

# 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."*



SPRING  
2024

# NEWSLETTER ÉCOUTEZ



A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



The West Baton Rouge Historical Association's annual **Christmas in July Card Party** fundraiser is right around the corner! Mark your calendars for **Monday, July 22, 2024**, from 10:00AM-3:00PM. The fundraiser will take place at the West Baton Rouge Community Center. In addition to cards, participants can look forward to door prizes, lunch, and even a cocktail. There will also be two separate drawings for those interested in trying their luck. For questions, you can call the **West Baton Rouge Museum** at (225)-336-2422. We look forward to seeing you. As always, thanks for supporting the West Baton Rouge Historical Association!



*Blast from the Past* **SUMMER HISTORY CAMP** *Two one-week sessions to choose from June 17-21 or June 24 - 28*

# LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!



\$125 for WBR Parish residents and/or members of WBRHA and \$150 for all other participants. For more information, call 225.336.2422 or visit [www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org](http://www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org)

**West Baton Rouge Museum** will soon host its twenty-ninth annual "Blast from the Past" summer history camp. This year's theme, *Lights, Camera, Action* will lead campers ages 6 - 12 on an adventure through time to learn about film, photography, motion pictures, and action taken by individuals in history to make a difference. Inspired by the exhibition *Evolution of the Revolution*, a multi-media installation created by Surreal Box Cinema, museum staff and guest presenters will present activities focused on optical toys and early forms of entertainment that led to the art of making movies. Campers will also engage in photography, lighting, set design, prop making, and small film projects that will focus on the heroic acts of brave people from the past or their own revolutionary ideas for positive change in the present.

**Space is limited. To register, visit [www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org](http://www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org).**

# LES LETTRES



## SPRING 2024 ÉCOUTEZ letter

# Thank you for following our journey

WEST BATON ROUGE  
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BRIAN FALCON Board President

Dear all,

The Historical Association is continually working to extend its connections with all those similarly minded in their passion for preserving our parish's history. At our annual meeting, we introduced several new faces, greeted long-standing members and thought of our members who couldn't attend. Thank you to all our membership who were able to make the meeting, and I hope our new board members will have an enriching experience as part of our community.

West Baton Rouge has over 27,000 residents. Great opportunities to meet a few of them are by volunteering at the museum or attending one of its many events. I also invite you to participate as a chair or member of one of our committees. There are plenty to choose from, including fundraising like our card party, historic preservation where we highlight the parish's history and long-range planning to name a few. We've had several great people chair committees who weren't on our board, and we are so thankful to have their time, talents and good company.

We will hold the Card Party on **JULY 22, 2024**. As always, there will be refreshments and door prizes. Call the museum to register your party and come have a great time!

Your membership in our organization means that you care about the preservation of our parish's culture and history. There are opportunities large and small to save our heritage. Support preservation organizations and initiatives or start one even! Make connections between people who want to save something and people who can save something.

*Cheers!*

Brian Falcon  
WBRHA President





SPRING 2024  
Director's Letter



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

ANGÉLIQUE BERGERON, PH.D. Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The year has gotten off to a great start, and the West Baton Rouge Museum has lots of good things planned for the Spring!

We are thrilled to welcome back Mrs. Geraldine Robertson the week of April 8th for another week-long Split Oak Basket Weaving workshop thanks to a Pass It On grant from the Louisiana Folklore Society as part of the Bayou Culture Collaborative, a partnership with the Louisiana Division of the Arts Folklife Program.

On April 18th we will kick off Baton Rouge Blues Festival weekend with a Musicians Fête. This event is organized in partnership with the Baton Rouge Blues Festival Foundation and WRKF. That evening we welcome back Nick Spitzer for another conversation/performance, this time with Lil' Ray Neal. Prior to showtime, we will host an afternoon of networking, resource information, and open jams for musicians and the public to enjoy.

Spring exhibits include the West Baton Rouge Talented Student Art exhibition which is on display through May 5th. An open house and reception will be held on Friday, April 19th from 4 - 8 PM which overlaps our regularly scheduled Blues After School class and our monthly Historical Happy Hour event. Be sure to stop by to support the arts. There will be student artists demonstrating their crafts, visual art on view, and live music entertainment starting with Blues music lessons from 4 - 6 PM and live Jazz performed by SB4 from 6 - 8 PM.

Don't miss the two exhibits coming in May, *Evolution of the Revolution* and *Spaces and Places: Historic Black Churches of West Baton Rouge*. Read more about them in the **Curator's Corner** on p.5.

The *Evolution of the Revolution* exhibition provided the inspiration for our annual Blast from the Past Summer History Camp - *Lights, Camera, Action* (June 17-21 & June 24-28) and Teachers' Institute - *Be a Part of the Solution: Evolution of the Revolution* (July 9 - 10). At the time of this writing, our camp program is almost full!

*We are now up to EIGHT regular monthly programs! See the events calendar for a complete listing and follow us on social media. With all that we have going on, we hope to see you at the museum!*

Angélique Bergeron, PH.D.  
Executive Director

## In memoriam: Gwenn LaViolette



Longtime Museum educator, Gwenn LaViolette, passed away January 5, 2024.

Gwenn joined the West Baton Rouge Museum in 2013 as a part-time tour guide and was instrumental in developing the museum's tours including *S is for Sugar*, for which she later recruited her daughter, Annie Bates, while an intern at the museum, to create a video. Her bilingual expertise was a boon for the museum in many ways. Not only did she give tours in French, but she translated numerous documents for publication or research. She was instrumental in the development of the first printed French language tour guide of the West Baton Rouge Museum's permanent exhibits. She was also responsible for the creation of the popular monthly *Café Français* with Mr. Russell Daigle. She inspired many to reconnect with their Louisiana French language and culture.

In 2017, she was promoted to full-time Educator and in 2019 to Director of Education. In her time at the museum, she revolutionized the flow and structure of school tours. When the WBRM finally made some leaps in technology, Gwenn was the first to master the new credit card machines and helped train all frontline staff.

Inspired by the space camp theme for our 2019 Blast from the Past Summer Camp, Gwenn found a recipe and decided it would be a great idea to make rocket fuel from sugar. It quickly became a favorite session for campers, who would line up on the back ramp of Cabin 1 and watch while Gwenn, with blow torch in hand, would send a Lego rocket shooting into the sky. Gwenn made sure we all had an exciting and educational summer.

Gwenn took great pride in providing visitors with an excellent experience. She is greatly missed by the entire West Baton Rouge Museum community and the staff who had the honor of working with her.

## For Immediate Release | The Process of Making Split White Oak Baskets Workshop with Artist, Geraldine Robertson at the West Baton Rouge Museum

Join Louisiana tradition bearer Geraldine Robertson in a weeklong series at the West Baton Rouge Museum for an immersive workshop on the art of making split white oak baskets. From taking a nature walk at Port Hudson led by a naturalist from the Louisiana State Arboretum, to identifying trees, to preparing materials harvested from split oak, participants will learn how to construct baskets from start to finish. The workshop will be presented **Monday, April 8 - Friday, April 12, 2024 from 10 AM - 3 PM**. Funded with support from the Louisiana Folklore Society, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, this series is being presented with the objective of passing on the knowledge and tradition of this craft which is one of the most endangered traditions.

Geraldine Robertson, a native of Washington, Louisiana, is an award-winning folk artist. Not only has she demonstrated the art of split white oak basket making across the state of Louisiana at various cultural and historical sites and events, she was also invited to demonstrate her craft at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. and in Europe. In a recent interview with the artist, Geraldine shared her enthusiasm for this upcoming workshop and stated, "I just want to teach, and I want the tradition to carry on!" As the sole remaining split white oak basket weaver in the state of Louisiana, she is eager to educate participants every inch of the way from locating, throwing (taking down), and busting (splitting) the tree in the woods to gathering weaving strips and posts and ultimately fashioning handmade baskets from the collected materials in a workshop space at the museum. She said that it's hard work and it takes strength but she loves it, and anyone who puts their mind to it can do it too.

This program is being offered free of charge. However, space is limited, and advanced registration is required by calling (225)336-2422. Registered participants must commit to the five-day deep learning experience.



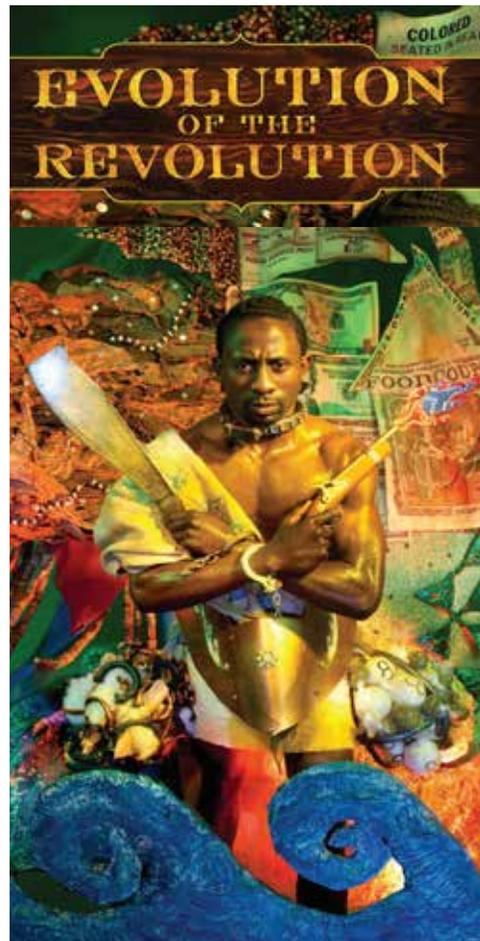
# The 2024 Teachers' Institute will take participants on a surreal artistic journey

This year's Teachers' Institute is designed to coincide with the exhibit, *Evolution of the Revolution*, which will be on display at the West Baton Rouge Museum from May 18th to August 25th, 2024.

The 2024 Teachers' Institute will take participants on a surreal artistic journey from the arrival of the first Africans in the United States to the present-day political arena, with a focus on how the art in the exhibit *Evolution of the Revolution* can be used to increase student engagement and connect a wide range of subjects in the classroom.

Planned events include scholarly lectures, studio time to experiment with photography, set design and visual art, and interactive group activities! Teachers Institute will culminate with lab time for the creation of classroom lesson plans.

Teachers' Institute is open to in-service K-12 teachers across all subject areas. The museum has offered this professional development program since 2007. Participants will produce a theme-based lesson with the help of museum staff and special guests for use in their classrooms and for presentation before departure on the last day. Participants will also receive classroom resource materials, a certificate of participation, and a \$100 stipend upon completion of all institute activities and assignments.



## UPCOMING EXHIBITS

### TALENTED STUDENT ART EXHIBITION

MARCH 30 - MAY 5

### EVOLUTION OF THE REVOLUTION

MAY 18 - AUGUST 25

### SPACES AND PLACES: HISTORIC BLACK CHURCHES OF WEST BATON ROUGE PHOTOGRAPHED BY BRUCE WILLIAMS

APRIL 27 - JULY 14

## Curators' Corner

### Talented Student Art Open House and Reception

APRIL 19TH 4-8PM

The West Baton Rouge Museum would like to invite you to a reception honoring our talented student artists. Step inside the museum's Whitehead Gallery to view two- and three-dimensional works of art created by elementary, middle, and high school students from the parish public school talented art program. While here, enjoy light refreshments and music by the museum's Blues After School program and SB4 with a Jazz Historical Happy Hour Concert.

### Evolution of the Revolution

MAY 18 - AUGUST 25

*Evolution of the Revolution* presents a surreal photographic journey that explores the African American revolutionary path, from the Trans-Atlantic Middle Passage to the present-day political arena, including pivotal moments such as the Underground Railroad and the Civil Rights Movement. The bright, large scale photographs featured in the exhibit do more than pay tribute to the men and women who triumphed over slavery and struggle to gain equal rights: they also provide a poignant commentary on how the revolution reverberates through contemporary culture and events. It is an immersive, multi-media installation created by Surreal Box Cinema, and artistic collaboration formed by photographer and set designer, Lynn Rossi, and set designer, Nichelle Evans. The opening reception will take place during Historical Happy Hour on May 18, 2024.

### Spaces and Places: Historic Black Churches of West Baton Rouge Photographed by Bruce Williams

APRIL 27 - JULY 14

Known as Houses of Worship, Churches were a place of spiritual practice, community support, and refuge, especially during Reconstruction and The Civil Rights Movement. Continuing in this tradition, *Spaces and Places: Historic Black Churches of West Baton Rouge Photographed by Bruce Williams* will include both interior and exterior images of these local churches as well as interviews with pastors and the church congregations. These photos convey the feelings of providence, faith, and empathy these churches have provided members of the West Baton Rouge Parish community for centuries.



AMANDA MOAK



LAUREN HAWTHORNE

# MUSICIANS

# FÊTE

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Noon - 8PM

at the West Baton Rouge Museum

Lunch from  
Neal's Soul Food

**FREE FOR MUSICIANS AND MUSIC LOVERS**

- Open jams and live entertainment
- Networking Opportunities with artists and venues
- Resources for Musicians (contracts, insurance, taxes, trademarking, and publishing/recording)
- 6PM - Interview/performance with Lil Ray Neal & Nick Spitzer, host of NPR's American Routes radio show

845 N. Jefferson Avenue  
Port Allen, Louisiana 70767  
225.336.2422



BATON ROUGE  
BLUES FESTIVAL  
A&B FOUNDATION

LOUISIANA  
ENTERTAINMENT



89.3  
wrkf  
Baton Rouge  
Public Radio



MANSHIP THEATRE  
NON-PROFIT VENUE

# Big Performances for Blues After School

If you missed **West Baton Rouge Museum's Blues After School** program performing with none other than famed Blues artist, actor, and author, Chris Thomas King in March or at Henry Turner Jr's Listening Room last spring, come see our kids play at Baton Rouge Blues Fest! On Sunday, April 21, 2024 at 12:15 PM, the Blues After School band known as the Juke Joint Juniors will be performing on the Front Porch Stage.

Now in its fifth year, Blues After School is proving that hard work, dedication, and alignment with loyal mentors bring great opportunities! West Baton Rouge Museum is able to offer this thriving after school music enrichment series to area middle and high school students thanks to tremendous community support. Program co-sponsor, Rockin' Mozart Music School who provides music educators, the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and Foundation who helps to fund this program annually, and local musicians and music industry professionals who share their time and talents are assisting the museum in bringing up the next generation to carry on the Blues tradition.

A special thank you goes out to the Baton Rouge Blues Festival and Foundation for giving us the opportunity to play at a long-standing major music festival that was founded in 1981. Standing on stage at an event started by Baton Rouge area Blues legends is a stellar way to celebrate and showcase five years of success that museum staff dreamed of when making long range goals at the inception of the Blues After School program.

For more information on Baton Rouge Blues Fest which is held annually in downtown Baton Rouge, visit <https://www.brblues.org/>.



EXPLORATIONS



IN GENEALOGY

WBR Genealogical Society presents

Saturday, April 13

10:30 AM - 12PM

*Jewish Communities of Pointe Coupee Parish*

with guest speaker,  
Brian Costello

Saturday, May 11

10:30 AM - 12PM

*Canary Islanders, Isleños of Louisiana*

with guest speaker,  
Stella Carline Tanoos

Saturday, June 8

10:30 AM - 12PM

*Ancestors Speak*

with guest speaker,  
Gaynell Brady



# Pics from Past Programs

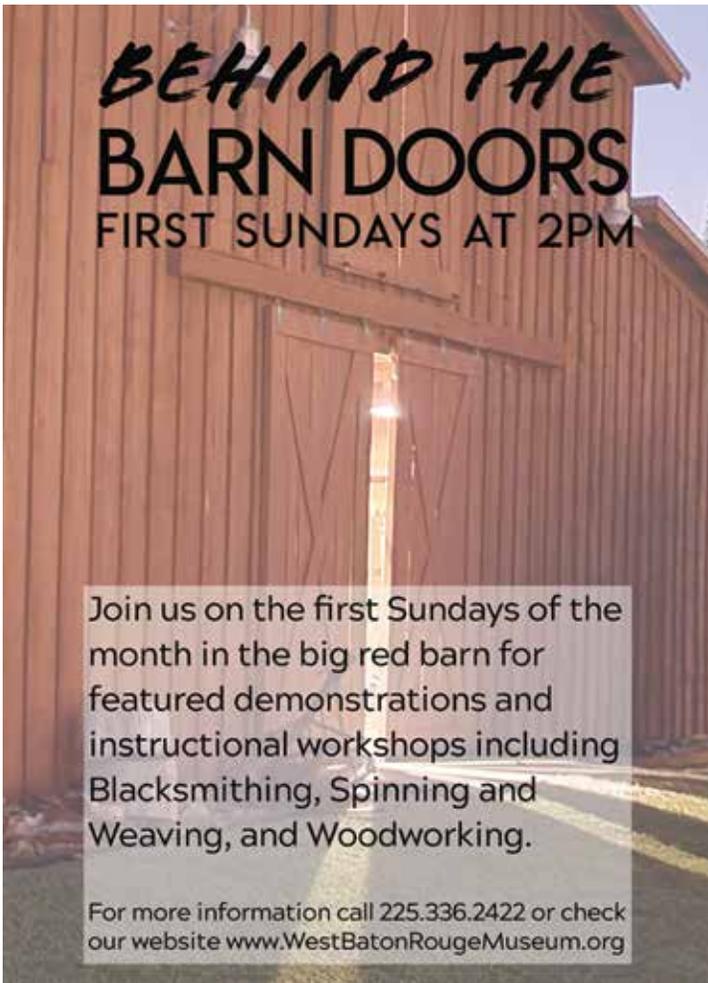
## Le Grand Pique-Nique

On Saturday, March 2nd, the West Baton Rouge Museum hosted CODOFIL's annual picnic for French immersion students across the state. The event was a success with over 650 attendees representing 13 immersion schools, contests, talent show, panel discussions, and even a performance from Grammy Award-winning musician, Louis Michot!



## Historic Trades

**Traditional trades are always on display at the WBRM.** Check out the barn demonstrations the first Sunday of each month at our Behind the Barn Doors program. Want to learn more? **Sign up for an apprenticeship!**



Join us on the first Sundays of the month in the big red barn for featured demonstrations and instructional workshops including Blacksmithing, Spinning and Weaving, and Woodworking.

For more information call 225.336.2422 or check our website [www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org](http://www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org)

## Historical Happy Hours

### Ring in the New Year for Historical Happy Hour with Ben Bell & The Stardust Boys!

On Friday, January 19th, the WBRM museum enjoyed live entertainment featuring Ben Bell & The Stardust Boys. Known for playing folk music, the band featured Ben Bell on rhythm guitar and vocals, Brad Chance on pedal steel, Shawn Roux on lead electric guitar, and Steve Wolverton on upright bass. The audience tapped their toes and while listening to ballads and great classic country tunes.



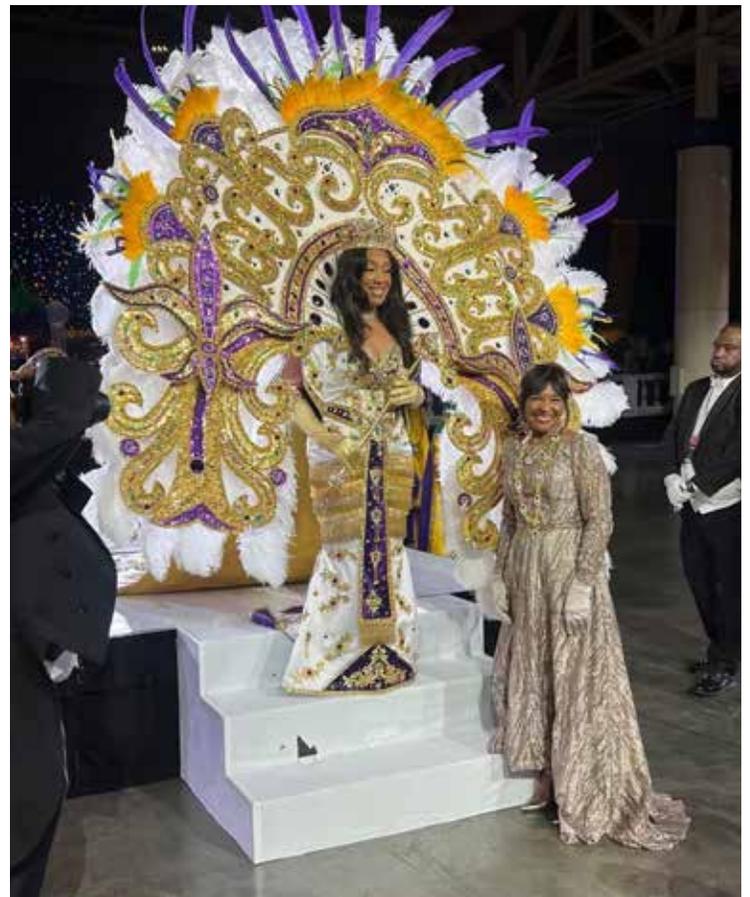
### Cool Jazz at the West Baton Rouge Museum for Historical Happy Hour featuring Zia Tammami accompanied by star-studded trio, Mike Esneault, Harry Anderson, and Herman Jackson

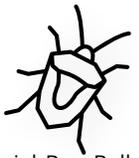
A legendary performance inspired by the exhibit, *Shutter & Sound: The Jazz Photography of Bob Willoughby (1927-2009)*, our Friday, February 16th Historical Happy Hour featured Jazz and Blues historian, Zia Tammami accompanied by a star-studded trio of musicians including Mike Esneault, Harry Anderson, and Herman Jackson. This exhibit set the stage for a perfect night of live, cool Jazz. Zia captivated the audience with narrated stories, all backed by an entertaining musical cast. And as unexpected treat, Blues artist Chris Thomas King, who happened to be sitting in the audience as a guest, was encouraged by Zia to take the mic and sing, and he did... much to the delight of our audience!



## Queen Zulu – A Local Legacy

**West Baton Rouge native Angélique Roché**, daughter of WBRHA and WBRM Board Member Rose Roché, reigned as this year's Queen-Select of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club. Angélique is a Zulu legacy as her mother served as Queen Zulu in 1996. She will reign over Mardi Gras morning 2025 alongside King Zulu Melvin L. Labat.





## Small Wonders Exhibit Sparks Creative Event: “Bug Ball”

The West Baton Museum welcomed guests to a very special Bug Ball on Sunday, January 7th. This event was inspired by the exhibit Small Wonders: Insects in Focus. Many of our buzzing winged visitors dressed to impress by wearing their favorite insect costumes. From making insect antennas to learning about the fascinating world of insects, story time, and participating in bug yoga, a squirmy time was had by all!



**Historical Happy Hour**

**april 19<sup>th</sup>** **SB4**  
and Talented Student Art Show Open House

**may 17<sup>th</sup>** **Blues 4 \$ale**  
Evolution Of A Revolution Opening Reception

**june 21<sup>nd</sup>** **Kenny Acosta**  
acoustic set

**tatting workshop**  
*with Christy Castille*

**Beginner Needle Tatting Workshop**  
Wednesday April 24, 2024  
10 AM - NOON

**Beginner Shuttle Tatting Workshop**  
Wednesday May 8, 2024  
10AM - NOON

**Simple Edging Workshop**  
Wednesday May 22, 2024  
10AM - NOON

The fee for each class is \$30.  
Space is limited.  
Register by calling the WBRM at  
225.336.2422

*Participants should not have dexterity problems (arthritis or joint issues) with their fingers.*



WEST  
BATON  
ROUGE  
MUSEUM



# NEWSLETTER ÉCOUTEZ

A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

845 N. Jefferson Avenue, Port Allen, LA 70767 | 225.336.2422 | www.WestBatonRougeMuseum.org

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Port Allen, LA

# NEWSLETTER ÉCOUTEZ



A PUBLICATION OF THE WEST BATON ROUGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## WBR HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS 2024

Thomas Acosta, Treasurer  
Mary Bennett  
Bo Bres  
Kim Callegan  
Ashley Coco, Vice President  
Anita Collins  
Brian Falcon, President  
Kristy Hammack  
Billy Hebert, Secretary  
Ken Kahao  
Beth Kleinpeter  
Lennette Lasseigne  
Jesse LeBlanc  
Debbie Martin  
Clyde Robertson  
Rose Roché  
Janet Simoneaux  
LeeDell Woods

## WEST BATON ROUGE MUSEUM BOARD MEMBERS 2024

Jo Ann Busse, Secretary  
Brilliant Clayton  
David Couvillon, Chair  
Joycelyn Green  
William Kleinpeter, Treasurer  
Drew Maciasz  
Rose Roché, Vice Chair  
Lorry Trotter  
Sadie Payne Woods  
Katherine Andre, ex-officio



## Monthly Programs

- 1ST FRIDAYS, 1PM:** *Le Café Français*. GRATUIT
- 1ST SUNDAYS, 3PM:** *Behind the Barn Doors*. FREE
- 2ND SATURDAYS, 3PM:** *Genealogy Series*. FREE
- 2ND SUNDAYS, 3PM:** *Old Time Jam*. FREE
- 3RD FRIDAYS, 6PM:** *Historical Happy Hour*. FREE
- 3RD SUNDAYS, 3PM:** *CFMA Cajun Jam*. FREE
- 4TH SATURDAYS, 3PM:** *Children's Art workshops*. FREE
- LAST TUESDAYS, 6PM:** *Yoga*. FREE