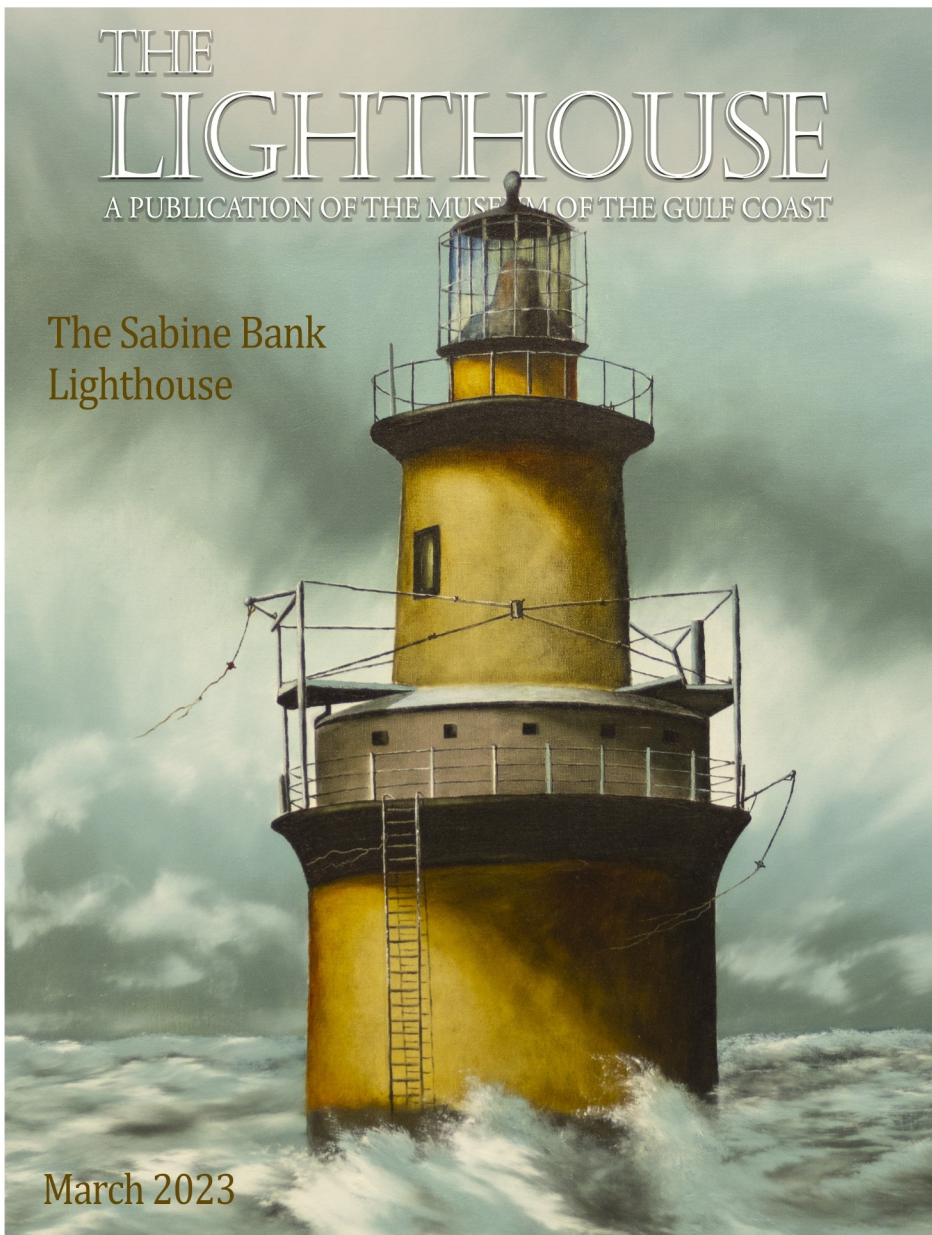


THE LIGHTHOUSE

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GULF COAST

The Sabine Bank
Lighthouse

March 2023



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from The Director

Exciting times continue at the Museum of the Gulf Coast. Reunions from area high schools, Lincoln, Stephen F. Austin, Port Neches Groves, and Thomas Jefferson, to mention a few, continue to book the Museum and find their heritage while learning so much more about this area they called home that they never knew or imagined. I love hearing people who have lived their entire lives here walk in and declare, "Oh my goodness, I never had a clue how amazing this place is," speaking about the Museum and after learning about all the incredible historical events and people that are documented here. That is before they even reach all of the newly added 55-inch touch screens that present the great histories of our Music, Notable People, and Sports Hall of Fame.

They are blown away to find out about Port Arthur's Father of Pop Art, Robert Rauschenberg, who had one of his paintings sell at Christie's Auction house in New York in 2019 for \$88.8 million or about Robert "Bobby" Kimball, who grew up singing in our area and over at the Big Oak Club across the river in Vinton, Louisiana was the Lead Singer for the



infamous band "TOTO." Who knew that one of the top 100 songs of all time, "These Boots are Made for Walking," sung by Nancy Sinatra, has its ties back to Port Arthur and was written by Lee Hazelwood from Port Neches?

As a kid, I always wondered how and why General Motors came up with a composite/fiberglass Corvette Stingray. It turns out the answer to my question includes a guy from Port Arthur working at General Dynamics, Andy Green, who, on the side, invented the Chaparral race car that helped the United States finally win the international Grand Prix race that we had lost for 57 straight years. While growing up here, Andy developed an early passion for developing ultra-strong and lightweight materials, putting him on a career path with a lasting influence on aircraft, racecars, and sailboat design, one that led him to become a giant in the field of composites.

I haven't even scratched the surface of all that is incredible about the Museum of the Gulf Coast and this place we call home. The question is, when will you come to see for yourself, then become a member and support the one-of-a-kind place that is part of your own history? Being a member helps our kids know this place they are growing up in is nothing short of a "Launch Pad" of what may be ahead in their lives. It is time to become a part of something great that needs your support and care. Now it is time to become a member and give back to the future.

Tom Neal

SEVENTEEN INDUCTED INTO HALLS OF FAME



Photo by Bart Bragg

With the lifting of Covid restrictions nationwide, MOGC held a number of Hall of Fame inductions that had been approved by the board but had yet to see any formal induction ceremony. Over the past five months, we have held four inductions ceremonies.

Museum Director Tom Neal presided over the ceremonies, stating, "Our Halls of Fame serve as a beacon for what people from the gulf coast region can do and have achieved. They are a reminder to our youngsters that their experiences here are a launchpad to a great future."

Port Arthur Historical Society President Dr. Sam Monroe presented plaques to the honorees. His remarks remind us of the criteria, "To be included in the hall of fame, a person needs to have roots in Southeast Texas or Southwest Louisiana. Their work needs to attract national attention. There must be a body of work to go with it, and there must be general public recognition of that work. A vote of the Board of Directors makes the final decision. Walter Umphrey, Rockin' Sidney, Slim Harpo, Clarence Picou, Jimmy Picou, and William Seale were inducted posthumously.

Inductees Johnny Fuller, Charean Williams, and the sisters of Rockin' Sidney Simien - Lucy Chenevert and Lucinda Mack

The following is a list of the 17 amazing individuals that are now a part of the three Halls of Fame of the Museum of the Gulf Coast – Notable People, Sports, and Music.

September 24, 2022 – Mike Simpson (Football Player), Jason Tyner (Baseball Player), Jeff Granger (Baseball Player), and Walter Umphrey (Lawyer)

November 12, 2022 – Todd Dodge (Football Coach), Dr. Jesse DeLee (Sports Medicine), Jon Lew Ford (Baseball Player), William Seale (White House Historian)

December 17, 2022 - Andrew Landry (Golfer), Mark Petkovsek (Baseball Player), Clarence Picou (Horse Jockey), Jimmy Picou (Horse Racing), Davy Arnaud (Soccer Player)

February 25, 2023 – Slim Harpo (Swamp Blues Musician), Rockin' Sidney Simien (Zydeco Musician), Charean Williams (Sports Writer), Johnny Fuller (Football Player)

If you would like to nominate someone, the instructions and criteria for nomination can be viewed at MuseumoftheGulfCoast.org/nominate. Starting with the Hal Wiggins induction in October of 2021, videos of all ceremonies are on the Museum of the Gulf Coast Channel on youtube.

OUR AREA LIGHTHOUSES STILL INSPIRE



The Sabine Bank Lighthouse

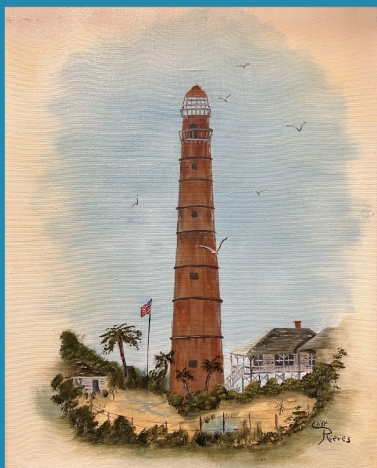
With 367 miles of coastline, Texas has only seven remaining lighthouses that survive today. The Galveston Jetty Lighthouse was built on iron piers and fell into the ocean during a big storm in 2000. We are fortunate to have three in our area. They are a rich part of the region's history and continue to inspire photographers, painters, and sightseers. They are the Sabine Bank Lighthouse, The Bolivar Point Lighthouse, and in Louisiana (just barely), the Sabine Pass Lighthouse.

Understandably, the **Sabine Bank Lighthouse** is often confused with the Sabine Pass Lighthouse. It is located about 16 miles offshore at a spot where the sediment from the Neches and Sabine rivers settles on the ocean floor. This "bank" is only 20 feet below the surface of the ocean.

It is the lighthouse the Museum of the Gulf Coast most identifies with because we house its original Fresnel lens, which was donated by the Coast Guard. Our logo and the name of this magazine are inspired by the beautiful Fresnel lens.

At the turn of the century, and after three ships ran aground, Congress appropriated \$40,000 for the construction of a lighthouse. When no bid was offered for the challenging project, the engineer that designed it was told to proceed with hired labor. On March 15, 1906, at the cost of over \$100,000, the Sabine Bank Lighthouse was put into service. It was painted red and measured fifty feet from the surface of the water to the ventilator ball at the top. During periods of low visibility, a Daboll trumpet powered by two oil engines would blast forth every 30 seconds. Due to its remoteness, the crew of 3 to 4 keepers was expected to serve for several weeks or even months before being relieved. Keeping workers at the remote location proved difficult.

On August 16, 1915, swells from the 1915 Hurricane swept completely over the 50-foot structure causing significant damage and contaminating the drinking water. Extensive repairs included enclosing the gallery level with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch iron plates, which helped the Sabine Bank to withstand another hurricane in 1920. In 1922 an acetylene lantern was installed, and resident keepers were no longer necessary. The new light produced a two-second flash every



Bolivar Point Lighthouse, painting by Cliff Reeves, Gift of Pete Lyday

five seconds. On the night of April 19, 1924, the keepers at Sabine Pass Lighthouse noticed the light had gone out. It was discovered that a port had been left open, and a small hawk, still in the lantern room, had put out the pilot flames. The Sabine Bank was occupied again during World War II as a coastal lookout station. In 1960, the light source was converted to a 150-watt lamp powered by a 32 Volt battery. A mechanism that automatically pulsed the light was invented for the lighthouse and is on display and still in use as a working mechanism at the Museum. The Museum's third-order Fresnel lens was removed from the lantern room in 1971, and the tower was converted to solar power.



Sabine Bank Lighthouse Lens - Museum of the Gulf Coast

In 2001, when the deteriorating condition of the structure threatened the safety of maintenance personnel, the top section of the lighthouse tower and the lantern room were refurbished and relocated to Lions Park in the city of Sabine Pass. Visitors to the park can enter the structure at the bottom and climb the stairs to the Lantern Room tower. A new 55-foot-tall steel structure built on top of the original caisson foundation took its place at sea. Local fishermen now refer to it as the 18-mile light, and it is known for its ability to attract fish. The lantern room from the Galveston Jetty Lighthouse was saved before its collapse and is now the symbol of Galveston College on campus. Its design is the same as the lantern room in Lions Park in Sabine Pass.

The **Bolivar Point Lighthouse** on Bolivar Peninsula is privately owned and is the only lighthouse that is easily seen. It originally contained eighteen lamps backed by twenty-one-inch reflectors. During the Civil war, most southern lighthouses went dark, but Bolivar Point was completely dismantled. It is assumed that the iron was used to build or reinforce warships.

Rebuilt in 1872, it is the tallest lighthouse in Texas at 117 feet and one of only two existing lighthouses in Texas built from iron. It was outfitted with a second-order Fresnel lens, which was then replaced with a smaller third-order Fresnel lens in 1907. Its light could be seen from 17 miles away. During the 1900 Hurricane that destroyed Galveston, 125 passengers traveling on the train from Bolivar to Beaumont took refuge in the structure. They survived by sitting two to a step inside the tower. Eighty-five others also on the train perished in the storm's waters. During the August 16, 1915 hurricane, 61 people were similarly saved by taking refuge in the tower. At 9:15 PM, the night of the hurricane, the lighthouse's turning mechanism, used to give the light a pulse, broke due to the violent vibrations caused by the storm. Lighthousekeeper J.B. Brooks turned the Fresnel lens by hand for another 45 minutes until the oil was washed away by the storm. The door was forced open, and an 11-foot surge entered the bottom, but it withstood the onslaught. By 1933, the Bolivar Point Lighthouse was no longer needed. The lens was donated to the Smithsonian Institution by the National Park Service and is displayed there. The lighthouse was auctioned in 1947. The current owners are descendants of the 1947 buyers. They established a foundation and are attempting to raise 2.5 million dollars to restore the structure. A recent assessment found that the top tower is ready to give way and fall into the marsh with the next big storm.

The **Sabine Pass Lighthouse** was lit in 1857 and is on the Cameron Parish side of the Sabine River Pass as water flows from Sabine Lake into the Gulf. It was built by the U.S. Navy to guide ships to our Texas ports. The best view from Texas is on Farm-to-Market 3322 past the Sabine Pass Battleground Site and the last industrial yard on South First in the city of Sabine Pass (bring some binoculars). It is distinctive due to the eight supporting brick buttresses that radiate from its base to compensate for the marshy location.

The South purposely kept the lighthouse dark during the Civil war to hinder Union navigation. On April 13, 1863, four Confederate soldiers decided to go fishing in Lighthouse Bayou and were captured by a Union patrol at the Sabine Pass Lighthouse. When they did not return, Confederate Col. Griffin sent 60 men to attempt a possible rescue. They took up positions the night of April 17 in the high grass beneath the lightkeeper's cottage. At dawn, two whaleboats from the Union blockade landed and were ambushed as they made their way to the lighthouse. Greatly

African American Quilters of the Gulf Coast Exhibited in Dunn Gallery

The exhibit, African American Quilters of the Gulf Coast, was on display in the Dunn Gallery from October 1 through December 3, 2022. Quilters from Texas, Louisiana, and Florida displayed their extraordinary artistry in an exhibit presented for the first time by the MOGC in conjunction with the National African American Quilt Guild. Over 20 quilts were on display. The Houston Chronicle published a full article on the exhibit. NAAQG co-founder Rhonda Masters gathered member's quilts from the Gulf Coast region. "It is such an honor to work with the Museum of the Gulf Coast to make this exhibit a reality. Our quilters were thrilled to be able to share their work with

the wonderful, diverse audience of members and visitors here in Southeast Texas." Beaumont native Georgia Williams lives in Houston. and contributed three pieces to the exhibit. "I have quilts on display in Ohio and Florida, but I've not had a chance to show locally. I am excited to be in this exhibit so my friends and family in the Golden Triangle will be able to see my work." – Robert Fong

Georgia Williams & Rhonda Masters



(continued page 6) outnumbered, the Union soldiers fled back to the shoreline, with the Confederate soldiers in pursuit. Upon reaching their boats, they discovered one was mired in a mud flat, hindering their escape. Eleven Union soldiers and one Confederate soldier lost their lives in the skirmish, including Union Com. McDermut. The Confederacy controlled the lighthouse for the next five months and used it as a lookout. There were no further engagements until September 8 on the other side of the Sabine River Pass, where Dick Dowling and his garrison would make Confederate history.

The Sabine Pass Lighthouse was in use until 1952. Its remote location made it vulnerable to vandalism after it was abandoned, and the wooden buildings, including the keeper's quarters on site, were lost to fires. The lighthouse was donated to the Cameron Preservation Alliance in 2001, which has made minor repairs over the years to keep the lighthouse from deteriorating even further. Attempts to raise money

for reconstruction and preservation have proven unsuccessful. An LNG has fortuitously built a four-mile road close to the lighthouse, making it accessible by land for the first time. The alliance mounted a powerful temporary light on the lighthouse for a night in 2019 to bring attention to attempts to rescue the structure. – Robert Fong



Sabine Pass Lighthouse - Painting by Cal Gaspard

Gift of Cal Gaspard

P.A. THIRD GRADERS RECEIVE DICTIONARIES

The Dictionary Project, started in South Carolina in 1995, is a non-profit program that gives dictionaries to school children. In 2002, the Dictionary Project set a goal to give dictionaries to third-grade students in all 50 states by partnering with service organizations like the Rotary Club. The Port Arthur Rotary Club joined the program shortly after and has spearheaded the local Dictionary Project ever since.

The Museum of the Gulf Coast hosts these dictionary presentations, sponsored by the Port Arthur Rotary Club, Motiva, and the Port of Port Arthur. Third-grade students from Port Arthur ISD, Sabine Pass, Bob Hope School, Tekoa Academy, and St. Catherine's school receive a guided museum tour, followed by a dictionary presentation.

Representatives from the Rotary Club, Motiva, the Port of Port Arthur, and Museum staff speak to the students about the importance of education and literacy and how using a dictionary can help them become stronger readers and better learners. They also speak about



their respective organizations and how they work inside our community while teaching the children to look up words relevant to their organization. About 800 dictionaries are given out yearly to each third-grade student in Port Arthur. Ms. Perla Campos, a first-year teacher at Tyrell Elementary, recalled when she came to the Museum as a third-grade student and received her very own dictionary. She used it all through school and still has it. She was excited to be able to share this experience with her students. - Dana Howard

COVER PAINTING PART OF LARGE DONATION FROM THE CLIFTON STEAMBOAT MUSEUM

The detail of the painting of the Sabine Bank Lighthouse on the cover of this issue is by Ted Sizemore, and is part of a very generous donation by Clifton Steamboat Museum Director, Sarah Hearn Wells and the board of the Steamboat Museum. Ms. Wells' grandfather built the museum from the ground up. After flooding twice in recent years they were sadly forced to close their doors - more on this in a coming issue.





(Photo Bart Bragg)

MOGC Hall of Famer, Raymond Strother

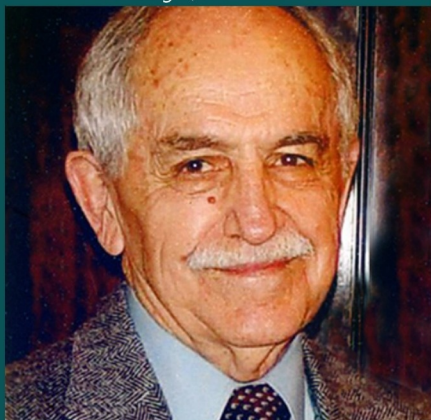
Legendary political strategist Raymond Strother died of cancer on October 1st 2022. Born in Port Arthur, Strother graduated from LSU and worked primarily in Louisiana politics until he retired. His list of clients, was a who's who of Democratic Party notables and included Bill Clinton, Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer, Lloyd Bentson, Gary Hart, Russell Long, Dennis Deconcini, Al Gore, Mary Landrieu, and Mark White. Famed political strategist James Carville got his start with Strother in Baton Rouge. "He could meld words with art," Carville said. He won numerous awards for his documentaries, and also penned the book, *Falling Up, How a Redneck Helped Invent Political Consulting*, which is available in the Museum's gift shop.

Dr. Charles Bollich, PhD. of Beaumont, died Thursday, June 16, 2022. Charles served in the Navy during World War II. He retired from the United States Department of Agriculture as a Rice Breeder after over thirty years.

LEGENDS RAYMOND STROTHER & DR. CHARLES BOLLICH PASS

During his lifetime he received many honors including the Agriculture Research Service Science Hall of Fame by the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Louisiana State University Alumni Hall of Distinction. After retirement, he was a rice research consultant, developing rice for the United Nations. Dr. Bollich served as a past president of Texas Archeological Society and a member of the Louisiana Archeological Society. He was also an expert on the archeological pottery of our region. MOGC displays a large number of pieces from his findings. He also designed and constructed the shell midden cross section on our first floor.

Archeologist, Charles Bollich



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Angeline G. Bowers

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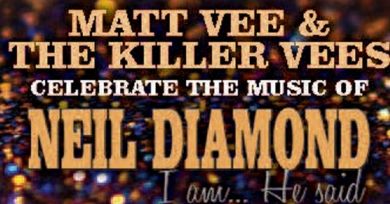
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