



**LOUISIANA
STATE
MUSEUM**



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**PROGRAM EXPLORES THE ARTISTRY OF THE REX PARADE
AND REVEALS NEWLY DISCOVERED FILM FROM 1898**

*Panelists will discuss the evolution of the Rex parade from its origins 150 years ago
and share historic film believed to be the earliest surviving moving footage of New Orleans*

NEW ORLEANS – Join the Louisiana State Museum at the Presbytère on Jackson Square on Wednesday, June 22, 2022, 6:00–8:00 p.m., for an evening exploring the artistry of the Rex parade, highlighting both historic imagery and contemporary processes and featuring newly discovered footage of the 1898 parade.

The Rex Organization Archivist and Historian Emeritus, Dr. Stephen Hales, will share insight into the krewe’s history and traditions and explore the evolution of the parade. In conversation with Louisiana State Museum Curator of Costumes, Textiles, and Carnival Collections Wayne Phillips, float designers Caroline Thomas and Richard Valadie of Royal Artists will discuss the continued artistry that defines the parade and historical influences on contemporary design.

Rex Historian Will French will also debut a two-minute film clip of the 1898 Rex parade recently discovered in the archives of Eye Filmmuseum, the Dutch national film museum in Amsterdam. This extraordinarily rare film is thought to be the oldest surviving moving footage not just of Mardi Gras but also of New Orleans. Film historians have known about its existence for many years, but until now its whereabouts were unknown. The film was made by the American Mutoscope Company, founded in 1895 as the first American company devoted solely to film production. The June 22 program will be the first time it has been shown in New Orleans in living memory. “It’s not really a surprise that the first film footage ever shot in New Orleans would be of the Rex parade,” says French. “After the Civil War, Rex, the King of Carnival, really captured the world’s attention and helped to establish New Orleans as a tourist destination for visitors from near and far. The footage itself, though, is absolutely incredible.”

The silent film clip is surprisingly clear and captures part of the 1898 Rex parade, with the theme *Harvest Queens*, showing not only the floats and riders but also the diverse parade watchers. The footage also shows one of the last times that a live bull was featured in the Rex parade representing the *boeuf gras*, or fattened ox. “This film takes us back in time to show us what Mardi Gras parades were like almost 125 years ago,” says Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. “Don’t miss this chance to see it!”

This program is presented in connection with the current exhibition *Rex: The 150th Anniversary of the School of Design*. It is hosted in partnership with the Louisiana Museum Foundation and made possible with generous support from IBERIABANK | First Horizon and many other donors. The program is free and open to the public and will take place at the Presbytère, 751 Chartres Street, on Jackson Square. Pre-registration is encouraged. Please register here: <https://forms.gle/BvFewTfuYZig5X4A>

Rex: The 150th Anniversary of the School of Design will remain on display to the public in the Presbytère through December 11, 2022. Visit LouisianaStateMuseum.org for more information.

About the Panelists

Dr. Stephen W. Hales is the Rex Organization's Archivist and Historian Emeritus and was King of Carnival in 2017. He is the author of *Rex: An Illustrated History of the School of Design* (2011) and *Rex: 150 Years of the School of Design* (2021), written for Rex's sesquicentennial. Dr. Hales is the founder of Hales Pediatrics and serves on the boards of the Pro Bono Publico Foundation, Children's Hospital, LCMC Health, and New Schools for New Orleans. He is vice-chair of the Board of Fidelity Bank.

A Louisiana native, **Caroline Thomas** received her BFA in fine art painting from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and has been working in New Orleans Mardi Gras for more than ten years through the float production company Royal Artists. She designs floats for Rex and the Krewe of Proteus, the last two nineteenth-century krewes that still parade. She also paints floats, props, and decorative elements for a multitude of parades in New Orleans as well as Mobile, Alabama.

Richard Valadie is the owner and operator of Royal Artists. He began working at the company in 1998 and became owner in 2011. Royal Artists builds the Rex, Proteus, Babylon, and Krewe d'Etat parades in New Orleans. In Mobile, Alabama, Royal Artists builds Mystics of Time, Order of Inca, Condé Cavaliers, and Neptune's Daughters as well as the Order of Mystic Magnolias in nearby Fairhope.

William Darwin "Will" French is the Historian for the Rex Organization. He is also a lawyer and tax credit finance professional, as well as senior warden of Trinity Episcopal Church, a member of the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Civil Service League, a director of the Fenner-French Foundation, and vice-chair of the Crescent City Carnival Museum Foundation. French's responsibilities within the Rex Organization include preserving and archiving the organization's film and video assets.

Attached Photo Captions:

Film.still.1

This still photograph taken from the 1898 Rex film shows the King of Carnival, Charles A. Farwell, riding atop the royal float.

Film.still.2

The theme of the 1898 Rex parade was *Harvest Queens*, with floats representing bountiful displays of fruits and vegetables. In this still photograph from the 1898 parade film, riders are seen on the *Cherries* float.

Film.still.3

This still photograph from the 1898 Rex ball film shows riders on the *Pine Apples* float.

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