

# PASS CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## MAY 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,

The month of May will be another busy and exciting month for the Pass Christian Historical Society. On May 5, 2 - 5 p.m., we will have an outstanding Home Tour and Garden Party held at Janet and Michael McElroy's home at 533 East Scenic Drive in the Pass. Purchase is \$25 for tickets in advance and \$30 at the door, Music will be by Christy and the Rascals, a swing jazz band, along with Wine and Refreshments. But, the most glorious part of the Tour will be to see their Gardens! Their front yard is beautiful, but the back yard is Fabulous! You will be in awe as you wander through the Tennis Cottage, the walkways and a Children's playground with paintings inside a tunnel. A Spa is also on the grounds. You're also invited to enjoy the beautifully decorated rooms inside the McElroy's home.

We then received great news - The Billy Bourdin Collection has been donated to the Historical Society, thanks to Billy's family, Ed Macdiarmid, Tom Pritchard and Jessie Heitzman! After much discussion, we, the Board of Trustees, decided to have a special celebration and dedication honoring this gift with a plaque naming our library "The Billy Bourdin Library". We've set the evening of Monday, May 13, 7 p.m., for this memorable event, inviting the Bourdin Family, Mayor Chipper McDermott, Kyle Bennett, Priest at Trinity Episcopal Church, Members and friends to cut a cake and celebrate the life of this special Citizen!

Please plan to join us.

At our April Luncheon, our Members and Guests were mesmerized by the video "The Birth & Rise of JAZZ", which was taped and recorded Live, At the Mint - New Orleans. The History of Jazz over the centuries, was truly fascinating!

We wish many thanks to Evelina Shmukler Burnett for the many years of a job well done producing our monthly Newsletter so well. Welcome to Wendy Nelson, our new Producer. We are grateful for her filling this vital role for our Society.

Plan to make Reservations for our Monday, May 20 Lunch Meeting: 12:00 noon. (*Our usual 4th Monday lunch is Memorial Day - the reason for our earlier date*)

There will not be a 7 p.m. Membership Meeting in June, July or August. Remember, our May newsletter will be emailed to you and online: [www.passhistory.org](http://www.passhistory.org).

Your Board of Trustees

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*Under the Live Oaks*, a history of Live Oak Cemetery, is now available for purchase at the Historical Society! This book presents new stories about some of the people interred at the Cemetery.

Come buy your copy today!

### UPCOMING EVENTS



The Pass Christian Historical Society Garden Party and Home Tour is this weekend! This year's event will feature the stunning home and grounds at 533 East Scenic Drive. We hope you will join us from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on **Sunday, May 5th**.

**Advance Tickets on Sale Now:** Tickets are \$25 in advance and available for sale online at [www.passhistory.org](http://www.passhistory.org) or in person at Pass Christian Books/Cat Island Coffeehouse (300 East Scenic Drive) or at the Historical Society. Tickets will be \$30 at the door.

Tickets for Sustaining memberships were mailed last week - please let us know if you have not received your tickets yet: call 228-363-1973 or email [info@passhistory.org](mailto:info@passhistory.org).

**Food donations:** Thank you also to everyone who has contacted us already about food contributions. If you can help and haven't yet sent a note to food chair Pattie Ryan, please email [tea@passhistory.org](mailto:tea@passhistory.org) with your name and what you plan to bring. In lieu of food, we are also happy to accept monetary donations towards the cost of shrimp and other necessities.

Thank you to everyone for helping make this year's event a success!

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**Monday — May 13th: 7pm - Dedication of the Library in Memory of Billy Bourdin**

**Monday — May 20th : 12pm**  
Rosary O'Neill will speak about  
New Orleans VooDoo!

**Please email**  
**[reservations@passhistory.org](mailto:reservations@passhistory.org)**  
**or call 228-452-7254**  
**for reservations by May 17th.**

# Billy Bourdin's Chronicles

Contributed by Dan Ellis

Billy Bourdin's Historical Collection continues to be a tribute to heritage preservation in the 300-year-old community of Pass Christian.



Prior to Hurricane Katrina, when walking into the Bourdin Plumbing Shop on Davis Avenue, you would have been confronted by a maze of photographs that told a story about Pass Christian and its beautiful heritage. This is where Billy Bourdin was born and spent all of his life.

His historical collection had its start following the first devastation of the city by Hurricane Camille in 1969. Not only was most of the city destroyed, but most of its heritage documents and city records, as well. Billy Bourdin, after retirement, had accumulated more than 3000 graphic representations of Pass Christian and the neighboring areas. Most of his days were spent in clipping and copying from old newspapers, some more than 100 years old at the time. He was undaunted by the tedium of cataloging the many snippets of history that were separated into nearly 400 categories – by events, persons, or homes and buildings. Past memories faded for many local residents, but not for Billy Bourdin who clearly recalled the many landmarks that had no longer existed. Bourdin kept alive all of the happenings that had passed through the eras of time.

During his retiring years, he held forth every morning in his shop as special friends gathered to hear his

stories or to contribute new accounts. To welcome visitors and heritage seekers to his plumbing shop, Billy hung a sign out front that read, *Muséé Bourdin*. This generated an increased interest by residents to stop by the *Muséé Bourdin* (Bourdin Brothers Plumbing) to drop off a photo or some archival relic.

In the front room of the shop were many photos exhibited on the walls and posted in hanging files. Bourdin's photo exhibit is still unequalled. The accolades from community support re-energized Billy Bourdin's efforts to continue building his unique archives. With dedicated research he would categorize the gathered information. The back room of the Plumbing office was stocked full with historical folios on the many special interest categories. Nearly a century of past local newspapers, magazines, periodicals and anything else printed about the Pass, had been studiously studied and copied on his xerox machine in order to clip, sort, and compile the hundreds of events and personalities that have been significant to Pass Christian's history. Each of these nearly 400 categories had been stored in its own binder or folder depending on the amount of data. Not a person, local resident, or out of town visitor, had ever left Billy's Plumbing Shop without being well impressed and more informed than prior to their visit to his place on Davis Avenue.

Billy passed away after Hurricane Katrina struck and devastated his city once more. However, due to Billy and his perseverance, his files continue to LIVE at the Pass Christian Historical Society in a Special Collection compiled and created by one of Billy's faithful friends — Jessie Heitzmann.

## THIS MONTH IN PASS CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Article By: Becky Orfila

### A Few Bielenbergs from Pass Christian

Frederick W. Bielenberg arrived in our area in 1867 and wasted no time in establishing a successful furniture store. A career carpenter and custom furniture designer, his presence in Pass Christian extended into the social and civic scene. Bielenberg participated in numerous philanthropic activities on the coast and served on the local school board for many years. Per his obituary in the Gulfport Daily Herald of June 11, 1912, he "always had the love and esteem of everyone who knew him." Frederick is entombed in the family tomb located in St Paul Cemetery.

Like his father, Edward C. Bielenberg was well-known and well-respected in Pass Christian. Edward was born in Pass Christian in 1877 and became a successful businessman. At the time of his death, he was the district justice of the peace. Edward served on the Pass Christian School Board for many years, owned and operated a bakery and confectionary business, and a barber shop. Edward died in April of 1936 following a paralytic stroke and pneumonia.

Miss Adele Bielenberg, daughter of Edward, was born in July of 1905 and thrived in the local academic environment. In addition to being an accomplished track athlete, she graduated as valedictorian from Pass Christian High School in 1924. She studied at Gulf Park College for two years, after which she taught at Hurley and Pineville Schools. Adele received her Bachelor's Degree from Mississippi Southern and Master's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi. She was Principal of Pass Christian Elementary School from 1957 until 1970, after which she moved on to St. Paul Elementary where she served as principal for seven years. Adele Bielenberg passed away in 2004 at the age of 99. The Bielenberg home was located at 305 East Scenic Drive, but was destroyed during Hurricane Katrina. Bielenberg Avenue is located north of East Railroad, opposite Our Mother of Mercy Catholic Church. The Bielenberg family tomb is located in St Paul's Cemetery.