

# 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."*



Volume LIII No. 4

WINTER

2021

# NEWSLETTER ÉCOUTEZ



A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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We hope you will get out in support of our museum.



ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars for Monday, January 10, 2022. The West Baton Rouge Historical Association will be hosting its Annual Meeting at 1:30 PM, at the West Baton Rouge Museum. We will take this time to introduce and swear in new HA Board members, as well as vote on the 2022 officers. We also look forward to presenting a summary of our past year. The meeting is free and open to the public, but only members of the West Baton Rouge Historical Association are allowed to cast votes.

If you haven't already, please consider updating your membership for the 2022 calendar year. A membership form has been inserted in this copy of the Écoutez for your convenience. We thank you for your financial support.

## Historical Marker Unveiled at St. Mark's Church

Ida Pierre and Brian Falcon (WBRHA Board Members) stand with Debbie Martin (incoming WBRHA Board Member), Yvonne Gordon (St. Mark's Church Mother), and Sadie Payne Woods (St. Mark's Church Member and WBRM Board Member). The new state historical marker was unveiled on October 31, 2021. We have come this far by faith trusting in God's holy word. Special thanks to all who contributed their talents to this history-making event.

## Museum Tax Renewal Set for April 30th

The Board of the West Baton Rouge Museum has set April 30, 2022 for the millage tax renewal. If passed, the renewed 2-mill property tax will continue the support for the museum for ten years, providing education, tourism, recreation and historic preservation for the parish. The museum has been in operation for over 50 years and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. We hope you will get out in support of our museum!



# LES LETTRES



It is hard to believe that 2021 is almost over. We have so very much to be thankful for this year, and much to look forward to for 2022. I hope and pray that the New Year sees much more of a return to pre-Covid normality for everyone. Please get vaccinated & stay safe!

We celebrated SugarFest once again in person on Sunday, October 3. It was so nice to see so many people turn out to enjoy our traditional chicken dinners, the always popular Sweets Booth, and so many other SugarFest music and craft activities. Thanks so much to all of our WBRHA members/volunteers who helped support this enjoyable community event!

We had a large turnout for our Ethel Claiborne Dameron lecture on Sunday, November 14. Dr. Elista Istre, who has previously served as museum director at the Historic Dyess Colony: Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash in Dyess, Arkansas, gave this year's very interesting lecture: "Ring of Fire, Circle of Love: The Women in Johnny Cash's Life." - a perfect complement to the museum's exhibit: 1968: *A Folsom Redemption* which opened on November 13 and continues thru January 9, 2022. Thanks to all who donated food and worked at the lecture reception!

Our publication *Images of West Baton Rouge* by Arcadia Publishing - part of their Images of America series - has arrived. It is a beautiful little book! Plan to purchase copies of this fine book as Christmas presents for family & friends!

Winter 2021 ÉCOUTEZ letter

## Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!

WEST BATON ROUGE  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

TOM ACOSTA Board President

Our Holiday Open House returned on Sunday, December 5. Thanks to all who helped make this fun-filled event possible!

In 2022, we will once again be called upon to spearhead the tax election campaign to successfully renew our Museum millage - this election is scheduled for Saturday, April 30, 2022. Please ask your family and friends to support this vital tax renewal election!

Though this is my final Association President letter for 2021, it will not be my last. I have been graciously requested to serve the West Baton Rouge Historical Association again in 2022 as its President, and I gratefully accepted this nomination. Please join us at our Annual Meeting at 1:30 PM on Monday, January 10, 2022 at the Museum, as we plan for the coming year. I am looking forward to a rewarding 2022, and hope you will consider being involved.

In the meantime, please keep up the good work, stay safe, join us at Association and Museum events when able, tell friends about us, and help celebrate West Baton Rouge at OUR Museum!

## Bonne Santé!

Tom Acosta  
WBRHA President



## Winter 2021 Director's Letter

### WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM CULTURE CULTIVATED LA CULTURE CULTIVÉE LA KILTIR KILTIVÉ

ANGÉLIQUE BERGERON PH.D. Executive Director

Our Fall programs were a big success...SugarFest, Halloween, the Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series, an art workshop series, Blues After School, and Holiday Open House – a hopeful sign that things are returning to normal.

We're enjoying taking a nostalgic look back on America's iconic Man in Black with the national traveling Johnny Cash exhibit, 1968: A Folsom Redemption. Opening weekend featured Dr. Elista Istre's ECD lecture, a poignant presentation including photographs, letters and stories from the women in Johnny Cash's life. We hope you will join us for the closing reception on January 9th celebrating the January 1968 anniversary of Johnny Cash's trip to Folsom Prison. Everyone is encouraged to honor the legend by wearing black and coming ready to sing, dance, and play iconic Cash tunes.

Our next exhibit, *The Pelican State Goes to War*, comes to us from the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. We will open it with a bang as the Victory Belles, a delightful vocal trio, are set to perform at a USO dance on Sunday, January 23 from 3-5PM. Come in uniform or optional 1940s attire as we salute our soldiers and the men and women on the home front. An accompanying exhibit will highlight West Baton

Rouge in the 1940s with photos and artifacts from the West Baton Rouge Historical Association's permanent collection.

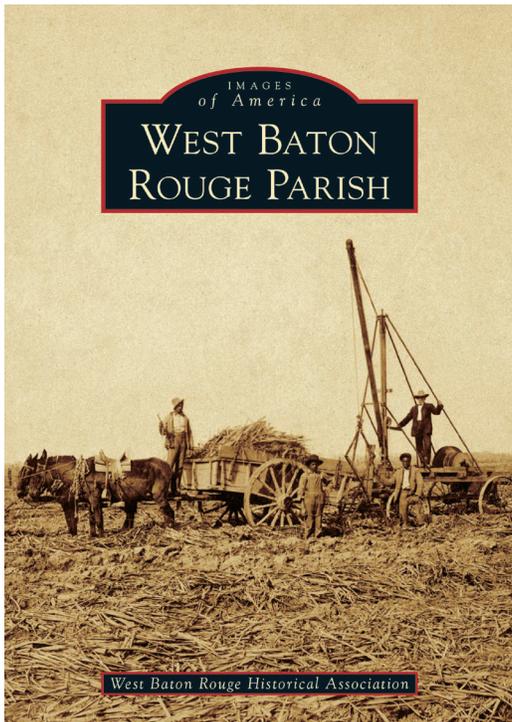
Volunteers are needed on Thursday, February 24th as we will once again will host the regional National History Day competition in-person at the West Baton Rouge Museum. We are currently seeking judges to evaluate middle and high school history projects. Volunteers are also needed to check students in, give directions, and lead tours. For more information on volunteering, contact Amanda Moak at amanda@wbrmuseum.org. Area teachers and students are encouraged to participate. For more information on participation, [www.la.nhd.org](http://www.la.nhd.org). Registration deadline is February 17th.

Our monthly programs will continue in 2022 and we're adding YOGA. Join us on 1st Fridays at 1PM for Le Café Français; on 2nd Sundays at 3PM for the Old Time Jam; on 3rd Fridays at 6PM for the Historical Happy Hour; and on 3rd Sundays at 3pm for Le Jam with the Cajun French Music Association. New this year is Yoga with Elena Keegan on the last Tuesday of the month at 6PM.

*With all that we have going on, we hope to see you at the Museum!*

Angélique Bergeron PH.D.  
Executive Director

# READ UP



## Images of America: West Baton Rouge Parish

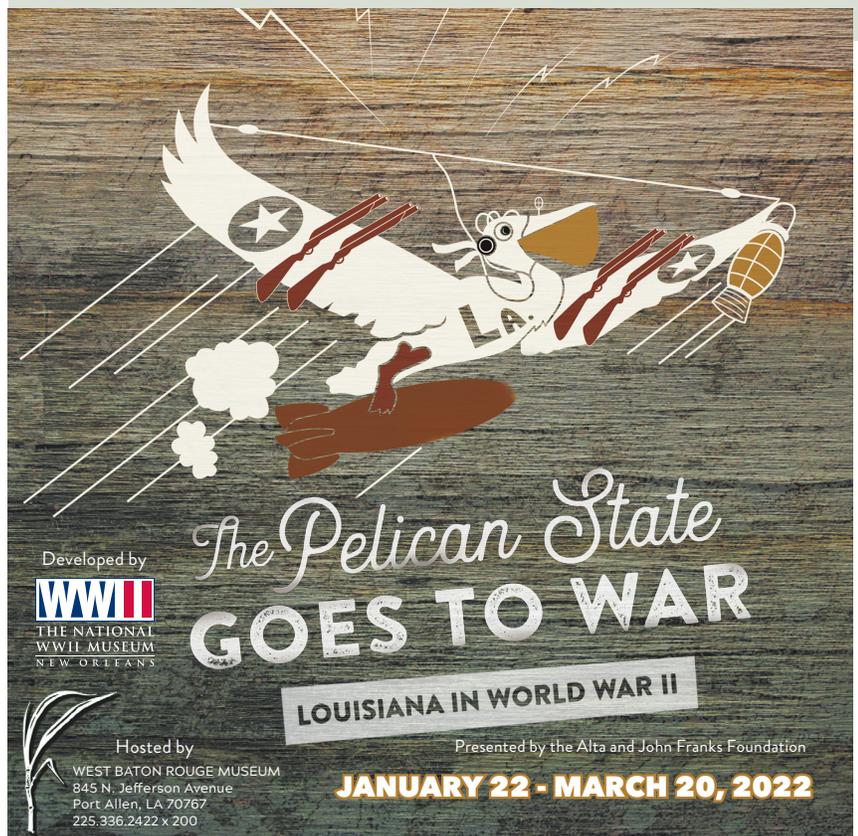
The West Baton Rouge Historical Association is pleased to announce the release of their latest publication, *Images of West Baton Rouge*. With images from their collection, the WBRHA gives a one hundred and fifty year synopsis of the parish, unveiling scenes of the area's development and growth and way of life in the small-town community. The purchase price of the book is \$26.25 (tax included) and will be available for purchase in the museum gift shop, Barnes & Noble, and a variety of local stores.



## Harleaux Bus Donated

The Harleaux family recently donated the 1956 Dodge Blue Bird School Bus driven by Mr. Harold Harleaux of Erwinville to the West Baton Rouge Museum. Special thanks to John Harleaux for seeing this donation through after the sudden passing of his father, Linus "Connie" Harleaux,

and to the Harleaux family: Marie Raynel Harleaux, Zelda Harleaux, Vanessa Harleaux, Jeanne Shailly Harleaux. We also wish to thank the Parish and Donald DiBenedetto for helping to get the classic bus to the museum's campus and in place in time for SugarFest.



# 1968: A FOLSOM REDEMPTION

EXHIBIT CLOSING PARTY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9

3 - 5 PM

Wear black and be ready to sing, dance, and play iconic Johnny Cash tunes. Acoustic instruments welcome! Free to the public



## EXHIBITS:

LIFE IN THE 1940S IN WEST BATON ROUGE

PELICAN STATE GOES TO WAR

## Curators' Corner

The year is 1940 and Americans have no idea how their world is about to change. From fashion to the unfathomable Pearl Harbor, this decade is one historians continue to study at great length.

On January 8th, The West Baton Rouge Museum will open a new exhibition titled Life in the 1940s in West Baton Rouge. The exhibit will feature photos and artifacts from the West Baton Rouge Historical Association's collection that highlight one of the most event filled decades in our history.

On January 22nd, The West Baton Rouge Museum will open a travelling exhibition from the National

WWII Museum entitled *The Pelican State Goes to War*. Many citizens of Louisiana contributed to victory in World War II on the battlefield, with nearly 280,000 individuals from the state serving in the armed forces during the war. *The Pelican State Goes to War* will share the courageous stories of Louisiana's six Medal of Honor recipients, which represent sacrifice and devotion. The exhibit will also explore tales of the Louisiana Home Front, from the great mobilization efforts of Higgins Industries, to first grader Billy Michal's scrap collection for school.

For all of their tragedy, the 1940s were ultimately

characterized by triumph. They were years of growth and strength for many in the United States and here in West Baton Rouge.

In preparation for our upcoming summer exhibit about West Baton Rouge athletes, the curatorial department would also like to ask the community for submissions of photographs of athletes or action shots from games and events through the years. If you have anything you would like to share, contact Lauren Hawthorne at [hawthorne@wbrmuseum.org](mailto:hawthorne@wbrmuseum.org) or Ferin Jones at [jones@wbrmuseum.org](mailto:jones@wbrmuseum.org)



# PICS FROM THE PARISH

## SugarFest

How sweet it was to once again hold our biggest event of the year in person! West Baton Rouge Museum's 26th annual SugarFest took place on its formula date, the first Sunday in October. We welcomed over 2,000 visitors to the museum grounds to enjoy sugary treats, folk art demonstrations, and live music. This event was made possible thanks to generous support from community volunteers, Alma Plantation Ltd., Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Foundation, the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council, as administered by the Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.





# Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture

West Baton Rouge Historical Association held its annual Ethel Claiborne Dameron Lecture Series on Sunday, November 14, 2021. This year's guest lecturer, Dr. Elista Istre spoke on "Circle of Fire, Ring of Love" sharing poignant photographs, letters and stories from the women in Johnny Cash's life. The presentation was followed by a lovely reception and a music jam featuring songs made popular by the man in black.

## Our Volunteer of the Quarter

and one of our newest WBR Historical Association Board members is Ashley Coco.

Our Volunteer of the Quarter, and one of our newest WBR Historical Association Board members is Ashley Coco. She is a commercial real estate attorney with Commerce Title Company in Baton Rouge where she has worked for the past 8 years.

Originally from Avoyelles Parish, she moved to Port Allen in 2001. Ashley has been married to her husband, Greg for almost 20 years and they have 3 daughters: Jeanette, Halsey, and Millie- all of whom are active in museum programs.

Ashley is a member of the Port Allen Rotary Club and is the current past-president. Additionally, she serves on the West Baton Rouge Chamber Board, the Board of Louisiana Association of Independent Land Title Agents (current president), and the Louisiana Clerks Remote Access Authority. She also does a great deal of legislative work for a statewide professional organization of land title agents, and in her spare time she enjoys baking.

Ashley has jumped right in to life as a WBRHA Board member. She is a part of various committees and always brings a good idea to the table about growth and community involvement. This is one busy lady and we're delighted that she chose to serve as a board member for the West Baton Rouge Historical Association!



KUDOS TO COCO

## Holiday Open House

West Baton Rouge Museum's annual Holiday Open House was on Sunday, December 5, 2021. Visitors of all ages were welcomed with cider, gingerbread, holiday themed tours and tableaux, pop up shops, live music, craft demonstrations, ornament making, reindeer games, and an elf hunt. The jolliest elf of all posed for pictures from an antique carriage while Mrs. Claus greeted everyone with well wishes and candy canes.



## Halloween

The West Baton Rouge Parish Library once again partnered with the West Baton Rouge Museum to provide the community with a merry not scary celebration on the museum grounds. Festivities under the night sky included tricks, treats, storytelling, vintage games, and a movie on the lawn.





WEST  
BATON  
ROUGE  
MUSEUM



NEWSLETTER  
**ÉCOUTEZ**

A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER  
**ÉCOUTEZ**



A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**WBR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

**BOARD MEMBERS 2021**

- Tom Acosta
- Babs Babin
- Donna Badon
- Kim Callegan
- Ashley Coco
- David Couvillon
- Glen Daigle
- Brian Falcon
- Ellis Gauthier
- Beth Kleinpeter
- Drew Maciasz
- Andrea Norman
- Michelle Owens
- Ida Pierre
- Janet Simoneaux
- Ruth Stanley
- Lorry Trotter

**WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

- Mary Bennett
- Sue Blanchard
- JoAnn Busse
- David Couvillon
- Mark Graffeo
- Lauren Jung
- William Kleinpeter
- Scott Rhodes
- Sadie Woods

**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