Celebrate Seersucker Saturday
By Molly Sanchez

Seersucker Saturday will be the theme for the 2017 Tea, Fashion, and Fancies on Saturday, February 18, 2017 from 2:00pm - 4:00pm in the LSU Rural Life Museum’s Visitor Center. This annual event is a partnership between the Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum and the Friends of the LSU Textile and Costume Museum.

Treat yourself, your mother, your daughter, a best friend or a special someone to a delectable English-style tea. Various samplings of tea, pastries and specialties will be served in multiple courses by the LSU Rural Life Museum docents.

This special event will feature Laurie Haspel Aronson of Louisiana’s Haspel Clothing Company, which is famous for its historic roots in New Orleans dating back to 1909 and for the introduction of its classic seersucker men’s suit. Seersucker Saturday will include a trunk show featuring Mignon Faget Jewelry and Jolie & Elizabeth which have creations inspired by the fabric.

Children attending the tea will have an opportunity to make their own seersucker craft and participate in their own fashion show.

Tickets are $60.00 per person for ages 13 and over and $25.00 for children under 13. Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum and the Textile and Costume Museum will receive a $5 discount. Tables for 8 or 10 people may be reserved in advance.

For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Molly Sanchez at 225 765-2437. All proceeds jointly benefit the Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum and the Friends of the LSU Textile and Costume Museum.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BATON ROUGE!
By Elaine Ellis

The twenty-first annual Ione E. Burden Symposium will be held Saturday, March 4, 2017, at the LSU Rural Life Museum from 8:00 - 3:00. The title of this year’s symposium is “Baton Rouge’s Bicentennial: An Historical View.”

This will be the museum’s first contribution to the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the city of Baton Rouge. Four symposium speakers will take us through the 200 years since Baton Rouge was incorporated as a Louisiana city.

Paul Arrigo, President and CEO of Visit Baton Rouge, will start the symposium by welcoming our guests. Faye Phillips, a dear friend and contributor to the museum and retired associate dean of libraries at LSU, has authored several books on local and Louisiana history. She has also authored a book on the history of the museum and gardens: “The LSU Rural Life Museum & Windrush Gardens – A Living History.” She will speak on the history of the first 100 years of the city of Baton Rouge.

Doug Villien, retired Baton Rouge city planner, author of several books, one of which is “Forgotten Baton Rouge,” and current docent at the LSU Rural Life Museum, will continue with the later history of the city of Baton Rouge. Robert Seal is a native of Bogalusa, Louisiana, a Vietnam veteran and a graduate of LSU with a degree in fine arts. He has had a lifelong interest in history focusing on the Civil War in Louisiana. His talk will center on the gunboats on the Mississippi River around Baton Rouge during the Civil War.

A delicious country lunch will be served by the LSU Rural Life Museum docents. Dr. Trent James, retired medical doctor and current docent at the LSU Rural Life Museum, will bring us “Greetings Baton Rouge – Postcards from the Past.” This will be a visual presentation of select postcards from the archives of the LSU Rural Life Museum.

In addition to the country lunch, there will be a speakers’ reception at the conclusion of the symposium. Come and learn about our city’s history! The day will be a great way to start the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the city of Baton Rouge. The cost of the symposium which covers all talks, lunch and the reception is $40. Call the museum at 765-2437 to make reservations to attend this once-in-a-lifetime historical symposium.
Out of all the other months, January is a month of preparation for the new year. In the 18th and 19th centuries, farmers would repair and make ready their farm equipment, they would begin to clear new land, split new fences, and prepare to plant a new crop in the spring. January was anything but mundane for the experienced farmer. January is a time for planning and preparation for a new year of growth.

It is the same here at the LSU Rural Life Museum. We are actively planning for new projects that will enable the museum to grow and prosper. Here are some of the larger projects that we are presently working on.

**Self-Guided Audio Tour**

This project entails developing an audio walking tour of the museum for visitors who desire more information about the buildings and artifacts, yet do not have access to a museum docent. We are grateful to the Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) which will develop a script and design an audio interpretation program of the LSU Rural Life Museum and Windrush Gardens. The visitor will be able to utilize a telephone-like wand. By pushing a numbered button on that wand the visitor will hear information pertaining to the history of that building. The program will be produced in two languages, English and French, and in the many dialects of our diverse citizenship. LPB will work with the museum staff on the script, much of which will originate from the Museum’s docent manual.

**New Interpretive Signage for 29 Historic Buildings**

This project entails replacing the current interpretive signs found on the Museum’s historic buildings with fiberglass outdoor plaques. Each plaque will include historic information about each building along with a photograph of that building before it was moved or during restoration. The plaques will have a designated number that will coincide with a button on the Museum’s interpretive wand. The signage along with the self-guided audio tours will greatly enhance our visitors’ experience.

**Museum Assessment Program (MAP)**

Initiated by the American Alliance of Museums, the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is an assessment tool that can help the LSU Rural Life Museum attain excellence in operations and planning through a confidential process of self-study and peer review. MAP is one component of the Department of Museum Standards & Excellence at the American Alliance of Museums. The goal of this assessment is to improve collections stewardship, prioritize long-term collections management issues, develop and revise collections policy and procedures, and review and critique the proposed museum collections storage facility plans. This is the second time the Museum has participated in MAP.

**“Antiquities Barn,” A New Collection Storage Facility**

A new 2000 square foot collection storage facility (Antiquities Barn) plan has been developed by Architects Southwest as part of the Museum’s Visitor Center. The Antiquities Barn will properly protect and house museum artifacts and collections that are not currently on exhibit. It will enable the staff to protect, preserve, and maintain the museum collections in a professional fashion according to American Alliance of Museum standards. The staff, docents, and friends of the museum are beginning a fund-raising effort to make this facility a reality. Stand-by for more information on how you can assist with this important project.

So as the farmer of old used the month of January as a time of planning and planting, so are we at the LSU Rural Life Museum. I expect the year 2017 to be a time of growth and improvement for the Museum, its staff and volunteers. It will be an exciting year!
S Steele Burden’s interest in a museum documenting the life of rural working-class Louisianans predated the donation of the Windrush house to Louisiana State University (LSU) and the establishment of what is now the LSU Rural Life Museum by quite a few years. Dottye Varnado documented the early history of this interest in a Baton Rouge Advocate newspaper article in 1963 where she described, among other features of Windrush, the “quaint museum” that housed the collection of artifacts that Steele had collected during his life. That quaint building was the Hostler’s House, which now welcomes visitors to Windrush Gardens. Varnado describes it as follows:

“Included in the gardens of Windrush is a fine, small museum of Louisiana and family memorabilia housed in a restored cabin on the grounds. Objects and collections to be found here are fascinating, and one could browse for an entire afternoon. There is a crude rice husker, hacked out with a hatchet from a log, into which the rice was placed and pounded; there are massive oxen yokes once used to pull loads through the mire that was Third Street on a rainy day; there are old foot warmers used in buggies, a number of Bayou Sara whiskey bottles, and sugar kettles ranging from small to massive. Inside there are furnishings from another era and family papers from which probably an early history of Louisiana could be written.”

Later, in March of 1967, after the Windrush donation agreement was completed, Steele asked Alvin Rubin, the Burden family lawyer who was then a federal district judge in New Orleans, to write a letter to Dr. Norman Efferson, dean of the LSU College of Agriculture, asking him to consider “putting aside approximately one acre of land and erecting there some sort of a museum of Louisiana plantation life.” The LSU Agriculture Experiment Station was part of the LSU College of Agriculture at that time and was in charge of managing the Burden property. LSU had not yet established the AgCenter.

I further quote from Rubin’s letter: “This might include restored originals, or replicas, of typical plantation out buildings. As you know, Steele has already gathered much material that would be invaluable, and irreplaceable, and he has commitments for a great deal more. For example, he can obtain a plantation cottage and a blacksmith shop for only the cost of moving them. He also has a number of objects, such as a dugout canoe, farm implements and the like that would be priceless as part of a museum collection.”

The result of this request was the construction of a small little metal building, the first bay of what we now call “the barn”, then the front, now the back of the LSU Rural Life Museum. Steele exquisitely arranged the first collection and decorated the insulation walls with his own art.

From small beginnings.

The Hostler’s House Today Looks Much the Same Today as in 1963

Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra
LSU Rural Life Museum
Music Series presents

Classic Soul
Featuring:
Capathia Jenkins and Darius de Haas
with the Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra
David Torns, Conductor

Saturday, May 13, 2017 at 7:30 pm
Gates open at 6:00 pm

Timeless top 40 hits from the kings and queens of soul including Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Tina Turner, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight and James Brown.

For more information and ticket sales, please contact: Miriam Overton, BRSO 225-400-0339 or Molly Sanchez, LSU Rural Life Museum 225-765-2437.
The very best part – and there are many – about working at the LSU Rural Life Museum is the people that walk in our front door from all over the world. Each person has a different story – some happy, some sad, some funny and a few that make me shake my head. I love hearing every one of their stories! Our director, David Floyd, has a directive that we find out if our visitors are from in-state or out-of-state, international, children, seniors - people 62 years of age and older - so he can look at the reports and see where we attracting our visitors. He is very conscious of keeping the demographics at a good mix. If he sees that the numbers are falling down in one area, he can take corrective measures. Before I started working at the museum, I had no idea of the many diverse groups and individuals that choose to visit the museum.

Recently, a lady from Honduras whose husband was attending a conference in Baton Rouge found us on the Internet and called Uber to bring her here and then called Uber a couple of hours later to come pick her up. One day I looked up and saw my friend whom I had not seen in a couple of years walk in to have a drink of water after her run on the property.

We have visitors of all ages and combinations: a grandmother with one grandchild sharing one-on-one special time; a large group of multi-generations; couples taking a few hours from the task of rebuilding their flooded homes; people here for high school reunions that want to see if the museum has changed since they have been away; folks in Baton Rouge for weddings or other family events and a family of four whose college-age daughter was obviously dealing with cancer but had a smile on her face.

Our school children are frequent visitors. We accommodate children with special needs and make sure they have a good time. Our two longhorns, Star and Stripe, have been here since they were three months old so a busload of school children does not bother them. People who know how well-stocked with neat items our gift shop is come in to buy special gifts – we had a grandmother who came in to buy her four out-of-state grandchildren our adorable puppet animals because her Baton Rouge grandchildren were so happy with the ones she had bought them. Even our vendors come in with interesting stories about their products.

Our international tour groups are delightful! We have a lot of French-speaking tour groups that are brought here by their travel agents. We also have other national and international groups that come from the cruise ships that dock in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The people on the ships that dock in New Orleans come here by bus. I speak English and Spanish and am trying to learn a few important words in French. So far I know: Bonjour which is hello; Au Revoir which is good-bye; Merci which is thank you; and toilettes which are toilets; I like sale de bain which is room of bath (bathroom) better. It sounds more “elegant”. We have docents who speak English, French, German and Spanish. We will have a docent who will give tours in Italian in the near future. We had a tour group from London and I asked one of the ladies if she had brought me something from Harrods. She was that delighted that I knew about Harrods Department Store, one of the oldest, most famous department stores in London. I told her I learned about it from the 1979 book A Woman of Substance by Barbara Taylor Bradford. She had read the book so we had a fun connection even though we had never met before.

My two most favorite groups are my friends who come to see where I work because I have made our museum sound so interesting and the folks who live in Baton Rouge that say they did not know the museum existed but they are so glad they came and will return!

People make the world go ‘round and we are so happy to have so many of them – 72,000 last year – come to our front door! We appreciate each and every one of them!
An Old Fashioned Easter Celebration
Sunday, April 9, 2017

The Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum will celebrate the fifth annual *An Old Fashioned Easter Celebration* on Sunday, April 9, 2017.

Children will experience springtime excitement and the welcome of the Easter season with wonderful old fashioned activities overseen by the Easter Bunny. Join us for Easter Egg Hunts with plastic eggs filled with confectionery for children ages 2-5 and 6-8.

All Festivities begin at 1:00 p.m. and advance ticket sales can be made by calling (225) 765-2437. Refreshments will be served throughout the day. General admission is $5 per person.

Activities will include the following:
- Music
- Story Telling
- Easter Bonnet Decorating
- Egg Pacquing
- Egg Dying
- Egg Races
- Petting Zoo
- Old Fashioned Games

All funds raised will help support the LSU Rural Life Museum’s Interpretive Programs. For more information 225-765-2437.

Zapp’s International Beerfest XIII
Saturday, April 1, 2017

The 13th annual Zapp’s International Beerfest will be held Saturday, April 1, 2017 from 3:30 until 6:00 pm. More than 200 foreign and domestic beers, ales and homebrews will be made available for tasting during this popular annual event benefiting the LSU Rural Life Museum. This fun filled afternoon is for patrons aged 21 years and older. A proper I.D. must be presented upon entering the event.

Tickets are $35.00 each and advanced purchase is required.

Designated Driver tickets available for $20.00 each which will also include one meal ticket.

Only 2500 tickets will be sold

VIP TICKETS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!
- Entrance into festival 1 hour early!
- Beer Tastings not available to general ticket holders
- Complimentary food 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm
- Souvenirs
- Limited to 200 NO EXCEPTIONS!
- Tickets: $100.00 each
UPCOMING EVENTS
For more information, please contact the LSU Rural Life Museum at (225) 765-2437.

An Old-fashioned Tea ................. February 18
Ione E. Burden Symposium .......... March 4
Zapp’s International Beerfest .......... April 1
An Old Fashioned Easter .............. April 9
An Evening at Windrush ............... April 28
Symphony Pops at Rural Life .......... May 13

LSU Rural Life Museum

An Old-fashioned Tea ................. February 18
Ione E. Burden Symposium .......... March 4
Zapp’s International Beerfest .......... April 1
An Old Fashioned Easter .............. April 9
An Evening at Windrush ............... April 28
Symphony Pops at Rural Life .......... May 13

Whispers of the Past is printed quarterly by the “Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum.”

Friends of the LSU Rural Life Museum
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 14852, Baton Rouge, LA 70898
(225) 765-2437 • http://rurallife.lsu.edu

THE LSU RURAL LIFE MUSEUM IS NOW ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER
Visit our pages for updates, news, events and contests!