

The Heritage Gazette



Preserve the Past, Honor the Present, Shape the Future

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 - MAY 2014

Circa 1907

President Theodore Roosevelt shakes a record 8,513 hands in 1 day. The 1st radio broadcast of a musical composition airs. NY Giant Roger Bresnahan becomes the 1st catcher to wear shin guards. 11,745 immigrants arrive in Ellis Island, NY. The Fairmont Hotel opens in San Francisco. Taxis first began running in NYC. The automatic washer & dryer are introduced. Florenz Ziegfeld's "Follies of 1907," premieres in NYC. Magician & Escape Artist Harry Houdini escapes from chains underwater at Aquatic Park in 57 seconds. The United Parcel Service is founded by James E. Casey in Seattle, Washington. The Plaza Hotel (5th Ave & 59th St, NY) opens. Ringling Brothers Greatest Show on Earth buys Barnum & Bailey circus. Oklahoma becomes the United States 46th state. In Haverhill, Massachusetts, scrap-metal dealer Louis B. Mayer opens his first movie theater. For the 1st time a ball drops at Times Square to signal the new year. And on a local note, a grand resort - The Southern Hotel - opened its doors in the quaint, charming town of Covington, Louisiana.



Built in 1907 during an era when Covington was renowned for its fresh air and surrounding spring waters reputed as having curative properties, the Southern Hotel opened on June 1st, 1907. A luxurious

reputation swiftly encircled the Southern Hotel as it pampered guests with electric lights, hot water and carpeting. Newspaper reports on the 1907 grand opening "also noted the property's fine china, linens and attentive service." It wasn't long before the Southern Hotel began attracting visitors from near and far, hosting guests for over 50 years.

Today, after decades of other uses, vacancies, and a bit of neglect, new owners Lisa Condrey Ward, Joseph Ward, Ricky and Gayle Condrey have infused their vision into reality with the assistance of their architect Peter Trapolin of New Orleans who has had experience with several successful historic hotel renovations.

The first complete restoration after 107 years, the newly renovated, 41-room boutique hotel will re-open in its grandeur on June 1st, 2014. In addition to "attentive service and fine amenities" as

was prominent in the past, current day features include two meeting rooms - The Josie and The Olympia, banquet facilities, fitness room, Wi-Fi, plunge pool, bar/lounge, and delectable new restaurant, Ox Lot 9. Beautifully decorated and proficiently designed guest rooms and two lavish suites, the Walker Percy and the Thomas Sully, will be offered.

The Southern Hotel, once the crown jewel of Covington, will again shine in the city's historic downtown thanks to the dream,

leadership, and investment of the Ward and Condrey family team. For more on the history, renovation and news of the upcoming ceremonial activities and events that will take place in celebration of the gala re-opening of this historic hotel, visit their website www.southernhotel.com and Facebook https://www.facebook.com/SouthernHotel/page_map.

Contact: info@southernhotel.com

See inside bottom right page for events.

-Contributed by Pam Keller



We eagerly anticipate hosting a book signing in June of Howard Nichols' latest book, *Stories of a Rivertown: Covington, Louisiana at Two Hundred Years*. Nichols, who grew up in Covington, is a popular historian, author, lecturer, and Professor Emeritus from Southeastern Louisiana University. We are pleased to collaborate with the Southern Hotel on introducing his latest work to the community.



HISTORY MYSTERY

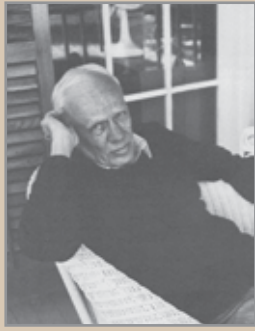
So Who Is This Ex-Commodore?



See Page 2 . . .

SEND US YOUR TRIVIA AT
info@covingtonheritagefoundation.com

Covington Spotlight On . . .



Our Very Own WALKER PERCY

The most famous literary figure to ever call Covington home, Walker Percy lived and wrote on the banks of the Bogue Falaya. He also wrote in a loft above his family-owned bookstore, The Kumquat on Lee Lane, where fans lined up on the porch to purchase signed copies of his books. Publications include novels The Moviegoer, The Last Gentleman, Love in the Ruins, Lancelot, The Second Coming, and The Thanatos Syndrome. Non-fiction works include The Message in the Bottle, Lost in the Cosmos, and Signposts in a Strange Land (published posthumously).

A series of unfortunate events in young Percy's life may have contributed to his reflective and philosophical worldview. When he was 15, his father's suicide seemed to mirror his grandfather's previous suicide and uprooted the family. Three years later his mother was killed in an automobile accident. Walker and his two brothers were adopted by his father's cousin William Alexander Percy, a Mississippi writer (Lanterns on the Levee), a scholar and a gentleman. Walker graduated from UNC then Columbia Medical School. But, during residency he and a few other residents contracted tuberculosis in pathology rotation.

Practicing medicine was over for Dr. Percy. During three years of recuperation, he read extensively works of philosophy, psychiatry, and the European Existentialists. Thus began his search – the search for meaning exemplified in all his literary works. After spending time in New Mexico with his friend, Civil War historian Shelby Foote, Walker was back in Greenville, where he met a gracious Delta girl, Mary Bernice “Bunt” Townsend. Together, they studied and converted to the Catholic faith, another direction of his search. In 1946 they married in New Orleans, where they lived for a few years.

In 1948 Walker and Bunt drove to Covington, loved it, and returned the next week to buy a home on Military Road near historic Sunnybrook. In 1961, they bought a spacious French Provincial home with extensive grounds on the beautiful Bogue Falaya off Jahncke Avenue. Some years later, they expressed intention to “downsize” and built another home on the property, a home with panoramic views from the many windows. Walker and Bunt had two adored daughters, Mary Pratt (Lobdell) and Ann Boyd (Moore) and four grandsons, John Walker and Robert Lobdell and David and Jack Moore.

Walker relished driving around town in his little blue truck with his Corgi Sweet Thang by his side, people watching at the Waffle House, and weekly lunches with friends at Bechac's, where he drank his bourbon “neat”. Walker and Bunt are buried at Saint Joseph's Abbey.

Volumes have been written about Walker Percy's philosophy, his literary merit, and his desire to have his readers accompany him on the search for meaning. Here we will focus on his view of Covington, his love for the town, and the legacy he left for us.

In the legendary essay in which he addresses “Why I Live Where I Live” in Signposts in a Strange Land (Patrick Samway, Ed., 1991), Percy declares: “The reason I live in Covington, Louisiana is not because it was listed recently in Money as one of the best places in the United

States to retire to. The reason is not that it is a pleasant place but rather that it is a pleasant non-place.” “When I first saw Covington, having driven over from New Orleans one day, I took one look around, sniffed the ozone, and exclaimed ‘this is the nonplace for me.’ It had no country clubs, no subdivisions, no Chamber of Commerce, no hospitals, no psychiatrists (now it has all of these). I didn't know anybody, had no kin here. A stranger in my own country, a perfect place for a writer! I bought a house the following week.” Later he laments “Things have changed in recent years. Covington is now threatened by progress. It has become a little jewel in the Sunbelt and is in serious danger of being written up in Southern Living, what with its restored shotgun cottages, live oaks, nifty shops, converted depot.”

In another piece, Percy personalizes Covington and his place in the small town. His essay “Questions They Never Asked Me: So He Asked Them Himself” appeared in Conversations With Walker Percy (Lawson and Kramer, Eds, originally published in Esquire, 1977). He wrote, “How do you perceive your place in this small Louisiana town?” “I go to the barber shop to get a haircut and the barber says, ‘How you doing Doc?’ I say, ‘Okay.’ I go to the Post Office to get the mail, and the clerk says, ‘What's up Doc?’ I go to a restaurant on Lake Pontchartrain and the waitress says ‘What you want, honey?’ I say, ‘Some cold beer and crawfish.’”

With characteristic wry humor, Percy sums up his place and his legacy in Covington. “People don't read much in the South and don't take things very seriously, which is probably as it should be. I've managed to live here for thirty years and am less well known than the Budweiser distributor. The only famous person in this town is Isiah Robertson, linebacker for the Rams, and that is probably as it should be too. One day a fellow townsman asked me: ‘What do you do Doc?’ ‘Well, I write books.’ ‘I know that, Doc, but what do you really do?’ ‘Nothing.’ He nodded. He was pleased and I was pleased.”

–Contributed by Sue Osbon

Bicentennial Transitions To The Covington Heritage Foundation



The CHF evolved from the committee that put together Covington's bicentennial observance, which included a year-long series of lectures, home and garden tours and concerts before concluding with a day-long celebration at Bogue Falaya Park on July 4, 2013, the 200th anniversary of the city's founding by John Wharton Collins.

Urged to continue the focus on Covington's rich history by participants in the numerous bicentennial events, several members of the committee decided to form the CHF. A kickoff event was held last December and their website, covingtonheritagefoundation.com, was recently launched.

CHF President Sharon Nunez accepts applications to join the new organization. Signing on were Mayor Mike Cooper, Police Chief Tim Lentz and City Council Members Larry Rolling, Sam O'Keefe, Lee Alexius, Rick Smith and Jerry Coner.

–Photograph and content taken from the St. Tammany Farmer, Thursday, March 27, 2014

History Mystery . . . from Page 1

If you guessed Thomas Sully, you are correct. Why is this famous New Orleans architect of any interest to us? Along with many beautiful Sully-designed residences and buildings in New Orleans (one being the first skyscraper, the Hennen Building), Sully designed the convent for St. Scholastica and one of Covington's courthouses. He was a frequent visitor to Covington and fished in our rivers. View the Thomas Sully Office Records online at The Southeastern Architectural Archive at Tulane University http://seaa.tulane.edu/sites/all/themes/Howard_Tilton/docs/finding_aids/Thomas%20Sully.pdf. The Collection consists of specifications and photographs associated with Sully and many of his architectural drawings.

PHOTO CREDIT: “Ex-Commodore Thomas Sully.” *Men and Matters: A Magazine of Fact, Fancy & Fiction* 2:1 (December 1895): p. 11. Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University

The Board Talk

As many of you know, the inaugural event featuring the lecture about Covington natives by archivist Robin Leckbee Perkins this past December was both informative and entertaining. So what has the Board been doing since then. We can boast of now having Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, started our scrapbook, and completed our non-profit application. We also fulfilled an educational goal of ours by hosting a lecture on the history of the Covington area to the 2015 class of St. Paul's School. Mark Johnson, an SPS alumnus, made the presentation.

We are pleased to announce that we have decided to award a Covington Heritage Award to a business or homeowner who has shown an outstanding example of restoration or rehabilitation that forwards our mission to preserve the culture and heritage of Covington. While this will not be an annual award, it will be presented when appropriate.

Kudos to Covington Brewery for teaming up with us for Boilin' at the Brewery to be held June 8th. Details for a museum event, a home tour, and our annual membership meeting/party are still on the drawing board. We will keep you posted about these and other upcoming events by email and our website.

A big thanks to the members who have become volunteers. You are doing a great job. If you are thinking of getting involved, remember volunteers can work for an hour, an entire event, or just in the planning stages. Consider writing articles or proofreading for our publications, organizing mail-out activities, or offering good ideas or suggestions. Presently, we are organizing a museum event, and we would love to include you in our planning stages. We actually have fun while working on these various projects!

Thanks to all of you for supporting our mission. Hope to see you and your friends at our next recruiting event—the crawfish boil on June 8th.

—Contributed by Sharon Nunez



Archivist Robin Leckbee Perkins



Board Members Suzanne King, Sue Osbon, Lee Alexius and Sharon Nunez



Elizabeth Van Sant, Carolyn Chassee and Mark Richards



Mark Johnson with SPS Class of 2015 lecturing on the history of the Covington area



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Covington Heritage Foundation Presents

Boilin' AT THE BREWERY

JUNE 8, 2014 AT 4PM
AT THE COVINGTON BREWHOUSE

Enjoy Beer, Friends, & Crawfish in support of Covington Heritage Foundation!

Current CHF Members - \$15	SUBSCRIBE:	CONTRIBUTE:
New CHF Members - \$95		
New CHF Families - \$40 (for 2)		
Kids (Ages 7-12) - \$5		
Kids Under 6 - Free!		

Includes 2014 Membership, Beer & Crawfish!

Go Online: CovingtonHeritageFoundation.com
By Phone: (985) 373-0192

PURCHASE TICKETS

* Tickets sold at the door include an additional \$2.00 exchange.

SOUTHERN HOTEL TAKES CENTER STAGE

Join us to celebrate the 107th Anniversary of Southern Hotel's original opening, and get a SNEAK PREVIEW of the restored hotel, set to reopen in June.

Saturday, May 31 • 7 - 10 pm
ANNIVERSARY PREVIEW GALA
SOUTHERN HOTEL CAMELLIA BALLROOM • \$125 PER PERSON

Period costumes (black tie optional) are encouraged for this lively party.
Enjoy a cocktail supper, dancing to the Jimmy Maxwell Orchestra,
an exhibition of period photographs, auction items and more!

Sunday, June 1 • 2 - 5 pm
ANNIVERSARY CHAMPAGNE RECEPTION
SOUTHERN HOTEL COURTYARD • \$30 PER PERSON

Take a tour, listen to live jazz music and enjoy a short film presentation on the history of the Southern Hotel.

Events to be catered by Jeffrey Hansell, highly acclaimed chef set to open Ox Lot 9 in the Southern Hotel.

To purchase tickets, visit: Ward & Condrey Law Firm, 206 N. Jefferson Avenue or call 985.871.5223.

Event proceeds to benefit Keep Covington Beautiful and the Covington Boys & Girls Club.

