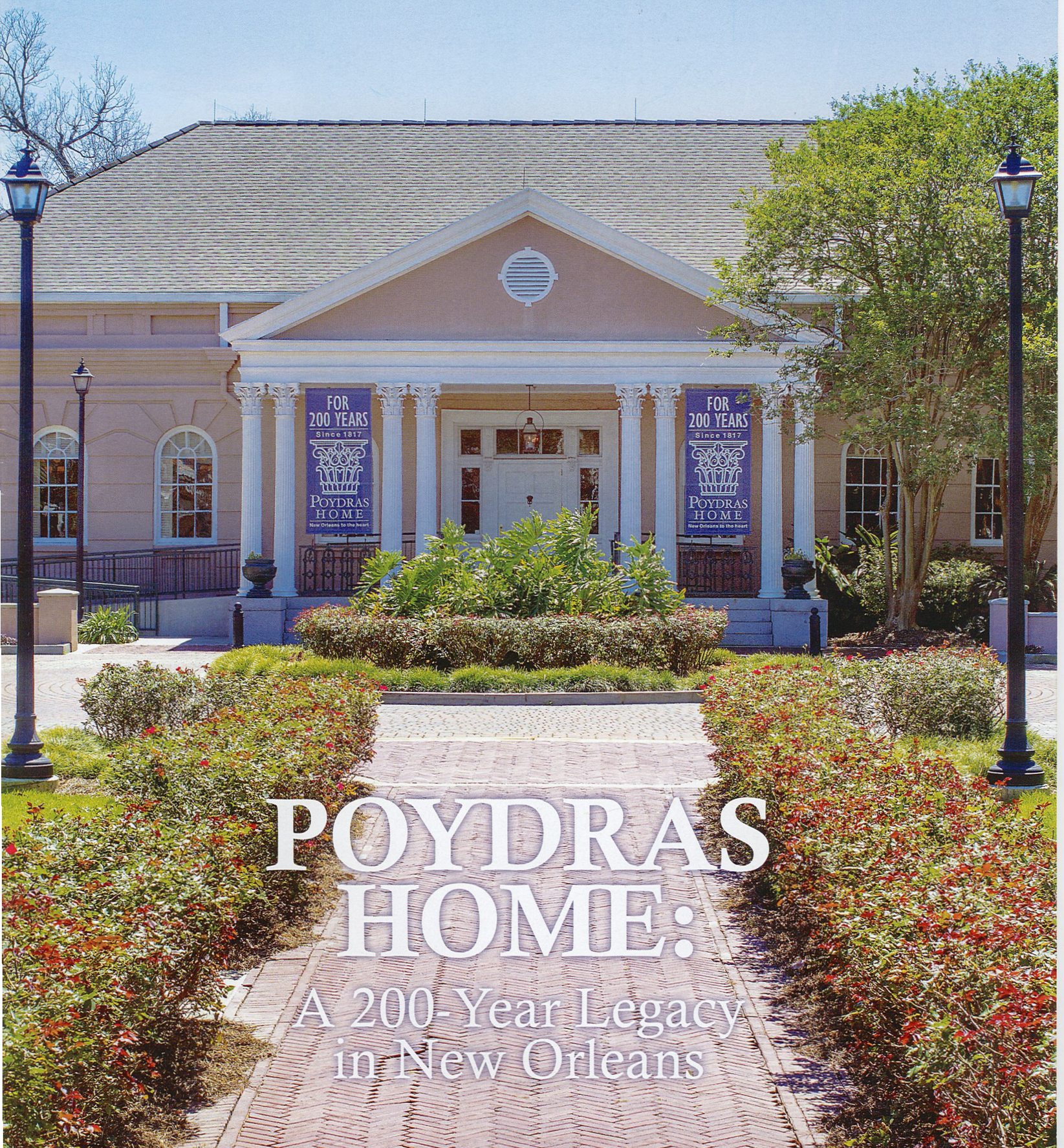
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VOL. 44 NO. 4 MAY 2017

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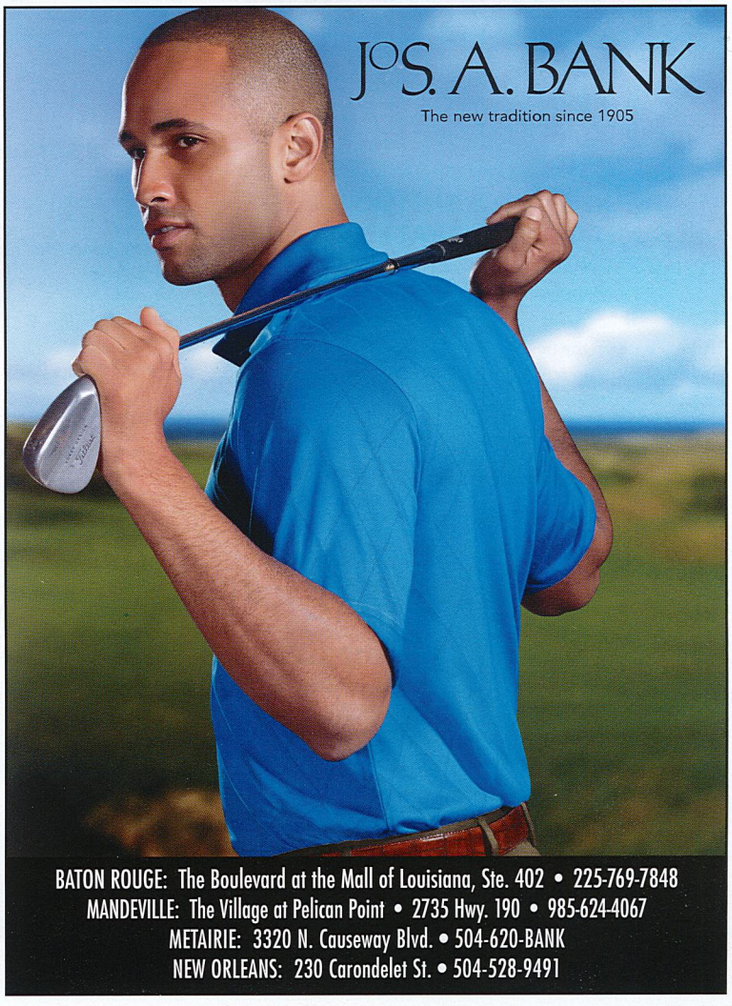
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The mission of the Preservation Resource Center is to promote the preservation, restoration and revitalization of New Orleans' historic architecture and neighborhoods.

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ON THE COVER

The Poydras Home's history is not what you may think. *Learn about it on page 20*

PHOTO BY LIZ JUREY

PICTURED ABOVE

LEFT Mixing Spanish moss and clay to make bousillage is unique to Louisiana. *See page 16*

PHOTO COURTESY STAUB WINDOW RESTORATIONS

CENTER An early 19th-century townhouse on Esplanade Avenue is undergoing an amazing renovation. *Read more and learn how to tour it on page 28*

PHOTO BY LIZ JUREY

RIGHT One of the many splendid renderings of landscapes of New Orleans' past featured in the new book *Garden Legacy*. *Read more on page 15*

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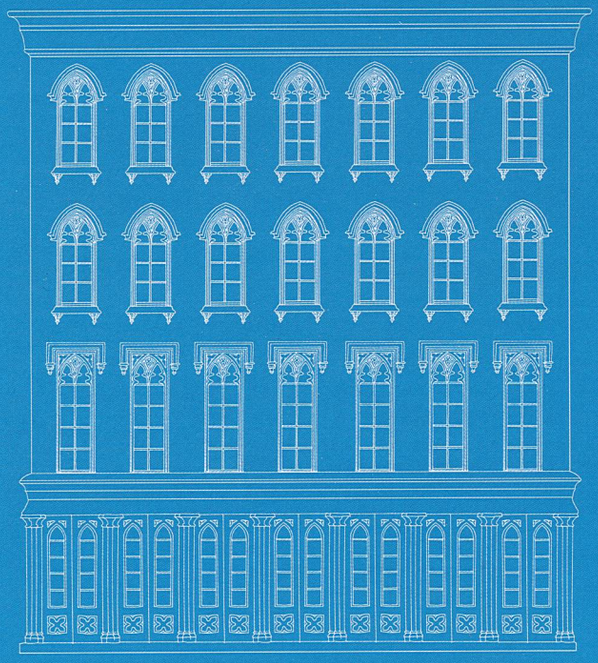
Election of Officers & Board Members
Unveiling of new lobby exhibit

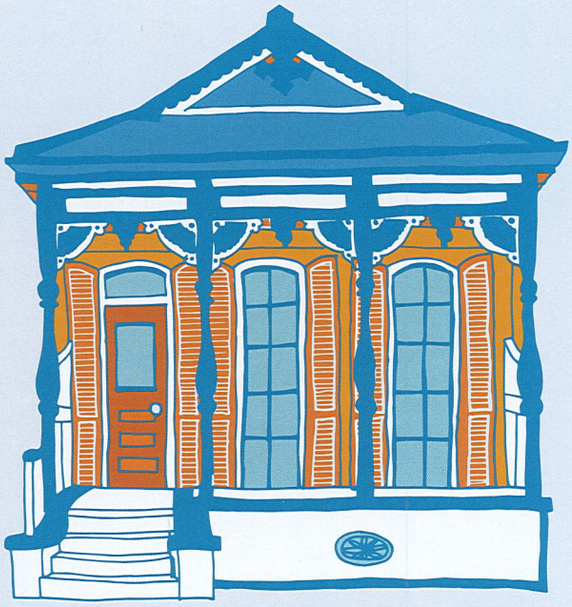
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Jack Davis – *Journalist & Preservationist*

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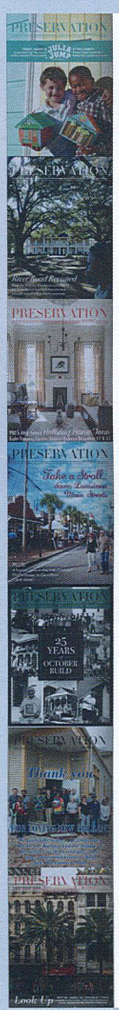
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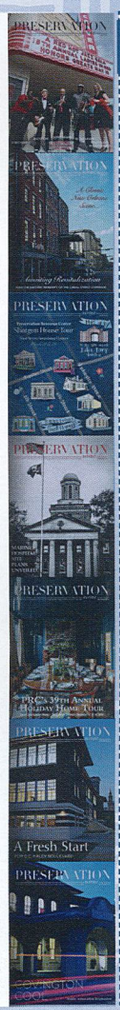
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FROM THE

Director

UPS & DOWNS *of* AMERICAN CITIES

THE US ECONOMY:

We Must Keep *Urban Revival* Going!

OUR CITIES AND TOWNS have come alive again since wholesale abandonment and demolition in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, when downtowns and neighborhoods in every city were in decline. Preservationists deserve credit for reversing this decline, but our work remains cut out for us: effective programs have been diminished, and decline is seeping in again.

For the first time since Hurricane Katrina, more people moved from New Orleans to other areas of the United States last year than came to the city from other communities, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates released March 16, 2017. The same decline in urban population growth is true of cities across the nation.

Jane Jacobs' book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which she states in her introduction is "an attack on current city planning and rebuilding," was published in 1961. By that time, numerous federal acts and funding, especially since World War II, had spurred terrific suburban development and urban demolition, of course at the expense of cities as people fled their historic and traditional neighborhoods to the new suburbs. We could have had it both ways — we did not have to sacrifice our cities for suburban growth. But we did. And the federal acts and funding were soon replicated at state and local levels. By the time Jane Jacobs began to write, American cities were becoming dysfunctional, actually disappearing as entire areas were bulldozed for federally funded projects, or simply for vacant lots.

From the perspective of many, and especially from today's perspective, it is unfathomable that a nation would want to destroy its own cities, the life and breath of its civilization. It has been said that the bombing of European cities in World War II contributed to the thinking in the US that either cities were disposable, or that it was good to move people out of the potential wartime targets. This seems like a rather incredible rationalization. There is also thinking that, following the Great Depression, suburban development was seen as a panacea. Regardless, for whatever reason, through public actions at local, state and federal levels, US cities were losing population, and the built environment was being destroyed. To repeat, we could have had it both ways — we could have had growth without destruction of our cities.

Fortunately, there were big thinkers like Jacobs who realized the disaster taking place. The National Preservation Act of 1966 was passed to also quell the demolitions. Many citizens limit their perception of preservation programs to the need to save precious historic buildings for posterity. Actually, preservation programs are significant far beyond that perception, in that the programs actually are bringing cities and towns to life again, after decades of public-policy-induced decline.

The impact of preservation programs at local, state and federal levels have been monumental. Once-empty downtowns and declining neighborhoods are on the rebound, if not completely alive once again, almost everywhere. Certainly this is highly evident in New Orleans. Granted, New Orleans was blessed in that the preservation of the Vieux Carré was ensured in 1936, when Elizabeth Werlein and Mayor Maestri convinced the state legislature to allow the city to establish the Vieux Carré Commission to protect the original heart of the city. But much more was needed — the rest of the city was in decline. As preservation efforts gained momentum in the 1970s, new historic district commissions, grants, tax incentives and the Main Street program, and of course non-profit organizations, began to have impact. New Orleans' Central Business District, and all older neighborhoods that had been experiencing decline and demolition since the 1950s, began to come alive.

The US census figures released recently indicate that for the first time in several years, urban populations across the country are beginning to decline again. The essential point here is that **the urban revitalization work that followed the National Preservation Act of 1966 must be continued until all towns and cities are strong and self-sufficient once again.** The work is not finished.

Recently, Joel Kotkin of *NewGeography.com* wrote about the importance of cities for yet another reason: He asserts that the unfortunate nation-wide problem of increased polarization of the political left and political right is more successfully addressed at local levels. The success of preservation efforts in returning life to cities and urban neighborhoods is important for yet another reason: revitalization — of neighborhoods, of downtowns, of buildings, of cultural heritage — is bi-partisan. Citizens work together for revitalization. Private and public preservation efforts are not "left" or "right," and are not the singular domain of any political party.

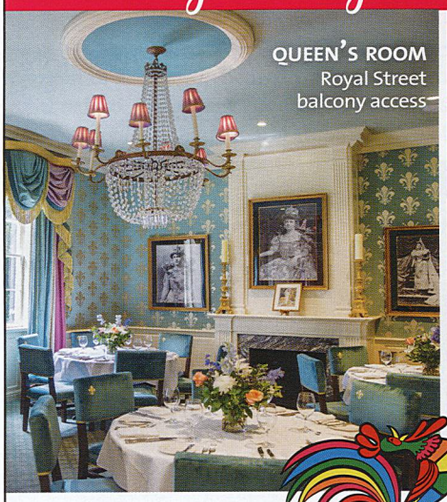
We simply must not ignore the recent US census information that more people are leaving cities than moving in, including New Orleans. This is the result of cutbacks to successful preservation efforts, particularly at federal and state levels. Urban revitalization has much further to go, and any decline must be addressed. Rehab tax credits must not be decreased, Main Street programs must be funded, and grants must be reinstituted at federal level, administered by states. In New Orleans and in cities across the nation, our economy and quality of life of all citizens depend on it!

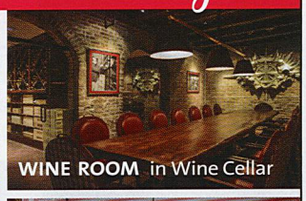
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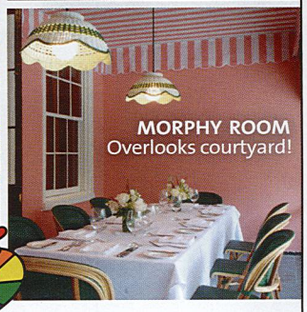
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Documenting the Traditions of Baton Rouge

BY MAIDA OWENS, LOUISIANA DIVISION OF THE ARTS FOLKLIFE PROGRAM

BATON ROUGEANS, like people anywhere, create community through groups. Whether based on cultural heritage or ethnicity, religion, work, neighborhoods, or affinities such as gardening or sports, these "tribes" create traditions that are passed down informally over time and space. This is the definition of folklife: traditions that are shared by a group and passed down. Everyone and every group has folklife. And everyone belongs to several folk groups. Taken together, folklife, in turn, reflects a community's sense of place, a community's identity and its distinctive characteristics.

Folklorists use the term "tradition bearer" to describe an individual who maintains a tradition even if, in some way, they are influenced by mass media or formal training. So, when a conservatory-trained vocalist sings traditional hymns in the hospital for a fellow congregation member or a contemporary fiber artist crochets prayer shawls for relatives coping with cancer, they are bearers of traditions.

There is little awareness of the wealth of folklife that Baton Rouge offers. Such identity problems are common among capital cities and cities that benefited from the rise of suburbia. Baton Rouge is both. This fueled my motivation because I was convinced that there is more here than people realize.

Baton Rouge is my hometown: it's where I grew up, went to school, and have worked as a folklorist since the 1980s. Over the years, in my role as the state folklorist, I have noticed that all too many people like to criticize Louisiana's capital city. People love the state and its culture, but some make an exception about Baton Rouge. Many residents, and especially non-residents, think that it lacks any expressions of folk culture even though it is home to an array of individuals who maintain Louisiana's defining traditions.

I started wondering why Baton Rouge, a mid-sized Southern city that has boomed since World War II, is perceived as having no folk culture. I knew that as the capitol city, it is a cultural microcosm of the entire state with people coming here to work, especially since the economic boom of the 1970s. Others have moved here from throughout the United States for employment at the universities as well as in industry. I began to realize that Baton Rouge has an identity issue. While others have documented the city's history, no one had ever focused on its cultural traditions.

Being sandwiched between New Orleans and Lafayette — both cities with strong folk cultural identities — doesn't help the situation. Many cultural groups in Baton Rouge have annual sacred or secular events, such as the St. Patrick's Day parade, Festival Latino, Hindu mela, or St. Joseph altar, but their folk traditions have little other presence throughout the year. The newspapers and magazines do a good job of covering cultural events and feature stories on traditions maintained by groups or families. Yet, Baton Rouge doesn't have organizations that regularly present folk traditions to the public, and contemporary artists generally do not draw upon the city's folk traditions for inspiration like those of New Orleans and Lafayette. The tradition bearers are here; they are just harder to find because many are hidden in private or sacred spaces or practiced by families, clubs, or other groups not intended for the general public.

Baton Rouge has a wealth of traditions and traditional artists — some public and some private, some unique to the city and some not. I have seen hidden in suburban homes and inner-city residences folk traditions that would be celebrated elsewhere. One woodcarver carved saints and mounted them on his kitchen cabinets. Bedrooms have been turned into Buddhist holy rooms. Front yards display statues of the Virgin Mary. Living rooms host jam sessions. Memorials to lost loved ones may be found on roadsides or appear on t-shirts. In workshops, duck decoys are carved and mandolins made. I have known families who grow far more vegetables, especially tomatoes, figs, and satsumas, than they can consume in order to give some away in an informal economy of exchange. Immigrants maintain gardens in order to have vegetables not readily available here. I have seen groups gather for barbecues, crawfish boils, and fish fries at home, parks, or at tailgate parties. Hunters and fishermen arrive home with the state's bounty and then process it in extensive outdoor kitchens and offer feasts for family and friends.



TOP LEFT: Judith Braggs in her sewing room. Photo by Laura Marcus Green **TOP RIGHT:** Ken Raye's Custom Saddlery, built in 2009. Photo by Douglas Manger **ABOVE:** Emma Mensia Royal makes tea cakes in her Scotlandville shop. Photo by Maira Zeringue

Nonetheless, Baton Rouge is not recognized for having a folk culture. So I decided to apply my expertise to the situation and look at Baton Rouge through my folklorist lens and begin documenting traditions in the city. Thus, the Baton Rouge Folklife Survey was born.

Baton Rouge neighborhoods are stratified economically, rather than culturally or ethnically. The exceptions are African-American neighborhoods in north Baton Rouge, but there are also some in south Baton Rouge. Others include a Vietnamese subdivision and, more recently, some Latino enclaves. The largest cultural groups in the greater Baton Rouge area are those descended from European Americans and African Americans, with some closely identifying with specific ethnicities such as Italian and Irish. In spite of its French name, Baton Rouge is not a French town; nonetheless, many Cajuns and Creoles live here. The immigrant experience in Louisiana is largely an urban one, with Baton Rouge having the second-largest concentration of immigrant groups in the state. The largest foreign-born groups are from Vietnam, India and China, but there are significant numbers from other countries as well. Together they create a diverse, rich community.

Louisiana has historically had the largest native-born population in the country with 78.8 percent of its residents born in the state, according to a 2013 article

written by Geoffrey Skelley for the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. Baton Rouge is perceived as having more transplants, but the native-born rate of its residents is actually 76.9 percent. No doubt the native-born rate would have been less during the 1970s during the expansion of the petro-chemical industry, which attracted so many new workers from across the country. The children and grandchildren of those workers are now counted among the native born. Nonetheless, Baton Rouge has deeper roots than is generally acknowledged.



Keith Felder's dugout pirogue (14 feet), made from a cypress log. Photo by Douglas Manger

The rapid increase in population coincides with the growth of suburbia, which has affected the area's cultural dynamics. East Baton Rouge Parish includes urban, suburban and rural areas in addition to three small towns. The eight adjacent rural/suburban parishes are closely connected to the city, creating a web of relationships and networks throughout the region. Baton Rouge serves as an economic hub, and its population density allows specialized businesses to exist that would otherwise be difficult to sustain.

While scholars around the world research Louisiana's folk cultures, especially those of south Louisiana, Baton Rouge has, prior to this project, received relatively little attention. In 2005, the New Populations Project included documentation of several Baton Rouge immigrant communities. We then had the situation where we knew more about the immigrants in the city than the native born.

Scholars often focus on what is unique to an area, but with Baton Rouge that presented a problem, due to identity issues. So I cast a broader net and found plenty. Instead of "Baton Rouge folklife," it is "folklife in Baton Rouge." The results are presented in the online book *Baton Rouge Traditions*, available at www.louisianafolklife.org/batonrouge. It is a compilation of essays produced from the Baton Rouge Folklife Survey as well as others from the New Populations Project, the *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany*, and earlier projects. Following an introduction, the essays are organized into six chapters: Baton Rouge Gives, Baton Rouge Makes, Plays, Worships, Works, and Diversifies. Each essay features photographs and most also have audio clips from the recorded interviews.

Baton Rouge Gives focuses on three philanthropic efforts: animal rescue and their events, customs, and volunteers' personal narratives; St. Joseph altars as gifts to the community, with a special focus on the specialty cakes; and individuals who make traditional fiber arts to donate to causes.

Baton Rouge Makes features traditional craftspeople who make goods ranging from saddles, whips, wooden boats and christening gowns; fabricators of Mardi Gras ball gowns and parade costumes; and quilter Judith Braggs and the ways in which her quilts reflect her heritage.

Baton Rouge Plays includes essays on recreational traditions, secular music, and dance including essays about a sac-a-lait fisherman, the Spanish Town Mardi Gras and Baton Rouge blues.

Baton Rouge Worships looks at sacred music and ritual traditions in local churches, synagogues, mosques and temples. Essays explore preaching styles of four African-American ministers, The Zion Travelers gospel quartet, church choir and ensemble directors and other sacred sounds, the Hindu Navaratri celebration, and Vietnamese altars.

Baton Rouge Works includes essays on occupational folklore with a special focus on small businesses who offer specialized skills, including repair services, clothiers and bakeries, along with an essay about restaurateur Wirt Bellue and how he used his welding skills to creatively solve problems for his restaurant and food processing business.

Baton Rouge Diversifies includes essays from the New Populations project that focus on Chinese craft traditions, the Vietnamese Moon Festival, Palestinian cross stitch and calligraphy, and Latino experiences in the city.

Despite these efforts, there were many people and traditions that, although identified, did not get included. A few are needlepoint kneelers, snowball stands, Italian Marchers, and the Irish parade, which looks like a green Mardi Gras parade. There is much more work that could be done here.

The research is shared through the online essays and hopefully others will help to present the results. Most essays have field reports that provide additional details that would be of interest to those wanting to present these traditions to the public. Hopefully this project will give civic leaders more data to consider.

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King Cotton's Crescent City Retainers:

The New Orleans Cotton Exchange, 1871-1964

BY **RICHARD CAMPANELLA**
TULANE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



THE BUILDING KNOWN as the New Orleans Cotton Exchange (constructed in 1921) on the corner of Carondelet and Gravier streets marks what was once among the most influential spots in the South, an area called "the cotton district," or "the Wall Street of New Orleans." It traced its origins to a series of technical breakthroughs on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1700s. On the demand side, in England, the steam engine, mechanical spinners and the power loom drastically reduced production costs, which lowered the price and increased demand for manufactured fabric. On the supply side, in the United States, the introduction of Sea Island cotton and upland varieties expanded the plant's growing range, while Eli Whitney's "cotton engine," or gin (1793) enabled a ten-fold savings of time to remove seeds and debris from lint. With cotton poised to boom, settlers from the Atlantic seaboard migrated to the lower Mississippi Valley, which, along with the key transshipment port of New Orleans, were now under American dominion, thanks to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

Cotton plantations were soon established throughout the rich bottomlands and loess bluffs between Baton Rouge and Natchez, served by an ever-growing armada of yet another technological advancement: shallow-draft paddle-wheel steamboats. Within a few years, cotton rose from a minor regional crop to a major export. The two million pounds of cotton raised in Louisiana in 1811 quintupled in 10 years, which in turn nearly quadrupled, to 38 million pounds, in 1826. By 1834, the harvest was over 62 million pounds. For decades to come, New Orleans would serve as a key node in the Cotton Triangle, where Northern-owned ships would ferry cotton to ports like Liverpool, proceed to New York or other Northeastern cities with cargos of fabric, and return to New Orleans with Northern manufactured goods.

The boom breathed new life into the institution of slavery. After the United States banned the international slave trade in 1808, a rigorous domestic trade ensued, and over the next half-century, nearly a million African Americans would be sold out of the upper South, where tobacco had depleted the soils and manufacturing began to eclipse agriculture, for transport either overland or "coastwise" to the wharves of the nation's largest slave marketplace, New Orleans.

Depending on the season, those same wharves would have bustled with a pecking order of cotton workers. Among them were the "roustabouts," who handled the bales on the steamships until the vessel docked, at which point "screwmen" extracted the bales for longshoremen to organize into shipments and pass them on to "draymen," who hauled them to the cotton presses. There, rollers moved the bales to the "scalemen," who loaded them onto scales for the "weighers" while pulling lint samples for the "classers," who graded the lint by color, cleanliness, and fiber length.

That was the key information needed by the professional class. At the top of their pecking order were cotton brokers, merchants and agents, who kept records, tracked bales, and decided whether a client's crop should be sold locally, shipped out or warehoused in anticipation of better prices. Cotton factors, a particularly powerful profession, accepted cotton on consignment from planters and sold it at the highest prices obtainable. Factors also supplied plantation equipment, provided financial services, and generally represented planters' interests in the marketplace, going so far as to serve all the needs of a wealthy rural planter family.

Each tier in the New Orleans cotton industry had support echelons. The professionals dealt with insurers, bankers and lawyers; the presses needed machinists and engineers; the dock workers needed tools and equipment. Ancillary parties such as cotton seed oil manufacturers, ginneries, pickeries (which salvaged scrap lint), makers of screws, ties and presses, and myriad others serviced the industry, creating thousands of jobs throughout New Orleans. And of course, the entire system rested squarely on the shoulders of tens of thousands of enslaved field workers.

The nature of trading a commodity like cotton entailed constant personal interaction and information-sharing. This social aspect drove firms to cluster together spatially to form districts, and as the districts grew, so too did their clout — which attracted more firms. So formed New Orleans' cotton district: entries from *Cohen's City Directory* for 1854 indicate that cotton professionals had by this time aggregated around Carondelet and Gravier streets in what was then called the Faubourg St. Mary, or the American Sector. Of the 147 cotton firms listed that year, 46 had addresses on Carondelet, and another 24 operated on Gravier Street, far more than any other street. About 90 percent of the city's professional cotton concerns were situated within a four-by-four-block area centered around Carondelet and Gravier.

By 1861, fully 174 of the city's 465 commission merchants and cotton factors — three out of every eight — had addresses on Carondelet or Gravier. The draw of the district was so strong that even dealers in cotton gins and in slaves set up shop nearby. Gravier Street had seven slave dealers operating pens or compounds. Nearby Baronne Street was home to another seven.

ABOVE: The ornate Cotton Exchange, opened in 1883 on Carondelet at Gravier, is seen here in 1900. Photograph courtesy Library of Congress

RICHARD CAMPANELLA,

a geographer with the Tulane School of Architecture, is the author of *Bienville's Dilemma, Lincoln in New Orleans, Bourbon Street: A History,* and other publications. This material was drawn from his books *Time and Place in New Orleans* (2002) and *Lost New Orleans* (2015). He may be reached through richcampanella.com, rcampane@tulane.edu, and @nolacampanella.

What was lacking in the cotton district was one centralized place for interaction and transaction. "Most of the cotton business was conducted in the open air, up and down Carondelet Street," recalled one veteran merchant, or "in saloons, which called themselves 'exchanges.'" The need for a space only grew after the Civil War, when cotton professionals not only had to rebuild an industry, but also its labor force.

Toward this end, a hundred industry leaders in February 1871 organized the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, chartering the organization to provide meeting space; arbitrate disputes; establish rules, regulations, and standards; serve as an information clearinghouse; and promote and market the industry. After initially operating out of rented rooms, the Cotton Exchange contracted for a three-story building on Gravier at Theater Alley, a narrow pedestrian way also called Varieties Alley (it's still there). A decade later, the growing organization decided to erect a larger and more ornate building on the corner of Carondelet and Gravier. Costing $380,000 and opened in 1883, the florid edifice, with elements of Second Empire, Renaissance and Italian style, featured a spacious Exchange Room with Corinthian columns, gold ceiling medallions, fresco murals, sculptures, and a fountain around which cotton futures were sold. A steam elevator brought brokers to well-appointed offices and meeting rooms throughout the four upper floors. For the next 40 years, this building functioned as the "capitol" of New Orleans' cotton district, just as New Orleans served as the "capital" of Mississippi Valley cotton production. "Carondelet and Gravier streets are considered the centre of the cotton business, and in this neighborhood are clustered all the large houses," wrote one journalist in 1893. Of the 283 Exchange members listed in the organization's 1894 charter, 94 percent worked within two streets of the Cotton Exchange.

Edward King described a typical day in the cotton district in his 1875 book, *The Great South.* "Cotton is the only subject spoken of; the pavements [by] the Exchange are crowded with smartly-dressed gentlemen, who eagerly discuss crops and values, and who have a perfect mania for [cotton], each worshipping at the shrine of the same god. From high noon until dark the planter, the factor [and] the speculator flit feverishly to and from the portals of the Exchange, and nothing can be heard above the excited hum [but] the sharp voice…reading the latest telegrams."

World War I meant rocky times for American cotton, as European markets closed and market quotations ceased. But demand for lint increased, for military uniforms, while the movement of matériel to the front rejuvenated river for transportation. The South produced its first billion-dollar crop during these years, and doubled it in 1919. Counting on a rosy future, the New Orleans Cotton Exchange in 1920 had its aging building demolished, in part for structural problems traceable to its lack of foundational pilings. The cornerstone for the new eight-story, steel-frame corner building, designed with a Renaissance flair by Favrot and Livaudais and costing $1,222,520, was laid on the organization's fiftieth anniversary in 1921. Festivities marked the occasion, and the future looked bright.

The optimism proved to be ill-founded. Government regulations, foreign competition, a shift in domestic production to drier Western environs, coupled with the emergence of Dallas as a business hub, effectively ended New Orleans' reign as the nation's premier cotton port. Of the 93 cotton factors listed in the New Orleans City Directory in 1880, only 15 operated in 1921 and one remained by 1949. It got worse: "We went from trading thousands of contracts in the early '50s to maybe five contracts in all of 1962," recalled Eli Tullis, a retired broker from one of New Orleans' last active cotton families.

In the fields, floods and boll weevils took their toll, and cotton acreage in Louisiana declined from almost two million acres in 1930 to only 130,000 acres today. Accordingly, leaseholders at the Port of New Orleans switched from cotton to bananas, coffee, lumber, rubber and metals. Today, only two companies keep cotton moving through New Orleans, from warehouses at the Napoleon Avenue Container Terminal for export to Pakistan, Turkey, Latin America and elsewhere. The bales are packaged and hidden from view, and most New Orleanians under the age of 50 have probably never seen one.

As for the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, in 1962 the organization sold its landmark building to the Universal Drilling Company, as if to signal the upcoming oil boom, and became a renter in its own home. What finally killed the Exchange was the Agricultural Act of 1964, which subsidized domestically consumed cotton and controlled once-volatile prices, thus eradicating the futures market. When the Exchange finally closed on July 9, 1964, its last president, C. Layton Merritt, wistfully told the *Dallas Morning News,* "We cede our role in the market place to the Secretary of Agriculture, the cooperatives, and history." The building was renovated into a hotel in the 2000s, and the corner space at Carondelet and Gravier now hosts a bank.

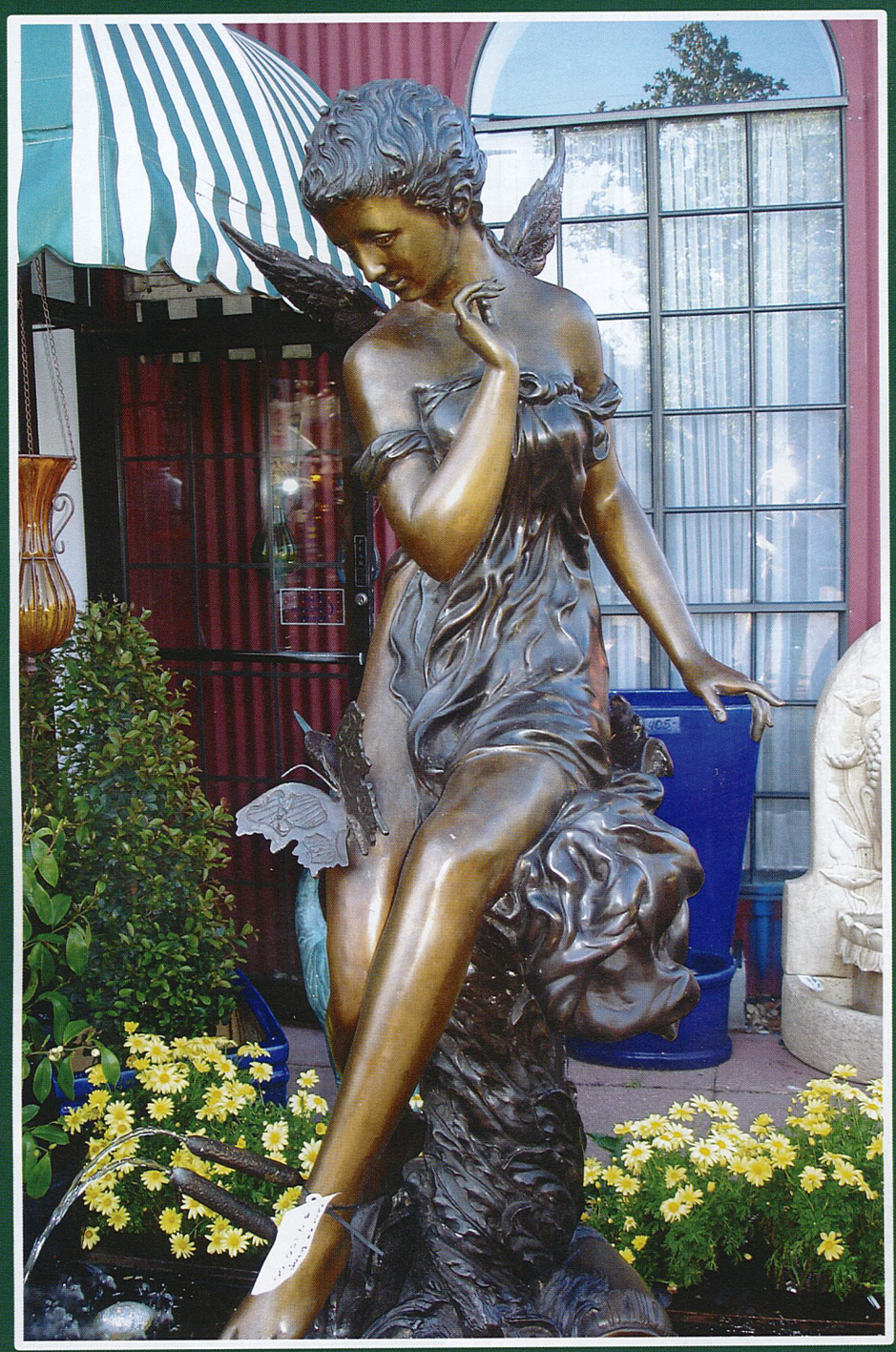




ABOVE: The former Cotton Exchange, built in 1921 and recently transformed into a hotel and a bank, as seen from the top of One Shell Square. Photo by Richard Campanella **TOP RIGHT:** The cornerstone for the Cotton Exchange Building, designed by Favrot and Livaudais, was laid on the organization's 50th anniversary in 1921. Photo by Richard Campanella

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A LEGACY OF LANDSCAPES

IN THE EARLY 1970s, preservation pioneers Mary Louise Christovich and Roulhac Toledano spearheaded a project that gave an adrenaline boost to fledgling historic preservation efforts in the city: They authored and published, through the Friends of the Cabildo, the *New Orleans Architecture* series. One book and neighborhood at a time, the duo, with help of friends and local experts to serve as editors and photographers, documented buildings street by street. With buildings' important and irreplaceable histories packaged into lovely coffee table books, homeowners and investors alike began to appreciate the city's historic fabric just a little more, and preservationists had quick access to information they needed when fighting demolitions.

Fast forward nearly 50 years, and the powerful pair recently released their eighth collaboration, *Garden Legacy*, a gorgeous new book published by The Historic New Orleans Collection. The book examines 300 years of garden design in New Orleans, but not just the foliage itself — the history of settlement, weather, economics and myriad other topics that affected the development of the city's lush landscapes.

The rich topic offers insight into who New Orleanians were in centuries and decades past, and how they lived. It all comes to life thanks to large prints of the 19th-century property records held in the city's Notarial Archives, as well as paintings, prints and maps from The Historic New Orleans Collection and other archives around the world. It's a visual exploration of the whole city from a time before photography — a rare treat indeed, and another important contribution to the historic documentation of New Orleans. *–Danielle Del Sol*



Image courtesy of Dale N. Atkins, Clerk of Civil District Court, Parish of New Orleans



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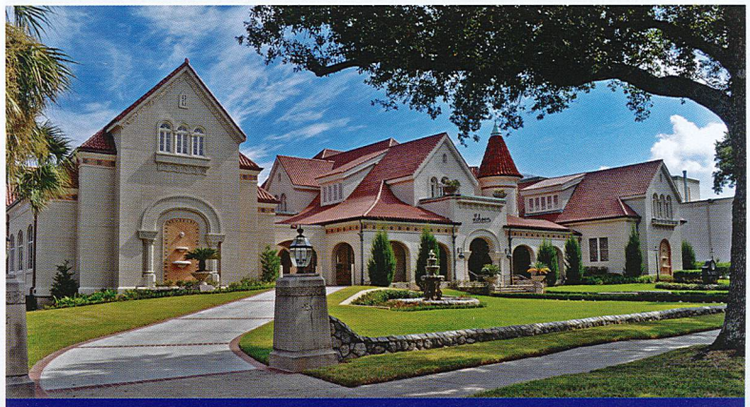
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BOUSILLAGE: RELEARNING A UNIQUELY LOUISIANA BUILDING TECHNIQUE



A Staub employee mixes Spanish moss and clay by hand.

"IT'S LIKE CHURNING ICE CREAM," Dale Pierrottie laughs. "Mix it 'til you can't mix it no more." Perched on a folding chair in front of two blue plastic kiddie pools filled with wet, yellowish-brown clay, he separates longs strands of Spanish moss and tosses them onto the piles of clay — first one pool, then the other. The Spanish moss quickly disappears into the muddy mix, as barefooted Staub Window Restorations employees stomp the mixture, learning the necessary task of being a *tacheron* or *tacherette*.

On a warm, March day in Baton Rouge, Lafayette-based artist and bousillage restorer Dale Pierrottie demonstrated the finer points of bousillage construction to the crew of Staub Window Restorations, a New Orleans-based restoration and preservation firm. This seemingly arcane construction material was once prevalent throughout the south and central parts of the state, used for all building types from *pigeonnier* to plantation house.

An earthen building material made of tempered earth and Spanish moss, used as infill between timber-frame construction, elements of bousillage techniques can be traced to building methods utilized in Africa and Europe, as well as the Native Americans, who built with wattle and daub. Bousillage — the mixture of clay and Spanish moss — belongs uniquely to Louisiana's architectural heritage, however. Despite many advantages, such as making use of cheap and widely available materials, natural fire retardency, and being a thermal mass able to keep a room cool on a hot Louisiana day, it fell out of use in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Now only a few craftsmen continue the local building tradition, which calls for good weather and a lot of physical stamina.

Bousillage structures, like any other type of building, require upkeep and occasional repair. That March day, the team was working on the restoration of Willow Grove Plantation, a small historic home south of downtown Baton Rouge off of Perkins Road. With its brick *rez de chaussée* (ground floor) and bousillage *primer étage* (first floor), external staircase, large gallery, and hall-less plan, the building is a textbook example of a Creole plantation house. It has been owned by the Kleinpeter family since it was constructed around



BY Hallie Borstel | PHOTOS BY Caroline Ourso

1820. The family's ties to the land on which the house sits date back even further, to a Spanish land grant in 1799. Willow Grove is currently undergoing a complete restoration to its original appearance. Staub Window Restorations is undertaking the task, which called for the lesson in bousillage repair.

The first step in making bousillage, according to Pierrottie's time-tested method, whether to repair or build anew, is gathering Spanish moss. The dark inner fibers of Spanish moss provide structure and stability to the completed wall. Once a sufficiently large pile of moss has been collected, the moss is boiled crawfish-style to flash cure it, though whether retting the moss, as this process is called, is a necessary step is still up for debate. The fully dried moss is "fluffed" and gently separated, then tossed into a pit (or kiddie pool) of wet clay handful by handful, where it is then stomped. The stompers, called *tacheron* or *tacherette* in the French Creole tradition, give their legs a rest once enough moss has been incorporated into the mud, and turn their attention to twisting and shaping foot-and-a-half-long *torchons*, or loaves. Still wet, each *torchis* is then draped over a stave, or *barreau*, between larger timber framing members. Working from the bottom up, the wall takes form as the earthen loaves are packed in tightly. Finally, the wall is smoothed to be flush with the framing timbers and re-smoothed as necessary during the days-long drying process.

Pierrottie's technique is unscientific and unquantifiable, based on years of learning by doing and gaining knowledge of what is "enough" or "just right" from those experiences. His demeanor was good-natured and patient with the bousillage novices of Staub, whose enthusiasm and excitement kept them going through hours of stomping, shaping, and carrying heavy *torchons* up a flight of stairs. After six hours, only about three-quarters of a ten-foot by four-foot section of wall has been repaired, but the heady sense of achievement hung about the group even as efforts shifted to mundane clean-up duties. Though the afternoon was not yet over, their work came to a halt early due to simple miscalculation in the amount of materials needed. The team will be back soon to finish the bousillage repairs, eager as ever to get up to their elbows in sticky mud.



Willow Grove Plantation in Baton Rouge.



The earthen loaves are tightly packed along timber framing members.



Pat McCausland is a Senior Salesman at Perlis Clothing and has been working there for 48 years.

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UPTOWN MID-CENTURY MODERN TOWER TRANSFORMED INTO

ALDER HOTEL

A 10-STORY, Mid-Century Modern tower next to Ochsner Baptist Hospital that had sat mostly vacant for the past two decades will complete its transformation next month when it becomes the sleek Alder Hotel Uptown. Developer Greg Ensslen of Go Mango Neighborhood Restoration teamed up with local hotelier Valentino New Orleans Hotels to renovate the historic tower, which will accommodate its first hotel guests this June.

The tower, built in 1964 and designed by New Orleans firm Mathes, Bergman and Associates, was originally designed as an apartment building for hospital staff. Exemplary of the International Style, the design of the building followed a "form-follows-function" philosophy. The reinforced concrete frame, exterior stairways, white stucco panels and balconies with grooved shadow-lines all unify to create a "pure, clean, pristine piece of architecture," explained Ensslen. While previous architectural styles adorned buildings with more intricate design elements, the International Style was revolutionary for its time, with architectural forms themselves serving as the only ornamentation to buildings. After finding a full set of building plans from 1962, Ensslen was surprised at how little the building had been altered over the years.

Drawing inspiration from the mid-century era and preserving as much of the original building scheme as possible was important for Woodward Design+Build and CDI Solutions, who worked together to design the new hotel. "You're going to walk in, and in some instances, you're going to think you're in a movie set from the mid-'60s," said Ensslen. Details like teardrop-shaped light fixtures, galaxy lamps, 3-D artwork commissioned by local artists, and built-in wooden furniture will be featured in hotel rooms.

The building had not always been in pristine condition. After functioning as an apartment building for 30 years, all but the first floor were abandoned in 1994. The bottom floor was later abandoned following Katrina and the building remained completely vacant, with the exception of flocks of pigeons, until the renovation began.

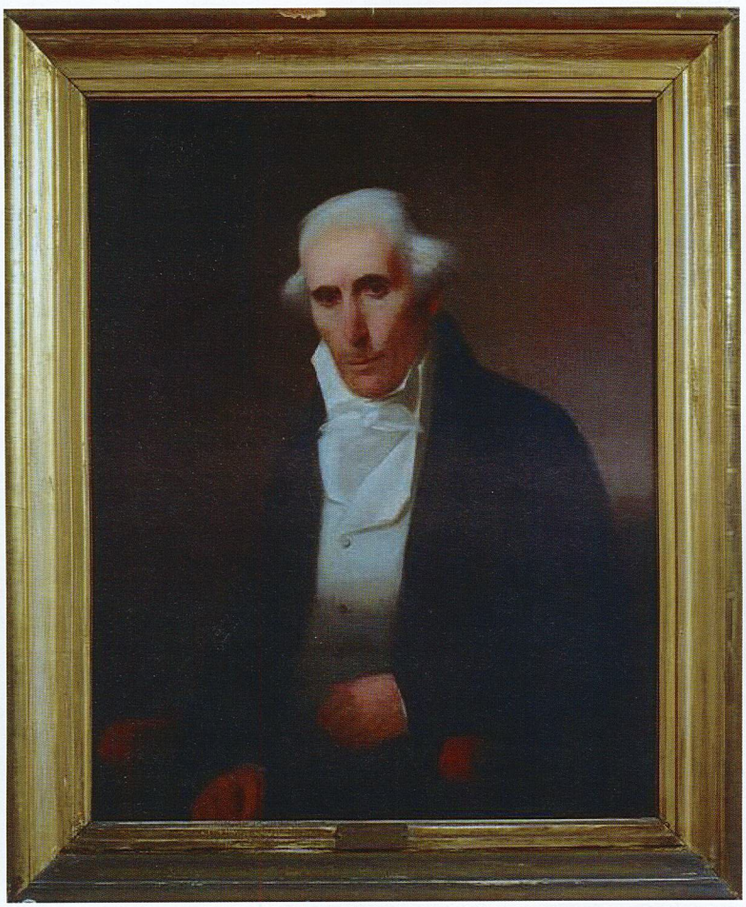
A minimalist high-rise would seem to stand out in stark contrast from its surroundings in a city known for intricate ironwork and other ornate architectural elements. However, the building had gone mostly unnoticed to its neighbors since its vacancy. When Ensslen, who also lives near the property, would speak to other nearby residents about the project, many had forgotten that a 10-story building existed there.

Ensslen could see past the years of disuse and decay, and instead saw the building as an opportunity for the neighborhood. When the building turned 50 years old in 2014, he knew it was the perfect time to act, get the property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and utilize the federal historic rehab tax credit to make the project possible.

One of the most exciting aspects about the project for Ensslen is the opportunity to use a previously forgotten building to "create something that … provides a necessary service to the neighborhood." With an estimated 30 full-time employees coming to the work at the hotel, Ensslen says that half will come directly from the neighborhood, close enough to walk to work every day. *–Davis Allen*

The Properties that led to the Prosperity of POYDRAS HOME Through 200 Years

BY Jennifer Brammell





A FIXTURE OF THE UPTOWN AREA, it may seem as if the cluster of pink buildings on the corner of Magazine Street and Jefferson Avenue have always been there. However, the true beginnings of Poydras Home, which today is a retirement community, can be traced back 200 years, downriver to the Warehouse District, to an organization established with a very different mission.

It all began in 1817 in Faubourg Ste. Marie, the American Sector of New Orleans. Julien Poydras, a planter, merchant and primary benefactor of the Female Orphan Society, generously donated a plantation house on a large lot at the corner of Julia Street and St. Charles Avenue for use as an orphanage. The Female Orphan Society, spearheaded by Phoebe Hunter, a Philadelphia Quaker turned Presbyterian through marriage, was dedicated to alleviating the struggle of young girls left parentless by Yellow Fever outbreaks. The plantation house was one of seven owned by Poydras, who resided in his main home in Point Coupée Parish.

The structure was built in the West Indies style with a gallery porch supported by wooden posts. The board of managers set about furnishing the plantation home to receive the orphan girls within a month. They made small customizations to the property including fencing the lot, digging a well, planting a vegetable garden and enclosing the gallery porch to expand the living space.

Julien Poydras passed away in 1824. One month after his death, the board of managers received notice that the Female Orphan Society was to benefit once again from his generosity. Poydras, who never married, left even more valuable real estate to the Female Orphan Society. The property was comprised of several squares in the heart of the American Sector upriver from Canal Street on Tchoupitoulas and Poydras Streets, with three commercial structures to rent to local merchants and two additional lots in the batture riverfront property at the foot of Poydras Street. The society also received additional property from two secondary benefactors, Stephen Henderson and Alexander Milne, in 1838. The board of managers, comprised entirely of volunteer women, set out to educate themselves as to how to best manage these gifts with prudence to ensure the longevity of the orphan's rescue far into the future. The income the ladies derived from these inherited properties made it possible for the Female Orphan Society to self-sustain.

The number of girls in their charge swelled from nine in 1817 to 62 only seven years later, severely challenging even their most creative use of space. By 1852, the board of managers knew the time had come to seek out a new location to meet the demand. They formed a committee to seek a country refuge, eventually choosing a bucolic suburb known as Rickerville, four miles upriver from the city in what

was Jefferson Parish, on the corner of Magazine and Peters Streets. The society made its first payment of $15,000 in the fall of 1854 to secure the land and celebrated with a dedication picnic on the new site with the girls.

Lewis Reynolds, a peer of Henry Howard, was selected as architect for the project, which was estimated to cost $70,000. Reynolds had gained fame for his residences in Natchez, commercial buildings on New Orleans' Factors' Row, and numerous Garden District residences including the Bradish Johnson House on Prytania, now part of the Louise McGehee School. The foundation was poured in 1855, commencing a two-year building period while the children and staff occupied several cramped older buildings on the grounds. By the time of move-in day for 103 girls in 1857, the asylum had sheltered a total of over 1,759 destitute children since its inception. The new three-story asylum had spacious proportions of 100 feet by 200 feet of Classical architecture with cast iron decorations and cement cornice ornamentation.

The abundance of shaded green space at their new location was quickly put to practical use. They planted an expanded vegetable garden, invested in a horse and cart, and raised chickens and cows on the grounds, selling their surplus to their rural neighbors. They also planted pecan and orange trees. Their higher vantage point near the levee allowed for better drainage and improved overall health for the orphans.

In 1859, at the original asylum's location on Julia and St. Charles, Dr. George Campbell built a grand home on the land he continued to lease from the Poydras board of managers. By the mid-20th century, the board would operate this fading gem as the Mansion Apartments to continue to derive sustaining income from their real estate holdings.

During the Civil War in 1861, blockades greatly increased the price of food to run the asylum. Staff salaries were cut by one-third. Union officers seized one of the asylum's stores at their Tchoupitoulas location and repurposed it as a recruiting office, cutting off that revenue stream. The Society's lucrative Cotton Press warehouse was also used as a depot for hay, and later was destroyed by a fire. Poydras Home narrowly escaped the fate of becoming an occupied hospital for Union troops. But for the persuasive talents of the board, which lamented the orphans' fates should occupation have become a reality for the home, Poydras Home might have ceased to exist during the Civil War.

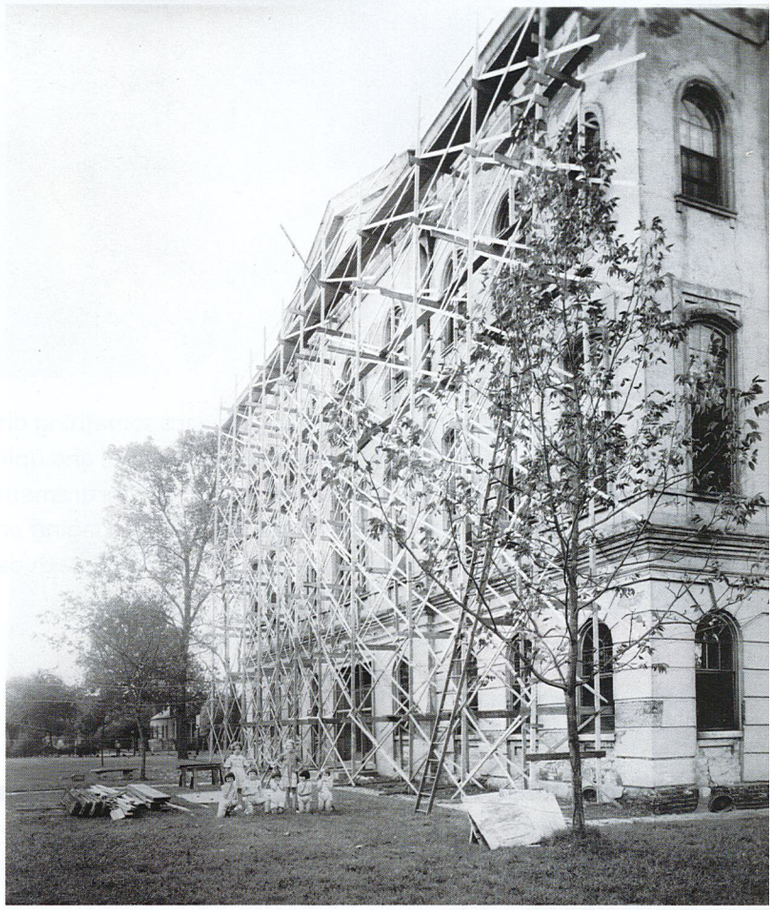
By the turn of the century, the Poydras Asylum experienced a steady reduction in the number of girls in its care, thanks to the rise of the social work profession and new state welfare programs to replace institutional living, including foster care. In the 1950s, it became clear that the Poydras Asylum could no longer continue as a solvent orphanage. The asylum was reimagined as a private facility for aged ladies. In 1957, the 12 remaining girls of Poydras Asylum were given one month's notice of this paramount mission shift.

The nearly 100-year-old structure on Magazine Street was showing its age. Significant termite damage was discovered, along with a failing roof. Steep, winding staircases and metal grillwork on upper floor windows proved incongruent with current fire marshal regulations, presenting a new high cost to bring them up to standard. With the building emptied in 1958, a demolition expert and architect were consulted and it was decided to remove the top two floors, retaining the first floor and the architectural integrity of the structure while negating the need for costly fire safety renovations. The board of managers wrote to both the president of the Louisiana Landmarks Society, Martha Gilmore Robinson, and to Samuel Wilson, Jr., architect and dean of historic preservationists, to reassure them that they planned to retain as much of the original look of the building as possible. Great pains were taken to keep intact the 16-foot ceilings, marble fireplaces, millwork and plasterwork. Furniture from the orphanage days and cast offs from the Roosevelt Hotel were refinished by hand by board members. In the spring of 1960, Poydras Home For Elderly Ladies accepted their first four residents.

As interest in eldercare grew, so did Poydras Home, both in number of women served and in assets. In 1961, an addition known as the "1960s Wing" was built to accommodate 20 more women than the 17 they then had residing within the original footprint. In 1973, the Fink Home, a local asylum for widowed Protestant women, closed and its board voted to







TOP LEFT: Framed oil portrait of Julien Poydras by William Edward West, painted in 1817. Photo by Jackson Hill Photography **BOTTOM LEFT:** An architectural painting by Jim Blanchard depicting Poydras Home's original location. Photo by Liz Jurey **TOP RIGHT:** Front view of the original building that houses Poydras Home. The top two floors were later demolished. Photo courtesy Poydras Home **MIDDLE RIGHT:** An exterior balcony in disrepair. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** An exterior shot shows scaffolding when the upper floors were being removed. Photo courtesy Poydras Home

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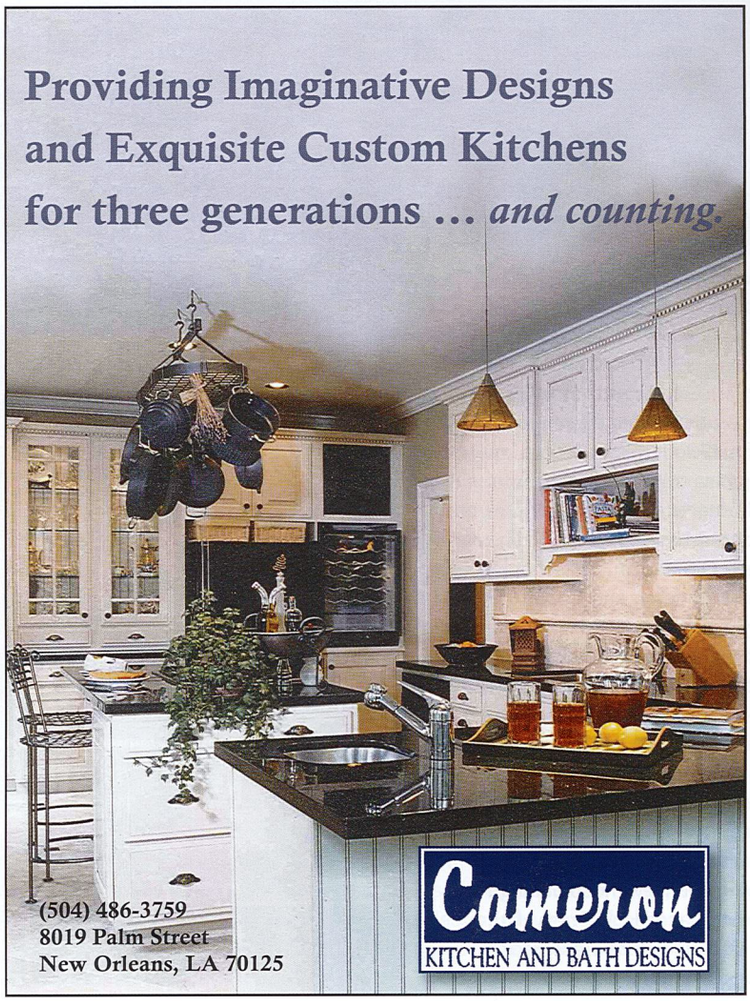
transfer all remaining assets to Poydras Home. Two years later, the City of New Orleans purchased a parcel of Poydras Home's land on Poydras Street for the Piazza d'Italia. In the early 1980s, the board negotiated a lease agreement with developer Joseph Canizaro for another parcel, upon which he built the Lykes Building. They also entered into a 99-year lease agreement in 1972 with the historic New Orleans Lawn Tennis Club to occupy the rear of their Uptown site at Jefferson and Laurel Streets with a clubhouse, pool and 12 tennis courts.

In 1976, Poydras Home embraced traditional nursing care with the construction of an infirmary, known as the John David Fink Memorial Wing, doubling its capacity. "Project '95," funded through a bond buy-out by Whitney Bank, led to extensive upgrades to all of Poydras Home's mechanical infrastructure, along with an expansion to a 54-bed capacity and a new kitchen and chapel. For the first time, elderly men were also admitted. In 1998, Poydras Home implemented PHASE, the Adult Day Care Program, for those with memory loss. By 2001, the 10 apartments of the Garden House Independent Living tower had been added to the campus along with Hunter House, designed for nursing residents in need of specialized Alzheimer's care. At this point Poydras Home was licensed as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). The largest expansion to date took place in 2013, when 22 Oak House Assisted Living state-of-the-art apartment suites and a first-floor capacity for 11 Seasons at Oak House's Montessori-inspired memory care residents were added in a three-story structure connected to the right of the original dwelling. The new structure honors the style of the 1857 Historic House, and the renovation included new dining spaces and a wellness and therapy center serving all residents.

The board of Poydras Home has nimbly navigated change throughout its 200 year history to persist and evolve into a premier retirement living community in Uptown New Orleans today.



A front view of Poydras Home. Photo by Liz Jurey





MID MOD NOLA

Mid-Century Modern-style Architecture in New Orleans

IN 1955, Progressive Architecture's second Annual Design Awards recognized more buildings by architects from New Orleans and Louisiana than any other city or state in the nation. That's right — before New Orleans was "the city that care forgot," it was one of the most architecturally progressive cities in the nation.

Yet in the decade following Hurricane Katrina, the city lost significant Mid-Century Modern architecture at an alarming rate. In the mid-20th century, six New Orleans buildings received national awards from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Four of those six are now gone. Of the city's 25 public schools designed and built in the 1950s, today only one is left standing.

Thankfully, some important structures survived. For example: we can celebrate the recent dedication of the Mid-City Library in the former Automotive Life Insurance building as a case for the adaptability of Modernist architecture, the inherent sustainability of its re-use, and a recognition of its regionalist sensibilities. In keeping with the residential character of the neighborhood, the firm of Curtis & Davis designed a two-story building set back from the street. The façade is distinguished by its concrete and steel vaulted front porch. The parking lot in the rear of the building is accessible by a porte-cochère, a nod to Spanish Colonial architecture of old New Orleans. The interior arrangement of ancillary spaces around a two-story central court again reminds us of the great courtyards of the French Quarter. In so many ways, and hopefully for many more days and years, it belongs here. – *Francine J. Stock, artist and archivist*

6 MAJOR MID-CENTURY MODERN LOSSES IN NEW ORLEANS

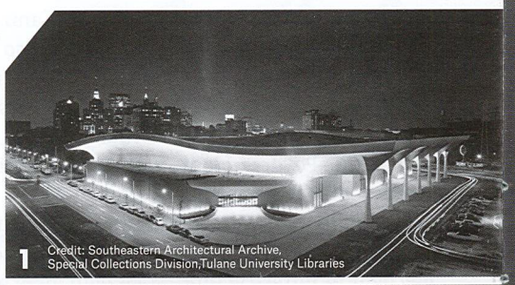
1. Rivergate Convention Center
2. Phillis Wheatley Elementary School
3. St. Frances Cabrini Church
4. George Washington Carver High School
5. Olivetti Building
6. Longshoreman Building

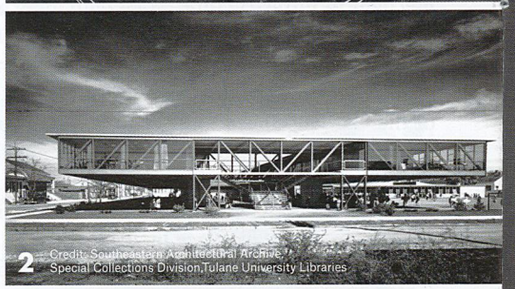
BY Christopher Boone, with help from Wayne Troyer, FAIA

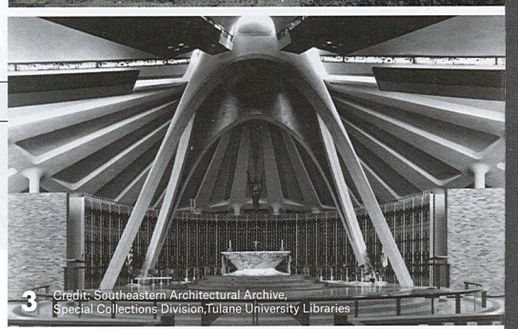
1. The **RIVERGATE CONVENTION CENTER**, originally known as the International Exhibition Facility, was completed in 1968 and was regarded as one of the city's most innovative and modern structures. The Expressionist-styled building featured six barrels of thinly sculpted, arched concrete in its vaulted roof. Spanning a range of 253 feet, the roof was record setting and engineered with a thickness of only five inches. A tunnel was built underneath the Rivergate to use as an expressway, but it was never put into use. The Rivergate was designed to be a bastion of tourism for the city's burgeoning hospitality industry before its contested demolition in 1995. The Rivergate Convention Center was an architectural landmark located downtown near the Mississippi River at the intersection of Canal and Poydras Street, now the home of Harrah's Casino. The unique structure was designed by the prestigious architectural firm of Curtis & Davis, and it is thought to be one of their most significant works.

2. The historic **PHILLIS WHEATLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL** was completed in 1954. The structure was raised a full story off the ground, providing shade underneath the building for students and recreational activities. The building became an internationally recognized flagship of Regional Modernism; its design incorporated open corridors, cross ventilation and bilateral lighting in direct response to place and climate. The raised design also protected the building from extensive flood damage during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Phillis Wheatley Elementary won the AIA Honor Award in 1955 from Progressive Architecture. The architect, Charles Colbert, is credited for leading the initiative to modernize New Orleans' public schools. Colbert, who served as the supervisor and director of the School Board's Office of Planning and Construction, conducted a comprehensive study of all existing structures to inform plenary goals and designs for new education facilities. Phillis Wheatley Elementary School was placed on the World Monuments Funds Watch List in 2009; it was demolished in 2011 despite community, historical and architectural voices of dissent.

3. The **ST. FRANCES CABRINI CHURCH** was designed by Curtis & Davis and completed in 1963. The structure received a Merit Award from the Louisiana Architects Association and an honorable mention from the Church Architectural Guild of America. In addition to the high praise for the thin-shelled concrete roof and unique Regional Modernist design, the commissioned marble altar was a large, masterfully carved import from Italy. The steeple of the church extended down through the roof, splintering in curved pillars that encapsulated the altar area. St. Frances Cabrini Church was demolished in 2007, following extensive flood damage incurred from Hurricane Katrina, and was replaced by a new school campus for the displaced Holy Cross High School — formerly of the Lower Ninth Ward. Though key elements of the original structure were preserved, it was considered a grave loss for the historic preservation of regional modernistic designs in the city.

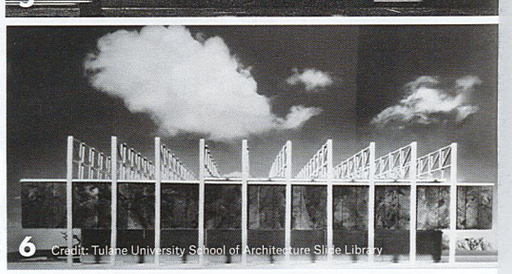

1 Credit: Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division,Tulane University Libraries


2 Credit: Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division,Tulane University Libraries


3 Credit: Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division,Tulane University Libraries


4 Credit: Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division,Tulane University Libraries


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6 Credit: Tulane University School of Architecture Slide Library

Spend the sultry New Orleans summer exploring our city's world-class Mid-Century Modern architecture with the Preservation Resource Center, the New Orleans Architecture Foundation and DOCOMOMO US/Louisiana! The Mid Mod NOLA series will feature exciting events every two weeks from May 25 to July 20: Get a private tour of the Superdome, sip chilled wine in the home of one of New Orleans' iconic Modernist architects, learn about our region's architecture from experts and mix and mingle in the Black Pearl neighborhood for an exclusive block party.

MID MOD nola

EVENT SERIES

1 • PRIVATE RECEPTION AT THE HOME OF ALBERT LEDNER

Thursday, May 25, 2017 | 6 - 7:30 p.m.

Home of Modernist Architect, Albert Ledner

Mix and mingle with experts on Mid-Century Modern architecture at the private residence of Albert Ledner, AIA, who pioneered regional modernist architecture in New Orleans. Enjoy complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres. $35 / $30* PRC Members. Tickets are limited and pre-registration is required.

2 • "MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN NEW ORLEANS"

TALK BY JOHN P. KLINGMAN

Thursday, June 8, 2017 | 6 – 7 p.m.

Mid City Library, 4140 Canal Street | Free and open to the public

John P. Klingman, Favrot Professor at the Tulane School of Architecture, will present an overview of Mid-Century Modern-style architecture in New Orleans. New Orleans' Mid-Century Modern landmarks, significant architects and locations of buildings will be explored inside of one of the most important Mid-Century Modern-style buildings left in New Orleans — the Automotive Life Insurance Building, now used as the Mid-City Public Library Branch.

3 • PRIVATE TOUR OF THE SUPERDOME

Thursday, June 22, 2017 | 6 – 7:30 p.m.

This event will feature one of the most recognizable buildings in New Orleans, now known as the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, which was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places. See the iconic structure through the eyes of architects and meet the woman whose love for the building led to its recent inclusion on the National Register. $25 / $20* PRC Members. Tickets are limited and pre-registration is required.

4 • WHAT IS MID-CENTURY MODERN?

PANEL MODERATED BY WAYNE TROYER, FAIA

Thursday, July 6, 2017 | 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Main Library, 219 Loyola Ave | Free and open to the public

The most prominent architects and experts on Mid-Century Modern architecture in New Orleans give their thoughts on style, history, building use, and answer your probing questions. The discussion will be moderated by Wayne Troyer, FAIA, and the panel will include Lee Ledbetter, AIA, Paula Peer, AIA, NCARB, Albert Ledner, AIA, and archivist Francine J. Stock. The location of the event, the New Orleans Public Library Main Branch, is itself an iconic Mid-Century Modern structure; prepare to leave the talk with a newfound appreciation for this urban gem.

5 • MODERNIST BLOCK TOUR IN THE BLACK PEARL

Thursday, July 20, 2017 | 6 – 8 p.m.

Celebrate the end of the Mid Mod series with a tour of three fabulous, mid-century private residences on Dominican Street in the Black Pearl neighborhood. You won't believe how chic these homes are! A talk by Lee Ledbetter, AIA, who once lived in and restored one of the homes, will begin at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are $25 / $20 for PRC Members. Day-of-tour tickets are $25*.

** Each ticket purchased with a credit card will have an additional $1.50 processing fee.*

Visit **PRCNO.org**

to **pre-register** or **purchase tickets** to any of these events, or for more information on this event series!

4. **GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER HIGH SCHOOL** opened in 1958 and operated for 53 years prior to its demolition by the Recovery School District in 2007. The school, originally designed as a joint campus for middle and high school students, was located in the Ninth Ward's Desire community. The structure was innovative, and its architecturally significant design by Curtis & Davis won Progressive Architecture's most prestigious award, the First Design Award, in 1957. The auditorium consisted of hinged, vaulted concrete with bridge-like buttresses that extended beyond the building, providing shelter for students. The Mid-Century Modern design was one of the first to integrate middle and high school students, allowing for the shared use of facilities.

5. The circa 1966 **OLIVETTI BUILDING** was designed by New Orleans-based architect Charles Colbert. The structure, located at 1900 Canal St., was created to be a showroom for the Olivetti Typewriter Company. Colbert incorporated structural elements that featured oil field pipes of different heights topped by Olivetti-Underwood typewriters. Colbert is credited as having created an "International Style jewel box." Olivetti, an Italian-based company renowned for its corporate philosophy on design, exclusively hired critically acclaimed modern architects to design its showrooms and offices. Colbert's plan is considered to be his most opulent and intricate. Adriano Olivetti, who ran the company during the Modernist era, espoused design as "...a question of substance, not just form...but a tangible reflection of a way of being and operating." It was cleared as part of the wholesale demolition of Lower Mid-City for the University Medical Center between 2008 and 2010.

6. The **INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN ASSOCIATION BUILDING** was constructed in 1959 by the Lawrence and Saunders architectural firm. At the time of the building's construction, the Longshoremen of New Orleans were segregated by race, and the structure was home to the Black Longshoremen's Union. The building also became the site of events pivotal to the Civil Rights Movement, including talks by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who spoke at the hall soon after its completion in 1959, key leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SNCC) and the National Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The hall also hosted numerous social events for the black community — weddings, funerals, second lines, Mardi Gras Indian events, jazz and blues concerts — and is recorded as hosting balls for the gay community when they were socially excluded from other venues. When the Black and White Unions merged, the unified organization remained at the longshoremen's hall. The building was destroyed beyond repair during Hurricane Katrina. →

5 FAVORITE MID-CENTURY MODERN STRUCTURES IN NEW ORLEANS

1. Galatoire House
2. Plaza Tower
3. Nathaniel Curtis Home
4. The Mossy House *(Tern Street)*
5. Automotive Life Insurance Building


1 Credit: Suzanne Blaum

1. The **GALATOIRE HOUSE** is an original design by New Orleans architect Albert Ledner, completed in 1966. Located at 11 Park Island, the house is a unique blend of classic and modern influences, and was fitted with a collection of windows salvaged by Mrs. Galatoire from the Good Shepherd Convent, which was built in 1866 for delinquent girls. The repurposed windows are featured upside down among the arched windows on the front of the home as well as in the stained-glass ceiling panels. Stone is also featured prominently in the home with white marble floors downstairs, and a centered, circular granite wall behind the living and dining areas. Ledner, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, incorporated many antique and custom elements in the home, originally built for one of the descendants of owners of the famous Galatoire Restaurant.

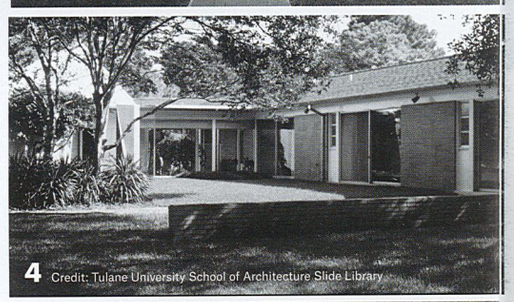

2 Credit: Wikimedia Commons

2. Standing 531-feet-tall upon its completion in 1969, **PLAZA TOWER** on Howard Avenue became the tallest building in the state of Louisiana, exceeding the height of the Capitol building. The construction of the building began in 1964, and stalled briefly due to financial complications. Leonard Spangenberg, a student of Modernist icon Frank Lloyd Wright, designed the building.

   Plaza Tower was the first local building to employ a friction-based structural foundation. This system proved successful for the unique and low-lying ground of New Orleans, where buildings of such height were previously not believed to be viable. The building was originally designed for residences, office space and high-end amenities. Though few residents ever lived there, the building was renovated from 2001-2006 after lawsuits regarding exposure to hazardous materials. The current owner is developer and hotel owner Joe Jaeger Jr. To date, Plaza Tower remains the third-tallest building in New Orleans and the state of Louisiana.


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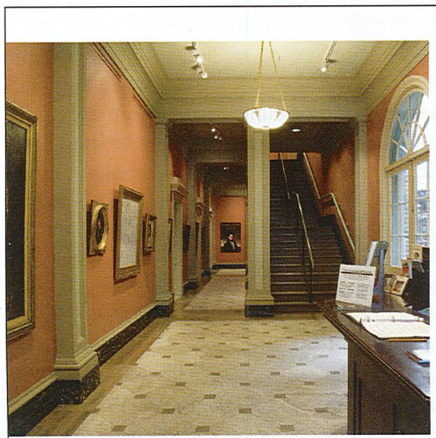
3. Built in 1963, the **CURTIS HOUSE** was the original design of, and private home to, Nathaniel "Buster" Curtis, who also designed the Superdome. The private residence is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and represents a maturation of design style from the Curtis & Davis firm. Surrounded by a high, mortared white wall, the home is located in the Audubon neighborhood. It boasts four outdoor patio-courtyards, three flat-topped pavilions and sliding glass walls that provide an abundance of natural light as well as outside accessibility.


4 Credit: Tulane University School of Architecture Slide Library

4. The **MOSSY HOUSE** on Tern Street in the Lake Vista neighborhood was constructed in 1956 and designed by Lawrence, Saunders and Calongne. The residence illustrates the unique architectural perspective of John Lawrence (1923-1971), former Dean of the Tulane School of Architecture. As a native of Louisiana, Lawrence believed that "good modern architecture is not a set of standard forms...it is an architecture which welcomes the entire range of building materials." Lawrence also used elements in his buildings found in traditional, local architecture and visually expanded the space by situating the building on the edge of the small, triangular lot, with a view at the time of Lake Pontchartrain through the expansive glass walls.


5 Credit: José Fernandes

5. The **AUTOMOTIVE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING**, designed by Curtis & Davis, was completed in 1963. The building is located at 4140 Canal St. and was originally built in celebration of the company's 25th anniversary. The structure features concrete columns, intricate vaulting, and two stories behind a street-facing wall of glass. The New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission selected the location as a historic landmark in 2010. It is now home to the Mid-City branch of the New Orleans Public Library.



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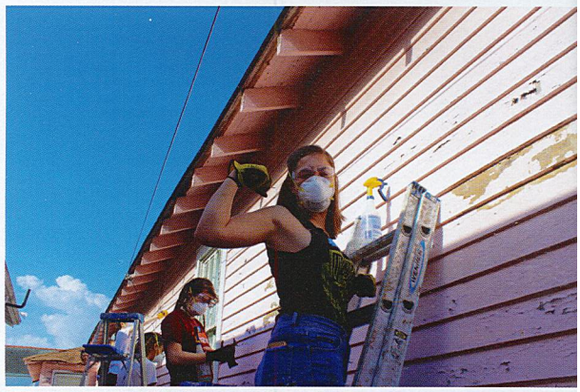
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Volunteers spring into action on alternative break trips

BY Kat Schweitzer, *RTNO Volunteer and AmeriCorps Manager*





WHEN STUDENTS FROM HILLEL AT VIRGINIA TECH returned to New Orleans for their annual spring service trip this year during the week of March 6, they expected to experience the city from the lens of a local and give back by rebuilding in the community. What they might not have anticipated however, was to see how quickly they could make a total transformation on Ms. Dornese's home in the Hollygrove neighborhood.

The visit from Virginia Tech Hillel kick-started a bustling spring break season that never fails to keep RTNO on our toes. Volunteers from across the country flocked to New Orleans this year to spend their spring breaks giving back to our community. Throughout the season, RTNO hosted over 500 volunteers looking to get their hands dirty, serving homeowners citywide. With over 6,200 hours served, saving $146,000 in labor costs, spring break is one of RTNO's favorite times of the year, next to our annual October Build. The high volunteer volume means we can accomplish astounding amounts of work in a very short time while sharing why New Orleans is so special to us with people from all corners of the United States. It's hard work, but the fun and excitement certainly isn't lacking.

"We had an absolute blast!" said Emma Cohen of Hillel at Virginia Tech at the end of their service week. Their group was comprised of several returning students, but mostly newbies to New Orleans, and rebuilding in general. In their four short days of service, they were able to completely scrape and prime the exterior of Ms. Dornese's Apricot Street home, setting it up perfectly for the weeks of volunteers ahead.

"On behalf of the Marquette students who had the privilege of working with RTNO this past trip, thank you for your continued commitment to the city of New Orleans and for providing us with such meaningful and memorable experiences," said Catherine Rourke of Marquette University in Milwaukee. The group of 14 students followed up with work on Apricot Street, giving it a fresh coat of paint and making vital repairs to the windows and siding.

As March drew to a close, RTNO finished work on five homes, while beginning work on a handful more because of the hard work and great attitudes that the dedicated spring break volunteers brought with them. From painting siding in the warm spring sunshine to setting fence posts and building wheelchair ramps, this year's volunteers were an irreplaceable asset to bringing New Orleanians closer to safe, affordable housing.

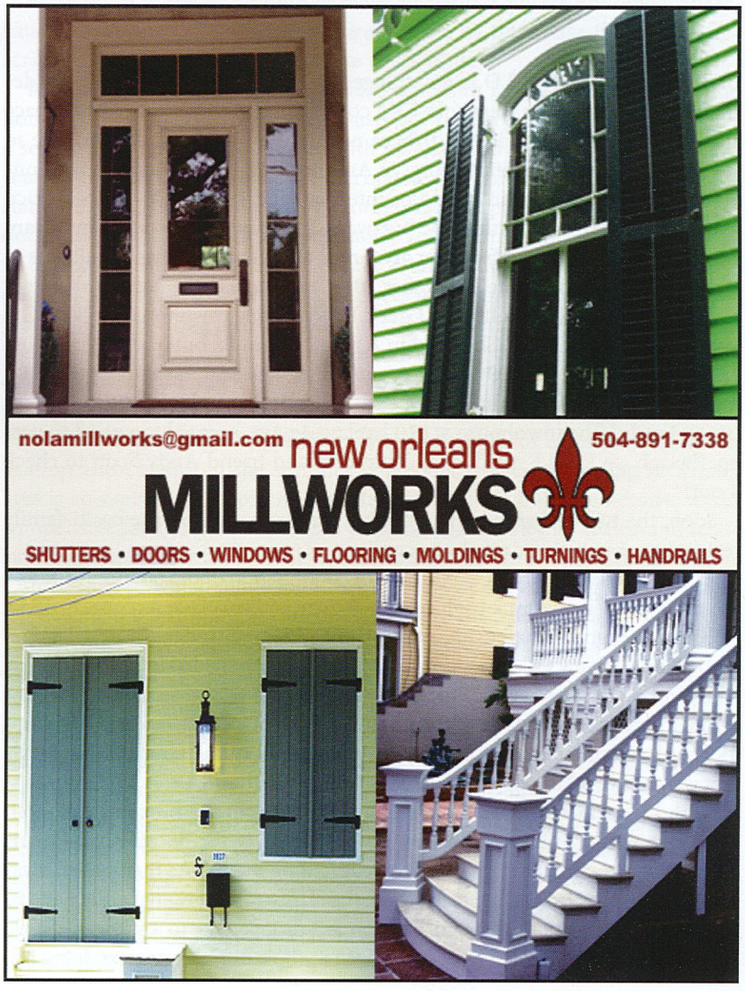


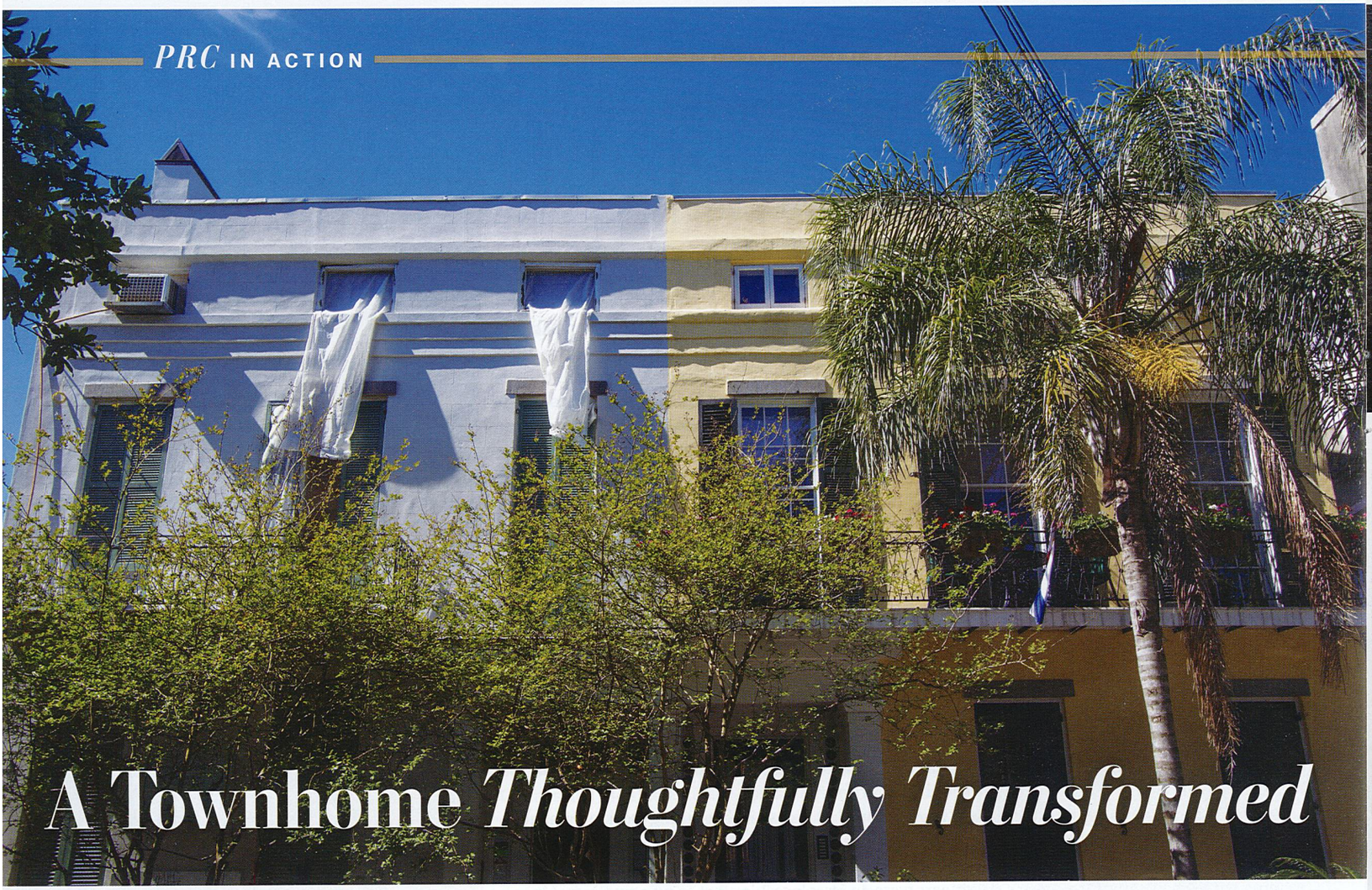
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A Townhome *Thoughtfully Transformed*

By Andrew Spaulding | Photos by Liz Jurey

BETSY EBERLE FIFIELD is no stranger to architecture: the homes she designed for her family in New York City, constructed in three stories of airspace atop a historic structure in the Tribeca neighborhood, and in Aspen were so spectacular, they warranted features in Architectural Digest magazine. A London home was featured in World of Interiors, and another home in Mexico wasn't publicized internationally, but was a construction project important enough to distract Fifield from her art career, after having shows in galleries in London and Aspen. In late December 2014, an article in the New York Times real estate section highlighting a Greek Revival-style townhouse in New Orleans caught Fifield's eye. She lived in Aspen, Colorado, but had been visiting New Orleans since the 1990s. "I'm a music fan," she said, "and I was fantasizing about getting something in the city. I had started to look a little, but not too seriously." The townhouse at 810 Esplanade Ave. seemed too good to pass up, though, so Fifield asked local contractor and friend Andy Scott to check it out.

Soon, the two embarked on a business venture to restore the multi-family residence using historic rehab tax credits.

As it happened, this joint venture was a continuation of the building's life as a rental property going back to the establishment of Esplanade Avenue. In 1832, William Montgomery, a businessman who had served under Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans, purchased the newly subdivided lots, which a only a handful of decades earlier had been land that had served as part of the city's colonial fortifications. After securing the lots, Montgomery built pair of common-wall townhouses that are very early examples of the Greek Revival style that was taking off in popularity in New Orleans in the 1830s.

With the property secured, Fifield and Scott began the process of demolition. Five rental units had divided up the property for decades, and many of the home's original details had been covered or altered. As they peeled away walls and finishes from more recent eras, the clarity of the original design and its remaining features came through. "The project dropped me to my knees," Fifield said. "I have been humbled by it. It has been a whole different process doing historic renovation and preservation as opposed to building whatever you want."

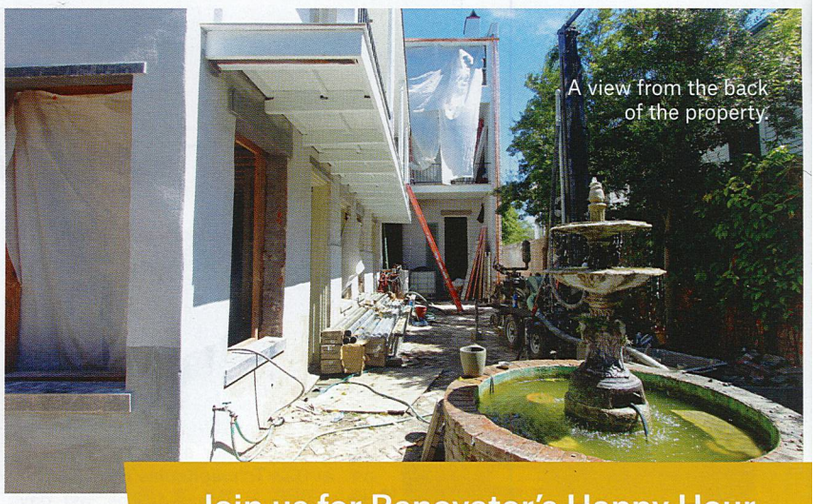
During the demolition process, "we began to follow the natural architectural lines of the building, uncovering beautiful details in the house that had gone unnoticed because it had been occupied by five units for generations," Fifield said. Graceful curves in the staircase, original to its construction, were uncovered under layers of plaster. Nine fireplaces, most of them still operable, were revealed. Plaster medallions and other details languished, but their former glory could still be appreciated. Seeing the townhome's original beauty uncovered, Fifield was moved to preserve all she could of the structure. "I felt it had to exist in its original architectural form," she said.

A significant turning point in the process was the discovery of a space that revealed itself only after all interior gutting was complete on the third floor. According to Scott, the attic turned out to be "a real garret" — just the kind of space that an artist like Fifield could use as a studio. She began to feel a connection to the house through the restoration process, and soon decided she would turn this nearly 180-year-old townhouse into a home for herself rather than returning it to the rental market as originally planned. As the basic concept crystallized, local architect Daniel Zangara of Zangara Partners was brought aboard to help her refine the plan and organize the project scope and objectives. "She challenged all of us at every turn to produce the best building possible," Zangara said. Included in the project requirements was an overall imperative to maintain the integrity of the original structure while modernizing the systems inside: no ceilings were to be lowered, but the building would be as sustainable and healthy as possible, and all work would be guided by Department of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

This was no small project: the building is 4,965 square feet. In working out the renovation, the original layout was generally adhered to, with a couple of key changes. To fit an elevator into the building, the wall along the side hall was thickened to two feet. According to Scott, this modification was a singular solution to several problems. It provided space for the elevator shaft, mechanical closets, and ducts and pipes while also becoming an integrated feature



The third-floor garret studio.



A view from the back of the property.

Join us for Renovator's Happy Hour
at 810 Esplanade Ave. on
Thursday, May 18, 5:30-7 p.m.

in its own right by creating a vestibule-like passageway between the parlor and the hall. It also cleverly restores symmetry to the rear parlor's slightly off-center pair of windows.

One other floorplan modification was needed. The original front parlor space, on the second floor, occupied the space behind all three front window bays; Fifield and Scott claimed the third bay for a master bath and dressing area. This intervention is not as out of character as it may initially seem, however. Cypress Building Conservation conducted a detailed analysis that revealed the presence of a cabinet, essentially a large built-in wardrobe, in the same location, suggesting that the traditional role for this zone of the building was more or less remaining unchanged.

The original service quarter building connects to the main house, and today holds the home's kitchen. Fifield and Scott decided to locate an oven in the building's original cooking stove; the rest of the kitchen was designed around this detail that melded new technology with historic placement.

Often, ceiling heights are lowered to be able to mask pipes, wires and ducts needed for modern amenities. To Fifield, this wasn't an option. Keeping ceilings at full height required close coordination between all consultants and trades, primarily a willingness on the part of the contractor, HVAC tech and plumber to work cooperatively to come up with creative solutions. For example, Zangara, the architect, Scott, the contractor, and HVAC technician Raul Mena widened the wall between the front and back parlors to allow a duct to maneuver below the ceiling joist without lowering the ceiling.

Addressing potential moisture within the walls was another special challenge. When Scott pulled away the plaster and stucco to repoint the bricks, he discovered the mortar between the brick was so wet and soft, you could smear it with your finger. After the walls were allowed to dry out, the exterior wall was stabilized and re-plastered.

To further protect against future saturation issues and ensure appropriate breathability of the exterior masonry walls, Zangara called upon the technical know-how of building envelope consultant George Ferris of Alternative Energy Sources. Given the existing thermal mass of the walls — or their capacity to act as a buffer against heat and cold — and the imperative to appropriately manage moisture, Ferris recommend a less aggressive approach to insulation. At sun-exposed walls, a radiant barrier was installed to transfer incoming heat, increasing the home's energy efficiency while also allowing it to "breathe." At the roofline, instead of spray foam, Ferris recommended a formaldehyde-free, high-density, "cathedral" batt to be used with a layer of radiant barrier and a one-inch air gap between them. Like with the walls, this helps the home with climate control in an energy-efficient way.

Titan Construction put on the new slate roof, and Kendall Ward Masonry retucked pointed and stuccoed the brick. "After the demolition there was significant degradation of the mortar throughout the house due to moisture. Kendall really saved me," Fifield said. Inside, work continued as PINTO Electric brought the building into the 21st century with necessary electrical wiring, and PEMBA brought on the luxury — the company hid wires to seamlessly bring state-of-the-art lighting, sound and technology systems into the home.

Once the exterior of the building was secure and interior system placements were complete, interior detail work could begin. Plasterer Jeff Poree was brought in to bring the surfaces of the rooms together with a Venetian plaster finish. This plastering technique consists of a pigmented "white" coat over a base coat on gypsum board. The "white," or finish, coat includes pigmented lime mixed with Plaster of Paris, which is then troweled twice to achieve a lustrous burnished appearance. By reducing the need for paint on the interior, this technique not only provides long-term durability but supports healthy indoor air quality, as well. A team at New Orleans Millwork restored original moldings and millwork inside the home.

Restoring the home's original doors and windows was another important component of the project. Courtney Williams of Cypress Building Conservation points out that proper window restoration is an inherently "green" practice. A properly restored window with operable shutters keeps out moisture and drafts just as effectively as modern factory-made windows. In terms of the restoration work itself, Williams is adamant that Cypress Building Conservation avoids the chemical bath process known as "dipping" at all costs and instead uses a heat gun for paint removal. Because old windows are made from extremely durable, densely grained wood, replacement of sash components is seldom required; however, when deteriorated material is found, Cypress Building Conservation opts to stabilize as much of the existing material as possible with Department of the Interior-approved epoxies and resins.

In addition to the restoration of these elements, Cypress Building Conservation wrote a social and architectural history of the house that Fifield described as vital to the home's accurate restoration.

It could be argued that the courtyard functions as the second heart of the home, pulling together the main house and the service dependency around a serene outdoor space, complete with planters and fountain. The courtyard is also the heart of the home's geothermal heating and cooling system. Unlike standard split system heat pumps, geothermal heat pumps do not require outdoor condensers — which are often noisy and unattractive — but instead rely upon deeply drilled wells. In the French Quarter, drilling such wells can pose a significant challenge, because the spaces are so tight it is rarely possible to get a standard drilling into the courtyard of a property. HVAC contractor Raul Mena, however, had a trick up his sleeve: a custom drill rig of his own design can navigate tight French Quarter spaces, bringing geothermal technology to places never before thought possible.

Inside the building, the geothermal system provides excellent dehumidification and cooling in the summer and equally efficient heating in winter. This is an especially important advantage in an older building because it can compensate for the limitations of a building that cannot be sealed and insulated to modern standards. It also translates into more compact ducts and air handlers, all of which allow the historic fabric of the building to take center stage while the technology fades discretely into the background.

"When it's done, I think this house is going to be something of a model for the preservation of a house while simultaneously updating it for contemporary lifestyle," Fifield said. "It's quite open, so you can see the historic architecture, but it will be lived in in the way modern people live in their homes." She plans to decorate the space with both classic and contemporary furnishings, but only "sparsely," so as to let the architecture itself shine.

Fifield used to work in advertising and in cosmetics, and long ago left office life, but is still constantly working, she said. This, her sixth personal architectural project, has been the most challenging; she looks forward, when 810 Esplanade Ave. is complete, to hosting friends and family so that they too can share in her love of New Orleans, and her special new home. She also plans to spend plenty of time finding creative inspiration in her garret studio.

Kiosk

PRC



RENOVATORS' HAPPY HOUR GOES TO ESPLANADE AVE.

THURSDAY, MAY 18

Visit a different historic neighborhood and renovation in-progress at this educational event. The most recent project of artist, Betsy Eberle Fifield, is an extensive restoration of an 1832 American Greek Revival Townhouse in the Vieux Carré. The project includes restored, original windows, doors, plasterwork, and many other features. Modern components include the addition of an elevator and a geo-thermal heating and cooling system. For more details, read the article on page 28. $10, free for PRC Members. Cash donation bar. 810 Esplanade Ave., 5:30 to 7 p.m. Purchase tickets at prcno.org or at the event.

MID-MOD NOLA: LAUNCH & PRIVATE RECEPTION

THURSDAY, MAY 25

Join PRC, NOAF and DOCOMOMO US/Louisiana for the launch of our Mid Mod NOLA summer event series. Mix and mingle with experts on Mid-Century Modern architecture at the private residence of Albert Ledner, AIA, who pioneered regional modernist architecture in New Orleans. Enjoy complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres provided by Wayfare. $35 / $30 PRC Members. 6 to 7:30 p.m. at 5328 Bellaire Dr. Tickets are limited and pre-registration is required. For registration and more information visit prcno.org. **Read more about the other events in this series on page 25.**

FIRST TIME HOMEBUYER CLASS

MONDAY, JUNE 12 TO THURSDAY, JUNE 15

Considering homeownership? The 12-hour course conducted by A Shared Initiative, Inc (ASII) in partnership with the PRC is certified by the LA Homebuyer Education Collaborative. It acquaints prospective buyers with the details of purchase contracts, insurance, fiscal fitness, budgeting, home maintenance, and more. Emerge from this program prepared to tackle the home purchase process and meet the demands of owning and caring for a home. 5:30 to 8 pm. at 923 Tchoupitoulas St. Advance registration is required. The last day to register is June 2, or when capacity is reached. Registration procedures atprcno.org or 504.581.7032. $100 for individuals, $115 per household, $75 for ASI Member individuals, $100 for ASI Member households.

NEW ORLEANS

MARIGNY HOME & GARDEN TOUR

SUNDAY, MAY 21

The Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association's 45th Annual Spring Home and Garden Tour will take place in the Marigny Triangle, beginning in Washington Square Park (700 Frenchmen St.) from noon to 4 p.m. $25 tickets will be available in the park beginning at 11:30 a.m. The tour features eight homes showing the variety of historic architecture the Creole Faubourg is known for, including artist James Michalopoulos' studio and Sun Oak, Gene Cizek's unusual triple cottage. Email vicepresident@faubourgmarigny.org for more information.

HNOC CONCERTS IN THE COURTYARD

FRIDAY, MAY 19

The Historic New Orleans Collection's monthly Concerts in the Courtyard offer a fun, casual way to kick off the weekend with live outdoor performances by Louisiana musicians. In May, Sweet Olive String Band will perform. For nonmembers, admission is $10 and includes complimentary beverages (beer or white wine). All shows are free to THNOC members. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Concerts are held from 6 to 8 p.m. Visit hnoc.org for more information.

VCPORA MOTHER'S DAY PICNIC AND CONCERT

SUNDAY, MAY 19

This month, Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents & Associates will be hosting their 20th Anniversary Mother's Day Concert and Picnic. Enjoy entertainment by New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra, face-painting, and lots of fun for the whole family! Don't forget your chairs, blankets, picnics and dancing shoes. 4 to 7 p.m. in Cabrini Park, French Quarter. Visit vcpora.org for more information.

IRISH CHANNEL TOUR

SATURDAY, MAY 20

Most New Orleanians have enjoyed a sloppy roast beef poboy at a legendary Irish bar off Magazine Street, or caught cabbages, potatoes and carrots at the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. But not everyone has stopped to consider the history of the immigrant populations who lived and worked near the docks along the Mississippi River, their culture and traditions forming the foundation of the area we now know as the Irish Channel. The Friends of the Cabildo's Irish Channel Tour explores this diverse home of working class immigrants, natives and free people of color. From famous churches to Irish bars, unique architecture, famous historic figures and notable festivals, the Irish Channel Tour reveals the many facets of this neighborhood beloved by locals and visitors alike. Departure Point: St. Vincent's Guest House at 1507 Magazine St. Visit friendsofthecabildo.org for more information.



GREEK FEST: CATHEDRAL TOUR

FRIDAY THROUGH SUNDAY, MAY 26-28

This Memorial Day weekend, head towards the bayou for this family-friendly event with food, live music, dance and much more! This Festival celebrates the heritage of New Orleans' sizable population of Greek decedants. Preservationists might be especially interested in touring the first and oldest Greek Orthodox congregation in the United States, founded in 1866. Visitors may tour the ornate structure with its magnificent, Byzantine-style dome. Frescoes and stained glass windows in the distinctive Eastern Orthodox artistic style greet the eye in every direction one looks. Entrance to the festival is $7 and children under 12 are admitted free. Visit greekfestnola.com for more information, including hours and location.

LOUISIANA

8TH ANNUAL MOTHER'S DAY HOME TOUR

SUNDAY, MAY 14

This Mother's Day, enjoy the Old Mandeville Historical Association's 2017 Mother's Day Home Tour with your loved ones. The theme of this tour is "Turning the Corner: Early 20th Century Cottages." Purchase tickets at Das Schulerhaus 611 Girod St. or Jean Baptiste Lang House 605 Carroll St. Ticket prices range from $12-$20, and children under 12 can attend free.

38TH LA ANNUAL PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, MAY 18 & 19

Hosted by The Louisiana Trust for Historic Preservation, the LA State Division of Historic Preservation and the Historical Association of Central Louisiana, this Alexandria-based event will feature educational seminars, panel discussions, three concurrent sessions with three tracks including Local Preservation; Main Street Communities; and Preservation Tools, plus tours. It will be held at the Historic Hotel Bentley from 1 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 18, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, May 19. For more information, call 504.256.0912 or 225.930.0936.

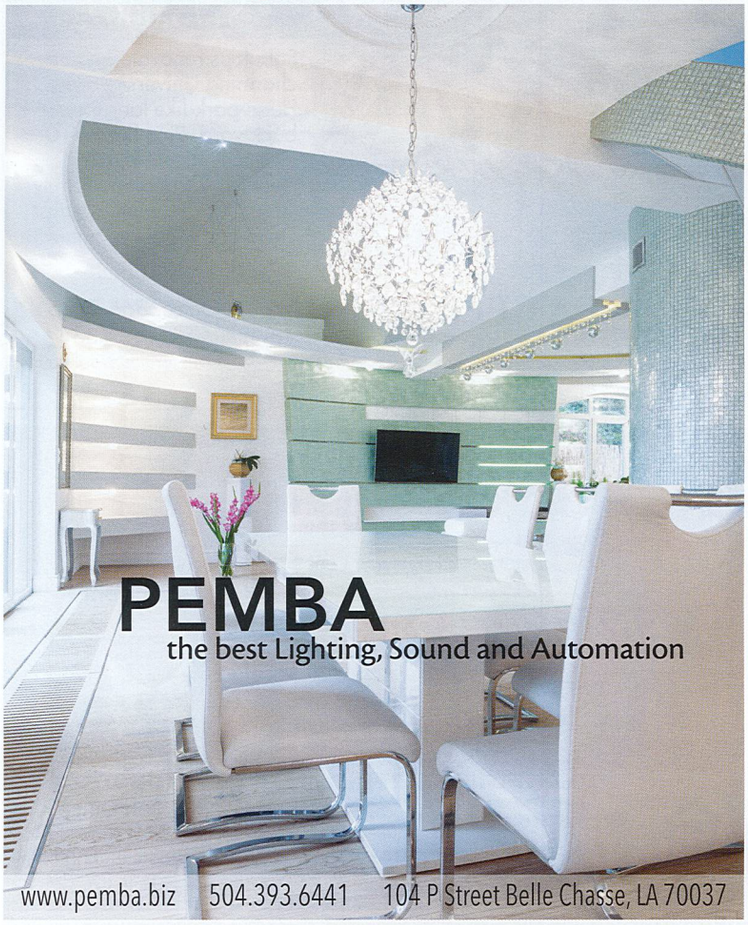


MEETING DATES

BLIGHTSTAT: MAY 11
CBD HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION: MAY 10
NEW ORLEANS CITY COUNCIL: MAY 4, 18
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION: MAY 9, 23
HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION: MAY 11
NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: MAY 1, 15
VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION: MAY 3

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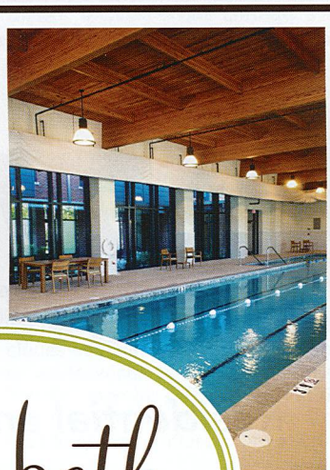


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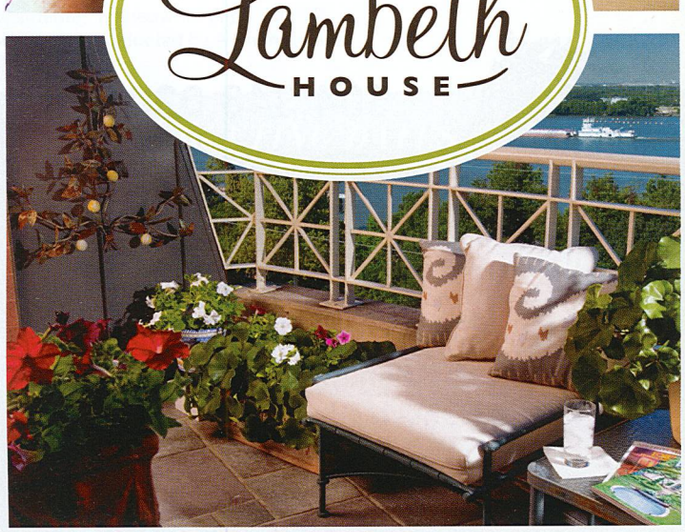
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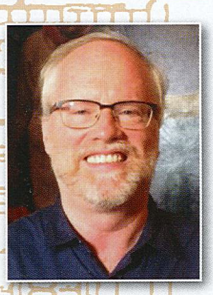
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Editor's SPOTLIGHT

jack davis

JACK DAVIS came to historic preservation, as many of the field's "big thinkers" do, through writing.

Or more specifically, reporting. Davis was co-founder of the New Orleans newspaper Figaro in 1972, and later went on to prestigious posts with the Times-Picayune, the Chicago Tribune and the Hartford Courant, among others. Along the way, Davis found himself drawn to reporting on issues involving urbanism, historic buildings and the economic impact of historic preservation.

Davis's attention to preservation issues in major newspapers around the country has made him a sought-after expert; he recently completed nine-year terms on the boards of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Congress of New Urbanism. PRC is lucky to have Davis as the speaker of our 43rd Annual Meeting on May 24. (More information on page 5.)

His passion for the historic built environment blossomed upon moving to New Orleans in the early '70s. He had moved to the city to help a friend launch the counter-culture newspaper Fiagro, but had plans to leave after a few months to return to Harvard, his alma matter, for law school. Instead of eight months, Davis stayed 12 years. "I fell deeply in love with New Orleans and was having so much fun writing stories that really mattered," he said.

His attention to the historic built environment was sparked by his daily commute. "I used to ride the streetcar to work — the Figaro headquarters was on Lee Circle," he said. Mansions and buildings Davis admired along St. Charles Avenue began rapidly disappearing. "Looking out the window and seeing the demolition of these wonderful buildings" impacted him deeply, Davis said, "so we decided at Figaro to make a big deal out of it." His July 1972 cover story "St. Charles Avenue is Dying," documenting the rampant demolitions defacing the iconic street, had instant and lasting impact. "That article produced a bigger result than any article I'd written, or any I've written since," he said. "Preservationists were waiting to spring into action, and they did." Nonprofits were formed, moratoriums issued, and St. Charles Avenue was placed under the protection of the Historic District Landmarks Commission. "None of the daily newspapers were reporting on the demolition of historic buildings back then, but we would."

Davis soon graduated from Figaro to the States-Item as city editor and later went to the Times-Picayune as metro editor, all while renovating three shotguns on Upperline Street in his spare time.

The Chicago Tribune stole Davis away in 1984, and he served as metropolitan editor before moving to Newport News, Virginia. There he built up The Daily Press as publisher, president and CEO. He moved back to Chicago in 1998 to help lead the Tribune Company. "Everywhere I was, I was either writing about architecture, the city, preservation or planning, or I directed others to write about it," he said.

From 2000-2006 he served as the publisher, president and CEO of the Hartford Courant; it was an era Davis cherishes. "I gave two pages in the Sunday paper to a section called 'Place' — stories, profiles and exposés by great writers" that had impact, he said. The reporting led to a revival of the Park Street commercial corridor into a thriving Main Street — a local organization gave Davis a lifetime achievement award for the effort — and to the designation of the Coltsville neighborhood as a National Historic Landmark District.

His work attracted the attention of Dick Moe, long-celebrated former director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Moe invited Davis onto the NTHP's board, and the two collaborated closely on how to best address recovery efforts in the weeks following Hurricane Katrina.

The PRC is lucky to have had Davis as a close adviser for years, including as a planner of the two recent Preservation Matters symposiums, hosted in partnership with the Tulane School of Architecture. "The number one strategy for business development in New Orleans should be preservation," he said, "and we haven't accomplished that yet." More effective partnerships are key, he said. "We just need to keep hammering away at it. No one ever says, 'I really regret saving that building.' The physical city is our number one asset. The historic aspect of our physical city creates more value than anything else; if we use it well, we can have a viable economy at a time when other parts of the economy are languishing. With everything else in doubt, we have to rely on the physical city to be protected, restored and enhanced."

- DANIELLE DEL SOL, *editor*

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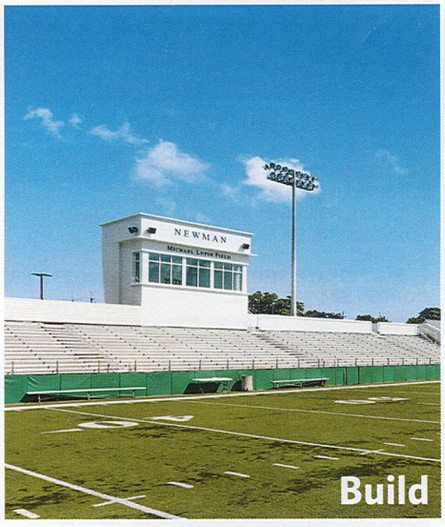
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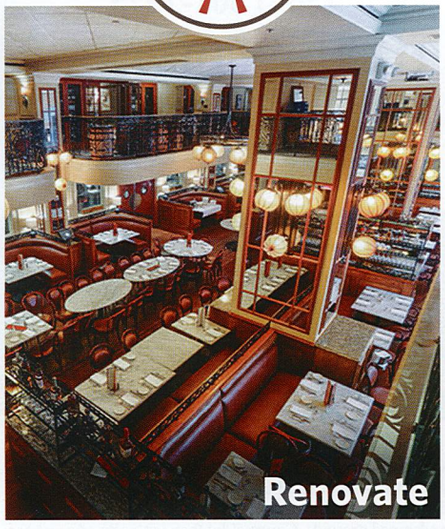
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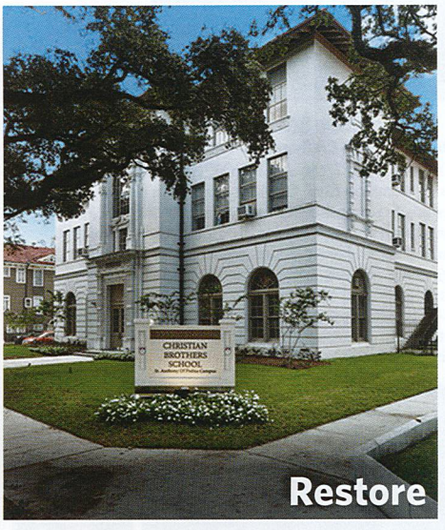
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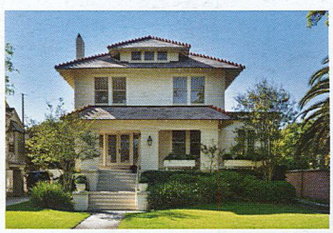
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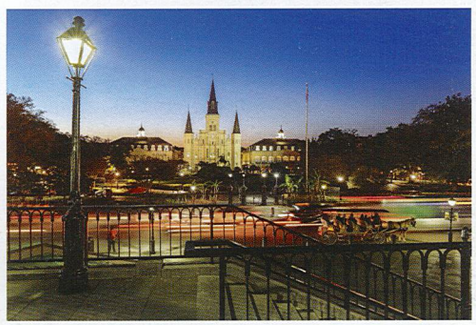
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