

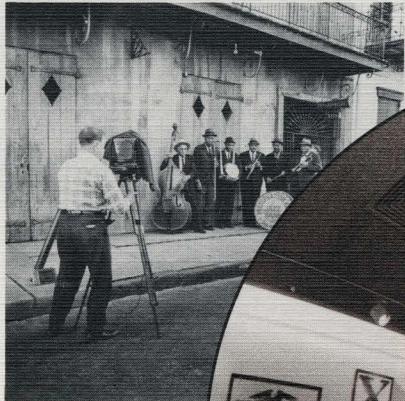


THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION NEWSLETTER

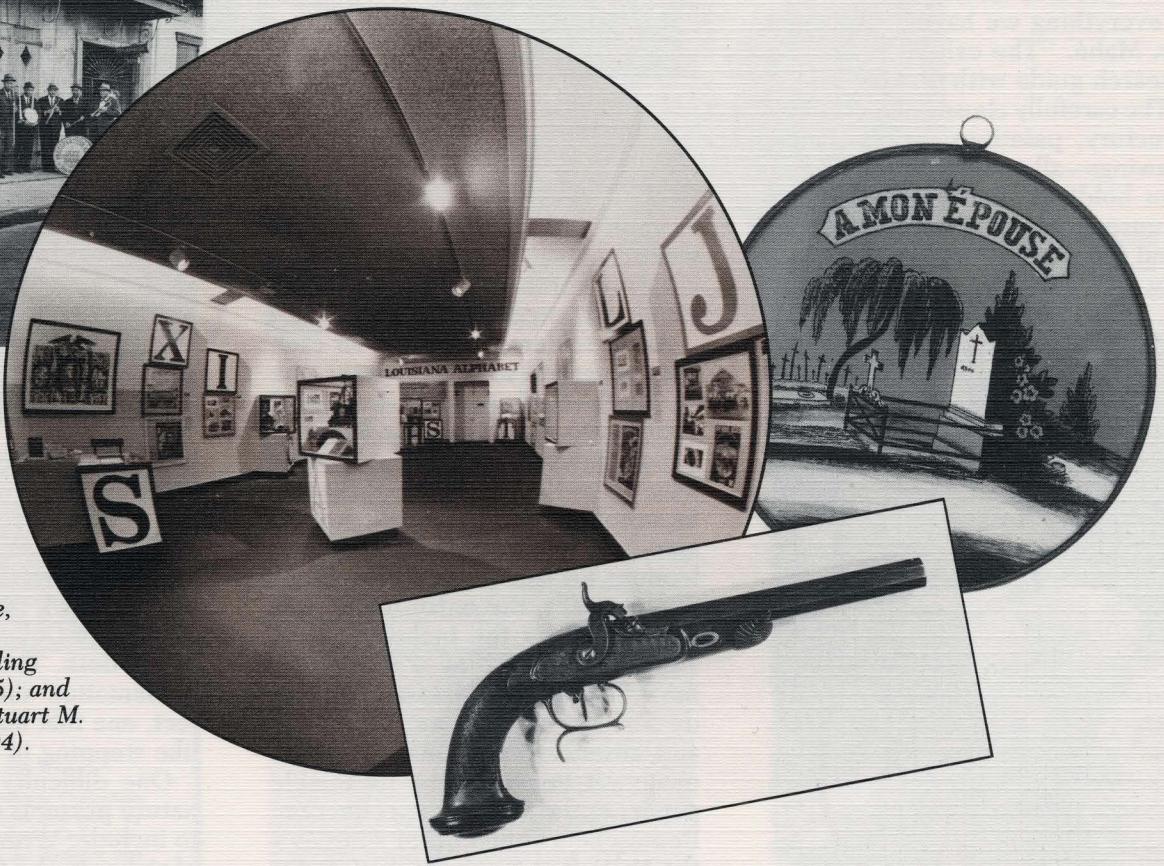
Volume II, Number 4

Fall 1984

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Center: The Louisiana Alphabet is currently on view in the Williams Gallery. Items from the exhibit include, clockwise, an immortelle (1948.8.5); a dueling pistol (1978.175.5); and a photoprint by Stuart M. Lynn (1979.326.94).



In the Gallery

Louisiana From A to Z

A, B, C.

Antiques, Basin Street, and cemeteries.

And so goes the Louisiana Alphabet, ending with a flourish: Z for Zulu.

"It's an easy, refreshing way to go through Louisiana history." Curator John A. Mahé II was talking about the Collection's current exhibition before it opened in the Williams Gallery in July. Just as refreshing is the pre-

sentation itself, modeled after a child's alphabet blocks.

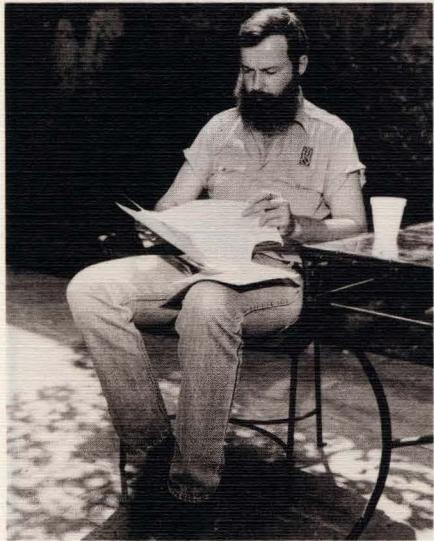
Serving as a point of departure for this exhibition are 27 pen and ink drawings by director emeritus Boyd Cruise. These illuminated letters originally appeared in the mid-1950s as illustrations for the *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* index.

When staff members began planning an ex-

hibit for this World's Fair year, they wanted to present a broad view of Louisiana life instead of focusing on a single subject. The suggestion of curator John H. Lawrence proved to be a good one: Mr. Cruise's Louisiana Alphabet would provide the necessary variety.

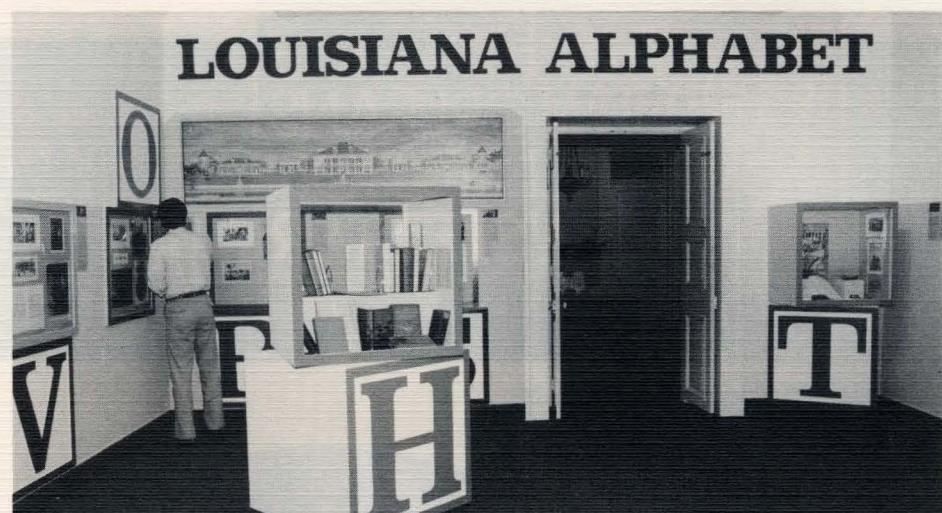
Besides giving visitors an overview of what is to be found in Louisiana, reinforcing their impressions gathered at the World's Fair, the exhibit also shows them items from every major collection at THNOC. "The idea is to introduce the visitor to everything we have," explained Mr. Mahé. "The exhibit is really a research guide with visuals."

The carefully chosen objects—city directory, paintings, prints, maps, drawings—all come from THNOC's own holdings. Each item suggests an unseen wealth of information beyond the walls of the Williams Gallery.



"Most visitors think we're a one-topic research center," Mr. Mahé continued. "This exhibit gives us a chance to talk about ourselves." It also used the expertise of more staff members than any previous endeavor.

Assembling information for the Collection's self-portrait got underway well over a year ago when Elsa Schneider, curator of education, and her staff of docents began researching the subject matter of Mr. Cruise's alphabet. Similar to a pebble thrown in water, each topic created its own pattern of concentric rings as one area easily spread into another related field. Gumbo, for



Left, Tom Staples examines a preparator's worksheet for the exhibit. Center, the Williams Gallery. Right, Alan Balicki paints the alphabet.

example, led to the French Market; writer Lafcadio Hearn, one-time employee of the *Item* and the *Times Democrat*, suggested newspapers.

As the folders established for each letter fattened over the winter, the curatorial staff searched for visual material to illustrate their findings. It was important to make selections from all available media. With this in mind, Susan Cole, curator of manuscripts, combed various collections for significant items. Thus, dueling oaks, the entry for D, was augmented by the inclusion of an 1832 letter detailing a Creole *affaire d'honneur*. Addressed to Henri de Ste. Gême, resident of France and absentee Louisiana plantation owner, it is one of the invaluable papers in the Ste. Gême collection. Researchers culled other sources—the Nicholson family collection, for example—looking for items to make the alphabet come alive.

Presenting this *potpourri* deserved a special kind of treatment. John Mahé realized that such mixed subject matter required a light approach. Inspiration came from some familiar objects: his nephew's alphabet blocks. These small cubes led to the construction of building blocks to be stacked one on top of another in addition to framed blocks for wall mounting. Tom Staples, THNOC's preparator, drew the specifications of the design, extending the theme of blocks to include the treatment of the docent's desk. The subjects are not arranged alphabetically but rather as they



might be found scattered within a toy box. K and Z—King Comus and Zulu—begin the alphabet procession; M and W for magnolia and water hyacinth are natural combinations, with X marking the spot (that's the Collection) near the docent's desk. The informality of the presentation aims for a certain effect, one that makes the visitor feel like stepping in to see.

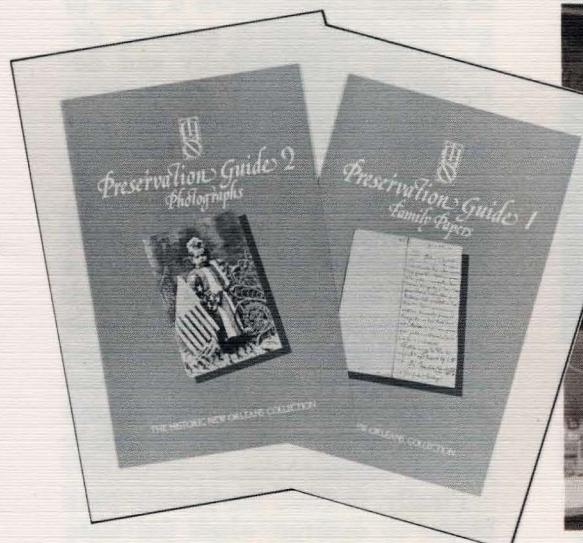
One difficulty an exhibit of this nature presents is in choosing what to include. With an embarrassment of riches in the Collection, the curatorial staff had to limit not only their visual material but also information included in the labels. Boiling down the text to its essence presented the biggest challenge to curator Rosanne McCaffrey.

Just before opening day John Mahé described some of the items to be displayed. All diverse, they include memorial jewelry, a fishing map with "official" spelled as "ofishall" to accommodate the subject, and a finely detailed oil painting of Uncle Sam Plantation. "The Louisiana Alphabet is like a pictorial history. This is our coffee table book," Mr. Mahé concluded. "It's something that will whet the appetite."

-Louise C. Hoffman

THNOC Seminars

PRESERVING YOUR FAMILY HERITAGE



Susan Cole, John H. Lawrence, and Priscilla O'Reilly, seminar speakers.

The first THNOC-sponsored preservation seminars were held at the Collection on Saturday, September 15, 1984. Approximately 60 people attended the morning and afternoon sessions which featured presentations by staff members on the care of family photographs, papers, and paintings.

"Identifications should not be written on the backs of photographs, but on the outside of the enclosure."

—Preservation Guide 2:
Photographs

The care of family photographic collections was demonstrated by curator John H. Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence presented a slide program illustrating different photographic media, handling, and storage; he also displayed material used in the care of photographs.

Curator of manuscripts Susan Cole addressed the problem of deterioration, storage, display, and retrieval of family papers. A slide pre-

sentation and exhibit of archival materials gave seminar participants a better understanding of how to care for papers at home.

Registrar Priscilla O'Reilly discussed the care of paintings, using slides to illustrate her narrative. The ingredients found in paint were analyzed, and the topics of handling, displaying, and transporting paintings were explored.

Those attending the seminars were taken on tours of the curatorial and manuscripts storage facilities. All participants received packets containing examples of acid-free supplies, bibliographies of preservation literature, and THNOC's *Preservation Guide 1: Family Papers* and *Preservation Guide 2: Photographs*.

"NEVER attempt to keep a document together by applying adhesive tape, staples, or glue."

—Preservation Guide 1:
Family Papers



HISTORIC

New Orleans

After the Expo: The Creation of an Uptown Park

A century ago another world's fair was unfolding in New Orleans at an upriver location that was to become today's Audubon Park. Originally a plantation, the land was purchased as a park site by the city administration in 1871 and named Upper City Park to distinguish it from Lower City Park, today's City Park. Undeveloped for several years, it was filled with stately, moss-hung oak trees, tall grasses, tangled bushes, weeds, crayfish, goats, and herds of dairy cattle. Drainage was so poor that some sections were reduced to perpetual bogs. In 1880 the *Daily Picayune* scoffed that the area resembled a park, "... about as much as a windmill resembles a plum pudding."

The development of Upper City Park began when it was chosen as the site for the 1884-85 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, succeeded by the 1885-86 North, Central, and South American Exposition. The exhibition buildings were to be demolished except for the Horticultural Hall which was an ornament to the uptown park. This area, an attractive urban retreat, was expected to be a lasting result of the expositions. Un-

The Horticultural Hall, a relic of the 1884-85 Exposition (1984.93), albumen photoprint by Edward L. Wilson.

fortunately, the park deteriorated rapidly. The worst victim of neglect was the Horticultural Hall itself, as vandals and climate destroyed its glass panes, and its exotic plants either died or went wild in the greenhouse climate, turning formerly well-tended walkways into veritable jungles of greenery.

In June 1886, the park was renamed in honor of John James Audubon, but, considering its rapid reversion to nature and the lack of money to remedy the problem, the scurrilous rag *Mascot* set the tone of press reaction when it called the honor an insult to the man.

Several private commissions with grandiose plans to improve the park—and little money to carry them out—came and went. By 1888, the overgrown, untended park was more of an embarrassment than an ornament, so the city council took over and set up a commission with a small annual income for maintenance. To carry out more ambitious plans, a special tax was proposed, but it failed miserably at the polls.

The Park Commission plodded ahead making what improvements were possible with its meager funds.

By 1892, numerous long, straight drainage ditches, spanned by little wooden bridges, had been dug. The State Experimental Farm had been located in the park to ensure that at least part of the area would be well kept, and a philanthropist had built an aviary stocked with a pair of golden pheasants. A gateway designed by Thomas Sully and described by the *Daily Picayune* as "... about as handsome and picturesque as an inspired toadstool ..." was built at the corner of St. Charles Avenue and Exposition Boulevard, where it still stands. However, lack of funds prevented any real beautification of the park which, except for a few magnificent stands of oak trees, was a barren, monotonous prairie marked by uncut grass, crayfish-filled ditches, and straight, uninspired rows of widely spaced, solitary trees.

Finally, in 1896 the present park began to emerge when the state legislature set aside funds for improvements. The well-known Massachusetts firm, Olmsted Brothers, which included Central Park designer Frederick Law Olmsted, was hired to redesign Audubon Park. In 1898 the park golf club was created, and by 1902 the Olmsted design plan was completed, calling for the lagoons, walkways, and tree-scapes that exist today.

The Olmsted plan incorporated the Horticultural Hall, so admired by New Orleanians that there were few complaints about its expensive maintenance costs. Broken glass was a constant problem, and it required repairs after almost every wind-storm. Moreover, in 1891 it was discovered that the hall had been built without a foundation so its underpinnings needed constant shoring up to prevent extensive sagging or even collapse. Sadly, during the implementation of the Olmsted plan, the building was so badly damaged in the 1915 hurricane that it had to be pulled down.

The improvement of Audubon Park was an enormous and costly undertaking. It took eighteen years to realize all the details of the Olmsted design, finally reaching completion in 1920. Many of the park's other ornaments were financed by generous private benefactors.

-John Magill

From the

Director



"What a terrific guide!" said Teddy Kennedy, Jr., who was personally escorted around the Collection by Elsa Schneider, our curator of education. I hasten to say, no one heard him make a similar remark following what has lately become my specialty, "The Non-Tour Tour of the French Quarter for Visitors Who Either Know or Don't Want to Know Too Many Facts."

During the summer it was conducted for H.R.H. Princess Alexandra who gave every indication of enjoying it. We finished the walk here at THNOC where New Orleans expert and resident anglophile John Magill answered her many questions about our local "royalty."

And our star is rising in the East as well. That same day my wife Clayton and I entertained San Shiyuan, Deputy Director of the Beijing Palace Museum, and his entourage in our home for lunch. As I strained to catch how THNOC sounded in Chinese, two extremely busy interpreters kept the conversation flowing smoothly. Closer at hand, we've had such notables as Governor Edwin Edwards, Secretary of State Jim Brown, and Mayor Dutch Morial strolling through our courtyards.



Meanwhile the staff was busy with the day-to-day running of our research facility. In the last calendar quarter we had 19,506 visitors to our public exhibition galleries while our three departments show that 1,791 patrons were assisted in 1,124 hours of research. Now that is our "stated purpose" and cause for a little self-congratulation.

-S.F.



FOCUS

The 1884-85 Exposition (1959.27.4), as depicted in Harper's.

"My own Darling Annie . . ."

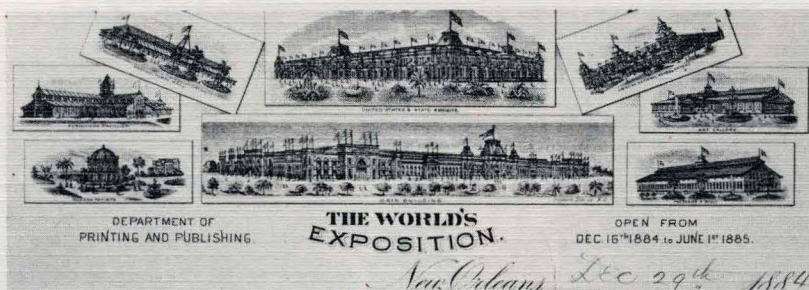
The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was held in New Orleans exactly a century ago, a time when the South was slowly recovering from both the Civil War and Reconstruction. The Exposition was intended to demonstrate to the nation the industrial development and vigor that accompanied this recovery. The Exposition site was located at what is now Audubon Park; it was then about five miles beyond the true urban portion of the city. A streetcar line down St. Charles Avenue connected the city to the fair grounds, and steamboats ran a regular route between the "head" (foot) of Canal Street and the newly constructed wharf serving the Exposition grounds.

When the Exposition opened on December 16, 1884, the *Daily Picayune* reported in a letter from the paving company to Mayor Guillote that the streets were paved up to Lee Circle and that the rest of the way was shelled. The shell roads, however, were in poor condition because of the constant hauling of heavy materials and equipment from town to the Exposition site.

The Manuscripts Division at the Collection has two letters on official World's Exposition stationery from

the Department of Printing and Publishing which provide a pungent commentary on the fair by an unidentified, but disgruntled, mechanic. Only a few facts are known about this mysterious letter writer: his first name was "Ed"; he was employed at the Cotton Exposition, running an engine that he hoped to sell; he was from "up north"; and he had a sweetheart named "Annie" to whom he wrote these letters.

"Dec. 29th. 1884. My own Darling Annie . . . There are a thousand things to make a person worried and tired here, especially as everything is confusion yet. You cannot imagine how poor the accommodations for travel &c. are here. . . . Car drivers are on a strike all over the city and travel is almost impossible. I had to take a Steamboat on the Mississippi River in order to get down town to the P.[ost] O.[ffice]. . . . A great many people at the exposition are stopping in the city and they are as 'mad as hornets.' I think myself that this strike is a disgrace to the southern states, and also the poor accommodations all the way through. The most important thing in a case like this is to look to the comfort of the visitors. Here they have spent millions of dollars on the



Letterhead from World's Exposition stationery (83-64-L) used by the homesick "Ed."

buildings and grounds and have not done the first thing to facilitate travel. . . ."

Contemporary accounts from the *Daily Picayune* on December 28, 1884, corroborated Ed's complaints. The paper reported that the day was warm and rainy and that there were large crowds in attendance. A rumor spread that the drivers on the streetcar lines reaching the Exposition grounds had struck and that all lines had ceased running. The crowd panicked and ran to the exits through wind, rain, and mud, pushing their way onto anything that moved. Steamboats of all sizes made innumerable round trips, but were not adequate to the task. When management attempted to keep the cars running, fighting broke out, and the mayor was forced to issue a proclamation to keep the peace. On December 29, the strike ended, and the *Daily Picayune* editorialized, "The companies have their hands full in meeting the demands upon them during the Exposition, and will need the best service of every employee."

Ed's disenchantment extended beyond transportation to the city's climate. He complained, "You don't know anything about mud up north. This is the rainy part of the year in this section. Instead of having cold weather and snow, they have rain and mud. Some streets that are not paved do not seem to have any bottom when wet. It is worse than it is in the country up north when the frost is comeing [sic] out of the ground. There is no use of blacking your shoes because the[y] are all spoiled in five minutes. . . . They have more changes of weather here in one day than I ever saw in a month up north. . . ."

As the Exposition continued, Ed wrote in a more mellow mood, "Jan. 11th 1885. My Love, Annie. . . . I went over to the Exposition about

three o'clock. Started the engine at four and ran until eight. I think there were more there to day than on any other. It looked quite full of life. The admission is 25¢ on Sundays. . . . There has not been a Sunday that has seemed like Sunday since I came down here. . . . In front of Horticultural hall is a long walk shaded by immense live oaks. I went over there this evening to look at the lights: when I was walking along this path, with the electric light at the extreme end, throwing long dim shadows, the place looked so romantic that it made me dreadfully homesick to see my Darling. Good night sweetheart pleasant dreams, Accept of much love and many kisses from Your loving Ed."

Ed's romantic electric lights were furnished by the Edison Electric Light Company, the largest establishment of the kind for providing the incandescent lights which were one of the marvels of the Exposition.

These letters (MSS 214) were a gift from Mrs. William Wright, who donated them to the Collection after seeing the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition exhibition in the Williams Gallery in 1978. They were added to 19 other Manuscript Division items relating to the Exposition, including receipts for stock, programs, material relating to the "International Drill" of military groups, a gate pass, and letterheads depicting the buildings.

Additional information about the events described in Ed's letter is available in the *Daily Picayune*, December 1, 1884-January 30, 1885. General background information can be obtained from D. Clive Hardy's *The World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition*, published by the Historic New Orleans Collection in 1978 in conjunction with the exhibition.

-Catherine C. Kahn

Profile

Dode Platou



"The trouble with me is I like to do everything," laughs chief curator Dode Platou, as she explains how she and curator John H. Lawrence created a videotape about Carnival. The colorful and innovative tape attracted crowds to the recent *Rites*

"Nothing you learn ever goes to waste."

of Rex exhibition. Versatility, activity, and willingness to experiment are keys to her professional style.

Mrs. Platou heads the largest department at the Collection with a staff of 30 and several volunteers; holdings in the rapidly expanding department now approach 250,000 items. In addition, she is a mainstay of the local arts community. Contrary to today's trend toward highly specialized museum studies programs, Mrs. Platou came to her profession with a wide range of educational and employment experiences, providing depth and variety in her approach to the job.

As she puts it, "nothing you learn ever goes to waste," and her career clearly indicates the success of that approach. With a "tremendous education in the public schools of Minneapolis—a very cultured city"

and a degree in art education with a minor in business administration from the University of Minnesota, Mrs. Platou has refused to confine herself to any narrow field of study. In college she took courses in everything from textiles to psychology, journalism, photography, and movies as an art form (in which viewing banned foreign art films was a definite plus), and some years later attended a summer session in arts administration at the Harvard Business School.

As a senior, she was one of the finalists in *Vogue's Prix de Paris* writing contest. She was invited by *Vogue* to New York and, despite the trepidation of her parents, promptly boarded a train for New York and arrived on the magazine's doorstep. She received an honorable mention in the contest, but joined the Minneapolis Tribune as a columnist and movie reviewer—"You see, those courses were useful."

Following marriage to Dr. Ralph V. Platou, she came to New Orleans when Dr. Platou was recruited as chairman of the pediatrics department of Tulane University Medical School. At first Mrs. Platou "couldn't believe" New Orleans because of "the heat and the terrible wartime housing conditions." Today, however, the city is her chosen home.

Because of her experience in photography, Mrs. Platou was asked to set up the medical photography department at the Ochsner Clinic



when it was located in an old building on Prytania Street. She hired another young bride to assist her in copying x-rays, taking photomicrographs, and making movies or slides of operations and patients' wounds. "At first I thought I might get sick, but it was a real challenge to provide the right shots."

In a career pattern emphasizing change and challenges, Mrs. Platou



As a columnist for the Minneapolis Tribune, Dode Platou interviewed the legendary Bette Davis.

moved on to Country Day School, where she set up the photography department and taught photography classes. Later she decided that "it was time to get out of the darkroom" and to pursue a lifelong interest in painting through classes at Newcomb. George Rickey, then head of the Newcomb Art School, encouraged her to complete an M.F.A. in painting, with a minor in art history, which she combined with rearing three small children. She continued a painting career for several years before moving to Hawaii.

After three years away from the city in connection with her late husband's career, Mrs. Platou returned to New Orleans in 1969 to become curator of the new Wisner Wing at the Delgado (today New Orleans) Museum of Art. Later named curator of education, she was in charge of educational programming, gallery lectures and films, docent training, and presented four major exhibitions in the Wisner Wing.

She was lured to the Collection by director Stanton Frazer in 1976 to head the curatorial department, which at that time was crowded into one office. Mrs. Platou's first assignment was organizing a retrospective exhibition of Boyd Cruise's work and producing an accompanying hardback book; she was soon asked to establish an acquisitions committee as well.

The diverse aspects of the job are appealing to her. Mounting exhibitions calls on her creative talents: planning the *Rites of Rex* was especially enjoyable. She also notes

that "collecting is something we all love, surrounding ourselves with fascinating objects," and that collection organization and care is essential.

One of her present projects is overseeing the inventory of the photographic archives of Clarence John Laughlin. A longtime desire is to publish a book on 19th-century illustrator Alfred Waud, incorporating manuscript material and original illustrations. This plan grew out of her earlier work on the exhibition and catalogue, *Alfred R. Waud: Special Artist on Assignment*.

Her pleasures include her family—she is the mother of three grown children and has four grandchildren—and travel. Recent excursions have included India and the mountains of Nepal, Tibet, China, and the northern silk route cities of ancient Turkestan.

She wakes up every morning with something to do or to look forward to—which she sees as the essence of an active and happy life. Her only problem is fitting all her interests into a day. Fortunately, as she says, her family tends "to live forever" so she has time to accomplish her diverse ambitions.

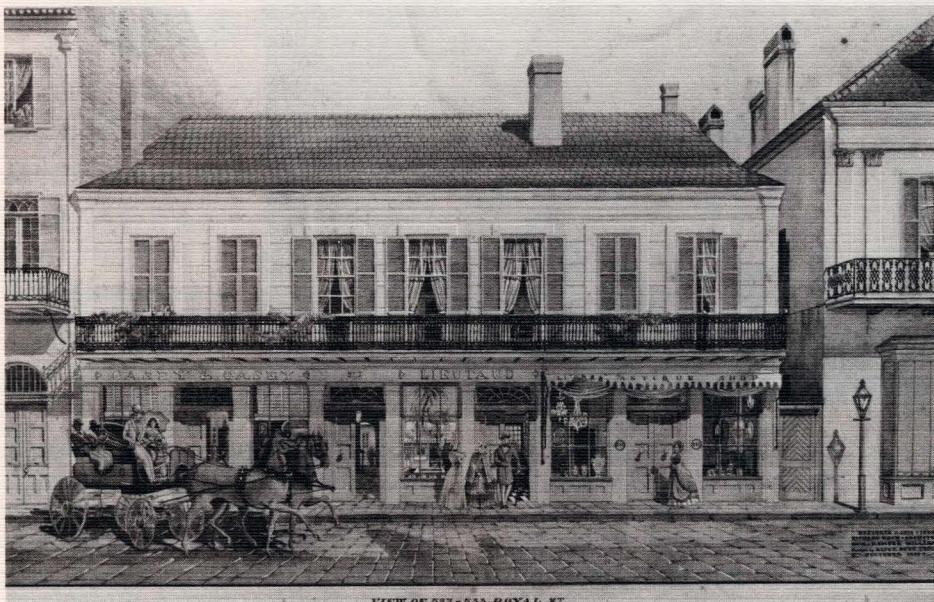
—Patricia Brady Schmit

CREDITS

Contributors: Susan Cole, Florence Jumonville, Catherine Kahn, Priscilla O'Reilly.

Photographs: Jan White, Judy Tarantino, and Sue Laudeman.

The Merieult House



Boyd Cruise's 1939 watercolor of the Merieult House (1952.17).

The Historic New Orleans Collection is housed in one of the oldest and most notable buildings in the Vieux Carré. It is the dwelling that the wealthy merchant-trader Jean François Merieult built for his extensive commercial activities, as well as an elegant residence for his family. It was constructed soon after he purchased the site in 1791 and may incorporate parts of a much earlier house that had been erected on this site in the 1750s or '60s.

This was the only structure in the area that escaped the disastrous conflagration of December 8, 1794, a fire that began across Royal Street in the house of François Mayronne. The fire spread rapidly down as far as the newly completed St. Louis Cathedral. The church was saved by a sudden change in the wind that reversed direction and sent the fire spreading over an area as far back as Bourbon Street and as far up as the fortifications in the vicinity of present-day Canal Street. In the plan prepared by the Spanish engineer Juan M. Perchet, and dated December 25, 1794, the Merieult House is shown standing alone in the devastated area.

The site of the Merieult House was one of the first to be built upon after the streets of the town had been laid out by the French military

engineer Adrien de Pauger in March 1721. The five 60' x 120' lots facing Royal Street, between Toulouse and St. Louis streets, were reserved from the beginning by the Company of the Indies for the construction of barracks to house the French and German workmen whom the Company had brought to the colony to assist in building the city.

When the Company retroceded Louisiana to the king in 1731, these lots were occupied by crude barracks buildings and by the king's forges. It was not until the 1750s that the barracks lots were granted to private owners. On May 12, 1757, the lot on which the Merieult House now stands was granted by Governor Louis de Kerlerec to the Sieur de Callogne. By 1762, a house, the residence and shop of the silversmith Isaac Guinault, had been erected on the site. When the great fire of March 21, 1788, devastated the city, this property was owned by a Spanish schoolmaster, Don Pedro Aragón y Villegas. Aragón's house was destroyed in the fire or soon after, for when the property was sold on April 15, 1792, it was described as having "brick rubbish upon it."

The purchaser from Aragón's estate was Jean François Merieult, a prominent merchant and a native of

Normandy. He built the handsome, two-story brick house that is now the home of the Historic New Orleans Collection. The builder may have been an American, Jacob Cowperthwaite, a native of Burlington, New Jersey, who had come into the Spanish province in the late 1770s or early 1780s. When Cowperthwaite died in 1793, Merieult was named as executor of his estate. Some of the brick walls of an earlier house were used in the construction of the new one, as evident in the rear wall of the countinghouse now used as THNOC's reception facility. In this room, pilasters cover French colonial-type ventilators distinguished with wrought-iron grilles.

Merieult died in 1818, soon after having had additional work done on the house by the architect-builders Claude Gurlie and Joseph Guillot. After Merieult's death, the building was sold to pay his creditors and passed through several ownerships until 1832, when it was purchased by the Lizardi Brothers, a firm of international bankers and merchants. They made alterations to the



structure, replacing the original first floor wall along Royal Street with the present granite piers, which were becoming popular in New Orleans in the 1830s. They also rebuilt the rear wing on the upper side of the courtyard to house their handsome countinghouse.

Manuel J. de Lizardi owned the property until 1857, when it was bought by Theodore Danflous, from whose heirs Jean Baptiste Trapolin acquired it in 1878. Trapolin built the house now at 718 Toulouse Street that became the L. Kemper Williams residence and was the owner from whom the Williamses purchased both the Royal Street and Toulouse Street houses in 1938.

-Samuel Wilson, Jr., F.A.I.A.
Mr. Wilson is a local architect and historian whose firm has been the principal architect for all the Collection's past building programs.



The Nitta Yuma Pasties: 19th-Century Art Form

The Nitta Yuma pasties, five panels of cut and watercolored paper, are among the finest pieces of southern folk art in THNOC's holdings. They provide an amusing glimpse into the routine of plantation life and also stand as a tribute to the noted silhouette-cutter William Henry Brown, who created them in the early 1840s.

Although pasties are little known today, this 19th-century art form was popular with both amateur and professional artisans. While similar to silhouettes in using profiles, they also introduce color and scenery in order to create a more realistic, three-dimensional effect. Pasties could be elaborate and time-consuming works, like the Nitta Yuma examples, or simple, clipped pictures from magazines pasted onto painted landscapes.

Each of the Nitta Yuma examples was drawn, cut, watercolored, and individually assembled by Brown as a gift to the young children of Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Vick of Nitta Yuma Plantation, north of Vicksburg, Mississippi. According to family tradition, the Vicks met Brown while on a trip to New Orleans and invited him to visit their family plantation. It was there that the expressive panels showing Vick's slaves returning from the cotton fields were done. The pasties were intended as a "thank you" for the generous southern hospitality

Brown received while a guest at the plantation.

The pasties, all in muted tones, begin with a stately woman on horseback; the horse is being fed by a man with a bucket. According to Vick family history, the lady was Mrs. Sarah Pierce Vick, the mistress of Nitta Yuma Plantation. The man feeding the horse was Jake, the family's trusted servant. This pastie, as well as the others in the series, displays an interesting sense of depth through the use of detailing, evident in the treatment of Mrs. Vick's outfit, complete with gloves, scarf, riding cap, and veil. Although Mrs. Vick and Jake are shown in profile, facial characteristics are apparent, unlike the traditional silhouettes of the other panels.

The two panels entitled *Hauling the Whole Week's Picking* are probably the most imaginative in the series. Full of movement and life, they evoke a sense of accomplishment as the field workers return after a week's work in the cotton fields. Vick family history identifies the pictured slaves as Willie, guiding the oxen, Dolly, with a basket of cotton on her head, and, in the rear, Horace, along with three unidentified children and their dogs. There is a three-dimensional quality to the figures whose finely detailed clothing belies their silhouette treatment, providing historical as well as artistic interest. The last two panels in

Three panels from the Nitta Yuma pasties (1975.93.1-2,.5).



the series show Harry riding the mule team that is pulling a large wagon of cotton. Perched on the back of the wagon and holding a basket is Big Sarah, followed by Elmo with a sack of cotton on his shoulders. Meticulously cut out, the chain attached to the mule's harness further exemplifies Brown's love of detail.

Because of the artist's skillful use of scissors and watercolors, the Nitta Yuma pasties are full of life. They are unusual in comparison to the rest of Brown's work, because they are done in color instead of entirely in black. Each individual's personality seems evident from the panels. When viewed as a whole, the clattering of the wagons and the chattering of the field hands are almost audible. Besides providing an insight into plantation life, the pasties are a fine example of a lost art form by one of America's most outstanding 19th-century silhouette artists.

-Wayne Lempka

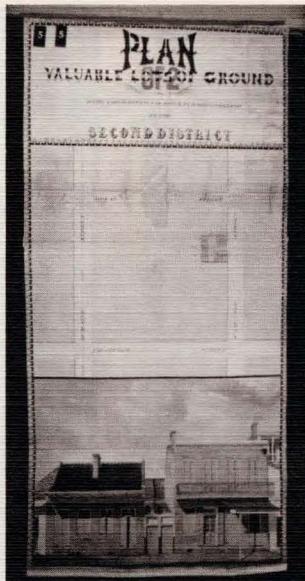
Mr. Lempka, the director of Barrett House in Poughkeepsie, New York, was formerly a curatorial cataloger at the Collection.

In Pursuit Of the Past

A "chain of title" is not as dry as it sounds. Architectural historians and researchers can vouch for the unexpected information brought to light while tracing a chain of title. Beginning with the present owner of a property, the researcher works backward noting each change in ownership, whether through inheritance, gift, sale, or confiscation for debts or taxes. A complete chain of title is essentially a history of a piece of land, providing a commentary on the social, cultural, or economic history of the city. These links with the past form the backbone of the Vieux Carré Survey, one of the most important resources at the Collection.

Initiated in 1960 under the auspices of the Louisiana Landmarks Society and later sponsored by the Edward G. Schlieder Educational Foundation and the Tulane University School of Architecture, the Survey is housed in the Research Library of the Collection. With the help of funds provided by architect Collins Diboll, it continues to be updated and extended by a fulltime researcher.

In tracing a chain of title for the Survey today, the researcher must first determine the present owner of a property. The search begins in the real estate records room on the second floor of City Hall where the most recent property transactions are registered. Lawyers, homeowners, buyers, real estate agents, entrepreneurs, and architectural historians use this facility. Since the



This watercolor of a property on St. Philip Street adorns the notarial archives records (1979.227.5.5).

small office is open only two hours a day, the atmosphere is sometimes frantic. Researchers, often standing three deep, call out their desired district and square and are eventually answered with the conveyance office book (COB) number.

Once this number is ascertained, the next stop is the conveyance office in the Civil District Court building basement. Here the registrar of conveyances maintains large volumes, weighing up to forty pounds, which contain real estate records in an abbreviated form. Books earlier than 1900, some of them dating back to 1827, are stored on the mezzanine. Indexes to the records are provided by a Soundex system and a set of early vendor-purchaser index books.

Across the hall, the notarial archives offers more complete information on property transfers, hous-

ing the detailed original transactions which sometimes have plans or drawings of properties annexed to the acts. This invaluable architectural resource was begun in 1768 with the appointment of the first notary in Spanish Louisiana, Don Joseph Fernández. A succession of notaries, officials who enjoyed a superior community position, kept books of real estate transactions, which they had beautifully bound. To consolidate the records of all the intervening notaries, Andrew Hero, Jr., led a successful movement in 1867 to create a central office, the notarial archives.

Records prior to 1970 are found by the notary's name and date. More recent records are organized by a numerical system. The early records are fascinating, but difficult to use. Heavy and cumbersome, some of the volumes are in poor condition, marred by time and with pages rendered almost indecipherable by "bleeding" ink.

A knowledge of French and Spanish is essential for working in the notarial archives. These records are the very stuff of history: reports of wives leaving their husbands' bed and board, slave sales, marriage contracts, inventories, and creditors' meetings enliven the pages. Elevations sometimes accompany descriptions of properties offered at auction. Executed with grace and precision, these old drawings are among the treasures of the archives.

Researching chains of title can become almost addictive, a stimulus to the historical imagination of a researcher.

-Helen E. Wetzel

Erratum

In Volume II, Number 3, of this newsletter it was incorrectly stated that *Grace King: A Southern Destiny* was the first book to receive both the Williams Prize and the Louisiana Literary Award in the same year. Actually, in 1976 *Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877* by Joe Gray Taylor won both prizes. Apologies to Professor Taylor.

At the Collection . . .



Recent visitors Teddy Kennedy, Jr., above, and Louisiana Secretary of State Jim Brown with director Stanton Frazar.



Acquisitions



The Historic New Orleans Collection acquires hundreds of items through purchase and donation during the course of each year. Only a few recent acquisitions can be noted here.

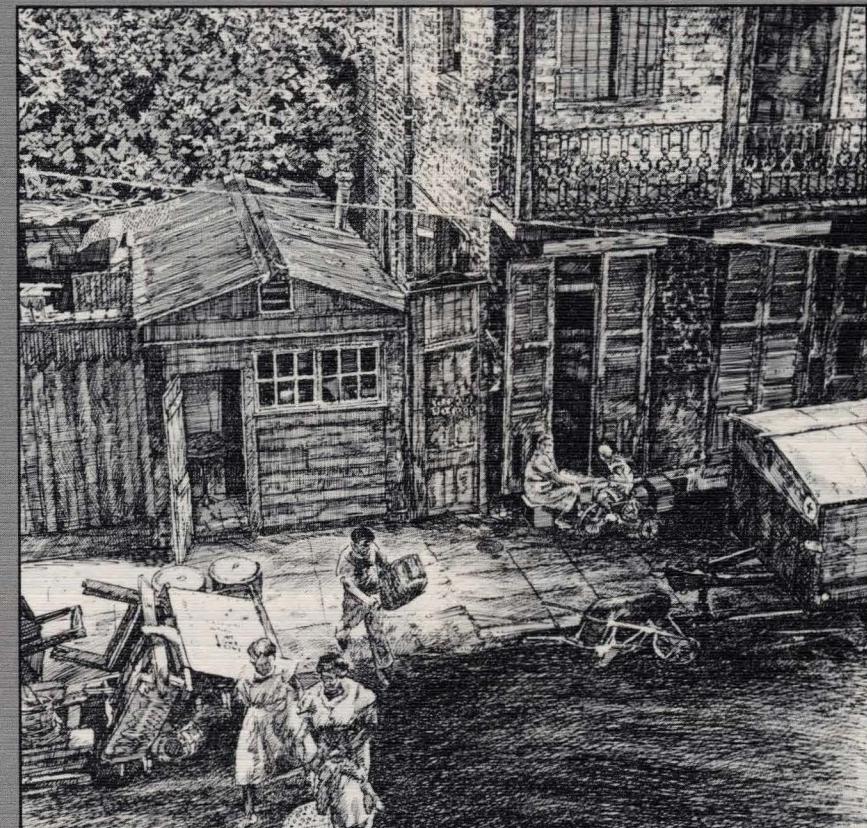
CURATORIAL

A group of 73 ink drawings, the original art for the book, *Louisiana Gallery, the River Country and New Orleans* by Philip Kappel, has been purchased for the Curatorial Division. Mr. Kappel, a Connecticut native, was a noted etcher whose work is owned by numerous major museums. He spent almost two years recapturing from memory and notes the life of New Orleans and the Louisiana delta. As he explained in the prologue to *Louisiana Gallery*, "I am filled with wonder that so many people are only passively interested in the landmarks of our own country. . . so I am driven to praise of Louisiana and its infectious color, to take you directly to those places of enchantment through the medium of art."

■ Samuel Wilson, Jr., donated four early photographs of the interior of Trinity Church on Jackson Avenue along with a bound group of eight Van Dyke copies of architectural drawings of the church by Crosby and Henkel architects, dated April 26, 1909.

■ Joseph S. Sheldon, Jr., has given a very unusual early Mardi Gras invitation together with its envelope. Addressed to "Mrs. Capt. Stephen Sheldon," the invitation is for "the Annual Mardi-Gras Ball, to be given on the Evening of Tuesday, February 13, 1866, at the St. Charles Theatre."

■ THNOC's collection of Mardi Gras programs and invitations is updated with each new season. Michael Taormina, director of the New Orleans Cultural Center, has do-

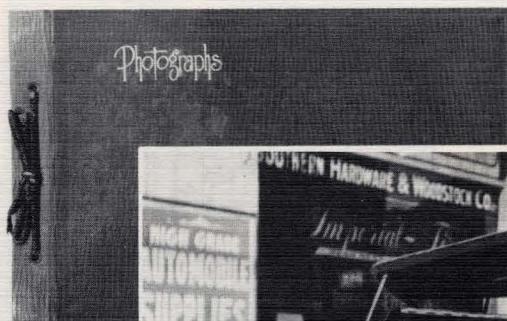


St. Philip Street between Bourbon and Dauphine, ink drawing by Philip Kappel (1984.58.12).

nated programs from each of the 1984 Mardi Gras balls held in the Municipal Auditorium.

■ Two albums containing family portraits and scenes in and around New Orleans are recent gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Bernard. The views date from 1898 to 1916. Scenes in the earlier album show the Central

Business District taken from the Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company building ca. 1898. An example from the later album is the 1912 photograph of a gentleman with his automobile in front of Southern Hardware & Woodstock Co. at 715 Baronne Street.



A photograph album yields this vintage 1912 scene (1984.112.79).



■ A silver pin inscribed "For Politeness," presented to Miss Berthe Charbonnet in June 1916, has been donated by her sister, Mrs. W. L. McIntyre. A wonderful memento from the days when courtesy was queen, the pin was given to Miss Charbonnet when she attended Finney's School. Miss Mary L. Finney was principal from its beginning in 1893 until 1922.

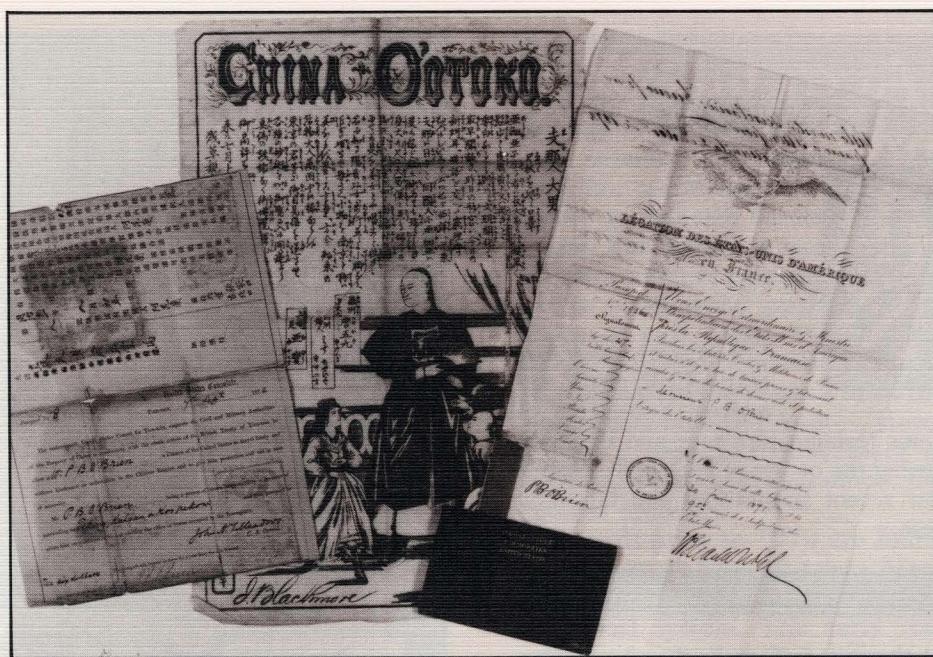


Politeness pin from Miss Finney's school (1984.69).

MANUSCRIPTS

The papers of Lt. Charles H. B. Caldwell are the most significant acquisition of this three-month period. Lt. Caldwell was commander of the gunboat *Itasca*, and later the ironclad gunboat, *Essex*, Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, U. S. Navy, 1863-1869. The collection consists of letters, orders, and maps detailing the preparations for and the capture of the city of New Orleans by federal forces in April 1862 and the siege of Port Hudson in 1863. The *Itasca* cut through the chains blocking the Mississippi River to federal entry. Caldwell's papers include direct orders from Commodore Farragut aboard the *Hartford* to other vessels under his command.

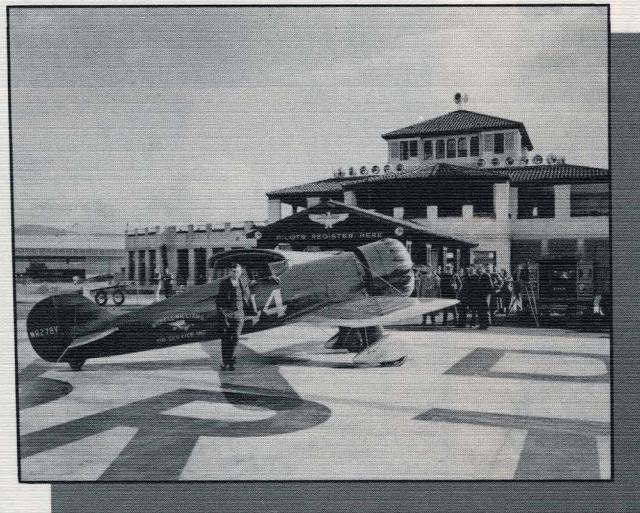
■ Patrick B. O'Brien was well-known in New Orleans in the mid-19th century as an astute businessman and generous philanthropist. A citizen of Canada, O'Brien came to New Orleans in 1844 as a young man and established a cotton pickery and press with his brother Richard. His British citizenship enabled



Memorabilia from the travels of P. B. O'Brien (84-64-L) include, left to right, visa, Chinese broadside, and passport with attachments.

him to survive the Civil War with his fortune intact even though he showed his partisanship by outfitting a Confederate regiment. After the war he left on an extended trip and spent most of the next ten years traveling around the world to the Middle East and the Orient as well as to Europe. He wrote a book describing his travels, *Over Land and Sea*, and filled his house on Esplanade and Royal streets with treasures from his travels. P. B. O'Brien's passport, a visa issued in the name of the Emperor of China, and other items related to the O'Brien brothers have been donated by a great-nephew, Ernest C. Villeré.

■ In the daredevil days of early aviation, the names James R. Wedell and Harry P. Williams stood for fast-racing planes and daring pilots. Ironically, both men lost their lives in routine "slow" flights, but not before they had made a name in aviation circles for themselves and the fast "44." This plane ("hot as a pistol and twice as fast") was designed and built by Wedell-Williams Air Service Inc. in Patterson, Louisiana. In memory of James R. Wedell and Harry P. Williams, Mrs. Gladys Calhoun Case has compiled and donated a scrapbook of correspondence, clippings, and photographs.



James R. Wedell and his fast "44" plane, 1931 (84-60-L).

■ Another important donation is the autograph album of Frank Adair Monroe, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Louisiana from 1914 to 1927. The album, donated by Mrs. Fitzhugh W. Boggs, contains signatures of Vice President John C. Breckinridge, members of the cabinet, members of Congress, and diplomatic representatives of foreign countries.

■ Additional donations continue to enrich the manuscripts collection: Civil War letters from Michael Wynne, a frequent donor; family papers, including letters written from Washington City in 1818, donated by Mrs. Mims Gage; advertising brochures and promotional pamphlets from Mrs. J. P. Ewin; and the school and college diplomas of Augusta Waldhorn Dennery, the gift of her granddaughters Nancy Kittay and Mrs. Jay Marx. A purchase of 19th-century and early 20th-century programs, announcements, and playbills will be added to the performing arts collection, as will the Opera Guild programs and clippings of frequent donor Mrs. E. B. Ludwig.

LIBRARY

The Research Library recently added *Les martyrs de la Louisiane* (Donaldsonville, 1839) by Auguste Lussan, a play in five acts which dramatizes the 1768 revolt against Spain by patriotic Louisianians who, unwilling to accept Spanish rule, forced Governor Ulloa from the colony. The action centers around unsuccessful efforts to achieve a peaceable adjustment of the unhappy state of affairs in Louisiana, concluding with the execution of rebel Nicholas Lafrenière. Among the other leaders of the revolt was Joseph Villeré; hence, *Les martyrs* supplements the Villeré material already available at the Historic New Orleans Collection.

■ Another historical event which lends itself to dramatization is the Mexican War (1845 - 1848). Activities which immediately preceded the Battle of Palo Alto form the basis of *Le Capitaine May et le Général de la Vega sur les bords du Rio Grande* (New Orleans, 1847), an opera by Félix de Courmont, which

was printed by Justin L. Sollée. Sollée was one of the most prolific printers in antebellum New Orleans. Opera libretti seem to have been a specialty, for he printed many of them. Like the others, *Le Capitaine May* provides French and English text in parallel columns; unlike the rest, it contains no advertising.

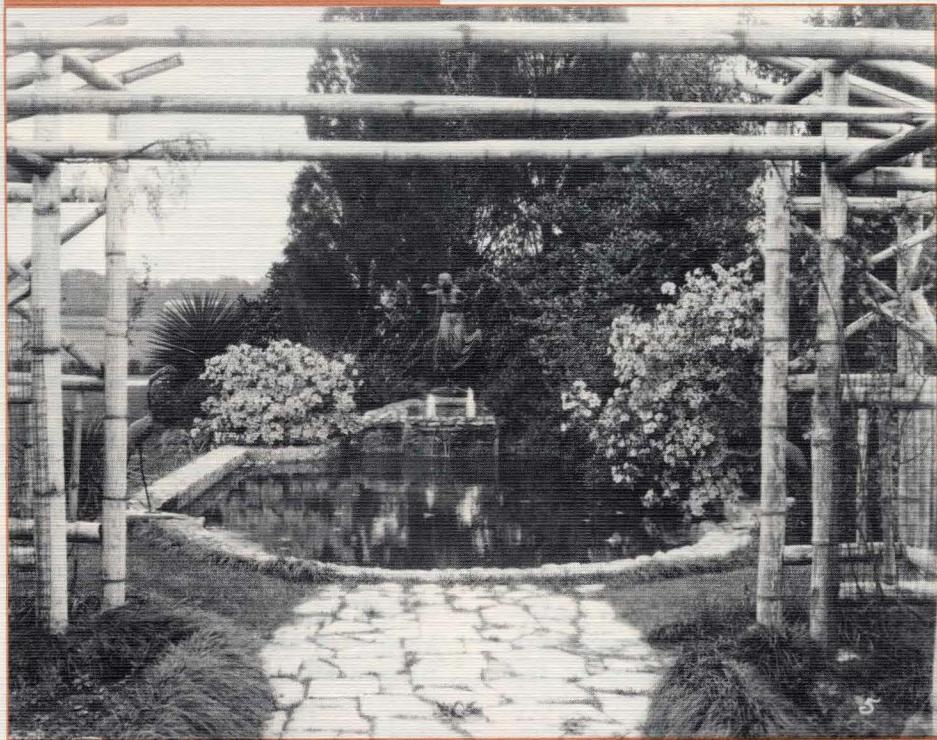
■ Of interest to students of Civil War history are the anonymously written *Review of Certain Remarks Made by the President When Requested to Restore General Beauregard to the Command of Department No. 2* (Charleston, 1863), and volume 1 of *Reports of the Operations of the Army of Northern Virginia, from June 1862, to and Including the Battle of Fredericksburg,*

Dec. 13, 1862

(Richmond, 1864), the personal copy of Col. James B. Walton of the Washington Artillery. Both provide contemporary accounts of activities in which Louisiana soldiers participated.

■ Among recent gifts are several items from Mrs. Lawrence Babst, including *Police Regulations of the Parish of West Baton Rouge (La.)* (Baton Rouge, 1828); *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Senate of the State of Louisiana at the Fifth Extra Session of the Legislature* (Baton Rouge, 1929), presented by Miss Mary Elizabeth Sanders; and the four-volume *Letters from John Pintard to His Daughter, Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1818 - 1833* (New York, 1940), the donation of Mr. Lewis Hoyer Rabbage, and a number of pamphlets about clubs in New Orleans, presented by Mrs. J. P. Ewin.

Puzzler



This issue's Puzzler is a problem for us, too. Assistant curator Richard Marvin has been processing over 19,000 negatives and photoprints spanning the years 1916 to 1955 which comprise the Charles L. Franck Collection, acquired in 1979. To inventory a collection of this size requires considerable research since many of the buildings pictured have been demolished or altered.

Mr. Marvin and curator John H. Lawrence, who is supervising the project, are stumped by several of the images. One of the photographs is clearly labeled as St. Joseph Hospital, but it may have been only a design for a building that was never constructed. The garden pictured above has no name. Please call Richard Marvin if you can help solve these mysteries.

-John A. Mahé II

Staff

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Chief curator Dode Platou, a member of the Arts Council of New Orleans, is serving on the Municipal Endowment Grants for the Arts Committee and has served as chairman of its Evaluation Committee.

Rosanne McCaffrey, curator and director of systems, attended the Museum Computer Network annual conference and the Canadian Heritage Information Network conference in Ottawa, Canada, October 17-19. . . Data processor Carolyn Dong has completed a certificate program in computer science at Tulane University. . . Miss Dong holds an M.A. in sociology from Tulane.

David Hunkel from the University of California in Santa Cruz, Colin Kemmerly from Spring Hill College in Mobile, and Laura Uhl of Dominican served as summer interns. . . their research assisted the artists encyclopedia, scheduled for future publication by THNOC.

Curator John H. Lawrence contributed "A Century of Louisiana Photography" to the *New Orleans Art Review* and exhibited photographs at the International Art Exposition in Chicago. . . he also served as a panelist during the Southeastern Museums Conference annual meeting in Tampa, Florida. . . this fall Mr. Lawrence is teaching basic black-and-white photography at Delgado Community College.

Dr. Alfred E. Lemmon, coordinator of special projects, is participating in four programs on Spanish medieval music, a feature of the Musica da Camera series on WWNO radio during October and November. . . manuscripts cataloger Mark Luccioni attended the Society of American Archivists convention in Washington, D. C., August 30 through September 3.

Florence Jumonville, head librarian, was reappointed chairman of the Louisiana Literary Award Committee of the Louisiana Library Association.

Elsa Schneider, curator of education, and John Jones, superintendent of social studies for the Or-



Kathleen Wall and Ashley Scott

leans Parish schools, presented a workshop October 20 for the Louisiana Council for Social Studies in Lake Charles. . . their topic dealt with the use of THNOC's Cane River history packet, *Evidence of the Past*, in two Orleans Parish

Alix Samuels and Taronda Spencer



Louise Hoffman and Joan Sowell

schools. . . the education department is also responsible for a continuing lecture series for docents and other interested staff. . . recent speakers included Carolyn Bercier from Gallier House, speaking on 19th-century bathrooms, and Alan Karchmer, whose photographs were used in the Louisiana Journey exhibit at the World's Fair.

SPEAKERS' BUREAU

Staff members have made the following THNOC Speakers' Bureau presentations in recent months: manuscripts curator Susan Cole spoke to the Plaquemines Genealogical Society. . . curator John Mahé II presented slides from *The Waters of America* at the Unitarian Universalist Church. . . curator John H. Lawrence discussed "Photographic Holdings at the Historic New Orleans Collection" with the New Orleans Museum of Art's Friends of Photography.

CHANGES

Wayne Lempka, curatorial cataloger, left THNOC on June 29. . .

he is the new director of Barrett House in Poughkeepsie, New York. . . replacing him is Kathleen Wall, who has been involved in the *Waters of America* exhibition. . . Miss Wall holds the M.A. degree in art history from Tulane University.

Curatorial assistant Michele Wyckoff assumed administrative assistant duties in the catering department of Brennan's Restaurant on July 25. . . her replacement is Ashley Scott, former student intern at THNOC. . . Miss Scott graduated with a B.A. degree in art history and studio art from Newcomb College.

Alix Samuels assists manuscripts registrar Cathy Kahn and works on the cemetery index. . . manuscripts cataloger Taronda Spencer is a former student intern and a graduate of Atlanta's Spelman College. . . she will soon receive the M.A. in history from UNO with a concentration in archives and records administration.

Joan Sowell has joined the publications department to work on the artists encyclopedia. . . she received a journalism degree from the University of Georgia. . . Louise Hoffman works with director of publications Patricia Schmit on the quarterly newsletter. . . Jessica Travis recently assumed duties as assistant reference librarian. . . a graduate of the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill with an M.S.L.S., she was formerly manager of the Belle Terre branch of the Jefferson Parish Library.

Jeanie Clinton has joined the staff as an administrative assistant to the director in charge of personnel and purchasing. . . Mrs. Clinton holds a B.S. degree in accounting from the University of Mississippi. . . former student intern Ellen Holmes began working in the shop last June. . . she graduated from Spring Hill College in Mobile. . . new shop employee Dorothy Howorth is a graduate of the University of Mississippi.



Jeanie Clinton

THE WATERS OF AMERICA THE SHOP AT THE COLLECTION

Top to bottom:
Betsy Crusel
Brian O'Reilly
Jacqueline Rainey
Elizabeth Bolles

Top to bottom:
Mary Fischer
Charlotte Hoggatt
Keppy Laudeman
Carolyn Wogan
Mimi Calhoun

Top to bottom:
Ellen Holmes
Fredricka Turner
Howard Estes
Stephen Favrot
Margaret Ervin

Top to bottom:
Dorothy Howorth
Sue Laudeman
Shops Manager
Priscilla O'Reilly
Kathleen Wall

Top to bottom:
Agnes Chavez
Peggy Caronna
Warren Woods
Betty Killeen
Nairne Frazer

Top to bottom:
R. Melvin Noah
SuSu Laudeman
Gwendolyn Rainey
George Nicholson
Tom Emerson

Top to bottom:
Lady Helen Hardy
Donald Hoffman
Dale Triche
Elise Gery

Pictured above is the staff of the Collection's three shops, Rain, The Waters of America, and The Shop at the Collection. Photos courtesy of manager Sue Laudeman's perseverance. Not pictured: Lucy Core, Kathleen Eckert, Cathy Fu-selier, Catherine Gardner, Denise Giroir, Ashley Keller, and Petr Spurney, Jr.

THE WATERS OF AMERICA THE SHOP AT THE COLLECTION

ON

Please send _____ calendars at \$5.95 each
_____ address books at \$8.95 each

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mastercard Visa Subtotal _____
Acct. # _____ 4% tax LA residents _____
Exp. date _____ 9% tax New Orleans residents _____
Postage and handling 75¢ _____
TOTAL AMOUNT _____

"Louisiana History Day by Day," the distinctive 1985 calendar, combines delightful illustrations and historical facts.
 The Collection's address book is a beautiful memento of Boyd Cruise's Louisiana Alphabet.

Looking Ahead

"Louisiana History Day by Day," the Collection's 1985 calendar, pays tribute to the 1884-85 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition. Full-color illustrations from THNOC's large curatorial holdings—a view of the Horticultural Hall for August, a scrapbook with trade cards for December—highlight the pages.

Each day is individualized with historical facts from Louisiana's colorful history. THNOC's contribution to the national craze, the Trivial Pursuit game, may well be this astonishing assortment of information. The facts leapfrog across history. On November 26, 1802, Napoleon directed that English customs be rejected in Louisiana, while the very next day, Tulane defeated LSU in football for the first Baton Rouge victory in 34 years. Separating the two events is a stretch of 180 years. Important to all New Orleanians is the 24th of

THNOC's calendar for 1985, Louisiana History Day by Day, features an illustration from the 1884-85 Exposition (1959.6).



July when the ship *Pélican* arrived in Louisiana with soldiers, workmen, and marriageable women. The year was 1704. Important too as an historical footnote is the day in 1974 (February 28th) when the venerable Morning Call took its beignets to the suburbs after 103 years in the French Quarter.

The calendar is a result of extensive research by the docents. Elsa Schneider, curator of education, and Ann W. Barnes, Mimi C. Calhoun, Patricia S. Cromiller, Noreen B. La-

peyre, Joan L. Lennox, Naomi R. Lowrey, and Barbara A. McMahon unearthed the facts and compiled the calendar.

Both price and paper have improved with the publication of a second calendar. Printed on heavier paper for more durability, "Louisiana History Day by Day" costs \$5.95, less than the 1984 calendar. It is available at the Shop at the Collection, as well as at THNOC's two off-site exhibits and selected book-sellers.



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