

# PASS CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## FEBRUARY 2019 NEWSLETTER

www.passhistory.org • facebook.com/passhistory • 228-452-7254 • info@passhistory.org

201 East Scenic Drive, Pass Christian MS 39571 • Building hours: Friday & Saturday 11am-1pm & By Request

*Dear Members and Friends,*

Although we've had some chilly days, we've enjoyed having wonderful "Snow Birds" visiting our Pass Christian Historical Society building. They've helped us to have an active January. We have been blessed to have one of our new Trustees, Jena Shepherd, as a Docent and opening the building on Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. And, beginning in February, our new Trustee, Ike Edwards, has agreed to act as a Docent on Fridays, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. We've acquired many members who have visited the Society with friends who are members.

We would like for our members to consider helping out the Society by volunteering to be at the building to meet and greet visitors as well. Just call 228-452-7254 and leave a message that you'd like to help.

Our Oral History project is moving forward. Historical Society Trustee Carter Hillyer and member Susan Grey have and will record life histories by interviewing our Senior Citizens for our Archives. We appreciate their taking part in this endeavor.

Many thanks to our dedicated Luncheon Chefs: Clayton Hardy, Cynthia Hammond, Alice Perrier and Florice Bradley. They work hard to prepare delicious meals for our Luncheon, and at a very reasonable price. We have a terrific attendance, with the cost \$10 for Members and \$12 for Non-Members. To

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Monday, Feb. 11, 7 pm: Membership Meeting "LEOTYNE PRICE-FAMOUS MISSISSIPPIAN" WITH RICHARD KALNINS**

Richard Kalnins will present "Honoring the Life and Career of Mississippi's Own Opera Superstar, Leontyne Price." In addition to background and historical information, this presentation includes video and recordings of Ms. Price from her career with the Metropolitan Opera. Born and raised in Laurel, Mississippi, Leontyne Price was one of the first African Americans to become a leading artist at the Met.



### **Monday, Feb. 25, 12 pm: February Luncheon CARNIVAL HISTORY WITH WILL KOOLSBERGEN**

Our speaker will be Dr. Will Koolsbergen, Professor Emeritus of the City University of New York, Fellow at Tulane University and author of *A Study in Popular Culture — the New Orleans Mardi Gras: Formation of the Mistick Krewe of Comus and the Krewe of Rex*, who will speak on the Theatrical Origins of Mardi Gras. This will be a presentation on the origins of New Orleans Mardi Gras as it relates to the thriving theatrical scene in the city at that time. The presentation will also examine classical antecedents to Mardi Gras and how they ultimately affect the structure of output of the Krewes.

*The cost for lunch is \$10 for members and \$12 for non-members. To reserve, call 228-452-7254 or email [lunch@passhistory.org](mailto:lunch@passhistory.org). Please reserve by Feb. 22 at 3 p.m.*

### **Sunday, March 3: PASS PARADE**

Mardi Gras Event at PCHS pending finding hosts for the event. Please watch for emails or call the society at 452-7254 for more information.

### **Monday, March 11, 7 pm: Membership Meeting**

### **Saturday, March 16: ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE**

Stop by the Historical Society to toast the parade as it goes by the Society's building on Scenic Drive.

### **Monday, March 25, 12 pm: March Luncheon**

# MOBSTER ARRESTED IN THE PASS—MAY 1934

Since the late 1800s, rumors have gone around of bootleggers, mobsters, thieves, murderers, and members of Chicago Mob, the Barker gang, John Dillinger, and the New Orleans crime family operating on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The arrest of Harry Sawyer in 1934 introduced Pass Christian to the St. Paul, Minn., gangsters.

On the morning of January 17, 1934, a wealthy banker in St. Paul, Edward Bremer, was kidnapped by a group of men armed with shotguns. The kidnapping victim was the son of a major brewer and bottler of beer prior to Prohibition. Bremer was snatched for ransom money and possibly revenge. Sawyer kept his money in Bremer's bank, as did many of his criminal associates. Bremer was released after payment of the required ransom was made by his father.

After nightfall on May 3, 1934, four



officers from the Bureau of Investigation of the U.S. Justice Department (pre-FBI) approached a short, heavy-set man standing behind Sam Myer's gambling hall in the Pass or "place on the beach," as it was known. The suspect was Harry (alias Dutch, alias Sea Lion, and alias Harry Porche) Sawyer of St. Paul, Minn. He and his wife, Gladys Rita, had lived in No. 2 Monroe Court on Mason Avenue in Long Beach for several months. Harry did not seem particularly surprised when the "G-men" approached him with guns drawn.

Sawyer was known on the coast and in the Pass as Harry Martin. He had

been instrumental in funding the new combination gambling and dance hall north of the railroad tracks.

In St. Paul, Sawyer was a powerful, flamboyant owner of several bars along Wabash Street, and provided safety and protection for members

of many of the gangs in the area. He was also an upper-level member of the Karpis-Barker gang (led by Doc Barker, son of Ma Barker).

Sawyer was named the "finger man" by the girlfriend of one of his cohort in the kidnapping job. Coincidentally, the federal agents confirmed Sawyer's identity from his badly mutilated left forefinger.

Though the revenge motive was never confirmed, government agents were able to prove their case of his involvement in the kidnapping, which resulted in Sawyer serving a 20-year sentence in Leavenworth and Alcatraz federal prisons. Thirty-four individuals were arrested for their participation in the crime.

An earlier but still unsolved gangland murder occurred in 1928 when "Dapper Dan" Hogan, Harry's mentor and boss, was assassinated with a car-bomb. Dapper Dan's murder is thought to be engineered by Sawyer, who took over as boss after Hogan's death.

Local officers that aided in the arrest included A. C. DeMetz, "a motorcycle cop," of Pass Christian.

*Becky Orfila is an avocational public historian with particular interest in unusual or forgotten history.*

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reserve, call 228-452-7254 or email [lunch@passhistory.org](mailto:lunch@passhistory.org). We are limited to 50 guests, so we ask that you make your reservation by February 22 by 3 p.m. Our luncheon will be on Monday, February 25, at noon.

*Your Board of Trustees*

## *Welcome, New Members!*

Marsha Buras  
Charolette Byars  
Blair Davis  
Sheila Edwards  
Marge and Joe Henican  
Rebecca Tate  
Patrick Veltman  
Lynn Wipperling

## *How to check if you've renewed for 2019:*

To see if we've received your membership renewal, please look at your **newsletter mailing label**. It will list the current year (2019) after your last name if we've received your dues. If you have a question, please email [info@passhistory.org](mailto:info@passhistory.org).