



GREETINGS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

This summer has been one of both reflection and renewal at Magnolia Mound.

In June, we bid a heartfelt farewell to Director John Sykes as he retired after 14 years of dedicated service. Since 2010, John has guided the site through major improvements, successful programs and events, and meaningful growth. His deep knowledge and passion has left a lasting mark on Magnolia Mound.

Throughout his tenure, John collaborated closely with BREC, staff, the Friends of Magnolia Mound, the local community, and many of the preservationists who helped save the site. Education remained a cornerstone of his leadership, with thousands of students, riverboat cruise passengers, tourists, and community groups benefiting from engaging tours and programs. He also played a key role in the renovation and preservation of the site's historic buildings, as well as in the planning and construction of the Turner Family Visitor Center. His presence and expertise will be greatly missed.

We are pleased to welcome Ashley Freeman as the new director of the Mound. We're looking forward to working with her at the Mound as we continue to work together to enhance the experience for our visitors at one of the premier house museums in Louisiana.

In other exciting news, Magnolia Mound has been re-accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. This prestigious recognition honors the museum's ongoing commitment to excellence, high professional standards, and continuous improvement.

We look forward to seeing you at Magnolia Mound.

Susan Eaton
President

Welcome to the New Director of Magnolia Mound!

We're excited to welcome **Ashley Freeman** as the new Director of Magnolia Mound. Ashley has been a dedicated member of the BREC team, previously serving as an archivist and education coordinator at Magnolia Mound, where she also helped with our summer camps. We look forward to the energy and insight she brings to this new role.



"I'm a Cajun from Bayou Lafourche who has been living in Baton Rouge for the past 15 years. In addition to my passion for history, I'm an avid reader and love spending time in nature with my family. I received a BA in history from Nicholls State University. After graduating, I spent some time teaching history to middle and high schoolers. I moved to Baton Rouge to begin my career in the museum field at the Louisiana Art & Science Museum.

While working at LASM, I attended graduate school at Southeastern Louisiana University where I received an MA in public history. During my studies, I focused on Southern history, including slavery and Louisiana history, as well as museum studies and historic preservation. Upon graduation, I was promoted to Operations Manager at LASM. In 2017, wanting to more closely align with my degrees and interests, I took the part-time archivist position at Magnolia Mound. A year later, I was promoted to Education Program Specialist. I thrived in the position developing summer camp programs and teaching hands-on history to school students.

I had my daughter Bonnie at the end of 2019, and by the Fall of 2022, I made the decision to stay home with her. Over the next two years, I cherished my time as a mother. We started a gentle preschool program at home, where I had the privilege of teaching my daughter to read and instilling a love of learning. When the part-time educator position became available last Fall, Bonnie was attending a nature school a few days a week, and I was ready to come back to a job I love and am passionate about.

Now, I am excited to step into my new role as Director. I'm looking forward to utilizing my educational background and passion for historic places to grow our programming, enhance community engagement, and develop the Mound's untapped potential."

Magnolia Mound Receives Re-Accreditation



**American
Alliance of
Museums**

As the museum field's mark of distinction since 1971, accreditation offers high profile, peer-based validation of your museum's operations and impact. Accreditation increases your museum's credibility and value to funders, policy makers, insurers, community and peers. Accreditation is a powerful tool to leverage change and helps facilitate loans between institutions.

Accreditation is based on the Core Standards for Museums.

Two core questions guide every accreditation review:

How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?

How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances?

The accreditation process is centered on self-study and peer review and takes 8-16 months to complete, and should be done every 10 years. Taken from the AAM website: www.aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/accreditation/



October 5 at Magnolia Mound

Join us for our annual Pumpkin Picking Event on October 5, 2025, from 1 to 4 PM at Magnolia Mound Museum for a fun-filled afternoon.

Pick your pumpkin from our pumpkin patch, walk through the Historic House, explore our Kitchen Garden, and taste different varieties of sugar cane and honey from our hives.

Lots of fun for the kids.

- Scavenger Hunt
- Painting activities
- Making corn husk dolls
- Halloween banner with a face hole for photo ops

Free admission to the house and grounds, just pay for your pumpkin! There will also be ice cream for sale!



Scenes from last year's Pumpkin Picking.



**Come early to
snag a BIG ONE!**

Save the Date for the 26th Annual PETITE ANTIQUE FORUM

By Catherine White

Neal Hurst, Curator of the Department of Textiles and Costumes at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, will be the speaker for the 26th Petite Antique Forum presented by the Friends of Magnolia Mound on January 29, 2026 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Mr. Hurst's topic will be **"The Art of Dressing: Clothing Men and Women 1770 – 1820"**. Attendees will learn about the exceptional historic textile collection in Colonial Williamsburg.

The one-day forum will also feature luncheon at the Baton Rouge Country Club and tours of two historic private homes that are not open to the public. Be sure to mark this date on your 2026 calendar now.

More information will be forthcoming this autumn.



Neal Hurst



GOWN

Date 1726-1728 (textile); 1775-1785 (gown)

Artist/Maker: Anna Maria Garthwaite

Origin: England (textile); worn in America, Rhode Island

Medium: Silk "lampas" brocaded with silk; linen bodice and sleeve lining.

Credit Line: Museum Purchase

Object number 1951-150,1



COAT

Date ca. 1770

Origin: America, New England

Medium: Wool plain weave fullered and napped "broadcloth"; twill worsted "shalloon" lining; tabby linen lining center back. Pocket flap lined with twill worsted; sleeves lined with tabby linen; right lower pocket is linen; left pocket is leather; inside pocket on left breast is linen, with broadcloth welt.

Credit Line: Museum Purchase

Object number 1953-59



PURSE

Date 1810-1825

Origin: Europe, France

Medium: Ribbed silk; silk ribbons; metallic threads.

Credit Line: Gift of Janice D. Reagan

Object number 1992-84

Photos courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg, Department of Textiles and Costumes

An Early 19th-Century Stand-Up Desk joined the Collection in Memory of Professor H.P. Bacot

By Babeth Schlegel

This July, the Friends acquired a remarkable piece of early Louisiana furniture—a cherry stand-up desk dating to circa 1800–1810. The acquisition from Mr. and Mrs. Williams was done with the memorial funds of Professor H.P. “Pat” Bacot, Curator Emeritus. This artifact enhances the museum’s decorative arts collection and now is featured in the boys’ bedroom of the historic house.

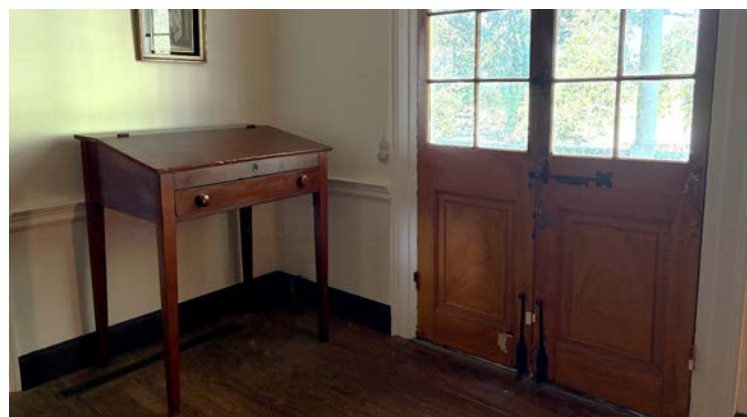


Crafted most likely in Louisiana, the stand-up desk reflects the simplicity and practicality typical of regional craftsmanship in the early 19th-century. The sloped writing lid opens to reveal a compartment suitable for storing ledgers, papers, or correspondence and could be locked to secure its contents. Below, a single drawer—fitted with reproduction knobs—offers additional storage space. The desk stands on square, tapering legs, a feature associated with Federal-era design aesthetics. This form of desk, designed for standing work, was not only practical for business or household management but also a mark for evolving work habits. A similar desk is documented on page 441 of the landmark reference book *Furnishing Louisiana: Creole and Acadian Furniture, 1735–1835*.

The stand-up desk also invites comparisons to a notable moment in American history. Around 1775, Thomas Jefferson—renowned statesman and third President of the United States—commissioned a standing desk from a Williamsburg cabinetmaker. Jefferson’s custom-made design allowed him to work while standing or sitting on a high stool, making him one of the earliest recorded users of an adjustable standing desk.

For the museum, the desk is more than an artifact—it is a lasting tribute to the legacy of Professor Pat Bacot, who devoted decades to interpreting and preserving Louisiana’s material culture. His scholarship and curatorial vision shaped the Friends’ collection and guided generations of students, visitors, and colleagues in understanding the region’s cultural history.

The stand-up desk now stands within the historic house, offering insight into daily life in early 19th-century Louisiana—and honoring a life dedicated to its study.



Thank you to John Sykes for his many years of brilliant dedication to the mission of Magnolia Mound

On Friday, May 30, the Friends gathered to bid a fond farewell to our dear John Sykes. It was a wonderful opportunity to show our appreciation for his many years of dedicated partnership with the Friends organization. While we will miss his presence dearly, we are excited for the journey ahead of him at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where he will begin a three-year program in religious studies. As a special keepsake, we presented John with a reproduction watercolor by Jim Blanchard of the 1810 west gallery of the historic house. We send him off with our deepest gratitude and our very best wishes for this next chapter.



Karen Zobrist with John



Harriet Babin with John



Donna Wright with John



Michael and Mary Williams with John



John with Donna Mitchell



John was presented with a Jim Blanchard framed reproduction watercolor of Magnolia Mound



Magnolia Mound House Museum 50th Anniversary Celebration



In the 1960s the house was in disrepair and scheduled to be destroyed to build apartment complexes.

The Foundation for Historical Louisiana, supported by other historical organizations, historians, and historical architects, urged BREC to purchase the property from a reluctant seller.

Because of its architectural and historic value to East Baton Rouge Parish the property was subsequently expropriated. In 1966, BREC purchased the house and five acres and a Board of Trustees was appointed to supervise the restoration.

The restoration began in 1972 under the supervision of a restoration architect from New Orleans.

In 1972, the house was placed on the National Register of Historical Places.

In 1975, the house was opened to the public.



Magnolia Mound Museum Historic Site Directors

Wing Stanforth Sigler 1975-1979

Carol Nelson 1979-1983

Timothy John Mullin 1983-1986

Gwen Adell Edwards 1986-1999

Margaret C. Kennedy 1999-2000

Dorinda M. Hilburn 2000-2005

Carey Coxe 2005-2007

Steven Ray Fuller 2007-2011

John C. Sykes III 2011-2025



Friends of Magnolia Mound Board of Director Presidents

Sue Turner 1975-1978

Winnie Byrd 1978-1985

Laura Clark 1985-1988

Merrill Faye Eglin 1988-1991

Patricia Comeaux 1991-1994

James Runge 1994-1997

Suzette Tannehill 1997-1999

Donna Wright 1999-2000

Katherine Ragland 2000-2001

Suzette Tannehill 2001-2003

Patricia Comeaux 2003-2008

Jane Thomas 2008-2010

Kenneth Kleinpeter 2010-2012

Nancy Dougherty 2012-2014

Semmes Favrot 2014-2019

Donna Mitchell 2019-2022

Karen Zobrist 2022-2024

Susan Eaton 2024-2026



Above: John Sykes, Craig Rowley,
Babeth Schlegel

Revolutionary War Heroes Reunited

On Friday, April 11, 2025, this could have been the banner news headline in the year 1825! This was the year Magnolia Mound's owner Armand Duplantier greeted his friend and Revolutionary Army superior, General Marquis de Lafayette in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

John Scurich and Denise Bennett from the American Friends of Lafayette invited the Friends of Magnolia Mound to host an event for the yearlong celebration of the Farewell Tour of the General Marquis de Lafayette to the United States. This event was celebrated at Magnolia Mound with a Lunch Buffet in La Grange, with 120 attendees. Eighty guests arrived in buses from New Orleans, where the Louisiana segment of a year-long celebration of Lafayette's return to the United States after the French Revolution, was celebrated. Ticket sales in Baton Rouge were restricted as there was limited seating available.

When the guests arrived, there was a reenactment of the two friends meeting in the twilight of their lives and reflecting on their parts in history. Lafayette's character was played by Mark Schneider, professional Lafayette impersonator from Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and Armand's character was portrayed by Semmes Favrot, former president of Magnolia Mound's Friends' board. The performance was held on the back gallery of the main house.

Following this, guests proceeded to La Grange, where a sumptuous lunch, prepared by Heirloom Cuisine, and entertainment by Magnolia Strings greeted them. Guests were treated to a tour of the Main House, Overseer's House, Slave Cabin, and observed a cooking demonstration in the kitchen.

The Friends had the pleasure of having a French delegation with a descendant from General Lafayette in attendance. Mrs. Virginie de Pusy Lafayette, a seventh-generation descendant of the Marquis, was the official ambassador for the commemorative tour. In 1997, Gilbert de Pusy Lafayette came with his mother, the Countess De Pusy Lafayette, to visit Magnolia Mound. Gilbert is the uncle and godfather of Virginie de Pusy Lafayette.

The weather was perfect, and guests enjoyed the commemoration of an important event in history, remembering Armand Duplantier's contribution to the Revolutionary War, and the establishment of our great nation.

A big thank-you to everyone who participated in the success of this event:

The event committee:

John Scurich and Denise Bennett

Friends Members: Ethan Melancon, *Chairman*

Babeth Schlegel, Karen Zobrist, John Sykes, and Jerri Becnel.

The day of event:

Friends Members: Susan Eaton, Barbara Bacot.

BREC staff: Janette Brock, Craig Crowley, Ann Felice Fourrier, Darren Hubbard, Ja'Nadius Journey, Patricia Ladut, Syama Madhavan, Nolaine Potts, Christopher Triche, and Jennifer Viator.



Top photo: Virginie de Pusy de Lafayette

Middle photo: Mark Schneider, Denise Bennett, Semmes Favrot

Bottom photo: Karen Zobrist

Honey Harvesting Time at the Mound

Harvested and written
by Camm Morton



We made our first honey harvest on July 21. It was an incredibly hot day even for South Louisiana but it was time. With the help of Kevin Langley and Gee Hargon we were able to harvest almost 130 pounds of honey. For perspective, that is 130 of the plastic squeeze bottles that we will sell in the gift shop, at our Pumpkin Picking Festival the first week of October, and at the Creole Festival in December. Last year we sold over 250 pounds of honey.

So what is the process of harvesting honey and getting it into that squeeze bottle? First, the beekeeper, Camm Morton, opens each of the hives starting with the top box. There are eight hives: the smaller ones contain five frames per box, the larger hives contain ten frames. Frames are what the bees use to grow the hive and to produce honey. At Magnolia Mound we only harvest honey from the first two bottom boxes. Those are the brood boxes where the queen lays her eggs to produce the brood and later worker bees and drones. In those bottom two boxes are also the honey stores and pollen stores for feeding the brood and the queen.

When we go to harvest, we are looking for all capped honey. Capped honey means that the honey has a 17 to 18 percent moisture content which is the sweet spot where the honey is stable and will not ferment. If the moisture is higher than about 18.6% yeast can start fermenting the sugars, which is not good unless you are trying to produce mead, also known as honey wine. Bees fan their wings to evaporate excess moisture before sealing the cells with a wax capping. In our most recent harvest, we found that whole boxes were filled with nectar in the process of being dried by the bees. We left that for a future harvest.

Once the frames are harvested from the hives, we use Kevin's air conditioned trailer to uncapp the frames and extract the honey. It is then filtered and placed in a 5-gallon bucket to "rest".

The air conditioned trailer not only helps the human workers in the summer heat, but it keeps the honey from extracting moisture out of the air. Not a good thing. The frames are uncapped using an uncapping knife which can take many forms. We use an electric fish file knife, but others use a hot knife or a scraper to remove the caps. Once uncapped on both sides, the frames go into a centrifugal extractor. As it whirls around, most of the honey is released from the comb. This is then filtered through a very fine screen to remove wax and other undesirable elements. After a few days rest, the honey is then bottled using a honey gate at the bottom of the bucket. Harvested properly, honey never spoils. It has been found still edible in 3,000 year old Egyptian tombs.

The frames are then returned to the bees to clean up the residual honey and they start using them again. We make sure we leave the bees plenty of food for winter.

That is the process of harvesting honey. And it is REALLY, REALLY good to eat. You can get yours in the gift shop and help the Master Gardeners raise the money to produce the fabulous Kitchen Garden at Magnolia Mound.



Become a member, renew or donate today!

SUPPORTER - \$50

Name on donor page
One free tour
20% discount in gift shop
Invited to Le Salon Duplantier
E-newsletter
Advance notice of events

CONTRIBUTOR - \$100

Name on donor page
Two free tours
20% discount in gift shop
Invited to Le Salon Duplantier
E-newsletter
Advance notice of events

PATRON - \$250

Name on donor page
Four free tours
20% discount in gift shop
Invited to Le Salon Duplantier
E-newsletter
Advance notice of events

MAGNOLIA CIRCLE - \$500

Name on donor page
Six free tours
20% discount in gift shop
Inside Magnolia Mound book
Invited to Le Salon Duplantier
E-newsletter
Advance notice of events



DUPLANTIER SOCIETY

\$1,000
Honored at Le Salon Duplantier
Name on donor page
Free private tour for you plus ten guests
20% discount in gift shop
Inside Magnolia Mound book
Printed newsletter mailed to you
Advance notice of events

CONSTANCE JOYCE DUPLANTIER CIRCLE

\$2,500
Honored at Le Salon Duplantier
Name on donor page
Two tickets to the Petite Antiques Forum
Free private tour for you plus ten guests
20% discount in gift shop
Inside Magnolia Mound book
Printed newsletter mailed to you
Advance notice of events

ARMAND ALLARD DUPLANTIER CIRCLE

\$5,000+ Honored at Le Salon Duplantier
Name on donor page
Four tickets to the Petite Antiques Forum
Free private tour for you plus ten guests
20% discount in gift shop
Inside Magnolia Mound book
Printed newsletter mailed to you
Advance notice of events

Friends of Magnolia Mound

MISSION STATEMENT

To assist in the preservation and interpretation of the historic house and site as a demonstration of early plantation life in south Louisiana for the education and enjoyment of present and future generations and to procure and manage the Collection

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Friends, working with BREC, the Museum Director and staff, assist in implementing the master plan for the structures, landscaping, future additions and changes to Magnolia Mound.

BREC owns and operates Magnolia Mound. All of the furniture, decorative items and artifacts are owned and cared for by the Friends. This collection brings to life the interiors of the house and other buildings for the community, school groups, and tourists.

The Friends provide advisory and financial assistance for the kitchen garden, which is part of the educational tour at the Mound. Produce from the garden is used in the cooking demonstrations in the kitchen building.

YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS THIS MISSION

Friends of Magnolia Mound

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Eaton – *President*
Donna Wright – *Vice President*
Karen Zobrist – *Past President*
Cary Cox – *Treasurer/Secretary*
John Turner – *Board Member-at-Large*

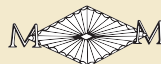
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Adelaide Russo
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Donna Wright

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Barbara Bacot
Mary Boston
Chet Coles
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Sean Duplantier
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Ethan Melancon

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Harriet Miller
Susan Wilder
Ashely Freeman, *Museum Director, Magnolia Mound*
Babeth Schlegel, *Executive Director/Collections Manager, Friends of Magnolia Mound*



The Friends & BREC - partners in preservation for over 50 years.

Questions? Please send an email to friendsofmagnoliamount@gmail.com or call Babeth Schlegel at (225) 421-3162

Friends of Magnolia Mound is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

1-Year Membership (For a renewal, the year's membership will begin when the current membership expires.)

Name _____ (as you would like it to appear in acknowledgments)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-Mail _____ Phone _____

Check Membership Level: ☐ Supporter \$50 ☐ Contributor \$100 ☐ Patron \$250 ☐ Magnolia Circle \$500

☐ Duplantier Society \$1,000 ☐ Constance Joyce Duplantier Circle \$2,500 ☐ Armand Allard Duplantier Circle \$5,000

I would like to make an additional donation in the amount of \$ _____

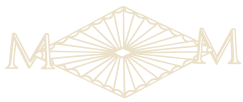
Enclosed is a check for \$ _____. I prefer to charge \$ _____ to type of card _____

Card # _____ Expiration Date ____ / ____ CVV number _____

Signature: _____

Make check payable to: Friends of Magnolia Mound
Mail to: Friends of Magnolia Mound,
P.O. Box 1254, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-1254

You can also charge your membership securely online, all major cards are accepted.
friendsofmagnoliamount.org



Friends of Magnolia Mound
P.O. Box 1254
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-1254



Blue, Gray & Bayous Tour brings visitors from around the world to Magnolia Mound



In 2024, Nick Clark of **Blue, Gray & Bayous Tours** contacted Nolaïne Potts to invite Magnolia Mound Museum and historic site to join their excursion program with American Cruise Lines, Inc. Since then, the Museum has welcomed more than 3,000 cruise guests, offering them the chance to explore our historic site and discover Louisiana's rich heritage.

This partnership has introduced our story to visitors from across the country and around the world, and we are proud to be featured in the **Blue, Gray & Bayous** promotional brochure shown above.