

LANDMARKS' PRÉSERVATION



THE JOURNAL OF THE LOUISIANA LANDMARKS SOCIETY

Join Us For Our Annual Fête du Jardin

November 3, 2019



New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra plays dance music from the 1890s—1930s

Excitement is building over our most ambitious and lively fall Fête ever! It promises to be the breakout event for the fall cultural season.

This year's theme is Les Rues de la Nouvelle Orleans and the Fête committee has been inspired by the city's colorful street names. Patrons are invited to spend the afternoon immersed in the MYSTERY, PLEASURE, HOPE, DESIRE, HARMONY and HUMANITY of our beloved New Orleans (the TREASURE of the South!) and delight in MUSIC of a time gone by.

Mark you calendar for **November 3rd** (A bye week for the Saints), **from 4 - 7 p.m.** when the pathways of the Pitot House will be transformed into a stage for some of the city's top street performers, offering poetry, music and performance arts plus great food, plentiful libations and the timeless sounds of The New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra. For more information or to purchase tickets go to www.louisianalandmarks.org.

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Hilary Somerville Irvin,
Editor

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Special Thanks To

Artisan Millshop

Bayou Beer Garden

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Cavan

JCB Creations

Katie's Restaurant

Martin's Wine Cellar

Mother's Next Door

Old New Orleans Rum

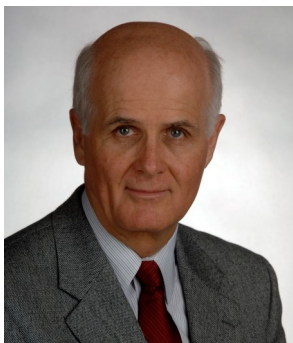
Peche

Shake Sugary

Ralph's on the Park

Twirl Photography

Zasu



A Message from the President

A MEMORY VAULT IDYLL

By Michael Duplantier

Verbena Bakery on Verbena Street in Old Gentilly made the best doughnuts in the world. The bakery was little more than an oil-stained vat in the rear shed of a post-WWI cottage, tended to by an employee flipping the glazed doughnuts and squeezing red ooze into the jelly doughnuts. Fans of the bakery drove great distances on hot summer nights to line up for this sugary delight. While almost perfect when they came out of the oven, they were absolutely perfect cold the next morning. Almost fifty years later I can still smell them, and my mouth waters at the thought. Beignets have always been a treat, but "Verbenas," as we called them, were heavenly. Verbena Bakery ended its reign as doughnut king in the 1970s, but the afterlife is no doubt stocked full of Verbena doughnuts.

We all have fond recollections of treasured places from our past, now gone, but alive in our thoughts. These classic places help define and frame our lifelong sense of place. "Ain't dere no more" may be literally true, but the afterglow of these places remains and

continues to offer pleasure, at least in the storytelling and in rich memories.

Special places like this stand apart from the undistinguished and more mundane places. They make significant contributions to our lives at a visceral level and often serve as a touchstone, a cultural unifier in a world generally characterized by complex and irreconcilable differences. When the day comes when that place is no longer there, or it loses its specialness, the loss is palpable and can evoke real sadness.

New Orleanians, especially, are nostalgic. Our collective sense of place can be said to be more developed, perhaps because as a community New Orleans had an uncertain founding and has long and often been challenged and threatened. We certainly know *loss*, a fact that sharpens our understanding of life and encourages our unusual indulgence in the simple pleasures of life.

That many of these favored retailers, institutions and other significant contributors to our daily lives manage to

endure is a key ingredient to maintaining personal satisfaction and a broader civic peace.

Thus, recognizing and cherishing these important elements of our community identity, and seeking to preserve the broadly viewed and interpreted social, physical and cultural fabric of our community is of inestimable importance. Regular patronage of these places is a *sine qua non*, as a fond memory of delicious doughnuts is a wholly inadequate substitute for the real thing.



Michael Duplantier is serving his second year as president of Louisiana Landmarks Society. He is a native New Orleanian and a retired lawyer.


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Master Craftsman Profile: Dwayne Broussard



The historic pieux fence at the Pitot House was recently repaired by master woodworker Dwayne Broussard, who often finds old growth Sinker Cypress in the swamp for his building projects. Broussard is one of the few craftsman in Southern Louisiana continuing the tradition of building split wood fences. His work has been displayed at the New Orleans Museum of Arts and he has been a Jazz and Heritage Festival artist for 20 years.

“ My dad is originally from Kaplan and has been a lifelong resident of Patterson and we've lived in Morgan City back and forth. My mom was born on a houseboat on the bayou and she's from Morgan City. I have two older brothers and two older sisters. [We're] Cajuns, pure Cajuns...I have an uncle traced the family tree and we came from Canada around 1750, by the Broussard side of the family...My mamma's uncle was my great uncle Slim. Back in the olden days he built wooden boats. That is stuff I watched and related to.

Not to brag, but I have an eye for beauty. I love to do things creative and original. If I go to a craft show and see something, I appreciate what I see, but I won't go back and try to build it. I make things original. I've always had the knack for it. My whole crew is kin to me. I'm a hard worker; I come from a hard-working family. These guys are of the same breed.

They are tough to the bone. I could call them on a Sunday afternoon and they will be at that shop pronto. They are dedicated to getting what I need done; no matter if they think it's [planned] wrong, or have never done it, they will do what I ask them. I look at the man that is my lowest-paid man, and he is just as important as the top-paid man. Everyone is just as important. In fact, they are more important than me, because I make decisions, but when it comes down to it, they are out on the job right now making money.

If I become a multimillionaire I'll still be doing what I do. I'm too simple of a person, and I love what I do. I don't think I could survive without a piece of wood. It's something that makes me happy... My motto I've always had: I can do anything. I'm not scared. If it is involving wood and you can explain it to me or show me a picture, I can build it. ”

Dwayne Broussard was interviewed as part of the New Orleans Building Arts Project. Laura Westbrook edited More than Just A Trade: Master Craftsmen of the Building Arts in 2004 for publication online on www.louisianafolklife.org.

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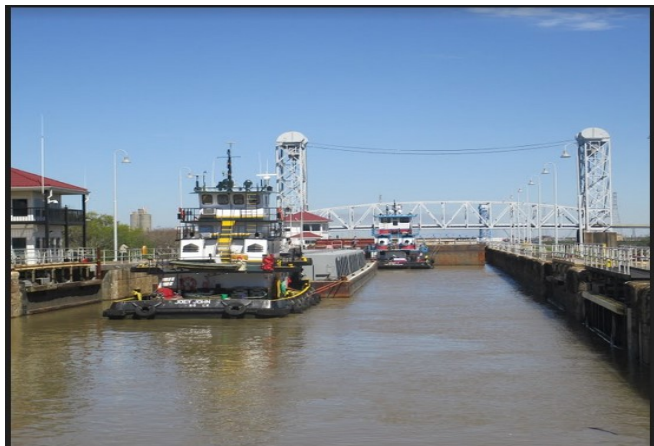
The pieux fence renovation was funded through a grant from the New Orleans Town Gardeners.

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Entire City Shares Risks of Corps' Industrial Canal Lock Relocation and Expansion

By Sandra L. Stokes

Chairman, Louisiana Landmarks Society Advocacy Committee



As the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Inner Harbor Navigational Canal (IHNC) Lock Replacement project rears its head again, Louisiana Landmarks Society continues to advocate for the safety of the city, opposing the project as currently planned. The risks and problems it will bring to New Orleans far outweigh any benefits. Before embarking on an outdated scheme with significant consequences, we believe the Corps of Engineers should evaluate the project using current information – particularly the dramatic changes that have occurred since the 22 year old decision to build the lock was made.

The IHNC lock has been instrumental for maritime shipping as it connects the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. The proposed new location with a wider lock could facilitate faster passage for shipping and comes with an optimistic price tag of \$951,000,000. Of profound concern, the new lock would be built twelve blocks deeper into the city – bringing with it the Mississippi River and its higher level of water. Dredging for the new lock along with the removal of the current lock, 225,000 tons of hardened concrete and comparable in size to the Chrysler Building, create tremendous risks that range from catastrophic levee failure to environmental safety concerns when known toxic soils are dredged up and shipped to a landfill.

Continued on page 6

Life on the Bayou Heritage Fair at the Pitot House



For five hours on Saturday, Sept. 14, children put aside their smartphones and video games to experience in real time what life might have been like before the advent of modern technology.

"Life on the Bayou" Heritage Fair assembled a multicultural mix of artisans, craftsmen and entertainers to recreate customs and practices of settlers living along Bayou St. John at the time of the Pitot family, 1810-1819.

The third annual cultural event brought together a melange of dancers attired in period costumes, demonstrating social dancing from the Regency/Federal era, intermingling with Shanty Krewe sailors, and Djembe drummers who shared Congo Square's African and Caribbean-influenced rhythms

Continued on Page 7

New Orleans' most endangered sites UPDATE

TO BE OR NOT TO BE *New Hope For the Touro Shakespeare*

By Michael Duplantier

Named not for the Elizabethan bard but for philanthropist Judah Touro and New Orleans mayor Joseph Shakespeare, this c.1932 former almshouse in Algiers has nonetheless had more than its share of drama. From a grand jury investigation into the fees paid to its architect; to its funding by Mayor Shakespeare from an 1854 gift from Judah Touro and the proceeds of a tax on illegal gambling; to a charge that succeeding mayor Semmes Walmsley sought to divert construction funds to his political cronies among the Old Regulars, the almshouse and later nursing home managed to get built and endured until 2005, when Katrina did what all other threats could not do.



reclaiming the home and its 7.7 acre site, and the building was

named to Louisiana Landmarks New Orleans' Nine Most Endangered Sites. In 2017 plans for stabilizing and securing the building with FEMA funds were announced, but little observable progress was made, and hopes dimmed again.

The city is now seeking a more compatible re-zoning of the site to a multi-family residential district, a designation that allows for affordable, senior or permanent supportive housing. More importantly, the re-zoning should clear the way for rehabilitation of the almost 90 year old Touro-Shakespeare Home, though firm plans for such redevelopment have not been announced.

With all residents of the home relocated by the City after the storm, the dignified Neo-Classical Revival building was allowed to fall into disrepair and neglect. In 2010, the City Master Plan future land use map identified the site as "Parkland and Open Space", an ominous designation affirmed in the zoning ordinance adopted in 2015. That year the neglect was so advanced that nature was

Shakespeare (the poet, not the mayor) warned that: "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there where most it promises". Given the nearly century-long drama and Shakespeare's cautious advice, fingers are crossed for a promising future for the home that so long represented an embodiment of Touro's initial legacy given to serve the needs of the "aged and indigent" in New Orleans.

Inside the Pitot House *Jenny Dyer*



Pitot House Coordinator, Jenny Dyer, was invited to speak at this year's Louisiana Association of Museums 2019 Conference in Natchitoches, Louisiana. The conference focusing on "Disaster Recovery: Museums Working Together," was well-attended by museum professionals across the state.

Jenny joined colleagues, Lily Elkins of the Beauregard-Keyes House and Reneé Donnell, formerly of Whitney Plantation, to discuss interpretation of historic house museums. As a 2017 LAM Emerging Museums Professional Award winner, Jenny was delighted to share her knowledge and experience in the panel topic, *Historical Figures, Modern Visitors: Interpreting People of the Past & Their Views to Contemporary Audiences at Historic House Museums*. She presented the Pitot House Museum as a case study in interpreting historic house museums using traditional practices of interpretation used by the National Park Service combined with new methods that address challenging topics essential to engaging modern audiences.

Jenny is currently coordinating and managing the daily operations of the Pitot House Museum as well as booking weddings and events. She also provides administrative support for the Louisiana Landmarks Society's preservation efforts.

Industrial Canal continued from Page 4

The timeline for construction is projected at minimally 13 years – promising to snarl traffic to and from St. Bernard Parish and the Lower Ninth Ward not only due to the complicated replacement of the National Register eligible lock and St. Claude bascule Bridge, but long after construction ends. Because the Mississippi River would infiltrate to approximately Galvez Street, it is estimated that with a 7-15 feet higher river level at Claiborne Avenue, the drawbridge will need to be raised more often, estimated from the present rate of 15% of boat traffic to up to 70% – and be “up” approximately 40% longer for navigation of the longer tows.

Many factors that should affect the decision for the lock have drastically changed, including the closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), the shift from accommodating deep water draft ships to now only shallow draft, the withdrawal of the Port of New Orleans as the local sponsor, new pipeline construction, and changes in barge traffic including the commodities shipped (i.e. in 1989, coal and petroleum products comprised 71.7% of the traffic through the lock but are not the vibrant commodities they once were). Yet the Corps has performed no studies that include this new information to determine basic premises, such as the current validity of the decades-old decision to site the project at this location, or if faster passage and/or if the savings for the shipping industry is truly worth the costs, risks, and myriad of problems that will undoubtedly ensue. Any supposed benefits accrue to the companies using the shipping lanes and certainly not New Orleans businesses or residents.

A few excerpts from Louisiana Landmarks Society’s letter submitted to the Corps of Engineers for the federal Section 106 process state: “We seem to be moving forward with a plan that was written twenty-two years ago but never enacted, adding the assumption that all deciding factors have remained frozen in time since then. In any rational world this would, of course, be totally unacceptable – but in New Orleans it even has more significance. Enormous changes have occurred: the urban landscape has expanded, the MRGO has been closed, significant structural changes have been made, the channel is no longer to be deep-draft, the Port Authority of New Orleans is no longer participating, etc. But most of all, Hurricane Katrina – with her vast array of challenges – has hopefully changed every way of thinking.”

“Of deep concern is the lack of consideration for the next hurricane that requires evacuation of the city and waterways. The much needed reevaluation of alternatives provides the opportunity for serious review of all possibilities and assessment of the optimal site for the lock – not just for maritime commerce, but the City of New Orleans and its residents. The current location of the

lock jeopardizes safety of citizens as difficult choices are required to either open bridges for maritime vessels maneuvering to safety, or allow thousands of vehicles to evacuate the hurricane’s path. This is an immense problem with catastrophic consequences – yet the proposed project does not seem to include it in the consideration. ...The number of people who died due to difficulties evacuating during Hurricane Katrina is just one reason this must be part of the equation before heading down the 22 year old pre-Katrina path.”

“An up-to-date economic analysis that looks at the cost/benefit of each of the alternatives using current information must be conducted. It should include the economic costs to all areas of the city and its immediate surrounding area (including St. Bernard Parish), resources, neighborhoods, businesses and residents (both homeowners and renters), time, traffic (including public transportation), added risks, etc. – compared with the monetized gains realized by vessels clearing the lock in less time – taking into account the new shallow draft restriction.”

“It is imperative that the Corps conduct a comprehensive traffic study, a new Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and a study of the impacts to the urban area incorporating current data.”

“... this is 22 year old material that assumes a static world and needs. A new, open and transparent process of “broad-based community participation” needs to be conducted, with new participants who represent the current population, to include consideration of the changing environment and needs.”

“... we can’t ignore that the move to pick up a 22 year old MOA (Memorandum of Understanding) and plod forward is simply not a reasonable approach. The USACE must take a step back and study all alternatives using current data and information. It would be negligent to do anything less.”

You can help: Sign the petition at www.stopthelock.com. To learn more, watch the twelve-minute video “Locked” at www.stopthelock.com. Contact your Congressmen at the following addresses:

U.S. Representative Cedric Richmond
<https://richmond.house.gov>
(202) 225-6636 – D.C. Office

U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy
<https://www.cassidy.senate.gov/contact>
(202) 224-5824 – D.C. Office

U.S. Senator John Kennedy
(202) 224-4623 – D.C. Office
<https://www.kennedy.senate.gov/public/>

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Heritage Fair continued from Page 4



Photo courtesy of Twirl Photography

“Mama” Jamilah Peters Muhammad led dance circles joined by Louisiana Vintage Dancers from Baton Rouge, sea sailors and soldiers from Plauché’s Battalion.

New Orleans’ cultural diversity and history as a melting pot in a port city was reflected in the Heritage Fair. When Barkerding saw Mama’s drum circle, her eyes welled up with tears. “That is what New Orleans is all about.”

“It was such an honor to represent African ancestors that would sell their crafts during this period of time,” said Anika Ofori who displayed handmade Shea butter and black soaps. “I enjoyed all the vendors, participants and the Pitot House staff was amazing, too.”



Courtesy of Mary Rickard

Shanty Krewe singer Keith Fawcett remarked: “If ever you cease to have a Heritage Fair, it would leave a hole in a lot of people’s hearts...It is a gem in size and complexity with the diversity of artisans, craftsmen, demonstrators that brings profound joy.”



Upcoming Event **Historic Spanish Fort** **How Old is it and Can it Survive?** **A Panel Presentation**

Thursday, November 14, 6:30 pm
Lake Vista Community Center
6500 Spanish Fort Boulevard

Louisiana Landmarks Society is excited to join Lake Vista Property Owners Association in cosponsoring LVPOA’s 2nd Annual ArchiTalk. Named by Louisiana Landmarks Society in 2018 to its annual list of *New Orleans’ Nine Most Endangered Sites*, Spanish Fort will be the topic of a timely discussion centered around its history as a fortification, entertainment venue, neighborhood and its threatened future. Participants will include City Park Executive Director Robert W. Becker, archivist Sally Sinor and historian Heather Veneziano, co-author, *Gateway to New Orleans, Bayou St. John*.

James Donald "Don" Didier Memorial



Don Didier in the garden of his Irish Channel home, the circa 1835 Mary Ann Grigson house at 436 Seventh Street.

The Louisiana Landmarks Society lost a special friend on August 9, 2019. James Donald "Don" Didier passed away on False River near New Roads, La., his hometown where he returned in retirement from New Orleans several years ago. A noted antiquarian and dealer in Louisiana furniture and art, Don and his wife Judith Lemoine Didier lived in the Pitot House in the early 1970s as resident curators, just after its architectural restoration was completed. Upon moving into the house, the Didiers brought in pieces from their collection to augment items already donated to or acquired by the Society. At the same time, they added period decorative touches such as draperies, china and linens. The *punkah*, which many remember fondly in the downstairs dining room, dated from the Didier years. Don and his business partner David Wojciechowski operated Didier Inc. in the French Quarter, a gallery specializing in fine art, antiques, and decorative objects of Americana. His former home at 436 Seventh Street is one of uptown New Orleans’s oldest properties. Much of the credit for the attention given to the Pitot House’s fine interior spaces is due to the aesthetic vision of Don and Judith Didier.



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As always, if any of our members have an item of interest or an idea for something they would like to see in *Préservation*, please let us know!

Leave a message at the Pitot House at 504.482.0312, email info@louisianalandmarks.org, or email our editor Hilary Somerville Irvin at hilaryirvin@gmail.com.

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