

ALLEN GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

End of Year 2024

PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648

Issue No. 261



ALLEN GENEALOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2024

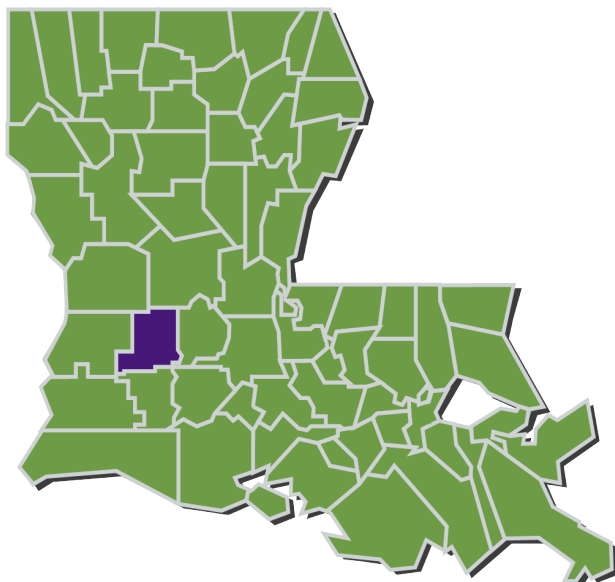
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THE ALLEN GENEALOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY was organized in May 1985 to collect, organize, process, and preserve genealogical material. The purposes of the Society are to promote interest in genealogy, to assist and encourage genealogical researchers in gathering material on historical events and people of Allen Parish, and to help complete family histories. AGHS was incorporated in March 1990.

AGHS regular meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at 10:00 AM in the genealogy room of the Kinder branch of the Allen Parish Library, located at 833 4th Street, Kinder, Louisiana. Members are willing to help visitors with research, and to answer questions they may have.

MEMBERSHIP fees are \$20 per calendar year per person, and includes a digital subscription to the CROSSROADS newsletter. Any correspondence and dues should be sent to AGHS, PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648. The Society's email address is allenghs.contact@gmail.com.

The Allen GHS website is www.allenghs.com. The website has a page dedicated to posting the current issue of CROSSROADS, as well as an archive of previous issues. QUERIES may be submitted by email, and all queries are posted on the "Queries" link of the website. When sending a query, please include all pertinent information such as names, dates, and places, along with your name and contact information.



EDITORIAL POLICY: We encourage and welcome contributions of genealogical and historical material that pertain to Allen Parish locations and families for inclusion in CROSSROADS. The Society does not assure responsibility for accuracy or for any copyright infringement of submitted and published material. We reserve the right to edit and/or reject material we deem not suitable for publication.

DONATIONS of genealogical and historical materials such as books, periodicals, family histories, newspaper clippings, old photos, and filled out 5-generation charts are accepted by the Society and each item donated will be cataloged and placed on file in the genealogy room of the Kinder Library to be used for research. Memorials and honorariums are also welcomed by the Society.

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Note: Books posted for sale in Crossroads prior to 2024 are out of print and are no longer for sale.



Memorial Day 2024



*The Avenue of Flags, Memorial Day 2024, McRill Cemetery
(drone photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

The 28th annual Memorial Day Ceremony and Avenue of Flags was conducted on May 27, 2024, at Riley Smith & Sons Funeral Home, and at McRill Cemetery, in Kinder, Louisiana.

Colonel Don Ladner (1934 - 2019) was the brainchild of the first Memorial Day Ceremony, held at at McRill Cemetery in 1996.

In an article written for *Crossroads* (Issue # 256, July 2018), Ladner described the inspiration for this tribute:

When I, as a veteran of the Vietnam War, discovered that the Kinder Cemetery was the final resting place for the area's only Medal of Honor recipient (Lt. Douglas B Fournet, US Army), and that flags were not being placed on the graves of veterans on special occasions such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day, I knew exactly what had to be done...and I set about doing it.

Ladner met with Kinder's mayor, and McRill Cemetery's board members, and shared with them his dream for a Memorial Day ceremony.

In addition to memorial speeches, a roll call of veterans, and the playing of taps, Ladner's vision included placing a small American Flag at each veteran's gravesite; a tradition from the Civil War of laying flowers on graves by flower girls; and instituting an Avenue of Flags along the roadways of the cemetery consisting of casket flags from deceased veterans.

Over the years, the annual Memorial Day ceremony has evolved. For example, the ceremony is now held indoors instead of at the McRill Cemetery pavilion, because of a bad weather event that disrupted ceremonies in 2022.

However, the core principles and activities have remained.

Eric Kuyper, Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, returned in 2024 as the keynote speaker. Among his inspiring and patriotic comments, Kuyper told of his visit to Arlington Cemetery, the final resting place of over 400,000 military heroes outside of Arlington, Virginia.

Included in that number is Col. Don Ladner.

Kuyper said in his remarks:

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Colonel Don Ladner. Last year (2023), when I gave my address, I said I'd be seeing Don over the summer. And I held true to that. I spent some time in Arlington. I went and visited with Don. In my talk with him, I told him that the tradition he started is carrying on here in Kinder.

Among the veterans present for special recognition was 99-year old Mason Fontenot, one of the very few World War II veterans still with us.

Following the formal ceremonies, a lunch was served for all attendees at Riley Smith & Sons Funeral Home. Opportunities for fellowship followed.

McRill Cemetery was adorned with appropriate flag memorials, and remained so throughout the day.

Community groups who were recognized for their contributions to the Memorial Day ceremony were the Kinder Cemetery Association; Southwest Louisiana Chapter 215 Vietnam Veterans of America; American Legion Post 244; and VFW Post 12203; among others.

*Our flag does not fly
because the wind moves it.
It flies with the last breath
of each soldier who died
protecting it.*

- Unknown



Kinder Cemetery Association
PROUDLY PRESENTS

**THE TWENTY - EIGHTH ANNUAL
MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
AND
AVENUE OF FLAGS**



*In memory of
the honored dead.*

Monday, May 27, 2024
9:30 a.m.

RILEY SMITH & SONS
315 N 14TH STREET
KINDER, LOUISIANA

KEEPING REMEMBRANCE ALIVE

Welcome and Introduction of Special Guests
-Scott LaFleur,
Member of the Board of Directors, Kinder Cemetery Association

Invocation
-Reverend Scott Benoit,
Indian Village United Pentecostal Church

Posting of the Colors
-Southwest Louisiana Chapter 215, Vietnam Veterans of America

Pledge of Allegiance
-Joe Green,
Allen Parish District Attorney

National Anthem
-Mallory Marcantel,
Indian Village United Pentecostal Church

Memorial Day Address
-Eric Kuyper, Commissioner,
Louisiana Department of Veterans' Affairs
Kinder Cemetery Association Board Member

Tribute to the Fallen and Wreath Laying
-Mr. Bill Miller,
Kinder Cemetery Association Board Member
-Southwest Louisiana Chapter 215, Vietnam Veterans of America

Roll Call of Deceased Veterans and Tolling of the Bell
-Mr. Thomas Mayes,
Honorary Board Member, Kinder Cemetery Association
-Mr. Joshua Fontenot,
Kinder Cemetery Association Board Member
-Gerald Romero,
Kinder Cemetery Association Board Member

Gun Salute and Taps
-Southwest Louisiana Chapter 215, Vietnam Veterans of America
-Taps; Diego Wade,
McNeese State University Band

Retirement of the Colors
-Southwest Louisiana Chapter 215, Vietnam Veterans of America

AVENUE OF FLAGS

The Avenue of Flags is established in the Kinder McRill Memorial Cemetery using casket flags donated by their families in honor of deceased veterans.

Fred A. Ashy	Cornelius C. Fosssett	G. C. Meaux
Joseph A. "Joe" Ashy	Douglas B. Fournet	A. Ray Miller
Mitchell A. Ashy	Rushton "Pete" Fournet	Cecil D. Miller
Alton Baker	Emile Fusilier	Arthur Kelly Mixon
Dick Baker	Joseph Fusilier	Edward Mouser
Dave Buck	Louis Fusilier	Thomas M. Nevils
Gerald T. Buck	Carroll Gilley	Nolan D. O'Connor
Gurdon "Pete" Buck	Eugene C. Hamilton	Richard Eugene Oden
Robert Clyde "Bob" Buck	William F. Henry	Louis Orr
Stuart Buck	Harold Powell Hooten	Elroy E. Phillips
Tucker Buck	Fredrick E. Jemison	Andrew Rester
Dr. William P. "Will" Buck, Jr.	Robert H. John	Dale Richardson
William P. "Bill" Buck, III	Don Johnson	Charles W. Rostrom
Victoria Booz Butterwegge	Myrl Johnson	Ermon W. Rostrom
Joseph Ward Cappel, Jr.	Robert Wayne Johnson	Willie V. Royer
Malcolm Dillard Carroll	Griff Jones	William M. "Jake" Sander
Wayne Clemmons	Pete Jones	Thomas A. Sconce
Dallas Cole	James R. Jordan, Sr.	Garland J. Searle
Austin B. Cowart	James R. Jordan, Jr.	Clifford Simonds
George B. Croak	Henry Keys	Daniel Thomas Slocum
Hubert B. Croak	Horace Robert Kibodeaux, Sr.	Ben F. Smith
Robert G. "Bob" Cronan	Daniel Jack Kingrey	Earl Smith
Tim Cronan	Donald A. Ladner	Fred Smith
Linton M. "Buck" Cunningham	Cledius LaFargue	Orlando B. Sneve
Hubert J. Delome	Daryl LaFleur	Ned L. Sortino, Sr.
Bob Dezendorf	Emery Joseph LaPoint, Jr.	Preston Jay Stagg, Sr.
Joseph Henry Dickinson	H. Norris Lambert	David J. Sunderman
Pete Duplachan	Alexis J. Lefort	Alfred Sween
Jack A. Evans	William F. "Bill" Manuel	Vesta A. Tanquis
W. J. "Red" Evans	Albert Lee "Brother" Marcantel	Daniel K. Thompson
Joseph W. "J. W." Ferguson	Edward Marcantel	Bryan E. "Gene" Williams
David Fontenot, Jr.	Dr. Jimmy Mayes	Oliver Woodard
Jake Fontenot	Rollie G. "R. G." Mayfield, II	

The Kinder Cemetery Association wishes to acknowledge and thank all community citizens and businesses for their assistance, contributions, and participation in today's Memorial Day Ceremony.

This program and the venue are furnished through the courtesy of Riley Smith & Sons Funeral Home.

Memorial Day 2024

Roll of Veterans, McRill Cemetery

American Civil War–1861 - 1865

Denny, Isaac	US Army
Kingrey, Joseph J	CSA
Nixon, Joseph H	CSA
Reynolds, William O.	US Army
Sudduth, Abel Jackson	CSA
Thompson, Amos R	US Army

Spanish-American War–1898

Gidlow, John William	Army
Miller, Abraham N	Army

World War I–1914 - 1918

Baker, Bonnie V	Army
Boykin, Tucker	Army
Buck, Tucker	Army
Buck, William P, Jr	Army
Croak, George B	Army
Fossett, Cornelius C	Army
Fossett, James, Frank	Army
Fuselier, Emile	Army
Fuselier, Louis	Army
Henry, William F	Army
Lawrence, Clarence C	Army
Marcantel, Willam	Army
Mayfield, Rollie G	Army
Miller, Abraham N	Army
Neilsen, Edvard	Army
Royer, William V	Army
Saucier, Kenny	Army
Smith, Ben F	Army
Smith, Joel	Army
St Romain, Thomas E.	Navy
Stagg, Preston Jay, Sr	Navy
Tanguis, Vesta A	Army
Thompson, Marvin	Army
Vaughn, Arley J	Army
Wallace, Theodore T.	Army
Woodward, Oliver	Army
Wrinkle, James Eugene	Army
Wrinkle, Robert Neal	Army

World War II–1939-1945

Allen, Charles Francis	Navy
Ashy, Fred A	Army
Ashy, Mitchell A	Army
Ashy, Joseph	Army
Atkinson, James D	Navy
Bacon, John P	Army
Baker, Alton V, Jr	Army AC
Ballou, Walter, Jr	Army
Bentle, Ralph Willard	Army
Buck, Charles Stuart, Sr	Navy
Buck, Dave W	Army
Buck, Gerald T	Army
Buck, Gordon “Pete”, Jr	Army
Buck, William P, III	Army AC
Burleigh, Eugene James	Navy
Butterwegge, Victoria B	Army
Cappel, Joseph Ward, Jr	Army
Carroll, Malcom Dillard	Navy
Cowart, Austin Bernard	Navy
Cronan, John Francis, Jr	USMC
Culberson, James, F	Army
Cunningham, Linton B	Navy
Deaton, George “Bud”	Army AC
Deshotel, Dorcensus	Army AC
Doyal, Everette	Army AC
Duplechain, Alcide, Jr	Army
Elam, James Conrad	Army
Ferguson, Claude B.	Army
Ferguson, Joseph W	Army AC
Fontenot, Jake B	Army
Fontenot, Leroy	Army
Fournet, Henry B	Army AC
Fuselier, Joseph Home	Army
Gibson, James	Army
Gibson, Thomas	Army
Gilley, Carroll C	Army
Goodeaux, Dallas J	Army
Hamilton, Eugene C	Navy
Heino, Oiva Elmer	Army
Heino, Winifred K	Army
Henderson, A Gilbert	Navy
Jemison, Frederick E.	Army
Jenkins, Alfred Vernon	Navy
Johnson, Andrew Myrl	Navy
Jones, Pete D	Army
Keys, Henry	Army

Kingrey, Daniel Jack	Army AC
Kingrey, Robert Nathan	Army
Lafargue, Clarence S	Army
Lafargue, Cledius	Army
Lafleur, Daryl	Army
Lambert, H Norris	Navy
Langley, Edgar	Army
Manuel, Chester D	Air Force
Matthis, Andrew “Ed”	Army
Marcantel, Ambrose L	Army
Mayes, James William	Army
Mayfield, Rollie G, II	Army
McCarley, Herschel E	USCG
Meaux, Gabriel Clerfe’	Army
Miller, A Ray	Army
Miller, Cecil D	Navy
Oden, Richard E, Jr	Navy
Oden, William Henry	Army
Odom, Ted C	Army AC
Parker, Nathan A, Jr	Army
Phillips, Elroy Earl	Army
Phillips, Lloyd Alvin	USMC
Pickens, Roy Lee	Navy
Reynolds, Bernal D, Jr	Army AC
Reynolds, Edwin H	Army
Richardson, Dale	USMC
Savoie, Woodrow C	Army
Savoy, Merrill E	Army
Sconce, Thomas A, Jr	Army
Scroggins, Elva J, Jr	Army
Searle, Garland J	Navy
Simons, Chancey	Army
Sliman, Mack J	Army
Smith, Earl	Army
Sneve, Orlando Boyd	Army
Storer, John James	Navy
St. Romain, Lee W	Navy
St. Romain, Leo J	Navy
Thompson, Daniel K	Navy
Tietje, Bryon E	Army AC
Valentine, Wallace Lane	Navy
Vizena, Caesar Vincent	Army
Walkner, R A Winston	Army
Williams, Bryan Eugene	Army
Wilson, Joseph E	Army
Wrinkle, Daniel Eugene	Army AC

Korean War–1950 - 1953

Acuff, Samuel Love	Air Force
Buller, Samuel Love	Army
Cook, Edward James	Air Force
Corkran, William	Air Force
Cronan, Timothy P	USCG
Doumite, Paul Marlon	Army
Fournet, Rushton “Pete”	Air Force
Granger, James K	Army
Marcantel, Albert Lee	Navy
Searle, Garland J	Navy
Searle, Stanley	USMC
Simons, John	Air Force
Sonnier, David Paul	Army

Vietnam War–1955 - 1975

Allen, Ward Hilton	Air Force
Buck, Robert Clyde	Army
Clemmons, Wayne	Army
Croak, Hubert B	Air Force
Cronan, Robert G.	Army
Cronan, Timothy P	Air Force
Culbertson, James D.	Navy
Duplachan, Francis, III	Army
Fontenot, Claude John	La ANG
Fournet, Douglas B	Army
Granger, Wildreau P	Navy
Johnson, Robert Wayne	Air Force
Johnson, William A, Sr	Army
Jordan, James R, Jr	Navy
Jordan, James R, Sr	Army
LaPoint, Emery J, Jr	Army
McGee, Jesse Henry	Army
Mouser, Edward M	USMC
Nevils, Bobby	Navy
Nevils, Thomas M	Army
Parrino, Joseph Frank,	Army
Sliman, Charles Wayne	Army
Wilkerson, Arlie H.	Army

Operation Iraqi Freedom

2003 - 2011

Manuel, William F	La ANG
Savoy, John “Kevin”	USMC

Peacetime Service

Crochet, Brad Michael	Army
Tate, Christopher	Army

Abbreviation Key

Army AC	Army Air Corps
CSA	Confederate States of America
La ANG	Louisiana Army National Guard
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USMC	United States Marine Corps

Shera LaPoint, “The Gene Hunter,” Visits Allen GHS



Shera LaPoint (photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)

On Tuesday, August 6, author and nationally renowned forensic genealogist Shera LaPoint gave a public presentation at the Reeves Recreation Complex in Reeves, Louisiana. The program was sponsored by the Allen Genealogical and Historical Society.

LaPoint first started helping adoptees and people of unknown parentage find their biological families. Her success in those services led to her involvement in one of the most recent tools in crime investigation—forensic genealogy.

“I love solving puzzles, and I love history,” said LaPoint. “I absolutely have a need to know. I think that’s what drives me to do this.”

A highlight of LaPoint’s presentation included her role in solving the 1995 cold case murder of Mary Catherine Edwards, which happened in Beaumont, Texas.

LaPoint’s role in the investigation has been featured by such media outlets as CBS’s 48 Hours, *Texas Monthly*, and Nancy Grace.

She said that she was brought into the case by Beaumont detective Tina Lewallan. Tina’s husband Aaron, also a Beaumont police detective, had re-opened Edwards’ cold case in 2010. The investigation centered around pursuing the owner of some DNA that was collected at the crime scene twenty-four years earlier.

After processing the DNA, Tina went about trying to identify its owner by building family trees based off of DNA matches posted on publicly available websites, such as GED-Match.

That’s when Lewallen discovered that Shera LaPoint was also researching many of the same trees. The DNA from the crime scene matched with people in Shera’s family line.

At that point, Shera threw herself into the investigation, and remembers when all the hard work culminated in a breakthrough.

I built a tree. The family was in Beaumont. They have two sons who live there at that time, and are about the right age. It was at night—10:30 PM. I have been working since six o’clock that morning.

I’m on my sofa, on my phone, and my eyes don’t want to

stay open anymore. I message Tina, and I say, ‘I just put this family in the tree. They have two sons in Beaumont. Good night.’

I turn my phone on silence. First time in 89 days. I woke up the next morning at seven o’clock. They had been trying to message me and call me all night.

Aaron, who’s the homicide detective, gets on his law enforcement site and looks up the leads. One brother’s clean as a whistle. Nothing. Not even a speeding ticket.

The other one...1981. Probation for rape. Bound a woman behind her back. Guess what happened to Mary Catherine? She was tied behind her back and murdered.


That lead gave a name to a new suspect in the case—Clayton Foreman. Police, through further detective work based on that lead, subsequently identified Foreman as the DNA match to the crime scene DNA.

In 2021, Foreman was arrested from his home in Ohio, and extradited back to Jefferson County, Texas. In March of 2024, a jury found him guilty of murder after seven days of testimony.

Shera LaPoint testified as a prosecution expert witness at the trial.

LaPoint said, “The ultimate goal is to give a voice to those who can no longer speak...to give answers to the families of victims...and to be able to prosecute the cases that forensic genealogy is used in.”

Allen Genealogical & Historical Society
presents
Shera Broussard LaPoint
The Gene Hunter, LLC



Shera LaPoint is from Louisiana and enjoys researching her Acadian Roots & genetic genealogy. She became involved in biological DNA searches in 2016 and has helped many adoptees & people of unknown parentage find their biological families. She is a Genetic Genealogist with DNA Labs International, Inc. and a licensed Private Investigator in the State of Louisiana.

She is the founder of Our Roots Genealogy and DNA Network on Facebook and enjoys speaking publicly to libraries & civic organizations about her DNA journey.

Shera is honored to have worked with League City Tx, Beaumont Tx, and the Texas Rangers in solving cases.

In Sept. 2023, she was honored to be assigned to the BTK Task Force as a consultant Genetic Genealogist.

Shera has been a guest Investigative Genetic Genealogist on Crime Stories with Nancy Grace since 2019. Shera is enthusiastic about being an advocate for Investigative Genetic Genealogy and how it is changing the face of crime fighting.

Shera and her family are proud to serve as genetic witnesses for these cases. Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy plays a key role in providing answers to families and to speak for those victims who have been silenced.

Tuesday 8/06/2024
10 a.m.
Reeves
Recreation Complex
610 Rodeo Pen Rd.
Reeves, La.
★ ★ ★ ★
Public and law enforcement cordially invited to attend

Charles Baggett—Advocate for the Dead



*Charles Baggett at the grave of Willie Wilson
Canada Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Elizabeth, Louisiana.*

In each issue of Crossroads, Allen GHS will feature one of its members. This issue will shine the spotlight on Charles Baggett.

Charles Baggett has spent his life pursuing responsibility.

As a grade school student growing up in Kinder, Baggett worked for Orlando Snevey, sacking groceries at Kinder Supermarket. Later, he moved in with an older brother who lived out of town, and graduated from Iowa High School in a class that numbered thirty-three.

"My mom was widowed, she worked for Dr. J. W. Mays for years, and she was raising my younger sisters. I thought it was for the best that I move in with my brother," he remembered.

Following graduation, Baggett enlisted in the US Army, in the midst of the Vietnam War era. He spent twenty months in Southeast Asia. The work he did there was highly classified.

He completed his service with an honorable discharge as a SP5 (E-5) in May 1968.

"That's when I realized the value and meaning of the Stars and Stripes," said Baggett. "Military service did not make a man out of me, but it did put me in places and situations that gave me the information and wisdom development to allow me to become one."

After returning to civilian life, Baggett pursued multiple career paths and interests—as a lineman for two telephone companies, as a specialist in electronic communications, and as

a forensic document examiner, among others.

There has been one feature of Baggett's, however, that has remained forever consistent with him: the responsibility of honoring and advocating for those deceased individuals who cannot speak for themselves.

It is a responsibility that springs passionately from deep in his heart.

"As I visit the many cemeteries, I like to gently rub a stone so as to show respect and honor to the name of the person that once was here," said Baggett.

"Sometimes it seems like a spiritual feeling is very briefly shared with someone I didn't know. If you don't believe me, visit the Great Vietnam Veterans Wall and touch some of the names as you wonder who they were, and how they died—like the sailors, the fighter and bomber pilots, and the Marines and Army warriors that will never come home."

"My heart grieves for them."

Baggett has taken this passion and put it into action.

As a prolific contributor to the website Find-a-Grave, Baggett's cemetery search over the years gave him over 27,000 memorials with over 55,000 pictures!

"I gave 25,000 memorials and 50,000 pictures back to Find-a-Grave because back problems prevented me from maintaining them," said Baggett. "Two-to-three years later I was better, and started over with my cemetery searches, to the numbers that you see now."

Baggett's focus for his memorials is on veterans—especially if they were family.

Baggett's position as historian of American Legion #244, and as a member of Allen GHS, puts him in a productive position to pursue his passion.

"Eric Kuyper, Commander of the local American Legion Post, appointed me as historian several years ago," said Baggett. "I'll do whatever Eric wants or needs pertaining to historical value."

Baggett has been involved with several actions to recognize local veterans.

Spencer Dunneho

“Spencer Dunneho’s mother was a Baggett. Spencer’s grave had been one of the many unmarked graves at LeBlanc Cemetery. We found out he was a veteran,” said Baggett.

“Allen GHS President Laura Hall found Spencer’s cousins, nephews, nieces, etc., and we formally dedicated his grave with the new military marker in a ceremony with his relatives.”

Spencer Dunneho was a first cousin to Albert Grover Baggett, a World War II veteran whose own unmarked grave and military headstone search was chronicled in *Crossroads* Issue #260.

Both Spencer and Albert are buried side-by-side at LeBlanc Cemetery.



*Laura Hall, Charles Baggett, and Eric Kuyper
at the gravesite of Spencer Dunneho.*

Willie Wilson

Willie Wilson (1892-1918) lived in Elizabeth, Louisiana. A World War I era veteran, he died of Spanish Influenza at Camp Grant, Illinois, before he could be deployed to Europe.

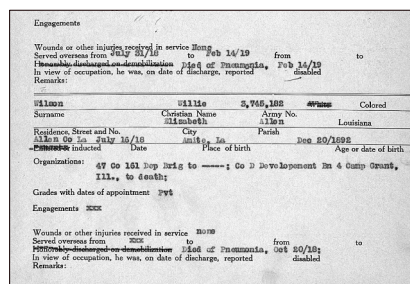
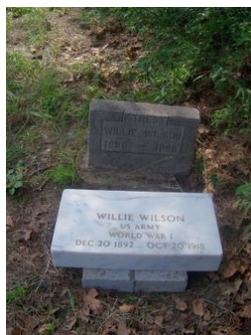
He is buried at Canada Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Elizabeth.

“Canada Memorial Gardens is a black cemetery,” said Baggett. “Many people don’t go there. When I went there, his headstone was covered up with brush. I couldn’t see it.”

"We cut a bunch of the brush out, and we got him a military headstone."

Baggett added, "I've done several black cemeteries. I've never found in Scripture where it says a soul has color."

Baggett credits Cara Bushnell from Riley Smith Funeral Home for help gaining the military stone, and "Nick" from Elizabeth for help clearing brush and tree limbs from the burial site.



Leroy Marvel Reeves

Leroy Marvel Reeves (1918-1944) was a native of Reeves, Louisiana.

During World War II, he fought the Japanese as part of the unit called “Merrill’s Marauders,” named after Frank Merrill. Their assignment was to fight the Japanese in the mountainous jungles of Mayanmar (Burma) in Southeast Asia.

Pvt. Reeves was first buried in a temporary location at Kalaikunda, India. Then, after the war, Reeves' body was exhumed and re-buried in Honolulu, Hawaii, at the National Military Cemetery of the Pacific, known as "The Punchbowl"



"No one had ever known what happened to his body," said Baggett.

"The disposition of his body was lost in Veterans Administration files. All of Pvt. Reeves' siblings had passed away, not knowing of his final burial location."

"Leroy Reeves' story and final gravesite are no longer lost, and will always be remembered."



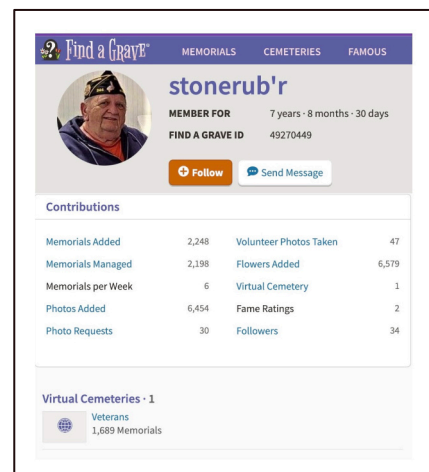
Baggett credits Allen GHS President Laura Hall, whose family lines extend back to the early Reeves family, for her contributions to Reeves' story.

The Allen Genealogy and
Historical Society takes pleasure
in saluting Charles Baggett!

(Article by Dr. Jon Buck Ford--Webmaster, and Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford--Photojournalist)



Charles Baggett
US Army



The Little White Chapel of LeBlanc, Louisiana



*The Little White Chapel of LeBlanc
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)*

“Take me down to the Little White Church...”

Serenely nestled among magnificent, century aged oaks, sits an iconic little white church that has become the talk of the town in LeBlanc, Louisiana, and the surrounding area.

The little white church has been a part of the LeBlanc community since it was first built in 1937. Originally situated adjacent to the LeBlanc Cemetery on Methodist Camp Road, the church has been inactive since 1969.

However, the church building has undergone a revival that has re-awakened it from fifty-four years of silence and slumber. After experiencing its own “spiritual movement,” it has truly become a picturesque showpiece in the LeBlanc community.

The church can trace its origins to one of Allen Parish’s most renowned ministers—Paul Leeds. Leeds was conducting extensive missionary work throughout the Allen Parish region during this time.

Mary LeBlanc Morrow, grand-daughter of John Lionel “Lonie” LeBlanc, remembers the church’s beginnings.

“The year was 1936. My grandfather Lonie was sitting on his porch with his wife Catherine when Rev. Paul Leeds rode up to his house on horseback. Rev. Leeds asked Grandpa what he thought about building a church in LeBlanc.”

“Grandpa Lonie kind of bowed his head and thought about it, and looked up and told him to go down the road to Matt Johnson’s and Larry Singleton’s houses and ask them what they thought about it, and then come back and tell him.”

Shortly thereafter, Leeds returned to Lonie LeBlanc, and told him that he received Johnson’s and Singleton’s approval. LeBlanc then started making plans for a temporary location on his own property.

“Grandpa Lonie put a nail in the second large oak tree on the left side by the road and hung a lantern there for them to be able to see. He built about three or four log benches,” said

Morrow. “That’s where they held services before the church was built.”

Subsequently, the men of all ages in the community commenced to building a church house, located adjacent to the LeBlanc Cemetery, which was completed in 1937. Seth Baggett was appointed as its pastor. Services were held on Friday nights.

The church building served the residents of the LeBlanc community until 1969, at which time the church became inactive due to insufficient membership numbers.

2023—A Church Building’s Revival

Ricky Dowden was now the owner of the property originally owned by “Loni” LeBlanc, located across the street from the LeBlanc Cemetery.

Dowden got word from Mike Richard, of the LeBlanc Cemetery Board, that plans were to tear down the church building.

“The church was in disrepair,” said Dowden. “The floor needed repairs, the siding was rotten, the roof was damaged, windows were broken. They only had six light bulbs, and the wiring was prehistoric!”

Dowden continued, “I made an offer to the cemetery association. I’d haul the church building off, and they could use the building at a discount if they wanted to use it for anything. The cemetery association could use it for meetings at no charge. That was the agreement.”

The agreement was made.

According to Dowden, he had a vision for the little white church. “I loved having my own little church. I wanted to leave it for my daughter to have events there, such as wedding ceremonies, wedding vow renewals, baby dedications, singings, anything for the cemetery, and the like. In fact, when I die, I want to have my wake there!”



The Little White Chapel, which had its last service in 1969, Was moved from its location at LeBlanc Cemetery across the street to Ricky Dowden's property.

Dowden footed the bill to move the church across the street to his property. He proceeded to repair six to seven floor joists with seals, replaced 300 square feet of siding, replaced half of the roof, put in new wiring, installed air conditioning, painted it, and replaced broken windows.

As far as the interior furniture, the resourceful Dowden got a piano off a Facebook post for free in Iowa, and pews from an old, dilapidated church in Ville Platte that were set out in a yard.

"My Aunt Sylvia rubbed those pews down with linseed oil, and they look so authentic it's unbelievable!"

Fast Forward to 2024

Ricky Dowden died in 2024, after losing a hard fought battle with cancer. But his dream was fulfilled.

True to his wishes, the family held a memorial service for him at the church, and following that service, his ashes were interred across the street at the LeBlanc Cemetery.

But his dream of reviving the Little White Chapel lives on.

After a 55-year period of dormancy, the church once again has come to life.

Curator for the church is Dowden's daughter Kelly Carroll, who has taken out a Facebook page for the facility titled, "The Little White Chapel of Leblanc." Bookings can be made for weddings, christenings, vow renewals, funeral wakes, photo opportunities, etc.

Monthly church services are now resumed, and are well attended. Missionary preacher and evangelist Paul Leeds is surely smiling down on the church building he first founded in 1936.

The little white church is once again part of the culture and community of Leblanc. It

is a refreshing resurrection because it was revived from Ricky Dowden's heart of love and caring spirit and will forever host new memories for the future generations to come.



The Little White Chapel, located across from Methodist LeBlanc Cemetery along Methodist Camp Road.. (photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)

- HISTORY -

The First Congregational Church of LeBlanc, Louisiana was originally founded under the leadership of Rev. Seth Baggett, the "Piney Woods Preacher".

In May of 1937, Bro. Baggett was invited to preach in one of the homes of LeBlanc. This service led to the organization of our LeBlanc Congregational Church.

The church was built in 1937 thru means of public subscription by the local residents and was located beside the old community cemetery as a separate institution.



Kelly Carroll,
Ricky Dowden



Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford 2025

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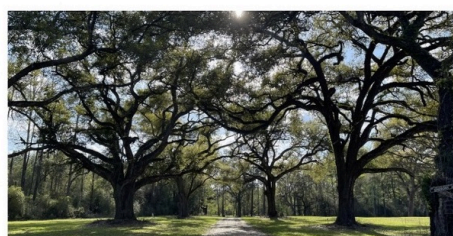
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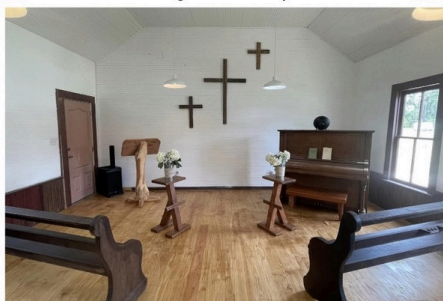
Massive, picturesque oak trees dappled with natural light in a park-like atmosphere.



Venue Restoration

This church building closed in 1969 and its congregation was then absorbed into the nearby Reeves and Kinder Congregational Churches. In March 2023, this local landmark was rescued from demolition by next-door neighbor and family patriarch Ricky Dowden.

Extensive restoration was completed in 2023 by Dowden and his daughter/owner, Kelly Carroll.



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Mason Fontenot—World War II Veteran

Local Centenarian Reflects on his Past 100 Years



Mason Fontenot
(photo by Wanda Carole Wrinkle Ford)

Two-and-a-half years on a US Navy ship during the perilous days of World War II.

Southwest Louisiana native and centenarian Mason Fontenot remembers those times well.

"There were three of us brothers who joined the Navy at that time," said Fontenot. "My older brother Elliott enlisted first, then me, and then my younger brother Dudley."

Fontenot came from a large family. His father David Fontenot had five children by his first wife Adeline LeJeune, and after she died, he fathered seven children by his second wife Daisey Buller.

As Fontenot recalls, "His first marriage there were five girls and one boy, and his second marriage there were six boys and one girl." Mason's oldest half-brother, Clodias, was a World War I veteran.

They all lived in the Kings Farm area south of Kinder.

"It was a big community out this way," said Fontenot. "There was a small school, and a Catholic church. I can remember a church priest and (Congregational missionary/preacher) Paul Leeds walked all over here."

Fontenot's mother was well known for being a prayer warrior, and she prayed relentlessly for the safe return of her three boys. "Mom would pray three times a day, asking God to bring her boys home."

"We all returned safe," said Mason, adding that brother Dudley was subsequently killed in an automobile accident after the war—while still in the service—in Tennessee. He was 19 years old.

After a six-week basic training in San Diego, Fontenot spent his next two-and-a-half years on the Navy oil tanker Ibex-119.

"We were in the South Pacific," said Fontenot. "We would take in oil and gas from the Merchant Marines, and deliver it all over—aviation gas, car gas, and oil."

In addition to being armed with 3" and 5" guns, and 20mm canons, the ship mostly sailed in a convoy, and was always accompanied with a Navy armed escort.

"We never encountered anything bad..." recalled Fontenot, "...except the storms!"

Mason talks respectfully about the storms that his ship and crew-mates braved during those days.

"Those storms were bad; it wasn't a pretty thing," he recalled. "Those waves would get up about 10-20 feet. They wouldn't let us stay in the harbor; we had to go out into the storm. They were afraid the ships would get damaged and run aground in the harbor."

Fontenot explained further, "We would be locked down during a storm, and we were in danger of the waves overtaking us."





"One time, the waves were high, and the covers came off our 20mm guns. The captain ordered three men to go put the covers back on."

"They did, but one of the men got washed overboard, and the other two were seriously injured."

Fontenot was at Okinawa when the war officially ended on September 2, 1945. From there, the Ibex sailed to China, where Fontenot spent 3-4 months at Shanghai. After that, he returned to the states on another ship, and eventually reached home.

However, upon returning home, he found civilian life had its own problems.

"I was glad to be back, but I couldn't find a job!" he recalled. "There was no real good jobs around."

However, Fontenot took advantage of some government support for veterans.

"In Kinder, they created a school—different trades," he recalled. "I worked on a farm making \$90 a month, and I also learned carpentry."

Fontenot honed his carpentry skills, eventually joining a union, and becoming a journeyman, and worked many carpentry jobs across the Southwest Louisiana region over the following decades. He worked in refineries, commercial construction, and home building.

Fontenot added, "I quit carpentry work when my arm gave out, and I went back to doing agriculture again."

He subsequently went to work for King's Corporation and Powell Lumber Company, overseeing their forestry infrastructure in the area where he was raised, in the Kings Farm community south of Kinder.

Fontenot's story wouldn't be complete without mentioning his late wife, Laura Mae Durio. "We raised three girls, and one boy," he said fondly. "We were married 68 years."

Even at 100-years old, Fontenot still sells vegetables out of his truck, which he still drives. He also makes and sells jellies and baked goods.

When asked about his overall experience in the Navy, Fontenot replied, "I enjoyed it. We were a crew; it was like at home. There was good food and everything."

When asked what he thought was the secret to a long life, he replied, "All I know is work!"

We at Allen GHS salute you Mason Fontenot! Thank you for your service, and thank you for making Southwest Louisiana proud!



Laura Mae and Mason Fontenot.



The Fontenot Family (Top Row, L to R) Lena, Daisy, David, Ella. (Bottom Row, L to R) Norman (Blackie), Franklin, Ermin, Mason, and Elliott. Lena is David's daughter by his first wife. Daisy is wife and mother to all the other children in the picture.



The Ibex-119. This picture was taken in the early 1960s, after the ship was decommissioned from military service, and sold for private merchant use. Re-named as the SS Winner, it was grounded during a typhoon off Wakanoura, Japan, and severely damaged. It was scrapped in Japan in 1966.



100th Birthday Cake, denoting Mason's military service, his agricultural background, and his carpentry skills.

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AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

May 16, 2022

Mason Fontenot
27436 Kings Farm Rd
Kinder, LA 70648-4216

Dear Mason,

Thank you for your service to our country and thank you for sharing your story through the Veterans History Project. Our country owes a debt of gratitude to the brave men and women who have selflessly served our nation. You put your life on the line to ensure the safety and security of each and every one of us, and as a nation, we are eternally grateful.

We are reminded through stories such as yours that freedom does not come free. On the contrary, the freedoms we enjoy, and often take for granted, come at immeasurable cost. Your story will be preserved in the Library of Congress so future generations may know and understand the sacrifices that have been made for our freedoms.

Sincerely,

MIKE JOHNSON
Member of Congress

MJ/JL

Allen GHS Closes Out 2024 at Kinder Hometown Holidays



Mary Cole Staffs Allen GHS Booth at Hometown Holidays

The Allen Genealogical and Historical Society participated in Kinder's Hometown Holidays festivities on Saturday, December 7, to close out its 2024 calendar of events.

The weather was cold and rainy, but it didn't stop Allen GHS and hundreds of local community members from participating in the event.

"This was our fourth year to participate in this event," said Allen GHS President Laura Hall. "Barbara Savant and the Kinder Chamber of Commerce make this event happen, and what a great job they do!"

Hall gave out special thanks to Allen GHS officers Mary Cole, Patricia Lowe, and Patricia's daughter Shawna Simmons who worked for months preparing for the event.

"They really put a lot of time into it, but it's more than that," said Hall.

"They gather donations from businesses and individuals, providing a letter stating the non-profit purpose of our donation request. Raffle tickets, and 'split the pot' tickets are sold by our members leading up to the event and on the day of at our booth."

Allen GHS's booth display was particularly impressive.

"Our book poster was on display right in front. People were really happy to see these books available again to the public," said Hall.

Bud and Blossom in Kinder wrapped the raffle baskets. "Such a polished look!" said Hall. "They were really generous to do this for us."

Donations ranged the gamut, and included an original painting from local artist Myka Guidry. Guidry is the artist who designed the Allen GHS logo, which currently graces the cover of our Crossroads newsletter.

Hall added, "Something surprising about the 2024 KHH

was the attendance. The weather was truly awful. It was cold and raining the entire time, but the vendors and festival attendees stayed right through."

"If this had been a test for just how faithful a community would be to such an event, it was proven that day!"

Visitors to the booth included the over twenty happy raffle holders who claimed a prize.

Allen GHS thanks all the local individuals and businesses that contributed prizes and baskets for the Society's raffle. Their support is truly appreciated.

"We are fully looking forward to the 2025 KHH!" said Hall.



Local History Books for Sale



Allen GHS has sponsored the second printings of three books of local history.

Patteran: The Life and Works of Paul Leeds, was written by Kathryn S. Johnson, and includes original material from Rev. Paul Leeds. It was first published in 1964, and is 237 pages.

Leeds' ministry as a pastor and missionary preacher ranged from the 1890s into the 1950s. His outreach extended into the local communities, as well as to the Coushatta Tribe.

Johnson assembled writings from Leeds' diaries, along with personal notes, memoirs, interviews, and old newspaper clippings.

"Bro. Leeds' determination to bring Jesus Christ to everyone he could reach was accomplished by a lot of walking, even swimming the river if he had to," said Allen GHS President Laura Hall. "For years, he went on horseback to deliver his message, many times making several stops a day."

"He finally did get a vehicle, but I personally like to picture him in his horseback days, doing all he could to help settle the rough backwoods."

Patteran delivers a hero in Bro. Paul Leeds and also contains good genealogical information.

Looking Back at Kinder, written by Ethelinda J. Andrus and Grace H. Cornish, was first published in 1985. Its first edition was limited to 300 copies, and they have long since been sold out.

The book thoroughly records the early settlers, founding churches, original businesses and schools, and community organizations. Included are many oral histories from numerous founding families, relating their exciting and colorful tales.

The book's 353 pages include many interesting old photos, in addition to a 75 family name index.

Stanley Leger, in a column published in the *Kinder Courier* in March of 1986, wrote, "*Looking Back at Kinder* is the kind of book that you will find hard to put down once you start browsing through its pages."

"It's a sentimental journey through the town's history. And this is a genuinely heart-warming experience. It's like attending a large family reunion."

"The authors' narrative is both interesting and witty and reflects the affection they have for their home town."

Oberlin: The First 100 Years, 1893-1993, edited by Pat Carroll Marcantel, was first published by the Oberlin Chamber of Commerce in 1994.

The book beautifully captures the spirit of its subject, and puts into words the legends and love that would have inevitably been lost forever. Past persons and places are now archival material in this enormously rich and evocative book. Topics include the local Coushatta tribe, Cajun culture, nearby small communities, early school, local politics and businesses, and founding families. Detailed maps of 33 original cemeteries are also included for genealogical research.

The book is 200 pages and is full of old, historical photos.

The second printings of all three books were published by Wise Publications, based in Sulphur, Louisiana.

Persons interested in purchasing the book may send a check for \$30 to Allen GHS, PO Box 789, Kinder, LA 70648.

Proceeds from the sales will go toward support for the Society's non-profit mission.