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Baron and Baroness de Pontalba to make historic visit to Cabildo for Tricentennial Celebration Finale

How a chance meeting and a love of Louisiana is bringing the Pontalba family home and opened the door for an exhibition of never before seen family treasures.

Culminating in an exquisite costumed Founders Ball overlooking Jackson Square, along with Honored Guests Baron & Baroness Deliaue de Pontalba of France.

December 1 at the Cabildo

The climax of the New Orleans tricentennial year is fittingly tied to Jackson Square and the family that sparked its transformation into the iconic and most visited place in Louisiana.

Learn about the dynamic father-daughter duo that gave rise to the evolution of Jackson Square through a new Louisiana State Museum exhibit, curated by Randolph Delehanty, Ph.D. Join us at the Founders Ball as we open the exhibit and make history with direct descendants of Don Andrés Almonester and his daughter, Micaela Almonester, Louisiana's very own Baroness de Pontalba! Her story is fascinating and well documented.

Micaela Almonester was born in New Orleans of Spanish and French descent in 1795. At the age of 16 she was married in St. Louis Cathedral to her second cousin, whose father had become French Napoleonic nobility.

From then on she was caught between two worlds, Louisiana and France. Her dramatic tale is filled with great wealth and great tragedy. It speaks to her resilience and her incredible talent – a highly intuitive eye for architecture that resulted in today's landmark Pontalba Buildings on Jackson Square.

Her father, Don Andrés Almonester, was the preeminent New Orleans philanthropist of the late 18th century. After the 1788 fire, he started the transformation of Jackson Square by rebuilding the Cabildo, St. Louis Cathedral and the Presbytere.

Fifty years later, the Baroness de Pontalba created her

two iconic Pontalba Buildings. This, along with her father's earlier contributions, produced one of the most important architectural ensembles in the nation.

Was it destiny? The Founders Ball and exhibition started with a remarkable coincidence six years ago in the French countryside.

New Orleansian and historic properties realtor, Peter Patout was out for a day of sightseeing. He passed a sign for Senlis. This triggered a memory from one of his all-time favorite books: *Intimate Enemies: The Two Worlds of the Baroness de Pontalba*, the late Christina Vella's New York Times critically acclaimed historical biography.

After a stop in Senlis, Patout discovered that the Pontalba family still lived nearby in the family's ancestral home, the Château de Mont-Evêque. He called and spoke with then 17 year-old Pierre de Pontalba, a son of the current Baron and Baroness. Pierre arranged an impromptu tour of the grounds, as the château was not open to the public.

When faced with an admiring New Orleansian familiar with the family history, Pierre paid Patout the highest compliment: "I think you should come into our house."

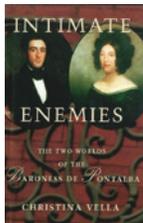
"That the direct descendants of the Baroness de Pontalba would welcome us to Château de Mont-Evêque, that we would develop a warm friendship, and that they would embrace their Louisiana heritage was beyond any dream that I could imagine!" Patout said.

Since that time, Pierre has become the family historian and Patout invited him to Louisiana to further explore his family's rich history. During Pierre's visit, a little over two years ago, Patout made the acquaintance of the Louisiana Museum Foundation's (LMF) Executive Director, Susan Maclay, whom he also introduced to Pierre.

As Maclay, who has a degree in history and was also fascinated with the Baroness' story, learned more of Pierre and his family, the idea of a tricen-



"I think you should come into our house"



ennial exhibition and Founders Ball honoring the Almonester-Pontalba legacy began to form. Fatout, along with friend and artist Andrew Lamar Hopkins, arranged for Maclay to visit the Pontalba family in France.

The château is a treasure trove of historical items related to the Pontalbas' time in Louisiana. The idea for an exhibition was born by the vision of Maclay and the Louisiana Museum Foundation and embraced by the Pontalba family, Louisiana State Museum Interim Director Steven Maklansky, and, most importantly, Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser.

Maclay stated she was welcomed and embraced by the Pontalba family. "I was overwhelmed by their kindness and hospitality and was in awe of the treasure trove of family heirlooms pertinent to our Invitations. On behalf of the LMF's Board, I extended invitations to the Baron and Baroness and the entire Pontalba family to be our guests at our inaugural Founders Ball." When the family accepted, Maclay knew that history was in the making, as the last time a Baron and Baroness de Pontalba had been in New Orleans was over fifty years ago, when the current Baron's parents had visited.

The Pontalba Family Returns to Louisiana for Founders Ball & Exhibit Launch, Dec 1

"For a city so steeped in history, to be able to showcase an exhibit as important to the development of Jackson Square, the focal point of the city of New Orleans, is historical in and of itself. The legacy Don Andrés Almonester and his daughter, Baroness Micaela de Pontalba, left on the architecture and culture of the city attracts millions of visitors every year," said Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. "We are honored to welcome Charles-Eduard and Isabelle, Baron and Baroness de Pontalba, Pierre de Pontalba and other family members for the Founders Ball and the Exhibit Launch on December 1."

The Founders Ball will be a costumed celebration reminiscent of the elegant parties that the Baroness held in her Paris mansion, which serves today as the

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official residence of the United States Ambassador to France and is still known as the Hôtel de Pontalba. All Louisianians with a passion for history are encouraged to join Founders Ball Co-Chairs, Catherine and Semmes Favrot and Caroline and Murray Calhoun, and Honorary Chairman Vincent Sciamma, Consul Général of France, at this once in a life time celebration!

Founders Ball Tickets are \$300 each for LMF members and \$350 for non-members. Guests can attend in period costume or today's black tie and ball gowns. Sponsorships with additional benefits are also available. Please visit themlf.org for more information.

Of course, none of this would have happened if Patout hadn't read *Intimate Enemies*. "We should all be incredibly grateful to the late Christina Vella," Maclay added. Both the Founders Ball and Exhibition honor Vella's memory.

The Louisiana Museum Foundation (LMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charitable organization whose mission is to preserve and promote Louisiana's history and culture by making community donations, grants, and other support possible for the programs, mission and properties of the Louisiana State Museum (LSM), and by providing a variety of services for the LSM.

The Louisiana State Museum is a major division under the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, under the Office of Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser.

LSM consists of 13 museum properties statewide, including its flagship properties in the heart of Jackson Square -- the Cabildo, Presbytere and the 1850 House Museum in the Lower Pontalba Building. It is also the caretaker of nearly 500,000 artifacts pertinent to Louisiana's rich history and culture.

The LMF supports the LSM's work of collections care, exhibitions, marketing and public outreach, and educational programming for children and adults.

In its thirty-seven-year history, LMF has raised and/or administered more than \$20 million for the LSM's programs and services.



Château de Mont-Evêque
Photos Courtesy of Susan Maclay in France
with the Baron Charles-Eduard

Meet Charles-Eduard and Isabelle,
Baron & Baroness de Pontalba
of le château de Mont-Evêque, France

Founders Ball

Exhibition Opening and Tricentennial
Finale Celebration Honoring
the Almonester-Pontalba Legacy

Saturday, December 1, 2018
The Cabildo • 7-10 p.m.

Tickets Available Now at TheLMF.org

LSM 501(c)(3)

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Château de Mont-l'Évêque
Photos Courtesy of Susan Maclay in France
with the Baron Charles-Edouard



Meet Charles-Edouard and Isabelle,
Baron & Baroness de Pontalba
of le château de Mont-l'Évêque, France

Founders Ball

Exhibition Opening and Tricentennial
Fête! Celebration Honoring
the Almonester-Pontalba Legacy

Saturday, December 1, 2018
The Cabildo 6-7-10 p.m.

Tickets Available Now at TheLMF.org

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