A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

WINTER 2022

OUR PURPOSE
“The purpose of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association shall be to foster interest in history, particularly that of West Baton Rouge Parish, and to encourage and pursue research, collection, and preservation of materials illustrating past or present activities of the parish.”

NEWSLETTER
ÉCOUTEZ
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“CALLING
ALL HISTORY ENTHUSIASTS!

On Thursday February 16, 2023, the West Baton Rouge Museum is set to host the Baton Rouge Regional History Day Competition. The campus will be full of junior high and high school students presenting projects, and we are looking for judges and volunteers to help facilitate the day.

This year’s theme is Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas. Students choose a topic and create projects in one of five categories: exhibit, website, documentary, performance, and research paper. Students are competing for the chance to represent their schools at the state competition, held at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. Please join us and share your passion for knowledge and learning with our competitors.

ANNUAL MEETING
Mark your calendars for Monday January 9, 2023. The West Baton Rouge Historical Association will be hosting its Annual Meeting at 1:30 PM, at the West Baton Rouge Museum in the Brick Gallery. Committee Chairs will be presenting their end-of-year reports. There will also be a vote on new board members and officers.

If you can’t attend, please mail your proxy vote to Amanda Moak at 845 N. Jefferson Ave., Port Allen, LA 70767. A small reception will immediately follow the meeting.

The West Baton Rouge Historical Association hosted its annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series on Sunday, November 13, 2022 at the West Baton Rouge Museum. Board members, museum staff, and the general public welcomed guest speaker, Elizabeth Chubbuck Weinstein who presented a talk on “Angela Gregory: Doyenne of Louisiana Sculpture.” A lovely reception hosted by the WBR HA’s Hospitality Committee led by Andrea Normand followed. Contributing committee members included Donna Badon, Kim Callegan, Ashley Coco, Beth Kleinpeter, Debbie Martin, and Ruth Stanley. This event is offered annually in memory of West Baton Rouge Historical Association and West Baton Rouge Museum founder, Ethel Claiborne Dameron affectionately known as “Puffy.”
LES LETTRES

WINTER 2022 ÉCOUTEZ letter

Joyeaux Noël et Bonne Année!

WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

TOM ACOSTA Board President

For the past two years, I have been privileged to serve as President of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association. This will be my final Association President letter for the Écoutez, but I look forward to continuing to serve on the Board of the WBRHA for another three-year term.

Please join us at our Annual Meeting at the Museum at 1:30 PM on Monday, January 9, 2023, as we plan for the coming year. I am looking forward to a rewarding 2023 and hope you will consider getting involved.

As always, please keep up the good work, stay safe, join us and encourage your friends and neighbors to join us at the WBR Historical Association and WBR Museum events when able, and help celebrate West Baton Rouge at OUR Museum!

Tackle difficult subjects with The Art of Addiction by Ben Peabody. In Summer 2023, we are pleased to host George Rodrigue: The River Is the Road (Summer Camp and Teachers’ Institute will be centered around the Rodrigue exhibit!). Our next slice of the Angela Gregory story will open in August and cover her portraits and process. We’ll close out the year pondering nature and art with Small Wonders and Wooden Imposters.

Beginning in February, we will debut a new monthly program in our Big Red Barn. Join us the 1st Sunday of the month for Barn Hands and enjoy demonstrations and hands-on activities for all ages. In addition to the on-demand blacksmith apprenticeships and woodworking workshops, we are now offering workshops in spinning, weaving, sewing and other textile arts.

Our monthly events will continue: Le Café Français (1st Fridays at 1PM), the Old Time Jam (2nd Sundays 3-5PM), Historical Happy Hour (3rd Fridays 6-8PM), Le Jam with the Cajun French Music Association (3rd Sundays 3-5PM), and Yoga (last Tuesdays at 6PM).

Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter for the latest updates.

With all that we have going on, we hope to see you at the museum!
Caroline Kennedy: Forever Young and Forever in our Hearts

IN MEMORIAM

Caroline Kennedy was instrumental in the West Baton Rouge Museum. She worked tirelessly for its renewal. She was a driving force behind securing funding to the museum and ten years later, the first parish millage tax passed to provide annual support. As Director of the WBRM for thirteen years, Caroline oversaw its transition from a small parish museum to a dynamic cultural center. After a year-long stint in France, she returned to the Louisiana Museum community and its Curator. At the Yale Center for British Art in Connecticut, Caroline brought her talents to Louisiana several years ago and oversaw the expansion of the museum’s collections and exhibitions. At the Louisana Museum of Art, she served as the Curator. After a year-long stint in France, she returned to the Louisiana Museum community and became the Educator Curator. As Director of the WBRM for thirteen years, she oversaw its expansion from a small parish museum to a regional history center with a full-time professional staff, outstanding programming, and changing exhibitions. She worked to secure the first parish millage tax pass to provide annual funding to the museum and ten years later she worked tirelessly for its renewal. She was instrumental in the West Baton Rouge Museum and the City of Port Allen’s participation in the 1994 Congress Mondial. She helped the museum hone its focus and brand itself. It is because of Caroline that West Baton Rouge Museum is often referred to as “the sugar museum,” and it was her creative vision that sparked SugarFest. She not only worked within the confines of the museum walls, she went out into the community. She was active with the area Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of Port Allen, the Leadership West program, and the West Baton Rouge Tourism Commission (now Convention and Visitors Bureau). She visited with locals and embraced their stories so she could weave them into the fabric of the museum’s exhibits, growth, and offerings.

Under her leadership, WBRM’s campus continued to evolve with the construction of a new gallery space and administrative wing and the addition of three historic buildings. She also served as the Chair of the Louisiana Association of Museums. As a mentor to many museum professionals and a guiding force, she helped to shape the future of the museum world. Caroline made people feel valued no matter their age, background, or status. She formed connections with everyone she met along the way. We are left with joyful memories, tremendous growth, and a determination to honor her vision and work toward maintaining the goals she set in place.

Caroline Kennedy was a true leader. She brought her talents to Louisiana several years ago and oversaw the expansion of the museum’s collections and exhibitions. At the Louisana Museum of Art, she served as the Curator. After a year-long stint in France, she returned to the Louisiana Museum community and became the Educator Curator. As Director of the WBRM for thirteen years, she oversaw its transition from a small parish museum to a regional history center with a full-time professional staff, outstanding programming, and changing exhibitions. She worked to secure the first parish millage tax pass to provide annual funding to the museum and ten years later she worked tirelessly for its renewal. She was instrumental in the West Baton Rouge Museum and the City of Port Allen’s participation in the 1994 Congress Mondial. She helped the museum hone its focus and brand itself. It is because of Caroline that West Baton Rouge Museum is often referred to as “the sugar museum,” and it was her creative vision that sparked SugarFest. She not only worked within the confines of the museum walls, she went out into the community. She was active with the area Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club of Port Allen, the Leadership West program, and the West Baton Rouge Tourism Commission (now Convention and Visitors Bureau). She visited with locals and embraced their stories so she could weave them into the fabric of the museum’s exhibits, growth, and offerings.

Caroline was a humble and charismatic soul hailing from the historically rich area of Philadelphia who fell in love with the Louisiana landscape, its people, its diverse history, and its culture. She came with a global perspective and a fresh lens. She saw what was special in each person and place. In her efforts to celebrate the unique and vibrant past of the Bayou State along with the artists, tradition bearers, scholars, political leaders, and the neighbors down the street, unknowingly, she endeared herself to so many people in her life. Caroline made people feel valued no matter their position. She formed connections where ever she went and she strengthened the museum community through collaboration. She maintained the goals she set in place. Rather, they share resources for the greater good. She worked with folk artists, fine artists, performing artists, farmers, factory workers, industry professionals, political figures, and top leaders in the museum world. She created educational experiences for visitors of all ages and taught museum professionals working alongside her how to advocate for best practices in museums, share a love of history and culture, and think outside the box to educate the public.

Recently, before her passing, Caroline was awarded the Louisiana Association of Museums Lois Wyatt Bonnin “Heart and Soul” Service Award for her long list of achievements and her ever so creative and giving spirit. Our sincerest condolences to Caroline’s family and friends. We miss her dearly. May she live on in all of the good work she inspired us all to do.

The West Baton Rouge Museum is pleased to present the Youth Volunteer of the Year Award to Kahlila Bandele. Kahlila has been a volunteer with the museum for the last five years, and she is always willing to help with any event. Most notably, she is a favorite counselor for our field trips from the Past summer camps.

Kahlila is currently a senior at Baton Rouge High, and is getting ready for graduation in the spring. We don’t know what we are going to do when she leaves us, because she is someone who can always rely on to attend events and help in whatever capacity. Throughout the years she has led games at SugarFest, dressed up and volunteered for Halloween, recruited extra help for summer camp, and this year she actually learned how to play tennis with her group of campers. If that’s not dedication, then I don’t know what is.

We are certainly sad to see Kahlila go next fall. Wherever she goes, however, we know she will do something great.

The West Baton Rouge Museum is pleased to present the Volunteer of the Year Award to Luis Interiano. Luis works at the West Baton Rouge Parish Library, and over the year, he has consistently made himself available to volunteer for joint functions, as well as museum programs. Our favorite is when he emceed the event.

It is for these reasons we are honored to give him this award. He always goes the extra mile, and he always seems to be working with a smile on his face.

The exhibition Artistry in Iron: Blacksmiths of New Orleans will be on display in the Big Red Barn on the museum grounds starting December 3, 2023. Artistry in Iron tells the often overlooked story of New Orleans’ blacksmiths’ blacksmiths of color who built much of the French Quarter’s iconic iron work. The exhibit beautifully highlights the sources and inspiration behind wrought iron designs in New Orleans and the world of the blacksmiths who created them.
SugarFest: Another Sweet Success

West Baton Rouge Museum’s 27th annual SugarFest was held on Sunday, October 2, 2022. This sweet celebration of the sugar cane harvest has been growing strong since 1995, and thanks to beautiful weather and the generous support from the local community, surrounding areas across the state, and beyond, this year’s event was the biggest yet with record-breaking attendance of approximately 4,000 visitors. Being named as part of Le Grand Reveil Acadien 2022, a multi-parish experience celebrating the lasting cultural impact of the Acadian people designed to encourage Acadians from around the world to continue to advance their unique lifestyle through shared memories, French speaking events, bonding and fellowship over Cajun food, music, and culture, attracted SugarFest visitors from around the globe. The staff of the West Baton Rouge Museum would like to thank Alma Plantation, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Foundation, Harry L. Laws and Company, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, Louisiana Nursery, LSU Sugar Research Station, Oxbow Rum Distillery, Port Allen/Sugah Rush Bakery, the West Baton Rouge Garden and Civic Club, the West Baton Rouge Historical Association, numerous volunteers, all of the artists, musicians, and tradition bearers who shared their time and talent, and all who came out to spend the day with us. See you again next year, SUGAR on the first Sunday in October!

PICS FROM THE PARISH

To Honor our Veterans: Veterans’ Day in WBR

The West Baton Rouge Veteran’s on Parade took place this year on Sunday, November 6. Local leaders Pee Wee Berthelot, Gary Hubble, and Charlene Gordon were in attendance and addressed the crowd with opening words and prayer. The West Baton Rouge Parish Veterans On Parade committee honored three veterans as the 2022 Grand Marshalls of the parade, Mr. Henry Russell Eidson, Jr.; Mr. Harold C. Hill, Jr. “Coley”, and Mr. Calvin Howard McClinton, Sr. Congressman Garret Graves gave a tribute to each honoree and presented their families with an American flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol. Thanks to WAFB for the media coverage!

October Fun Halloween

Every year, the West Baton Rouge Museum and the West Baton Rouge Public Library join forces to put on one of our favorite events: Merry-Not-Scary Halloween! This was a busy year with almost 400 visitors walking the grounds, playing games, getting creative, etc. In addition to our traditional games we added a slime station with the Coalition of Black Women Engineers from LSU, and stargazing with the Baton Rouge Astronomy Club. I am happy to say we saw both Jupiter and Saturn!

We were also able to bring back the fan-favorite, Brusly Lions Club, for eye testing. There was something for everyone. The grand finale was a spoky magic show with Chris Miller Magic. Guests were invited to buy dinner from the food truck on campus, sit back, and enjoy! We love hosting this special Halloween celebration for our community, and can’t wait to see what exciting venture 2023 brings.

November Historical Happy Hour with Mikhala Iversen

On Friday, November 18th, the museum welcomed storyteller and jazz singer, Mikhala "Jazz Muffin" Iversen, for a special Billie Holiday & Lester Young Tribute. Guests spent the evening with Mikhala and her four-piece band as she performed legendary tunes from the iconic Lady Day. It was a night to remember.

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WBR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
BOARD MEMBERS 2022
Tom Acosta
Donna Badon
Kim Callegan
Ashley Coco
David Couvillion
Glen Daigle
Brian Falcon
Ellis Gauthier
Luis Interiano
Brih Kleinpeter
Stacy Krebs
Drew Maciasz
Debbie Martin
Andrea Normand
Michelle Owens
Ruth Stanley

WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM
BOARD MEMBERS
Sue Blanchard
JoAnn Busse
David Couvillion
Lauren Jung
William Kleinpeter
Scott Rhodes
Lorry Trotter
Sadie Payne Woods
Chris "Fish" Kershaw
ex-officio

Monthly Programs
1ST FRIDAYS, 1PM: Le Café Français. GRATUIT
2ND SUNDAYS, 3PM: Old Time Country Music Jam. FREE
3RD FRIDAYS, 6PM: Historical Happy Hour. FREE
3RD SUNDAYS, 3PM: CFMA Cajun Jam. FREE
LAST TUESDAYS, 6PM: Yoga. FREE