

# Museum honors the legacy of black caddies

BY ELISE MALONEY

## The African-American Golf Exhibition

Lucy Craft Laney Museum

April 1-May 31

Opening reception, Monday, April 5, from 6-9 p.m. in the museum's conference room

\$5, adults; \$3, seniors; \$2, children

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[lucycraftlaneymuseum.com](http://lucycraftlaneymuseum.com)

AUGUSTA, GA - For the next two months, the Lucy Craft Laney Museum will host an African-American Golf Exhibition featuring the work of self-taught artist Samuel Barnes, with the emphasis on the role of the black caddie through history.

Barnes is a local artist who has always loved the game of golf, according to Christine Miller-Betts, executive director of the museum. Originally from Monroe, La., he started painting when he was a young child.

"He has a passion for the game of golf," Miller-Betts said. "He was in the military but continued to work on his art."

While the Augusta Museum of History is currently having an exhibition featuring golf in Augusta, Miller-Betts decided to put a different spin on how people typically look at golf.

Although the museum had never done a golf exhibition before, Miller-Betts said that it was important to showcase the fact that, historically, caddies were generally black.

Under United Golf Association rules that were put in place a century ago, black caddies were allowed to carry bags for white golfers but not allowed to join clubs or compete in professional or amateur tournaments, Miller-Betts said. Therefore, many were forced to practice at other locations if they wanted to play professionally. Although this blatant racism was unfair, these men were still able to study the game.

"The caddies provided a very valuable support for the golfers," she said. "They have an interesting story to tell and we wanted to tell that story. We will be exhibiting some of their paraphernalia."

Miller-Betts said she hopes to have some family members of the caddies come and talk about the different experiences to visitors.

Some of the caddies were rewarded for their caddying services with a portion of the purses from tournament play. A few caddies, such as Charles Sifford, Ted Rhodes, Lee Elder and Augusta's Jim Dent, even managed to launch careers as professional golfers, according to a press release by the Lucy Craft Laney Museum.

"We consider the caddies to be outstanding," Miller-Betts said.

Black caddies have also played an integral part in the history of the Masters Tournament. At the Augusta National Golf Club, golf legend Jack Nicklaus won his first Masters in 1972 with the assistance of caddie Willie Peterson, Miller-Betts said.

Non-Augustan caddies couldn't participate in Masters Tournaments prior to 1983. When officials lifted the ban in 1983, golfers began to bring regular tour caddies to the Masters.