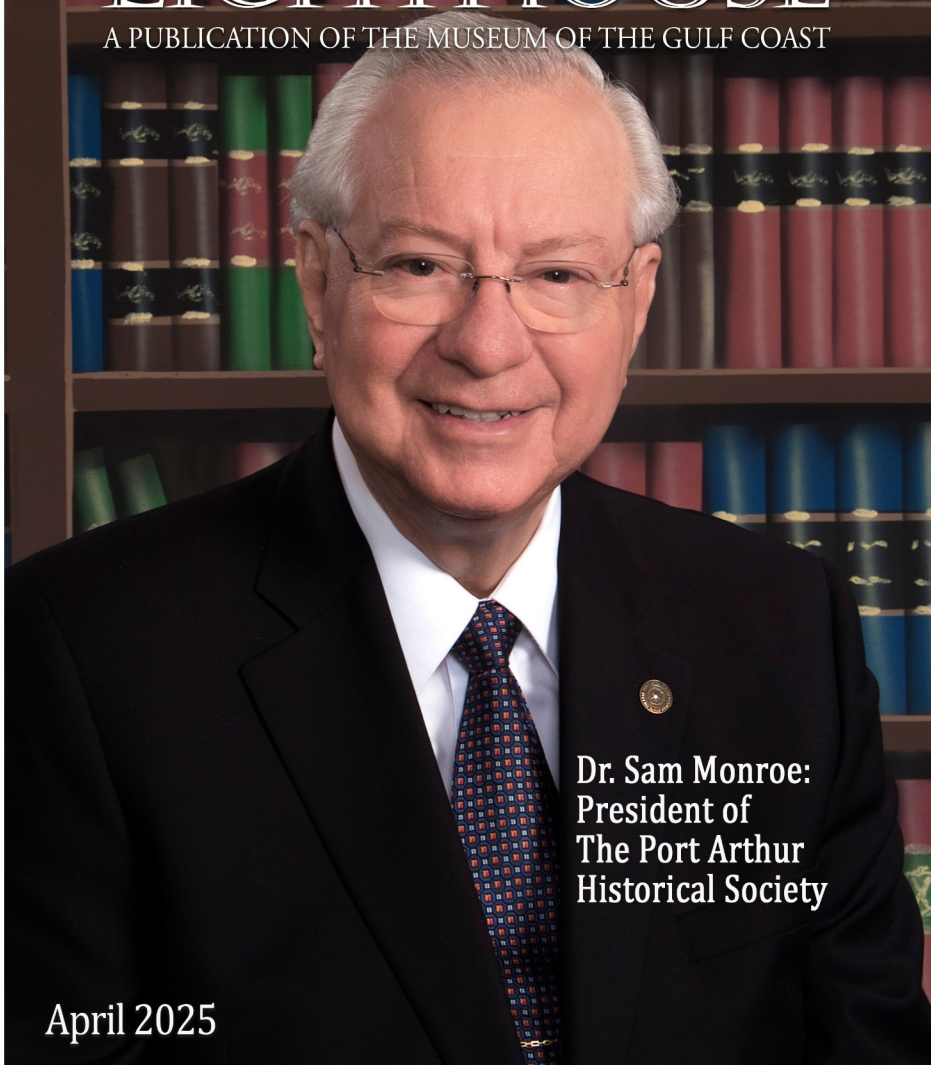


THE LIGHTHOUSE

A PUBLICATION OF THE MUSEUM OF THE GULF COAST



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President of
The Port Arthur
Historical Society

April 2025

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from The Director

Greetings from the Museum! Great things are ahead in 2025. As our Gala approaches (see page 5), we are excited about the redesign of the evening's festivities. The Gala Committee and Board have been hard at work coming up with many new and amazing additions.

A special thank you goes to Claire Jackson, Social Responsibility and Community Affairs Manager at Motiva Enterprises LLC. She has played a key role in providing leadership and guidance as we have expanded our Gala Event offerings. This year will start 30 minutes earlier to present Rare Whiskey Flights, featuring nine different types of whiskey. We'll also introduce the Vieux Carre, a drink created in 1938 by the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans.

Several raffles will also be available, including a \$4,000 diamond bracelet from Charles Nacol's Jewelers, to be announced at the end of the evening. If you purchase these items, keep your Prosecco glass and whiskey flight boards to find out if you are a lucky winner. In addition, Buckstins Brewery will be on hand with their delicious craft beer.



The Silent Auction will be very elaborate and include a wide variety of items including sports memorabilia, trips, and purses. All of this followed by a great meal and entertainment from The 3 Red Neck Tenors. This year's dress code calls for cocktail or business attire, but black-tie is still fine. Please consider attending if you are able.

On another note, as we wrap up our three part series on the history of The Port Arthur Historical Society and the Museum of the Gulf Coast, it has been wonderful reading the background stories of the early years as told by our Society president, Dr. Sam Monroe.

Our success is due in part to all of the dedicated volunteers, supporters, and board members who gave their time, energy, and financial support to the Society and eventually the Museum. I toured their first exhibit when I was in the 8th grade and began volunteering in the late 1970's.

As we complete the 30 year anniversary of the Museum, it is important that we recognize the contributions of Dr. Monroe. For 38 years as the president of the Port Arthur Historical Society his vision, knowledge, focus, and hard work was the constant bellweather that has guided our efforts. He continues with those efforts to to this day and we are all very grateful for it.

Tom Neal

Wyatt & Taylor Inducted into Halls of Fame

We are pleased to have recently inducted two amazing women into our Halls of Fame. Carol Wyatt was born in 1943 and passed away in 2023. She attended Port Neches-Groves High School, where she was co-captain of the Indianettes, and after graduation attended Baylor University on a voice scholarship. After studying for several years at La Scala Opera House in Milan, Italy, Carol launched her career as a mezzo soprano on stages throughout Europe and North America, singing with both Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo. For more than twenty years, she was a principal soloist with the Deutsch Opera Berlin. In the seventies and eighties, she was one of the most sought-after mezzo sopranos in Europe. After more than two decades of singing professionally, Carol returned to the U.S. and became an ordained Christian minister in 2003.

Carol Wyatt (below), Bishop Sarah Davis (right)



Bishop Sarah Taylor (1948-2013) attended Lincoln High School and was the Junior Class President and Senior Co-Valedictorian. After earning four degrees, she obtained her Doctor of Ministry Degree from Southern Methodist University. She eventually became the 126th elected and consecrated bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the 3rd female bishop in the 218 year history of the denomination. Bishop Taylor was recognized by Ebony Magazine as one of the 50 Most Intriguing Blacks of 2004. At the time of her death, she was serving as the President of the Council of A.M.E. Bishops and presiding prelate of the 16th Episcopal District. She was known as “the Praying Bishop,” and was a longtime advocate for vulnerable children. Sarah’s favorite scripture was Luke 18:27 - Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

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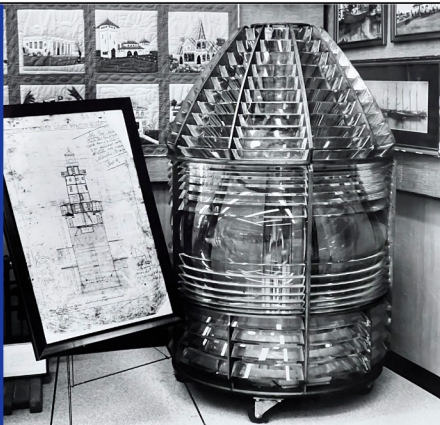
Dr. Sam Monroe Recounts the Early History of The Museum of the Gulf Coast (Part 3)

Dr. Monroe joined the Port Arthur Historical Society in 1975 and became its president in 1987. Since that time his unerring and adroit leadership has shepherded the Museum of the Gulf Coast through its formation, and a remarkable 30 years of rising prominence in this community, the nation, and the world. In this final installment of our series, Dr. Monroe recalls the decisions that would determine the Museum's themes, and the largest interior mural in the Southwest.

POP CULTURE

One of the objectives of the Museum was to tell the story of the Gulf Coast and the evolution of human life and the animal life that preceded it. So, geology and climate were an important part of it. We did a lot of extensive research. We worked with Dr. Mike Shahan who was one of the writers of the storyline. He later became president of Lamar State College in Orange. He was a trained historian and was a member of the board at that time.

We actually went out to various archaeological sites in this area. Tolbert Crowder was a well-known conservationist and he took us on boat trips. We went to the shell middens, and we discovered artifacts and pieces - some of which are in the exhibit today. There were a lot of people who contributed their time, energy, and expertise toward the project, including the design people in Houston. The popular culture part, I thought, was really important because of the history that is being made by people from here, and a lot of people don't look at contemporary artists or contemporary musical



Early photo of lighthouse lens displayed at Gates library

performers as historical figures. It took a little convincing because it was non-traditional. The approach was to tell this story of the Gulf Coast in a traditional historical fashion with exhibits to back it all up. We were able to do the same thing with the music people, and the sports people, and also the political leaders that came from here, the theater people, motion picture people - so it all finally worked out. But a lot of people had to swallow hard about including the pop culture. That really is the thing that has made this museum famous all over the United States and in many parts of the world. Those pop culture figures had great careers, international careers. People come here looking for the Big Bopper, they come looking for Janis Joplin, but are fascinated with Ivory Joe Hunter. Blind Willie Johnson is a name that most people wouldn't recognize, but one of his songs was put on the Voyager satellites that were launched and have left our solar system a few years ago and are now in deep space. There's a message on that spacecraft that talks about earth and the people here. Blind Willie is from Beaumont and has a song on that disc along with Frank Sinatra, Chuck Berry, and other classical writers and performers. So, there's a really great story to tell through the pop culture.

THE FIVE SCENE MURAL

The board looked at several designs for a mural that was envisioned on the first-floor wall of the Museum. We hoped to tell in these large renderings the story, at a glance, of the development of life on the Gulf Coast. The artist selected was Travis Keece, and he was assisted by Melinda Dixon. They had been active on other murals around Texas and the Southwest, and came to our attention through Dr. Bill Griggs. He had worked with them on a museum mural in Corpus Christi and was very pleased. We met him and liked him right away, and so they came in and did the mural on the wall. The mural scenes were carefully considered by the members of the board, and ultimately approved.

It begins really with the time before human occupation. Millions of years ago during the age of the dinosaurs and depicted with a plesiosaurus. The archaeological record shows these creatures were found here and in other oceans around the world. Next the depiction is of the Clovis culture - hunter gatherer nomads who followed the herds of large bison, mastodons, and mammoths for their food source. There's a great story that we are witnessing.

Then the European contact with Cabeza de Vaca and Esteban when they beached here in 1528. The first writing that was done about this area was by Cabeza de Vaca, which is interesting because all those centuries ago he finally got back home and wrote a book about what he had seen. That is the first record we have of what life was like here. And then, of course there is the time of war between the states when there was a famous battle fought at Sabine Pass led by Lieutenant Dick Dowling. The mural ends with the discovery of oil at Spindletop between Beaumont and Port Arthur, which was a very significant oil discovery, the greatest in North American history.

MOGC Today and in the Future

Today, the Museum has evolved into a tourist attraction, and is important for Port Arthur and the surrounding area. It is even now listed among the Houston area attractions. It has also evolved into an educational resource for school children who need the touch and feel of local history. We have archival materials available that can be used for research. So it has a multipurpose function in the community.

(continued on page 11)



Margaret Ezeell, Merle Murphy, unknown, Sydelese Fredeman, and J.B. Hathaway pose with the Museum's first exhibit in the lobby of Merchants Bank.

Museum Visited by Smithsonian Historian for 2026 Janis Joplin Exhibition

The Smithsonian Portrait Gallery will be mounting an exhibition on Janis Joplin, which is opening in November of 2026. Smithsonian historian Mindy Farmer has been in discussions with the Museum about the project for a year, and recently visited Port Arthur. This portrait of Janis was taken by J.C. Watkins and is part of the Museum's collection. Joplin was 22 when she posed for this photo. Bart Bragg is assisting the Smithsonian with retouching and printing the original negative. The Portrait Gallery focuses almost entirely on portraits, and it works with the Presidents on their official portraits as they leave office. Farmer will be writing the notes for each portrait shown at the Joplin exhibition.



Janis Joplin, Photo by J.C. Watkins



*Wade and Laurie Phillips visited MOGC in February for the Gala Launch Event.
- Photo courtesy of Bart Bragg*

Madelon Goldsmith, Robert Giblin, & Don Rollins Pass

Madelon Goldsmith passed away in February of 2025 at the age of 90. She was the last of the founding board members of the Port Arthur Historical Society which began in 1973. She served as the vice-president of the Society for many years with President Dr. Sam Monroe. She was known for her soft spoken demeanor, and for her sound opinions on matters concerning the operations of the Museum as a board member. Jeweler James Avery personally gave a gift to the museum in memory of Ms. Goldsmith.

Port Neches-Groves' standout receiver Robert Giblin died in February. He attended the University of Houston, playing cornerback from 1971 to 1974. He earned All-American honors as a defensive back in 1973 and 1974. The New York Giants drafted Giblin in 1975 in the 4th round. Robert played with the Giants for two years, and subsequently was traded to the St. Louis Cardinals. He announced

his retirement in 1978 to avoid further injuries. Giblin returned to U of H to obtain his law degree in 1982. As a respected attorney with Provost Umphrey, he excelled in his legal work before ultimately retiring in 1999 to dedicate himself fully to his family.

Don Rollins was a native of Vidor and won a Grammy award for co-writing the hit country song "It's 5 O'clock Somewhere." Rollins was a 1983 graduate of Lamar University in Beaumont. He was also a band director in both Vidor and Woodville. Don was a skilled studio musician, and played the saxophone with bands for Joe Williams, Bob Crosby, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Martha and The Vandellas, Little Anthony and The Imperials, Bobby Vinton, Lawrence Welk, and Barnum & Bailey Circus. His biggest song writing hit came in 2003. The song "It's 5 O'clock Somewhere" was co-written by Rollins and Jim "Moose" Brown, and was recorded by Alan Jackson and Jimmy Buffett. The song was a monster hit and stayed at number 1 on the country charts for 8 weeks, selling over 6 million copies. In 2007, Mr. Rollins placed two songs on the platinum *Duets* album by Reba McEntire; including duets with McEntire and Faith Hill, as well as a duet with Reba and songwriting legend Carole King.

From left to right: Madelon Goldsmith, Robert Giblin and Don Rollins



Memorials

RODNEY BROUSSARD

Ari Karell

CAROL ADELE BRYANT

Tom and Linda Neal

DELORES DEVILLIER

Doc and Denise Perron

DAVID ROY DIE, SR.

Doc and Denise Perron

ELEANOR JUNE GOOSBY

Tom and Linda Neal

Dr. Sam and Linda Monroe

JARON HARPER

Lucille Armintor

ANNA FRANCES JONES

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Dr. Sam and Linda Monroe

Gail Shook

ROXIE LAWSON

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DR. GEORGE McLAUGHLIN

Dr. Sam and Linda Monroe

Tom and Linda Neal

DR. BEVERLY PARKER

Dr. Charles Gongre

ROBERT TROXELL

Susan Straub

Tom and Karen Lye

ROBERT WELDON

Tom and Linda Neal

PATRICIA WOODS

Stuart and Patti Salter

MARIE ERRINGTON

Ladies Lunch Group of TJ Class of 1960

MADELON GOLDSMITH

Charleen Commings

Mary Linn

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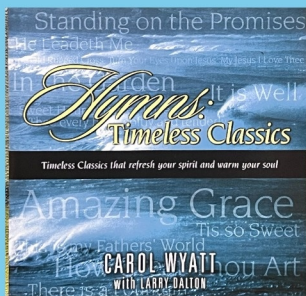
- In Honor of Ms. Willie Mae Marshall

Colleen Sims

- In Honor of Leanne Moore

Colleen Sims

- In Honor of Carol Greiner Eddins



The CD *Hymns: Timeless Classics* by Carol Wyatt

Now available in the Gift Shop

(MOGC History continued)

As we build on what we have accomplished and look to the future, the permanent endowment fund is an area of focus. There is about \$700,000 in it now, but there needs to be an effort made to build on that fund for the distant future, because to hire the people to work in the museum, to hire the talent, the resourceful people that are needed, that are trained and educated in the market, it takes money. To maintain the facilities and to update the exhibits, which is something that has been done through the years, is very important. Tom Neal added the electronic component with the touchscreen kiosks to the exhibits. So there are things you have to do to maintain relevance as the museum matures, and I am confident that The Museum of the Gulf Coast will continue to meet that challenge. *(As told by Dr. Sam Monroe - compiled by Robert Fong)*

Coming Museum Inductions



Mike Zito, Music Hall of Fame



Bart Bragg, Legacy Exhibits



Paul Orta, Legacy Exhibits

Thank you to our steadfast supporters of the Museum of the Gulf Coast and the Port Arthur Historical Society. Your generous contributions are a vital part of our effort to preserve the storied history of this region. Those members and non-members who wish to contribute a memorial in the name of a loved one, or make a donation, please call (409) 999-6282, email us at MuseumoftheGulfCoast@gmail.com, or go to MuseumoftheGulfCoast.org



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