



MUSEUM MUSINGS



Fall 2019 · Newsletter of Monroe County Museum



The world premiere of *Truman Talks Nelle Harper Lee*, an original one-man show starring Broadway actor and playwright Joel Vig, will be presented at the museum Sept. 27-29.

In the play, Joel portrays Truman Capote, who has come home to Monroeville for the surprise 50th birthday party for his childhood chum and lifelong friend Harper Lee. While awaiting her arrival, he tells tales from their shared lives, and draws an intimate portrait of a literary icon who was his great friend and professional rival. The result is one genius reminiscing on another. Joel is the leading Capote impersonator and interpreter on stage today, and the performances promise to be memorable and highly entertaining.

Performances are Friday and Saturday, Sept. 27 and 28 at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Sept. 29 at 2 p.m. Tickets are on sale by calling the museum at 251-575-7433. After the Friday and Saturday night performances in the courtroom, Joel will greet guests at a wine and cheese reception on the courthouse lawn. Following Sunday's matinee, birthday cake and lemonade will be served to celebrate Capote's birthday, which is Sept. 30.

The event is presented by the Monroe County Museums Endowment Board, Inc. in cooperation with the museum staff.

Museum members may also enjoy the *Cocktails and Capote* event on Thursday, Sept. 26 at the Monroe County Library, a ticketed event sponsored by the library and Monroeville Main Street. Contact Monroe County Library at 251-743-3818 for additional information and tickets.

**World Premier
of a new play!
Sept. 27, 28 & 29, 2019
Monroe County Museum**

About Joel Vig: Joel has performed as Truman Capote on multiple stages and the Museum is delighted to invite him back for a return appearance in Monroeville. In 2008, he and the Oscar-winning actress Patricia Neal presented a moving performance in the courtroom of Capote's *A Christmas Memory*, which was attended by Harper Lee. His presentations of *Capote Talks Tennessee Williams* at New Orleans' Tennessee Williams Festival have won rave reviews. Vig is a celebrated cabaret performer in New York and earned his theatrical reputation for outstanding roles on Broadway in the original casts of *Hairspray* and *Ruthless, the Musical*.



History Adventure Camp – June 3–7, 2019

Ten lucky children took field trips, went on a scavenger hunt, learned about Monroe County's Creek Indian heritage and created pottery during the Museum's annual summer history camp in June.

History camp coordinator Laura Richeson said the children learned about Monroe County history by visiting important historic sites from one end of the county to the other.

"We visited Red Eagle's grave and toured the Poarch Creek Indian museum, and we explored the Village of Buena Vista as well as downtown Peterman, with its restored train depot museum," said Laura. "We also learned about Monroe Countians who have made major cultural contributions as authors by exploring Monroeville's newly installed Literary Sculpture Trail, a project of Monroeville Main Street. We had a scavenger hunt of the trail's 14 bronze sculptures, which were installed in April around the downtown area.

Participants made pinchpots with renowned potter Sam Williams and painted with local art instructor Susan Brown. "Children need to know their history, and history camp is learning disguised as fun," said Laura. History camp is open to children entering second to sixth grades and is an annual educational, fun-filled program by the museum.



Since becoming a member of the Museum staff in June of 2017, Laura Richeson Harris has worked tirelessly to put her inimitable stamp on the Bird's Nest Gift Shop with annual visits to Atlanta Gift Mart to personally select the finest assortment of gift merchandise to be found in Monroeville. Laura also searches out and works with local artists, craftspeople and authors to help support those creating one-of-a-kind pieces by carrying their items in the shop as well, with a focus on "Made in Alabama" products. In addition to running the gift shop, Laura is in charge of managing Museum memberships and the Museum's social media campaigns. If you have not made a visit to the Bird's Nest recently, you owe it to yourself to come and see the incredible selection of constantly changing merchandise available in Monroeville's premier one-stop-shopping mecca, the Bird's Nest Gift Shop.





Truman Capote's Hat & Glasses

A great new addition to Monroeville—The Literary Capital Sculpture Trail—a project of Monroeville Main Street to celebrate the 10 writers who were the basis for Monroeville being legislated as the literary capital of the state - was installed in the downtown square area in April. If you have not seen these incredible sculptures, we encourage you to pick up a tour brochure at the Museum or take a virtual tour via the link <http://monroevillemainstreet.com/Literary-Capital-Bronze-Sculpture-Trail>.

After taking a break for the summer, Destination America's Titan Travel Groups from England have resumed their Saturday visits to the Old Courthouse Museum as one of their stops on each group's two-week trek through the Deep South. This marks the third year we have had regularly scheduled chartered busloads of British travelers with Titan. Museum volunteer Rabun Williams has created an entertaining and educational program which he presents to them. Thank you, Rabun.



Volunteers in Action... Every day at the Museum from 10 til 2... Greeting Visitors from around the World!

A very special thank you goes out from the museum to Volunteer Coordinator Becky Barnett and our loyal, hard working daily volunteers. If you're interested in joining this special group, please contact a staff member or Becky.

Calendar of Events

- Sept. 26.....Capote & Cocktails, 6:00 pm/Main Street at the Monroe County Library
- Sept. 27.....Truman Talks Nelle Harper Lee, 7:00 pm w/reception after/Old Courthouse Museum
- Sept. 28.....Truman Talks Nelle Harper Lee, 7:00 pm w/reception after/Old Courthouse Museum
- Sept. 29.....Truman Talks Nelle Harper Lee, 2:00 pm matinee/Old Courthouse Museum
- Oct. 3.....Partners in Preservation Open House at the Museum
- Oct. 3.....Barbeque for United Way Fundraiser/BBQ plates for sale/Old Courthouse Museum
- Nov. 7.....Pioneer Days at Rikard's Mill/9:00 am—12:00 pm
- Nov. 8.....Pioneer Days at Rikard's Mill/9:00 am—12:00 pm
- Nov. 9.....Cane Syrup Makin' Day at Rikard's Mill/9:00 am—2:00 pm
- Nov. 15.....Fruitcake Festival at Old Courthouse Museum
- Dec. 5.....Crossroads: a History of Monroeville play/7:00 pm/Old Courthouse Museum
- Dec. 6.....Crossroads: a History of Monroeville play/7:00 pm/Old Courthouse Museum
- Dec. 7.....Crossroads: a History of Monroeville play/2:00 pm Matinee/Old Courthouse Museum
- Dec. 7.....Pictures with Santa/following the Christmas Parade/Old Courthouse Museum
- Feb. 1.....Annual Genealogy & History Workshop/8:00 am—3:00 pm/Old Courthouse Museum
- Feb. 3—28.....Annual Quilt Exhibit/Old Courthouse Museum

HELP SAVE THE BRICKS IN THE WALL!!

A Matter of Grave Concern and Vital Importance

Our museum's age is showing, and immediate expensive repairs are critical to protect the building, according to noted preservation architect Nick Holmes III of Mobile.

The brick veneer on the courthouse's south side has visibly bulged and shifted out of place, and Mr. Holmes says the museum should move quickly to determine the cause and extent of the damage, and arrest it.

He indicated that rust may be building up on steel support beams underneath the building due to moisture and acting "like a battering ram" on the building, causing the brick wall to bow out.

"It appears to be an isolated area, but you won't know if the structural support wall underneath is involved until you get in there," he said. He also noted that the building's brick veneer – which lost its protective fired coating to an earlier sandblast cleaning -- has not been sealed or moisture-proofed since the 1990s, and "the sealer life is gone."

Moisture also has taken a toll inside the museum, damaging interior plaster walls near several windows and porch ceilings as shown in the following photographs.



Mr. Holmes and building contractor Michael Sawyer met with museum board members and museum endowment board members on Aug. 16 to give an overview of the 1903 landmark's current structural needs.

"It has been over 20 years since any major work has been done on the building," said Mr. Holmes. "These issues are only going to get worse and something should be done — the sooner, the better."

News Release: Mark your calendars! Starting Tuesday, September 24, we'll be asking you to vote online every day to help us win critical preservation funding. Stay tuned for more details!

Comments from the Visitors Register



Fishers, IN...Inspiring

Yorkshire, UK...Five Stars!

Parker, CO... Worth the 2-hour detour.

Chicago, IL...Fabulous!

Houston, TX...Amazing building, amazing history.

Hamilton, NY...Really great stories and history!

Quail Ridge, CT....Wonderful

RLB, Illinois...Flat tire couldn't stop us!

Winchester, CA...Very excited to be here!

Bagshob, England...A tick on the literary bucket list!

Camden, Ohio....A dream come true to be here!

Prattville, AL...I thought I knew Harper Lee... Interesting!

Villa Rica, GA...Beautiful building, great exhibits, nice folks!

Fort Worth, TX...An American landmark!

Reading, PA...Loved looking at the history.

Saudi Arabia...A great place. Me and my habibi (family) had a good time!

MONROE COUNTY MUSEUM

Bringing People and History Together

31 North Alabama Avenue
Monroeville, Alabama 36460

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