

LANDMARKS' PRÉSERVATION



THE JOURNAL OF THE LOUISIANA LANDMARKS SOCIETY

History on the Move! Pitot House 50th Anniversary Gala



On July 21, 1964, following months of negotiating and scrambling by Louisiana Landmarks Society, the Pitot House was moved from a nearby site to its current location in order to save it from demolition. To honor the anniversary of this historic move, Louisiana Landmarks Society is hosting a celebratory gala on Thursday, November 6. This exciting evening will feature a live auction, music by Deacon John and the Ivories, and food and beverages from favorite local restaurants including Café Degas, Pearl Wine Co., Ralph's on the Park, Nonna Mia, and Lil Dizzy's.

Prior to the main event, there will be a special Patron Party. Hosted at 800 Moss Street, now the home of architect, William

H. Sonner, the Patron Party provides an opportunity to visit the replica of the Pitot House. Built in 1939, the home was lived in by Nina Pollatsek, a daughter of Hungarian-born musician and music critic Adolph Pollatsek. 800 Moss has just undergone a complete restoration and this will be a unique opportunity to tour a private property with a special connection to the Pitot House.

All Louisiana Landmarks Society members will be receiving an invitation in the mail. In the meantime, to learn more, purchase tickets, become a sponsor, or to donate items for the live auction, visit the LLS website and click on "Events."

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Hilary Somerville Irvin,
Editor

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Surprise Move by HDLC Puts Off Marine Hospital Landmark Study

By Sandra Stokes and Walter Gallas

The effort to have the former Marine Hospital/New Orleans Adolescent Hospital campus site studied for local landmarking stretches back more than a year. In June 2013, Louisiana Landmarks Society's Executive Director, Walter Gallas, wrote to the Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) requesting that the site at 210 State Street be studied. At the time, the property was still owned by the State of

Louisiana, and so the HDLC could not act on this request. Once it was confirmed that the property had been sold to Louisiana Children's Medical Center (LCMC) earlier this year, Landmarks' request was placed on the HDLC's July 2014 agenda. LCMC subsequently asked that the matter be deferred-which it was until the Commission's September meeting.

Continued on page 5...

SAVE THESE DATES!

Vino on the Bayou
Friday, October 17
5:30-7:00 PM

Le Marché des Fêtes
Saturday, December 6
10:00 AM—4:00 PM

Visit
LouisianaLandmarks.org
to learn more

A Message from the President



Dear LLS Friends and Supporters,

I sometimes wonder why I am doing what I am doing for LLS. There are lots of other things that I would rather be doing, and things can be stressful at times.

Then, I go to one of our Advocacy Committee meetings. The Advocacy Committee activity is our *raison d'être*. I am constantly amazed at the sophistication that I see sitting around that table. Walter Gallas and Sandra Stokes have done an amazing job of bringing together such a great group of preservation professionals. This Committee is the core of who we are

and what we are all about. It is the reason that we were created.

It is likewise amazing to me to watch our Pitot House Committee at work. Recently, the HVAC went out on the first floor. We had a grant in hand to fund the work that needed to be done, but we were still in the process of getting estimates to replace it when it gave up the ghost. I watched our three architects, Chuck Berg, Pitot House Architect and Committee Chair, Stephen Chauvin, an architect and builder, and Mike Ballard, an architect who is a member of the Pitot House Committee, examine the bids that we had received and discuss technical matters that I did not understand. Even though the bid chosen was for a higher amount of money, they calculated that the energy savings from buying the more expensive unit would more than compensate LLS for the extra expenditure.

I also watched our First Vice President, Stephen Chauvin use his professional architectural talents to identify the

repairs needed to the Pitot House, bid out the job, supervise the repairs, and inspect that they were done correctly. All of this while running his own very busy architectural practice.

The winter was very hard on our parterre garden. Chuck Berg contracted with Anna Timmerman, a local landscape expert to revive it. We are now in the planning stages of making a kitchen/medicinal garden in the rear of the house.

Then, I consider this spring's Lecture Series that generated a handsome increase in membership, and also tied in so beautifully with our advocacy objectives, and at the same time watch our tiny staff--Walter, Meagan, and Brook-- plan two fund-raisers for this Fall, and conduct the daily business of the Society as well.

Seeing all of the hard work that all of these wonderful people are doing for our Society makes it all worthwhile.

Sincerely,

Casey

Upcoming Lectures

The People and Places of the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement
Dr. Raphael Cassimere, Jr.
Thursday, October 16, 6:30—8:00PM
St. James AME Church
222 N. Roman Street

On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of this watershed enactment, Louisiana Landmarks Society is proud to host a talk by Dr. Raphael Cassimere, Jr., sixth generation New Orleansian and a major figure in New Orleans' anti-segregation and voting rights battles. Dr. Cassimere will share his stories about the people and places associated with the movement. The event will take place at St. James AME Church, which since its founding in 1844 was involved with racial equality and in the mid-20th century became an important gathering place for the local civil rights community.

Constructed circa 1848, the existing neo-Gothic building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a New Orleans Historic Landmark.

Currently University of New Orleans (UNO) Professor Emeritus of American Constitutional History and African American History, Dr. Cassimere received the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in History from Lehigh University and was a member of the UNO History department from 1971 to 2007, during which period he was the school's first full-time black instructor. He was president of the New Orleans NAACP Youth Council (1960-1966) and in 1982 received the A.P. Tureaud Black Citizenship Medal, the highest award conferred by the NAACP in Louisiana. His advocacy for voting rights helped lead to the landmark 1991 Supreme Court decision *Chisom v. Roemer*, which extended voting rights to judicial elections. In 2013 he received the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana's 37th Annual Ben Smith Award.

This event is free and open to the public. Parking is available in the lot

at the corner of N. Derbigny and Iberville. Please enter the church auditorium from the N. Derbigny entrance. A reception will follow.

Parterre Garden Lecture and Tour
Anna Timmerman
Saturday, November 22, 10:00—11:30 AM
Pitot House

The parterre garden fronting the historic Pitot House has endured many changes, but the essential design can be traced back over 150 years. Gardener Anna Timmerman will provide examples from the fifteenth century onwards of French parterre gardens, as well as formal and contemporary examples here in New Orleans and abroad. A short garden tour and discussion of plans for future additions to the gardens and restoration of the Pitot House parterre will take place following a slide presentation.

The lecture is free for LLS members and \$10 for non-members. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

From the Executive Director

Walter W. Gallas AICP

Those of us who have been at this preservation business for a long time know that you can expect to see many more disappointments than successes as you do your work. We may feel that we have the right arguments and the right principles, and yet our strategies fail to bring about the outcome that we had sought.

This reflection is triggered by the recent developments with the Marine Hospital/NOAH site, detailed in this newsletter. Louisiana Landmarks Society, following the procedure laid out by the Historic District Landmarks Commission, sent a letter to staff requesting that the site be studied for possible local landmarking. The local landmarking authority of the HDLC has been a part of the Commission's rules since its beginnings--hence, the agency's cumbersome title. Louisiana Landmark's request was no different from those made countless times in the past by individuals or organizations.

As you read in our story, the nomination for study didn't go as we had expected. Instead it was put off for another six months.

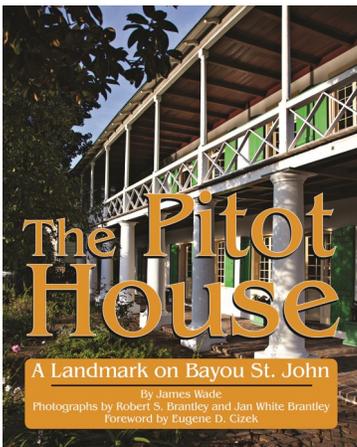
What happened? Clearly, we hadn't anticipated the Commission accepting the argument from the owners of the site that a landmarking study would interfere with their ability to conduct their own master planning. We didn't think the two tasks were incompatible, but the commission did.

About a week later, the City Council took up an appeal from a property owner who had been denied the demolition of a residence on Joliet Street by the Neighborhood Conservation District Committee, which reviews demolition requests in historic neighborhoods outside of the local districts regulated by the Historic District Landmarks Commission. The City Council upheld the denial, but it came after a debate between some of the council members about the city's authority to tell property owners what they can and can't do with their properties.

To me, it is very clear. Preservation protections are within accepted and proven law. As I said to a reporter at *The New Orleans Advocate*, "Government has the right to tell people what to do with their property. What do you call zoning?"

The message about preservation's important--and legal--role in protecting our neighborhoods and their historic resources isn't getting through to key decision makers and the broader public. We need to pay attention to these developments and think hard about what we need to do to change this situation.

Fifty years after Louisiana Landmarks Society saved the Pitot House from demolition, there is clearly still much work to be done.



Arriving Soon!

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the acquisition and relocation of the Pitot House by Louisiana Landmarks Society, we are proud to announce the forthcoming publication of *The Pitot House: A Landmark on Bayou St. John*. Written by James Wade, with photography by Robert S. Brantley and Jan White Brantley, as well as a foreword by Eugene D. Cizek, this new book captures the history and beauty of the Pitot House.

To reserve your copy and take advantage of member pricing contact us at:

504-482-0312 or
info@louisianalandmarks.org

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From the Archives

Excerpted from *Préservation*, Fall 1964

*From the Editor: Harnett Kane (1910-1994), Louisiana Landmarks Society founding member and president, as well as renowned author, wrote the following for the Fall 1964 issue of *Préservation*. We think Kane's words fifty years later during the 2014 golden anniversary celebration of the felicitous, fruitful marriage between the LLS and the Pitot House remain true to the tenets, goals and activities of LLS. Kudos to all volunteers and staff who have worked with such passion and diligence over the past five decades to pursue the LLS mission. Thank you!*



Gala Anniversary Year President's Report

The Louisiana Landmarks Society this fall opens a gala year, its 15th anniversary year. When a small group of us, living in various parts of New Orleans and nearby sections, began to feel their way toward formation of such an organization—without a name for some months—few visualized the phenomenal growth and wide public acceptance that would develop.

Today the Landmarks Society has an all-time high of close to 1000 members, in this state, in other states and countries. In case after case we have succeeded in preventing the destruction of important examples of our historical heritage. Again, we have

worked with individual owners and with groups to evolve practical plans which have maintained the integrity of vital areas.

Through the years we have learned through experience. At times we failed; again, especially of late we have achieved. We are not, we think, rigid or doctrinaire in belief or method. We do NOT think that anything old, per se, valuable. By the same token we do not believe that all things described as “progress” merit that word.

It is good to note the increasing number of times that individuals or officials of private groups and public ones have called in Landmarks for advice and assistance. In some in-

stances public officials have appealed to us for aid. A high point was reached recently in the case of a great residence when a sheriff telephoned. “I didn’t know just where to turn, but I’d heard what you people do.” Thanking him, Landmarks officials went to work the same day, and the structure remains.

Ours is a working organization, without drones, without prima donnas. Every day our committees are occupied in voluntary, intensive activity. One of our opponents in a recent incident admitted ruefully: “One reason why we lost, I guess, was that your side went at it harder than we did. But where do you people get the time, and energy, for it?”

The answer may be, as some of us tried to explain, that we believe in what we do. In the words of a young professional man, a new Landmarker, after attending the tenth conference on a tangled subject: “I wouldn’t go through all this even for the company that pays me. Maybe I’m crazy to do it.” Then he smiled. “But maybe it’s a good way to be crazy.”

With those sentiments, most of our Landmarkers would agree. For this 15th anniversary year we intend to continue much as we have in the past, staying humble and hopeful, trying to avoid errors—and working harder than ever. The line for additional recruits forms at the side.

Le Marché des Fêtes Saturday, December 6, 10am - 4pm

Save the Date! Louisiana Landmarks Society’s 5th Annual *Le Marché des Fêtes* will take place December 6 at the Pitot House. This unique holiday boutique is a great chance to shop for the holidays while supporting the Pitot House and gardens. Up to 30 juried vendors of hand-crafted wares will be on site selling and demonstrating their crafts along with live music, performances, and delicious treats. Authors from Pelican Publishing will attend and sign their works. And Papa Noel will preside over all the festivities.

Le Marché des Fêtes is also a chance to learn about Creole holiday traditions— all while supporting the endeavors of LLS. The entrance fee is \$5, but is waived for Louisiana Landmarks Society members. Proceeds from this celebration will help Landmarks promote and preserve the c.1799 Pitot House and its gardens. Find out more by visiting the LLS website and click on “Events.”



Surprise Move by HDLC (continued)...

The Site

This 17.83 acre site bounded by Leake Avenue, Henry Clay Avenue, Tchoupitoulas, and State Streets is steeped in history. The property was formerly owned by many of the city's notables, including Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, founder of New Orleans; Etienne de Boré, New Orleans' first appointed mayor after the Louisiana Purchase; Gustave Marigny, and later Bernard Marigny. At one time, the property was part of the Boré Plantation and later, the Burthe Plantation. Over time, crops grown on the plantation included vegetables, pecans, tobacco, indigo, and sugar. The first economically successful production of sugar is attributed to this plantation in 1795. At various times in its history the property contained a railroad, sawmill, cattle, and sheep, as well as a successful brickyard which was disrupted by the Civil War. The current site, which includes at least two antebellum structures, was acquired in 1883 by the United States Marine Hospital, and the site has been serving as a medical facility in some fashion ever since.

Located adjacent to the Mississippi River, replete with a lush landscape, stately oaks and over 25 structures, the site, to say the very least, is a prime piece of real estate. But clearly

it is also a major historical resource. The July HDLC staff report, prepared for the commission's consideration of the request for landmark study, notes that the site "retains a bucolic, serene campus character anachronistic to the densely developed residential districts that surround it."

Landmarks is Approached by LCMC

At the request of LCMC, representatives from Landmarks met with LCMC President and CEO Mary Perrin and attorney Justin Schmidt. In the meeting, LCMC proposed to execute an exclusive agreement giving Louisiana Landmarks a temporary preservation servitude, providing the same protections for the property that would be afforded during the HDLC landmarks study period, in exchange for Louisiana Landmarks withdrawing the request to study the site for landmarking. The agreement, LCMC said, would include the assurance that no demolitions would occur during the life of the agreement. This temporary servitude could terminate within 45 days of either party providing written notice to the other.

As explained by Perrin and Schmidt, while LCMC had leased the property for years, the medical center only acquired the campus in February, 2014. LCMC wanted time to access the prop-

erty and develop a master plan - "unburdened", as it were, from the jurisdiction of the HDLC. At the conclusion of the master planning for the campus, LCMC would then hope to join Louisiana Landmarks at the HDLC to present a consensus on what structures merited landmarking and which did not. They further explained that the LCMC board did not understand the full nature of a landmark study and did not want to start their ownership with a contentious battle with Louisiana Landmarks and the community.

It was at this meeting that Louisiana Landmarks first asked LCMC to include a preservation architect on their design and planning team - someone who, at a minimum, could look at the existing historic buildings with an eye for adaptive reuse. Louisiana Landmarks also asked for a tour of the campus, and on August 14th members of the Advocacy Committee visited the site.

Landmarks' Response

Following the discussion with LCMC and the tour of the site, the Advocacy Committee voted to reject the LCMC offer and proceed with the request for the landmark study. The committee agreed that an open and transparent process was important - and believed the expertise provided by the qualified professionals at the HDLC was crucial. The study would not hinder the hospital's master planning process, as it could advance on a separate, parallel track, saving time in the process.

In a letter dated September 5th, Landmarks informed LCMC of the decision to proceed with the public process. Landmarks stated their belief that a study of the historic resources would be beneficial to all partners - the city, the community, preservationists, and LCMC.

On September 9, Louisiana Landmarks learned from HDLC staff that LCMC would ask for yet another deferral of the matter at the September 11 commission meeting.



An Aerial View of the Marine Hospital/NOAH Site

Continued on page 6...

Surprise Move by HDLC (continued)...

At the HDLC meeting, Mr. Schmidt recounted the unsuccessful attempt of LCMC to strike a deal with Louisiana Landmarks. He stated that LCMC recognizes that the site contains elements that should be landmarked. He suggested that the HDLC's landmark study was somehow contrary to LCMC's master planning process, and would cause undue delay for the hospital. He asked for a 30-day deferral (October 9), at which time he would be able to provide a "very preliminary master plan" that would signal the specific buildings LCMC felt should be landmarked. In his presentation, Mr. Schmidt assured the Commission that LCMC would not apply for any permits for construction or demolition during the 30-day deferral period. The HDLC staff had no objection to the deferral, and Walter Gallas of Louisiana Landmarks Society concurred, adding that Louisiana Landmarks wanted the study done in a timely manner with no further delay after this newest one.

Unexpected Move by Commission

In an unexpected move, Commissioner Ed deMontluzin questioned whether 30 days would be sufficient time for LCMC. He suggested that a six-month delay might serve the hospital corporation better. There seemed to be a misunderstanding that the LCMC planning process and the HDLC study for landmarking conflicted. The opportunity was missed to explain to the Commission that the two are separate and distinct. Subsequently, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the six-month postponement.

Unfortunate Delay

Landmarks Landmarks Society is very disappointed in this development. A study by the HDLC is not only an essential tool for assessing the resources of the past, but can also be an important guide to what happens to those resources--including the campus-like setting--in the future.

Had the Commission not intervened unexpectedly, the request for study would have been considered on Octo-

ber 9th. And were the study approved in October, it could have proceeded on a parallel track to any hospital planning. Ultimately, the six-month deferral for the study puts off the hard discussions about the future of the site and could cause further delays for LCMC.

Conclusion

The Marine Hospital/NOAH site has a complicated architectural, social, industrial, and medical history, reaching back to the colonial plantation era and forward to the days of progressive medical practices. Structures date to the 1830's, live oaks are hundreds of years old, and the site bears the Depression-era imprint of landscape architect Albert Davis Taylor. In more contemporary times, the site was the location of the laboratory of Dr. Mary Sherman, whose mysterious death fifty years ago this year is being remembered through re-issues of the book *Dr. Mary's Monkey*.

The HDLC staff sums it up in its nomination report:

A handful of these sites remain intact but none include as rich an assemblage of architecturally and socially significant structures as the former NOAH campus. The buildings on the site have remained virtually unchanged since the construction of the 1930's hospital complex. To walk on the campus is to step back into a specific moment in time when the City's symbiotic relationship to the Mississippi River, now fettered by floodwalls and parking, still remained. The significance of the site lies not only in the structures themselves, but the grounds as well which includes many mature live oak trees. The staff recommends that the entire site including all structures and brick perimeter wall be nominated for study as a local landmark.

The Louisiana Landmarks Society strongly concurs with the staff of the HDLC in the opinion that the entire Marine Hospital/NOAH site should be studied for landmarking.

19th Century Mourning Customs Tours with Save our Cemeteries



Pitot House and Save Our Cemeteries are partnering to present a special tour on "19th Century Mourning and Interment Customs." The tour showcases both the historic Pitot House museum and St. Louis Cemetery No. 3. Tour groups will meet at the Pitot House on Bayou St. John at 1:30pm and walk to the historic St. Louis Cemetery No. 3 with a trained and licensed tour guide. After a visit to the cemetery highlighting burial customs and historic figures interred there, the group returns to the Pitot House to learn about the house and its history. The Pitot House will display 19th Century mourning attire and other period negro-artifacts and textiles from a private collection on loan.

Tours are 1:30pm - 3:30pm every Friday from October 3rd through November 21st.

Admission is \$30, with special pricing available for LLS members and large groups. LLS members may call the office at 504-482-0312 or email info@louisianalandmarks.org for more information.

Garden on the Move

LLS House Committee Chairman Charles A. Berg AIA, NCARB, MPS is working with gardener/horticulturist Anna Timmerman in upgrading and caring for the historic parterre garden at the front of the house. In addition, Antonia Viteri, of Grow Your Own, Kitchen & Apothecary Gardens, will join the team in creating and establishing a typical 19th-century medicinal/kitchen garden at the rear. Participants discuss specifics in the following paragraphs.

Anna Timmerman:

We are at the end of summer in the garden and have a wonderful abundance of blooms and butterflies. Right now is the peak bloom period for many of the milkweed, salvia, zinnia, and hibiscus varieties, as well as some late season blooms from our heirloom roses. The Archduke Charles rose that was lost has been replaced; and I am looking forward to enjoying the chameleon-like blooms of this rose, which are pale pink upon opening and then gradually darken to solid crimson. The Archduke Charles rose was developed prior to 1837 and was popular immediately when it was introduced to the New Orleans area. The Monarch, Fritillary, and Swallowtail butterflies have found the garden and seem to be calling it home, as I have found many caterpillars while I have been weeding the beds. I still have not seen any Sulfur butterflies, which I think may be a result of the hard winter.

In developing the front parterre garden, this past spring I added over two hundred and fifty plants to the flower beds, and began shuffling existing plants into a more cohesive and formal arrangement. After things cool off and are more favorable for planting, I will be adding a short border of six to eight inch tall boxwoods to all the beds. The eventual goal is to restore the formal border as a means to contain the soil during heavy rains as well as to add a unifying traditional element to the eight separate parterre beds. Currently the beds are varied in plant type, due to the light conditions



caused by our magnolia trees, which create a mix of full sun and partial shade areas. The boxwood will work to unify and "frame" the many flowers and herbs that we have growing already. The maidenhair fern is being regulated to the beds at the foot of the grapefruit trees, which are laden with fruit this year. The pomegranate tree is also full of fruit, which will be ripen soon.

Looking forward to the fall and winter seasons, we have exciting things in the works. I purchased over thirty types of native wildflower seeds, which are chilling as a part of the stratification process, which tricks them into sprouting. I will be starting them in trays when season is behind us, and will be planting them as well as more established native wildflowers in the Mignon Faget native plant garden on the borders of the parterre. Some that I am especially excited about are False Indigo (*Baptisia*) in both white and blue, many new cone-flower colors to add to our existing varieties, and Sky Blue Asters. Many of my selections bloom spring through fall, and are host plants for native butterflies or provide seed for the birds. I have just added two nice clumps of *Gaura*, in both the pink and white varieties.

Charles A. Berg:

A potager, or kitchen garden, to be made up of two approximately 6' x 15' raised beds, built of brick, and with a paved walkway in between, is proposed for the rear garden, where currently caterers do their set-up. A proposed new brick pad will be laid for their use, adjacent to the raised beds in the downriver corner. Additionally, there may be some more brick paved areas for seating and party tables, as suggested by Nora Wetzel, LSS's catering and event consultant.

The new beds will be traditional kitchen gardens, with herbs, vegetables and citrus trees. With Antonia Viteri's input, medicinal plants that would have been used in the early 19th century for treating illnesses will be grown. Ms. Viteri is a well-known expert on apothecary gardens. At the rear of the raised beds will be located large pots of existing plantings, which will serve to close the view of the schoolyard behind, and create a pleasing vista. We are excited about the ongoing educational potential of this project and are investigating funding prospects to enable the implementation, hopefully next spring.



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**WE WANT TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

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.

