Volunteer Appreciation Party – This year’s celebration will be held virtually. Go to the museum’s FaceBook page to congratulate the 2020 recipients of the Volunteer and Junior Volunteer of the Year awards as well as words of thanks to all of our sweet volunteers who help throughout the year.

February 5 - 1PM – Le Café Français – Gratuit. (Free and open to the public.)

February 14 – Old Time Jam - a monthly open jam open to any musician with an acoustic instrument to join in to play tunes including but not limited to Old Country, Bluegrass, Cajun and folk music. The public is invited to sit in to enjoy music on a Sunday afternoon. Free.

February 15 – Enrichment Monday

February 24 – Gallery Talk with Leslie Gladney, Noon – Join Leslie Gladney, granddaughter of famed Louisiana architect, A. Hays Town for a lunchtime Gallery Talk at the museum to accompany the current traveling exhibition, A. Hays Town and the Architectural Image of Louisiana followed by a visit to the West Baton Rouge Presbyterian Church which was designed by A. Hays Town for a brief tour and light reception. The church is located minutes and only a few blocks away from the museum. Free.

March 5 – 1PM – Le Café Français – Gratuit. (Free and open to the public.)

March 6 – May 30 – Exhibition – Centered Around Culture: Quilts by Cely Pedescleaux

March 13 – Baton Rouge Regional National History Day Competition – to be held virtually this year.

March 15 – Enrichment Monday

March 14 – Old Time Jam - a monthly open jam open to any musician with an acoustic instrument to join in to play tunes including but not limited to Old Country, Bluegrass, Cajun and folk music. The public is invited to sit in to enjoy music on a Sunday afternoon. Free.

March 20 – May 2 – Exhibition - Wandering Spirit: African Wax Prints

Find more events online at www.westbatonrougemuseum.org.

CURRENT LIST OF FRIENDS

Carolyn and Wayne Achee
Thomas W. Acosta, Jr.
American Sugar Cane League
Babs Babin and Family
Joyce & Kenneth Barbier
Mary F. Bennett
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Russell & Peggy Daigle
Fernin F. Eaton
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Lagniappe Dulcimer Society
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West Side Women's Club
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845 North Jefferson Avenue
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Phone: 225-336-2422
Fax: 225-336-2448
Email: contact_us@wbrmuseum.org
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Change Service Requested

Donations were received for the following Memorial Funds:

Acquisitions Memorial Fund
Doug Wilkinson - Angelique Bergeron

Ethel Claiborne Dameron Memorial Fund

General Memorial Fund
Kay Sager - West Side Women's Club
Evva Wilson - West Side Women's Club
Jane Brou - West Side Women’s Club
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Jane Brou - Daniel & Jayne Jason

Museum Memorial Fund
Wilhemenia Williams DeCuir - Angelique Bergeron

Frank Carruth III Children's Fund
Eloise Gomez Andries - Julie & Kenneth Rose

WBR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL DONATION FORM
Please fill out the form, enclose your donation made payable to the West Baton Rouge Historical Association in an envelope and mail to: West Baton Rouge Historical Association, 845 N. Jefferson Avenue, Port Allen, LA 70767. Only one acknowledgement card will be sent per donation. Thank you.

FROM: ____________________________________________
IN MEMORY OF: __________________________________
PLEASE MAIL CARD TO: ______________________________
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NOTE: Place an (X) next to the Memorial Fund to which you wish to send your donation.

ACQUISITIONS FUND  ETHEL CLAIRBONE DAMERON FUND
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The WBR Historical Association is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. All gifts are tax exempt. Thank you for supporting the WBR Historical Association.

Membership Form - 2021

Name: ____________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________
Email Address: __________________________________
Telephone: _______________________________________

Please check the membership category you wish to join.

Student $10.00  Friends $100.00  (businesses/individuals)
Member $20.00  Patrons $35.00  (individuals)
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Make checks payable to West Baton Rouge Historical Association, and mail to 845 North Jefferson Avenue, Port Allen, LA 70767.