



THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION NEWSLETTER

Volume IX, Number 4

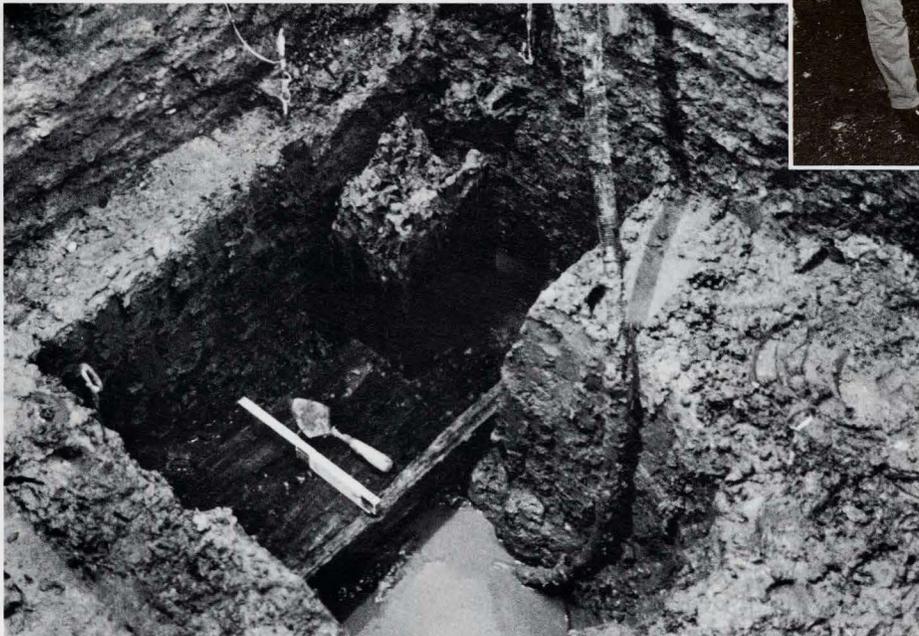
Fall 1991

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Above, Dr. Jon Kukla and Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik at the site of the dig, 726 Toulouse Street; left, early 18th-century foundation of the French colonial barracks; below, French colonial coin dated 1722.

EUREKA! UNCOVERING THE GREAT FIRE OF 1788 AND A ROYAL BARRACKS FROM THE 1730S



Through the centuries, many have echoed the jubilant “I have found it!” voiced by Archimedes when he successfully tested for specific gravity to distinguish gold from base metal. When archaeologists commissioned by the Historic New Orleans Collection made unprecedented discoveries about the Vieux Carré during a three-week dig last July, however, nobody shouted “Eureka.”



Left, Craig Hanson, chief excavator for the project; below, French colonial coins, illustrated in *Monnaies Coloniales Françaises*, identical to one of the coins found at THNOC site.



Enthusiastic “Okays” and “All Rights” greeted artifacts from the dark silt-laden clay beneath 726 Toulouse Street. Foundations and framing from early 18th-century New Orleans elicited “Wows” and (despite the breezeless heat inside the Creole cottage) “Cool!” But then, on the last Friday of the dig, there was amazed silence, as trowels wielded skillfully by Craig Hanson and Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik unearthed huge pieces of wooden substructure from a royal barracks that sheltered New Orleans colonists in the 1730s. Full analysis of the artifacts from this excavation has only begun, but (subject to revision later) some tentative and preliminary hypotheses emerged during the dig.

Only philistines are blind to the cultural significance of the historic buildings that attract thousands of visitors to the Vieux Carré each year, but even

ardent students of history and architecture are unacquainted with the colonial New Orleans that lies buried underfoot. Documents and books tell of human events big and small: the fabric of everyday life rarely gets recorded.

To a trained eye, tiny pottery shards, bits of glassware, scraps of animal bone, and a few coins declare the influences—French, Native-American, Spanish, African, English, even Dutch—that shaped the country’s first melting pot. Except for a few limited digs, however, the French Quarter is terra incognita to professional archaeological investigation. For these reasons, the board of directors of the Historic New Orleans Collection commissioned two archaeological investigations in recent months.

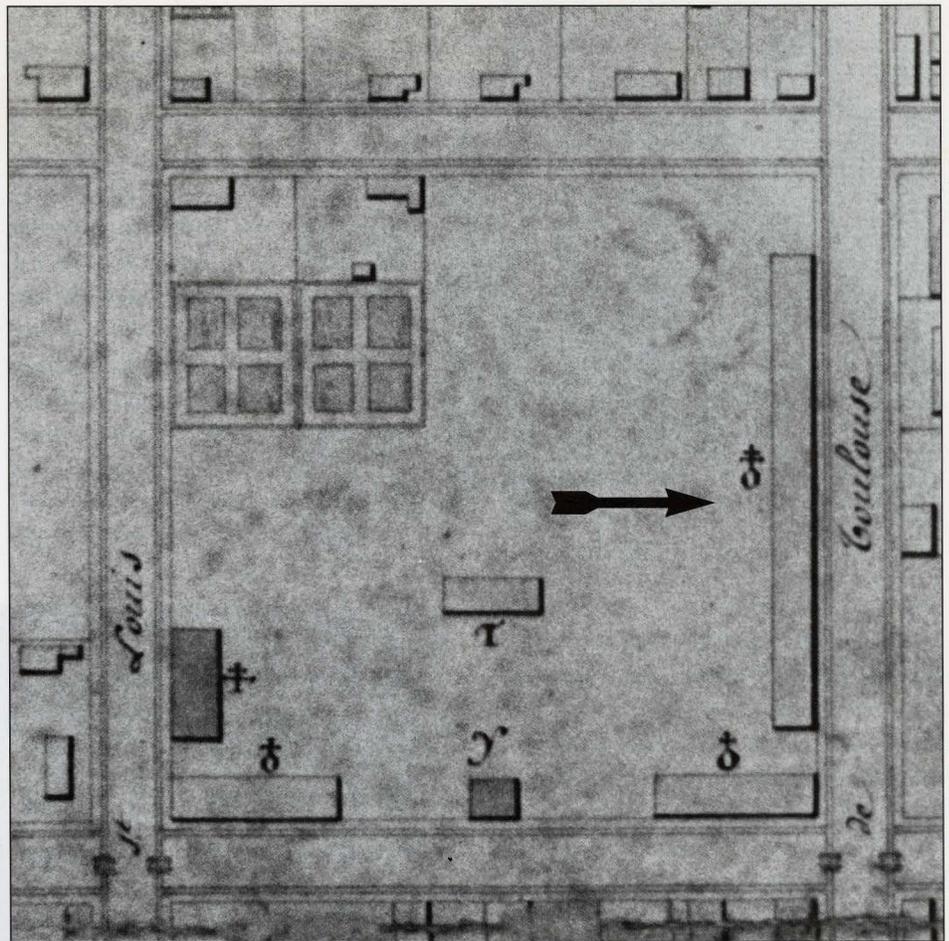
In December 1990, installation of an elevator in the 1792 Merieult House required a pit five feet deep. The Collection enlisted archaeologist Richard C. Beavers, of the University of New Orleans, to monitor excavation where documents suggested that a silversmith lived before the great fire of 1788. Only about two cubic feet of 18th-century soil proved intact, but it yielded fragments (ca. 1750) of French faïence and Spanish majolica pottery as well as high-quality glassware. Equally

noteworthy was a faint dark layer: Might it be ash from the fire of 1788? It was in the right place above the 1750s ceramics and below the 1792 house, but the site had been disrupted too many times for anyone to be confident.

More exciting archaeological discoveries awaited around the corner from the Merieult House, at 726 Toulouse Street, where the Collection had purchased an unkempt cottage and garçonnière next to the manuscripts division’s building. Before adapting the cottage for modern use, the board of directors sought to document its remaining historic integrity and explore the site on which it stood. Historic archaeology anywhere in the Vieux Carré has been rare enough; the prospect of a well-planned inquiry directly beneath this standing structure was exciting. Many lots in the French Quarter have supported a succession of buildings since 1718, but maps from 1731 and 1732 depicted a royal barracks standing along Toulouse Street. Was it there? Could archaeologists find any trace of it? To begin answering these questions, workmen lifted the floorboards and exposed the ground beneath 726 Toulouse Street for the first time since the mid-19th century.

Days later, on Monday, July 8, Tulane-trained archaeologist Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik, president of Earth Search, Inc., and her chief excavator, Craig Hanson, staked the corners of a one-meter-square unit. Blue and white five-gallon plastic buckets were lined up to transport dirt to the courtyard, where a crew of assistants recovered thousands of small artifacts by screening dirt from the pit through one-quarter-inch mesh. A square-meter unit dug one centimeter deep, Hanson noted, yields a bucket-and-a-half of dirt; within three weeks he had dug six units deeper than a meter each. Yakubik and Hanson’s chief assistant, Tony Ortmann, stood ready to label, weigh, and keep track of the dirt, brick, and artifacts that came out of the hole and went uptown to the Earth Search laboratory. With luck, the taut cotton cords of unit one defined a square that would expose evidence of the

Structures identified in this detail from an original manuscript *Plan de la Nouvelle Orléans*, dated January 1732 (1980.175), include old and new royal forges, old barracks near the corners along Royal Street, and a "small lodge to accommodate the adjutant." Archaeologists discovered the foundations of a substantial 18th-century earth-fast structure near the handwritten symbol (at the arrow) that designated the "new shanty serving as barracks" parallel to Toulouse Street. Coins, buttons, and other evidence found nearby link these foundations with colonial barracks of the 1730s.



**THE HISTORIC
NEW ORLEANS
COLLECTION
NEWSLETTER**

Editors: Patricia Brady
Louise C. Hoffman

Head of Photography: Jan White Brantley

The Historic New Orleans Collection Newsletter is published quarterly by the Historic New Orleans Collection, which is operated by the Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation, a Louisiana non-profit corporation. Housed in a complex of historic buildings in the French Quarter, facilities are open to the public, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. Tours of the history galleries and the residences are available for a nominal fee.

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The Historic New Orleans Collection

fire of 1788 and come down on the back wall of the 1730s barracks. (In fact, it missed by only about 18 inches.)

If a site is relatively undisturbed, each level of excavation carries the archaeologist back into time. By midweek Hanson and Yakubik had dug through three discernible layers: (1) late-19th-century debris from renovations to the existing cottage, (2) early-19th-century domestic and architectural debris related to the existing cottage, (3) a complex layer from an earlier residence with shards of ceramic dating from 1790 to 1820. Wednesday night a helpful rodent dug into the excavation and brought up charcoal; by Friday the archaeologists had reached a five-centimeter-thick layer of charcoal and silt. By Monday, July 15, the burned ceramic shards, melted bottle glass, and charcoal of level 4 suggested that, beneath two centuries of rubble and soil, the digging had reached the great fire that started at 538 Chartres Street and destroyed more than 800 buildings on Good Friday, March 21, 1788.

Some things didn't yet make sense, however. At level 5, along with the 1788 fire debris, there was a five-inch-wide white strip that looked like mortar — but from what? And at the Toulouse Street-end of the excavation, level 6 was a surface of oyster shells. Beneath the shells lay sterile soil. If the 1730s barracks was present, the shells were somehow related, but how? The real surprises (and questions not yet answered) were starting to appear.

Beneath the mortar lay two courses of brick — the foundation of some structure built after the 1730s barracks and destroyed in the fire of 1788. No documentary evidence for this structure is known, but there it was, obviously destroyed by fire that caused the huge charred beam to fall across the brick foundation and crush its corner into rubble. The oyster shells of level 6 stopped abruptly, in a line parallel to Toulouse Street, near some clumps of wood fiber. It was tempting to think the shells were the interior floor of the



Archaeologist Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik, principal investigator for the excavation.

“barracks of stakes in the ground. . . without flooring” about which Bienville complained in 1733 — if only there could be certainty about their date. Late on Friday afternoon, July 19, the screening crew from the courtyard suddenly rushed in with a brass military-style button and copper coin from the dirt of level 5B. As the mud was carefully brushed away, the date 1722 became legible beneath the words *Colonies Françaises*. This date — and the dates of other coins that were found — linked the shells of level 6 with the floor of the 1730s barracks.

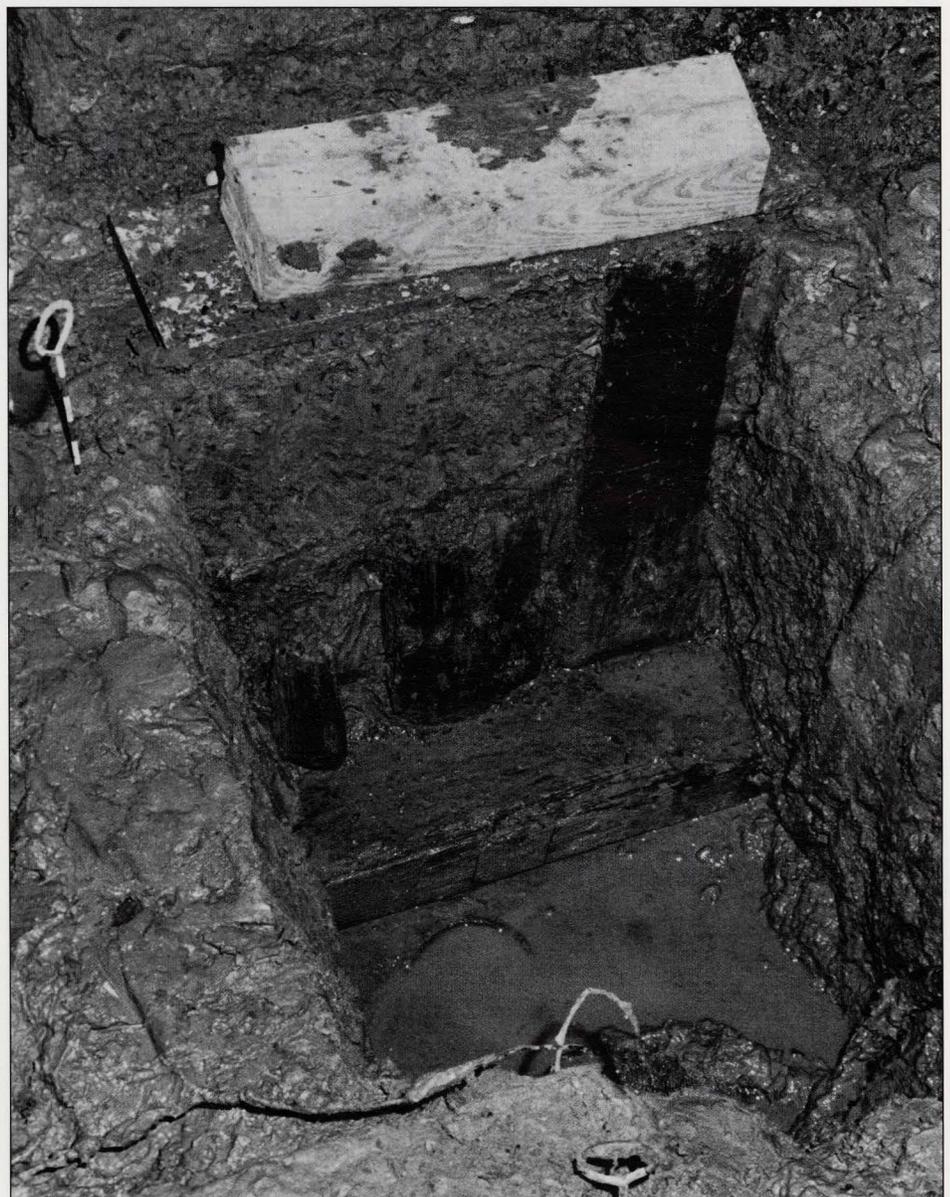
At 8:30 on Tuesday morning, July 23, as Hanson and Yakubik were preparing to wrap up their successful excavation, they encountered the final surprise: Those clumps of fiber were the tops of huge pieces of intact wood, buried since the 1730s and apparently preserved by the ground water and anaerobic subsoil. Trowels and brushes exposed three 10-inch-wide vertical planks fitted onto a huge 13-by-4-inch foundation beam, or trench-laid sill, and a 10-by-10-inch post associated with two horizontal boards. At colonial Chesapeake sites, archaeologists have identified traces of similar earth-fast structures (their wood long since rotted away) and traced the impermanent construction technique to some of its European roots. Few archaeologists have seen even partially extant American structures like this one.

In time, laboratory analysis will reveal more about early New Orleans from the archaeology at 726 Toulouse Street, but at the moment these intact sections of the barracks foundation and walls seem worth a “Eureka.” According to 18th-century maps, the building extended nearly from Royal to Bourbon streets; if so, its back wall remains undisturbed except for the three-foot-long section removed on July 31 for conservation, study, and exhibition. Lifting five huge pieces of fragile, water-softened wood from the bottom of a flooded pit was not easy. When pulleys and ropes had raised these cultural treasures without

damage, a 12-year-old witness to the archaeological climax said, “That was awesome!” Surely Archimedes would have understood the sentiment.

—Jon Kukla

Sources: Cary Carson, Norman F. Barka, William M. Kelso, Garry Wheeler Stone, and Dell Upton, “Impermanent Architecture in the Southern American Colonies,” *Winterthur Portfolio: A Journal of American Material Culture* 16 (1981); Jay D. Edwards, *Louisiana's Remarkable French Vernacular Architecture, 1700-1900* (Baton Rouge, 1988); Victor Gadoury and Georges Cousinié, *Monnaies Coloniales Françaises, 1670-1980* (Baden-Baden, 1979); Marcel Giraud, *A History of French Louisiana*, volume 5, *The Company of the Indies, 1723-1731* (Baton Rouge, 1991); Italo William Ricciuti, *New Orleans and Its Environs: The Domestic Architecture, 1727-1870* (New York, 1938); Samuel Wilson, Jr., *The Architecture of Colonial Louisiana: Collected Essays of Samuel Wilson, Jr., F.A.I.A.*, ed. Jean M. Farnsworth and Ann M. Masson (Lafayette, La., 1987).



Foundation beam and vertical planks, remains of the French barracks that extended nearly from Royal to Bourbon streets.

DIRECTOR

A *Hole is to Dig*, a well-known children's book, might serve as a description of an unusual summer activity that took place at the Collection. Daily business went on, but for three weeks "the dig" fired the imagination of the staff and media. It also made all of us realize that being an archaeologist is far from a glamorous profession. The project took place at 726 Toulouse Street — purchased by THNOC a couple of years ago — before renovation work was to begin. With the cottage floor removed, the archaeological team dug trenches with a trowel in a steaming environment of mud and rat holes (complete with rats), then sifted cubic yards of mud through quarter-inch screening. We all went thankfully back into our air-conditioned offices after a daily briefing.



With three civic exhibitions in a row — to honor the anniversaries of the New Orleans Public Schools, City Park, and the Fire Department (now on view) — we didn't have time to do much more than mention the 25th anniversary of the Collection. The opening of the completely refurbished permanent history galleries seemed celebration enough for that. But this undertaking came close to being another archaeological project — one that called for stripping away layers of paint, perhaps dating back to the 1830s when the 1792 building was extensively remodeled. (Yes, next year will be the 200th anniversary of the Merieult House.) In the process, old wallpaper, hand-hewn lath, and plaster strengthened with hair were revealed, as well as 18th-century wall constructions.

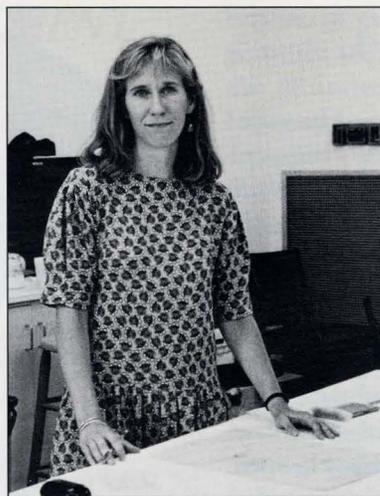
Daily work went on amidst all this activity. During the months of remodeling, thousands of researchers were assisted, while collections continued to be cataloged, computerized, and properly stored.

If only General and Mrs. Williams could see what their generosity "hath wrought." Now we're preparing for the next 25 years.

— Dode Platou

CONSERVATION INTERNSHIP

Last summer marked the first time the Collection has participated in the intern program in conservation sponsored by the University of Delaware and the Winterthur Museum. Alison Luxner, a graduate student specializing in paper and photograph conservation, advised the staff on conservation matters during her two-month internship



Alison Luxner, conservation intern.

at the Collection. She was recommended by Joyce Hill Stoner, director of the conservation program, and by Debbie Hess Norris, head of the photograph section.

Ms. Luxner completed written assessment surveys of each of the three research divisions and identified objects and conditions that could benefit from

further examination or treatment by a conservator. She performed repairs on slightly torn objects and relaxed a number of tightly curled panoramic photographs; she also flattened documents and constructed phase boxes for over two dozen volumes in the library, spending part of her time at the Tchoupitoulas Build-

ing conservation lab. Ms. Luxner worked with preparators Doug MacCash and Steve Sweet to reach solutions for the safe storage of problem objects, consulted on packaging loan items for shipment, and reviewed THNOC's series of *Preservation Guides*.

— John H. Lawrence

MEMORIAL FUND

Weeks after the death of senior curator John A. Mahé II, on March 31, 1991, the Collection was



alerted to the existence of 33 pristine issues — the complete run — of *Figaro*, a colorfully illustrated satirical 1883-1884 New Orleans newspaper. John Mahé was an enthusiast for Louisiana art, maps, and printmaking, and this was the kind of prospective acquisition he cherished: *Figaro* is a rare, significant, and handsome New Orleans imprint by a pioneering chromolithographer. (See story on page 10.) To honor a departed colleague and friend, the Collection purchased *Figaro* in memory of John Mahé and has established a fund for those of his friends and associates who may wish to share in this gesture of remembrance. All gifts to the John A. Mahé special acquisition account may be sent to the Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130-2179.

THE PLAGUE OF 1914

“Let every human hand be raised against rats, the city’s menace,” declared the *Times-Picayune* on July 1, 1914, after bubonic plague appeared in the Crescent City. This modern outbreak of the Middle Age’s dreaded plague appeared some 20 years earlier — in 1894 — in Hong Kong. The same year, bacteriologists isolated the bacillus that caused the plague and determined that fleas from rodents infected humans. A serum inoculation was introduced in 1897. With the huge volume of world shipping, however, rats — an unwanted part of every cargo — spread the plague to other ports.

As one of the world’s busiest harbors, New Orleans, with its warm climate and large rat population, was a vulnerable target. In 1900, when the plague reached the west coast of the United States, cautious New Orleans officials began systematically exterminating rats. Though three infected rodents were found in 1912, there were no plague victims and little public reaction.

But this attitude changed after June 28, 1914. A resident of the Volunteers of America home at 713 St. Joseph Street died of bubonic plague. When another fell ill, the inhabitants of the home were removed to a special isolation hospital on North Rampart Street.

The source of the outbreak was discovered in the VOA warehouse on Notre Dame Street. The building, infested with rats and fleas “more numerous than mosquitoes in a swamp,” was fumigated and its contents burned; the neighborhood surrounding the VOA properties was promptly quarantined. Only people with passes could enter the stricken area, but because it included the warehouse district and City Hall, more than 3,000 people mobbed the health office for passes allowing them to return to work.

At the request of New Orleans officials, W. G. McAdoo, secretary of the Treasury, ordered the surgeon-general,



Sketch by Louis A. Winterhalder
(1985.71.23ii)

Rupert Blue, to New Orleans to assess the situation and determine its potential impact on the nation. Blue was confident that the plague could be contained, as long as swift, community-wide measures were taken in a war on rats. Blue found the quarantine unnecessary because rats — not human beings — carry the disease.

Rat killings proceeded with a vengeance. Poison squads laid “croustons” — bread spread with poison paste; “rodentologists” brought in from California, supervised 622 specially hired rat catchers who set 38,000 rat traps. Within two months there were about 80,000 rat casualties. Ship rats also needed to be eliminated so the plague would not spread to other ports. Ships were fumigated and rat guards placed on all ship lines. One vessel yielded 24 dead rats and the cat that was kept to catch them, while another gave up 1,700 rodents. Dipped in kerosene to kill fleas and taken in large garbage cans to the City Hall annex, the rats were dissected and examined for infection. The few infected ones were used to manufacture serum.

Because the city contained a vast quantity of refuse where rats could hide, New Orleanians were encouraged to cooperate in an unprecedented clean-up campaign. All citizens were asked to use sanitary metal garbage cans with tight-fitting lids. To educate the public,

newspapers ran extensive coverage, posters were placed in streetcars, health officials spoke to clubs and neighborhood associations, and ministers even announced the campaign from the pulpit.

City residents were asked to remove piles of lumber and to replace wooden sidewalks and rotten house timbers. Wooden floors built at ground level had to be replaced with concrete. Screens were required around the bottoms of raised houses and at the ends of exposed drain pipes. Housewives were asked to put pressure on butchers, bakers, and grocers to keep their shops clean. Within two months, over 10,000 tons of refuse were carted away. Although residents grumbled about these expenses, the plague scare created much needed jobs in a slow economy.

The “chicken ordinance” became a major point of controversy. A new law, viewed as intrusive by many households that kept chickens, forbade keeping free-roaming chickens within the city because rats were attracted to chicken feed. But the ordinance did make a difference, and as the rat population began to diminish, rat catchers had a harder time trapping their minimum daily quota.

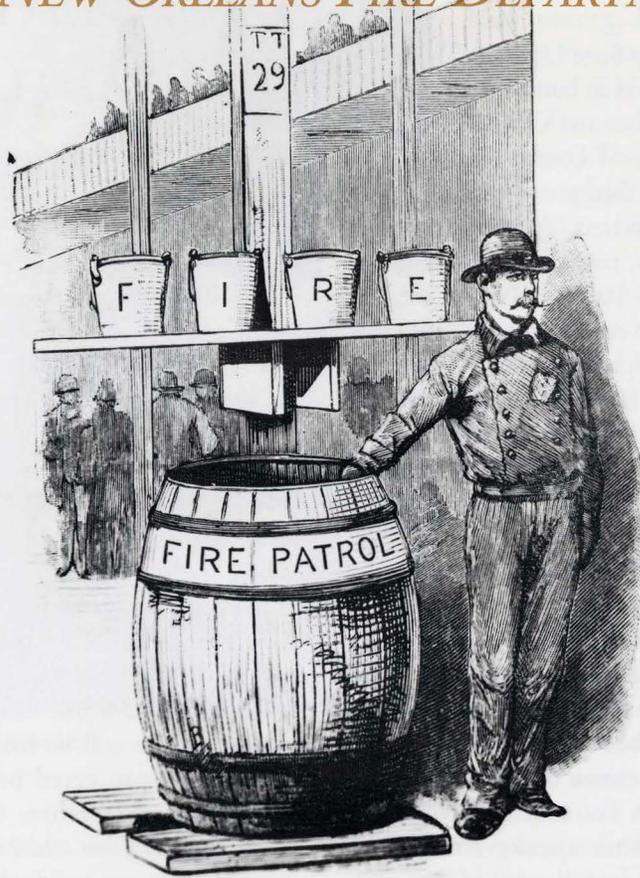
On September 4, 1914, Surgeon-General Blue declared New Orleans free of the plague, and a week later the last patient was released from the isolation hospital. The New Orleans experience demonstrated that bubonic plague could be treated and contained if quickly dealt with: out of about 30 cases, only 10 people had died. Vigilance against the plague continued, but New Orleans newspapers replaced coverage of the scare with the more frightening events taking place in the Great War that was spreading across Europe.

— John Magill

Sources: John Duffy, ed., *The Rudolph Matas History of Medicine in Louisiana*, vol. 2 (Baton Rouge, 1962); William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, N.Y., 1979); Edward W. Nelson, “The Rat Pest,” *National Geographic Magazine* July 1917; *New Orleans Item*, June 28, 1914-Sept. 15, 1914; *Times-Picayune*, June 28, 1914-Sept. 15, 1914; John Wilds, *Crisis, Clashes and Cures: A Century of Medicine in New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1978).

READY AT FIRST SOUND:

THE NEW ORLEANS FIRE DEPARTMENT



Precautions Against Fire, after Charles Upham, 1884, published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (1974.25.2.93)

The staff and board of directors of the Collection invite the public to attend the free exhibition in the Williams Gallery, *Ready at First Sound: The New Orleans Fire Department*. In honor of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the New Orleans Fire Department, the current exhibition represents both the volunteer and paid fire departments from their beginnings up until approximately 1930. Enhanced by loans from public and private collections, the exhibition provides a picture of the development of the city's fire-fighting capacity and the public image of the fire fighter.

Fire — which nearly destroyed the city in 1788 and 1794 — was a constant hazard in early New Orleans. Beginning shortly after the transfer of the city to the United States in 1803, the mayor and the city council issued numerous recommendations and ordinances for fire

protection. Despite their efforts, it was not until 1829, with the organization of Volunteer Company No. 1, that an organized and competent group of fire fighters provided fire service for New Orleans. As in other American cities, the members of the voluntary companies also were community leaders. The Firemen's Charitable Association (F.C.A.), originally established as a benevolent society by the members of the volunteer companies, was incorporated March 4, 1835. In 1855 the association took over the administration of the fire department, acting under a five-year renewable contract with the city. During the 1860s, with Isaac Marks as president of the F.C.A., the volunteer fire department of New Orleans became the fourth in the nation to acquire a technologically sophisticated fire-alarm system. Linked by the Gamewell telegraphic system,

24 companies of fire fighters served the city with up-to-date steam-powered fire engines. In the 1880s, as New Orleans prospered and grew, the fire department also prospered with the acquisition of improved equipment. In 1886, the department was manned by 1,000 active firemen and 2,000 exempt members, who had retired from active duty after about six years of active service.

Many city officials, however, saw the F.C.A. as a powerful political machine and worked to undermine the association's influence. By 1890, agitation for a paid fire department controlled by the city was widespread; by the end of the following year, the transfer from a volunteer to a paid department was effected. At noon, on December 15, 1891, the city's newly appointed fire captains took possession of their respective engine houses and equipment. The volunteer fire department of New Orleans ceased to exist and the Firemen's Charitable Association became again a purely benevolent organization. Fire protection during the transfer continued without a perceptible break.

Ready at First Sound: The New Orleans Fire Exhibition opened September 11, 1991, and will extend through January 8, 1992.

— Jude Solomon

Each Thursday during the exhibition a representative from the fire department will be at the Collection to answer questions and to demonstrate an operating antique fire-alarm system. Interested school groups should call Elsa Schneider, curator of education, at 523-4662 for an appointment.



Fire bucket.
Courtesy
Bob Whitman,
NOFD

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

For four days in July, nearly 1,700 persons gathered in Washington to discuss America's libraries and to plan for their future. Chaired by Charles Reid of New Jersey, the second White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS II) was the culmination of years of planning and scores of



Florence Jumonville

meetings in which thousands of citizens participated. Its purpose was to involve a wide range of individuals in the development of recommendations for future public policies on critical issues related to the three-part theme of literacy, productivity, and democracy.

Public Law 100-382, passed by Congress and signed by President George Bush in 1988, authorized the conference and directed the states and territories to identify local concerns and to select delegates. Each state's representation was based on the size of its congressional delegation and included an equal number of persons from each of four groups: library or information professionals; library supporters or policy-makers such as trustees; federal, state, or local officials or other government employees; and the general public. Governor Buddy Roemer appointed three delegates and one alternate delegate in each division. Florence M. Jumonville, THNOC's head librarian, served as alternate in the first category and was Louisiana's only representative of special libraries. The Louisiana delegation

was headed by State Librarian Thomas F. Jaques, who was an honorary delegate.

In September and October 1990, the State Library of Louisiana sponsored seven regional forums to ascertain matters of statewide interest. To prepare for these deliberations, conference participants read widely on 10 topic areas. Indeed, as a prerequisite to certification, delegates and alternates pledged to read everything sent by WHCLIS II — a stack of documents and materials 10 inches in height.

The White House Conference activities began each day at 7:00 a.m. and concluded at 10:00 p.m. or later. On the morning of Wednesday, July 10, First Lady Barbara Bush opened the conference. The President addressed the assemblage that afternoon, stressing his commitment to education and announcing that *Millie's Book*—"by a member of my family"—has earned \$1,100,000 for the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. Other speakers included Marilyn Quayle; Librarian of Congress James Billington; U.S. Representative Major R. Owens of New York; and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander. A reception at the National Museum for Women and the Arts hosted by the Presidential Cabinet spouses, another at the Library of Congress, and a joint Congressional hearing to receive testimony on library and information services also were part of the proceedings.

Publication of the final recommendations is in process, and ultimate assessment of the conference's success remains for the future. In the short term, however, WHCLIS II was best summed up by delegate Wayne Lawrence Coco, an architect and a library trustee in Simmesport, Louisiana. "I have to believe," he wrote, "that the work we did was meaningful and important. If our delegation is any indication of the genuine commitment people across the nation have toward libraries, then we can't help but make an impact."

—Florence M. Jumonville

JAN WHITE BRANTLEY

PROFILE

Jan White Brantley puts a good deal of energy into finding ingredients for the Thai cooking she enjoys — such as powdered galangal, a type of ginger — but what she mainly does in her spare time is take photographs, a not so surprising choice for THNOC's head of photography. On a Saturday or Sunday, the Brantleys (Jan and her husband, Robert, also a photographer) may be setting up their photographic equipment in front of a building in the Central Business District. The image they eventually choose will be included in the Brantleys's projected book on New Orleans architecture, to be called *New Orleans Then and Now*, a look at past and present buildings on selected sites. Nor is it unusual to find Jan Brantley, on assignment for *Playboy*, crawling underneath a table at the Louisiana State Museum's jazz collection to adjust the lighting for a shot of Louis Armstrong's cornet for "Playboy's History of Jazz and Rock."

Growing up in northern Illinois in the little town of Genoa ("population 3,000 when I lived there"), she may not have envisioned her future role in a museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Gulf South region, although a keen childhood interest in photography and a degree in fine arts from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pointed in that direction. Drawn to New Orleans by the offer of a teaching assistantship at Tulane University, Jan Brantley completed a thesis exhibition on non-silver photographic images for her MFA degree and stayed to teach a third-year photography course at the university.

"They found me," is her response to

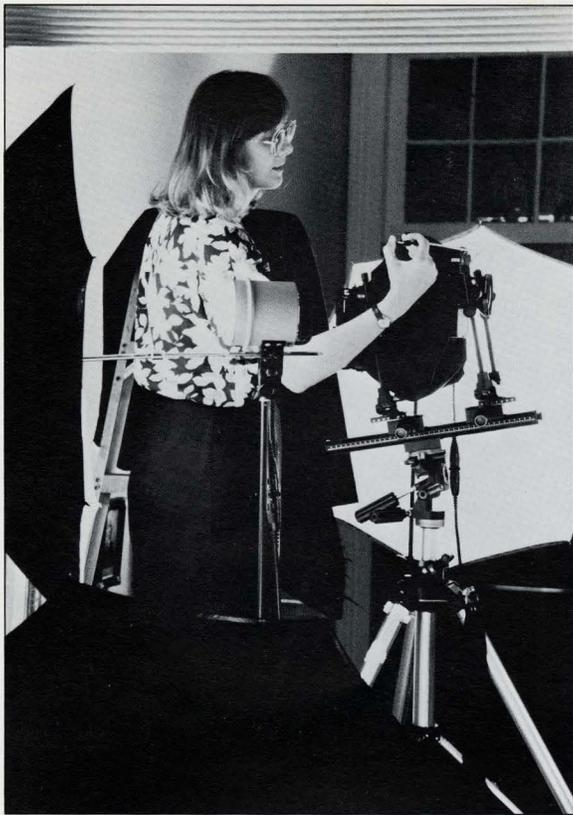


Photo by Robert Brantley

how she came to the Historic New Orleans Collection. Ten years ago, in June 1981, she was hired by Dode Platou, then chief curator, to photograph the institution's acquisitions and to deal with the boxes of tightly rolled negatives that she inherited when she accepted the job. Her system, refined over the years, is almost taken for granted now. But the carefully filed acquisitions negatives, logical photographic request forms, and systematic documentation of the Collection's activities are trademarks of her style.

Requests from researchers, an everyday event in the photography department, can mean anything from reproducing a single image from a book or manuscript to filling a large photocopy order for maps, prints, and paintings from the vast visual archives of the curatorial division. Such was the case with the *Time-Life* staff that settled in at the Collection to choose images to illustrate a multi-volume series on the Civil War. Working closely with Jan Brantley over an extended period of time, the visitors

donated a crucial piece of lighting equipment used to photograph the enormous De Haas painting, *Farragut's Fleet Passing the Forts Below New Orleans*. THNOC later received an award for excellence from *Time-Life* because of the helpfulness of the photography and curatorial departments.

Photographing events at the Collection requires quick thinking and special solutions. Members of Princess Margaret's entourage allowed no photographs when she came to tour the history galleries; Jan Brantley, nevertheless, thought to photograph the car that transported the royal party. Last summer, when a well-publicized movie starring Kevin Costner was

being filmed just outside the window of the manuscripts reading room on Toulouse Street, she was told, "no photos" — but continued taking pictures. She worked for a history museum, was her reply, and "this was history."

The photography department usually deals with a more conventional history. During the hot summer days of July and August, Jan Brantley and Judy Tarantino recorded the archaeological excavations taking place in the Collection's blue cottage on Toulouse Street. They were there to record the layers of earth, the quantity of mud, the innumerable rat holes, and the joyous discovery of a coin stamped Colonies Françaises 1722. (See story on page 1.)

Jan White became Jan Brantley in 1988 when she married Robert Brantley. On their honeymoon they traveled to the French region of Alsace where they helped cut grapes in her cousin's vineyard and listened to the sounds of the Alsatian dialect. It was the right celebration for a relationship that had grown when Jan was recovering from cancer surgery and Robert was a daily visitor to the hospital. She didn't feel too sorry for herself, she says, because "instead of

being nervous about test results, I was too busy falling in love."

Her direct manner translates to her photographic work. In 1988 she successfully captured the pathos associated with the burning Cabildo, the venerable 1795 museum next to St. Louis Cathedral. She caught the kindness of First Lady Barbara Bush (in New Orleans for the meeting of the American Association of Museums), and she preserved the moment of first encounter when the prized 1803 Vinache map of New Orleans was uncrated by THNOC's curators.

There's always a project just ahead. Jan and Robert Brantley, working together on a free-lance project, are providing photographs of St. Patrick's Church for a forthcoming publication by architect-historian Samuel Wilson, Jr. Another off-hours assignment (there are many) is for the Friends of the Cabildo; her work — this time, interior shots of houses Uptown — will appear in the next volume of the Friends's architecture series on the university section of the city.

So close to photography, she tries to explain what she looks for in an image, reflects for a moment, and offers this thought: "It should be so perfectly balanced — like a good poem — that you can't add or subtract a thing."

— Louise C. Hoffman





The Historic New Orleans Collection encourages research in the library, manuscripts, and curatorial divisions of its research center from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday (except holidays). Cataloged materials available to researchers include books, manuscripts, paintings, prints, drawings, maps, photographs, and artifacts about the history and culture of New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Gulf South. Each year the Collection adds thousands of items to its holdings by donation or purchase. Only a few recent acquisitions can be noted here.

LIBRARY

The library has acquired a complete run of an unusual 19th-century periodical entitled *Figaro: A Weekly Record of Society, Art, Literature and Contemporaneous History, with a Slight Dash of Politics from an Irreverent Point of View*. It was published from December 8, 1883, until July 26, 1884. As the subtitle suggests, much of the periodical is devoted to social and political satire at all levels. *Figaro* was started by renegade reporters from the *Times-Democrat* and the *Daily Picayune* who wanted to put before the public the items they were unable to print in their own newspapers. Except for the last three issues, which have only black and white illustrations, all contain color lithographs on the front and back covers and on a double-page center spread. These illustrations are usually cartoons satirizing political corruption. Articles are written in styles which parody popular authors of the day such as "Geo. W. Table" (Cable) and "Breathe Hard" (Bret Harte).

Several pieces of 19th- and early 20th-century sheet music have been added to the library's holdings, some with local imprints or themes. The earli-



Figaro, January 19, 1884 (91-501-RL) depicting Democracy saying to Louisiana: "Can't do anything for you this session, my good girl; we have to work the free trade racket for next summer's campaign. Call again."

est is "Bounding Billows" by J. Elliot, published in Philadelphia in 1827, but offered for sale in New Orleans by E. Johns & Co. as its imprint states. Emile Johns (ca. 1798-1860), a composer and pianist who came to New Orleans from Poland, began selling sheet music in 1826, established a stationers shop, and in 1834 began a printing business.

Several pieces were published in New Orleans by A. E. Blackmar, one of the

most significant of the 19th-century local music dealers. Armand Edward Blackmar (1826-1888), a music teacher born in Vermont, established his first piano and music store in Jackson, Mississippi, about 1856. In partnership with his brother, Henry Clay Blackmar, he moved the principal business to New Orleans in 1860 and began publishing music as well as selling sheet music and musical merchandise. He briefly operat-



Oak tree by Morgan Whitney (1991.48.6)

ed additional stores in Augusta, Georgia; New York; and San Francisco but returned to New Orleans where he resumed music sales and publishing until his death.

One of the latest pieces acquired is the popular song, “Way Down Yonder in New Orleans,” published in 1922 by a New York publisher. Other pieces reflect the tastes of the times and include sentimental ditties, plantation melodies by celebrated songwriter Stephen Foster (1826-1864), wartime ballads, dance tunes, and excerpts from popular operas.

■ A previously unrecorded Confederate imprint, a pamphlet describing various techniques for manufacturing sugar and assessing their relative merits bears the title: *A Synopsis of the Modes, at Present Most Practiced in This State, For the Manufacture of Sugar; Their Imperfections Pointed Out, and Means for Their Improvement Suggested by the Adoption of Gilbert & Ames’ Improved Process for Treating Cane Juice*. The 18-page pamphlet, printed in New Orleans in 1861, promoted the advantages of

Gilbert and Ames’s invention, a device for processing cane juice.

■ Solomon Weathersbee Downs (1801-1854) was an attorney and politician who served as United States senator from 1847 to 1853. Known as the “political spokesman of North Louisiana,” he supported Andrew Jackson, advocated universal manhood suffrage, and opposed high tariffs and the Bank of the United States. On June 19, 1844, he delivered a speech at Farmerville in favor of the annexation of Texas; his views on the subject appeared in a 64-page pamphlet printed in New Orleans, *Speech of S. W. Downs, Before a Public Meeting of the People of the Parish of Union, On the Annexation of Texas,...*

■ *Camp-Fire Stories of the Mississippi Valley Campaign* by Marie Louise Benton Bankston, published in New Orleans in 1914, is a collection of tales of heroism by Confederate troops and civilians in Louisiana during the Civil War. Among them are the story of the determined defense of Forts Jackson and St. Philip and the account of the seamstress who

ran up a smallpox signal if she saw federal troops approaching so that she would not be discovered making Confederate flags.

— Pamela D. Arceneaux

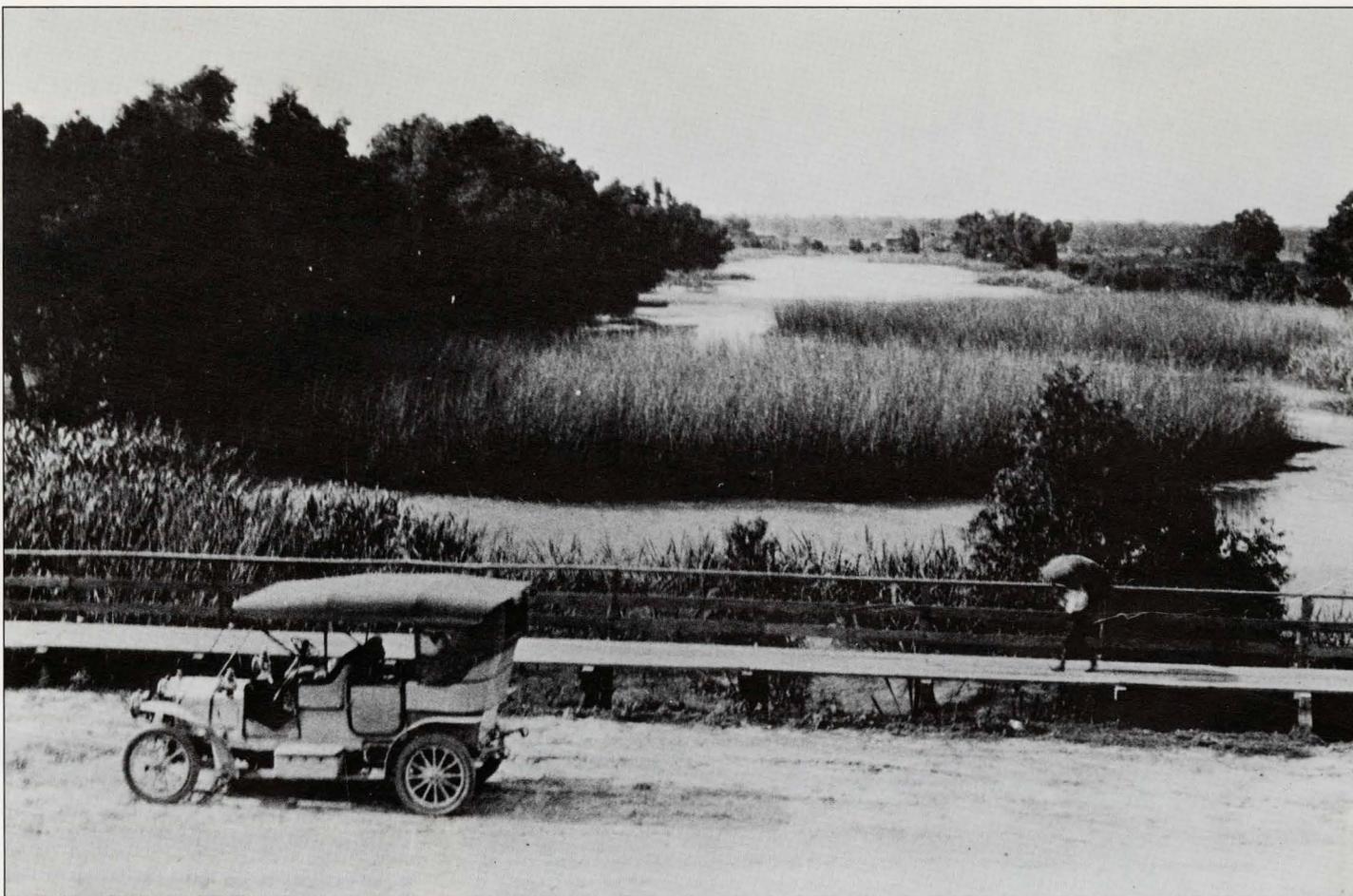
CURATORIAL

The Collection owns some 250 photographs by Morgan Whitney (1869-1913), a prosperous New Orleans businessman who was also an avid photographer. His pictures include elaborately composed still lifes incorporating native flowers, buildings of the Vieux Carré, and the countryside around New Orleans. A recent gift of 25 of Whitney’s platinum prints by library staff member Edith Norris Haupt augments this holding with views of plantation houses and grounds. Also included in the

donation are South Louisiana landscapes.

■ Just the mention of the name Major General Benjamin F. Butler (1818-1893) to New Orleanians of the Civil War era could provoke bitter reactions. The military rule that he enforced in occupied New Orleans from May to December of 1862 is the subject of history and legend. Following the war, Butler represented the state of Massachusetts as a Republican congressman from 1866 to 1875 and ran as the presidential candidate of the National Party in 1884. Although THNOC has several likenesses, both engravings and lithographs, of Butler, there was no photograph of “the beast of New Orleans” in the curatorial collections until recently. A fine *carte-de-visite* portrait of Butler by E. & H. T. Anthony, published by Mathew Brady, was donated by Gene Daymude. The gift was made in memory of John A. Mahé II.

■ A lithograph by James E. Routh, Jr., a printmaker active during the 1940s, is an addition to the curatorial holdings. Routh received a fellowship from the



Car and bayou by Morgan Whitney (1991.48.2)

Julius Rosenwald Fund, established by the Sears Roebuck magnate, and chose to portray people and places in the South. The lithograph depicts a turpentine forest.

■ The early days of the cinema might seem to bear more resemblance to variety shows than to today's films. The use of live music and projected slides was usually part of a program that included short, silent motion pictures. The Collection has acquired a series of lantern slides from the early days of New Orleans's motion-picture history. The 14 hand-colored glass slides are each labeled as property of the Crescent City Film Exchange, which operated at three different locations from 1909 until 1922. The slides, meant to be viewed in accompaniment to the song "I Am Longing for Tomorrow When I Think of Yesterday," embody the sentimental imagery often associated with the early years of the century.

—John H. Lawrence

MANUSCRIPTS

One of the most frequently used resources in the manuscripts division is the New Orleans Historic Cemetery Survey (compiled 1981-83) which contains records of nine of the city's earliest cemeteries. These holdings have been strengthened by Christ Church Cathedral's donation of records of the Girod Street Cemetery.

Bordered by Magnolia, Perrillat, South Cypress, and South Liberty streets (Girod Street ended at the South Liberty Street boundary of the square), the cemetery was deeded by the city to Christ Church Cathedral in 1822. One hundred and thirty-five years later, in a state of decay and disuse, the cemetery was deconsecrated and destroyed, with remains being reinterred elsewhere.

The records consist primarily of correspondence and tomb indexes. Letters and accompanying newspaper clippings give insight into the process of closing

the cemetery and removing remains. Alphabetical and location indexes enhance these records, providing extensive interment data.

■ Microfilm copies of *True American*, a daily rich in advertisements, market news, and shipping information is a recent addition to the division's newspaper holdings and covers the period from August 1, 1835, through December 31, 1839.

A second acquisition is a collection of the *Italian-American Digest* from 1974 through 1991. Donated by Joseph Maselli, these issues contain cultural, historical, and personal news of interest to New Orleans's Italian-American community. Another addition to the newspaper holdings is an original copy of the New Orleans *Item* of May 7, 1945, announcing the Allied victory in Europe and the end-of-war experiences and observations of New Orleans-area soldiers.

■ On April 15, 1862, the U.S.S.



Transfer of Girod Street Cemetery property, 1957. Times-Picayune photograph: seated, General L. Kemper Williams and Edmund McIlhenny, representing Christ Church Cathedral; standing, Hepburn Many and Norton Wisdom, U.S. attorneys (91-38-L)

Mississippi, a side-wheel steam frigate, ascended the Mississippi River as part of Farragut's attack on New Orleans. For the next 11 days the ship travelled between Pilottown and New Orleans, engaging in numerous battles and contributing to the destruction of the Confederate ironclad ram *Manassas*.

A manuscript journal of crew member Henry Ward Loring of Massachusetts provides an eyewitness account of activities of the *Mississippi* from May 27, 1861, to June 20, 1862. The vessel, commanded by Thomas O.

Selfridge, Sr., and named for the river, was the largest ship to enter the Mississippi up to that time. Loring writes in great detail concerning both daily crew activities and military engagements. Days between battle are filled with drills, reading, pranks, parties, and lemonade. These then give way to flames, smoke, shelling "like rain," and carnage. Loring himself was the first to board the damaged *Manassas* and hoist the conquering flag. Later, he visited New Orleans, seeing the "Catholic Cathedral" and eating ice cream.

Researchers may supplement their reading of this journal by viewing the drawings by William Waud that depict events in the river battle for New Orleans. Housed in the curatorial division, these sketches include illustrations of the *Mississippi* made by Waud when he visited the ship on April 13, 1862.

—Joseph D. Scott

ON LOAN

Items from the Collection on loan include:

- Drawings by Alfred R. Waud; broadside and plan for Belle Grove Plantation; collages and silhouette by William Henry Brown; watercolor by John H. B. Latrobe; lithograph by Saint-Aulaire; painting by John Antrobus, on exhibition in *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, Virginia; traveling to the McKissick Museum, Columbia, South Carolina, and to the Afro-American Cultural Center, Wilberforce, Ohio; through spring 1992.

- Twenty master prints by Clarence John Laughlin on exhibition in *Contours of an Unknown Land: Photographs of Clarence John Laughlin*, University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, September 3 - October 6, 1991.

- Photograph by Jay Dearborn Edwards; photograph album from the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition, 1884-85; album of cyanotypes by E. T. Adams on exhibition in *Photography in Nineteenth Century America*, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, October 26, 1991 - January 5, 1992; traveling to Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Amherst, Massachusetts, February 1, 1992 - March 29, 1992.



"Thank you, Captain Bob.": Fifth graders from St. George's Episcopal School with their teacher, Marcia Cooke, enjoy a lecture on the current exhibition at THNOC by Bob Whitman of the New Orleans Fire Department.

DONORS: JANUARY – JUNE 1991

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Le Comité des Archives de la
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Gene Daymude (in memory of
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Historian of the U. S. House of
Representatives
Robin von Breton
Mrs. Daniel Whitney
Florence P. Whitten
Tennessee Williams Festival
Samuel Wilson, Jr.
Mrs. J. Thornwell Witherspoon
Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik

Americanists... he attended an archives symposium in Maastricht, The Netherlands, for the centennial of The Netherlands's Society of Archivists.

Chuck Patch, director of systems, will moderate a session at the Museum Computer Network meeting in Santa Monica, California, in November... **Samuel George**, systems support technician, attended a course in systems management for the Hewlett-Packard 3000 computer in Atlanta.

Florence M. Jumonville, head librarian, has been appointed editor of *LLA Bulletin*, the quarterly journal of the Louisiana Library Association...she serves as chair for LLA's Subject Specialists Section and continues to chair the Louisiana Historical Association's General L. Kemper Williams Prizes Committee. Miss Jumonville and THNOC librarians **Pamela Arceneaux** and **Jessica Travis** attended the PRISM workshop sponsored by the Southeastern Library Network at Loyola University.

Doug MacCash, preparator, participated in a five-day seminar, "Care of Works on Paper," at the Campbell Center for Conservation Studies, Mt. Carroll, Illinois. **John Barbry**, manuscripts assistant, attended the Jefferson Parish Genealogical Workshop...and **Joseph Scott**, manuscripts registrar, attended a workshop on archival cataloging sponsored by the University of Texas Graduate School of Library and Information Science in July.

John H. Lawrence, curator of photographs, had photography work on exhibit at the Still-Zinsel Gallery...**Doug MacCash** designed an abstract mural for a building at the Cut Off Playground in Lower Algiers. **Margo Flake**, curatorial assistant, helped organizers for the Odyssey Ball by providing information about the airline service founded by Jimmy Wedell and Harry Williams in the late 1920s.

Media

Jon Kukla and **Dr. Jill-Karen Yakubik** appeared on WDSU-TV to talk about THNOC's archaeological dig.

STAFF

Professional Activities

Dr. Jon Kukla, curator of collections, assisted the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation in developing a grant proposal to sponsor a summer institute in 1992 on the Bill of Rights for selected Virginia secondary and middle school teachers...the grant was awarded by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution. Dr. Kukla gave a lecture on the Bill of Rights to a workshop for high school teachers, held at THNOC...he also served as evaluator for an exhibition at the Louisiana State Museum, *The Earth Trembles with his Thunder: A Social*

History of the American Alligator.

Sue Laudeman, shop manager, presided at the south-central regional meeting of the Museum Stores Association, held at the Collection in September.



Sue Laudeman

Dr. Alfred E. Lemmon, reference archivist, contributed research and oversaw the production of a concert of Spanish colonial music for the 47th International Congress of

Publications

George Washington's *Beautiful Nelly: Letters of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, 1794-1851*, edited by **Dr. Patricia Brady**, director of publications, has just been published by the University of South Carolina Press.



Patricia Brady

Jon Kukla contributed the foreword to *Letter Book of James Abercromby: Colonial Agent 1751-1773*, edited by George H. Reese and John C. Van Horne...he also reviewed two books for the *Journal of the Early Republic*. **Florence M. Jumonville** contributed two articles to the summer 1991 issue of *Louisiana History*, "Frenchmen at Heart: New Orleans Printers and Their Imprints, 1764-1803" and, in collaboration with Winston De Ville of Ville Platte, "Denis Braud's Petition to Ulloa: An Addendum to Early Louisiana Imprints." **John H. Lawrence** contributed a book review column to *LAM Newsletter* and an article concerning politics and preservation to *Preservation in Print*. **Louise C. Hoffman**, editor, wrote "The Cultural Treasures of New Orleans's French Quarter" for the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation.

Community Events

The Friends of the Cabildo gave a reception for their volunteers in THNOC's courtyard and Counting House last August.

Doug MacCash provided technical advice to Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré for a display of old photographs to commemorate the theater's 75th anniversary.

Meetings

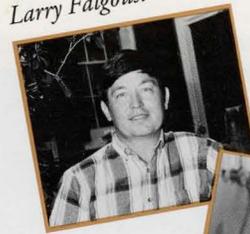
Patricia Brady attended the Mid-South Booksellers Association Trade

Susan Massey



Judy Tarantino and Margo Flake

Larry Falgoust



Thinh Phi

Show in Memphis in September. **Jon Kukla** attended the meeting of the Association for Documentary Editing in Chicago in October. **Alfred E. Lemmon** attended the meeting of the Society of American Archivists.

Changes

Susan A. Massey (M.A., Library and Information Science, Louisiana State University) has joined the staff as manuscripts cataloger...she has worked in the Rare Books Department at Tulane. **Carol Bartels**, manuscripts assistant, is now working on a full-time basis. **Judy Tarantino** and **Margo Flake** are serving as part-time curatorial assistants. **Larry Falgoust** has joined the staff as master carpenter. **Thinh Phi**, maintenance staff, has recently become an American citizen.

The following promotions have been announced: **John H. Lawrence**, senior curator; **John T. Magill** and **Judith**

H. Bonner, associate curators; **Maclyn Hickey**, assistant registrar; **Doug MacCash**, head preparator; **Chuck Patch**, director of systems; and **Samuel George**, systems support technician.

Booklovers Brunch

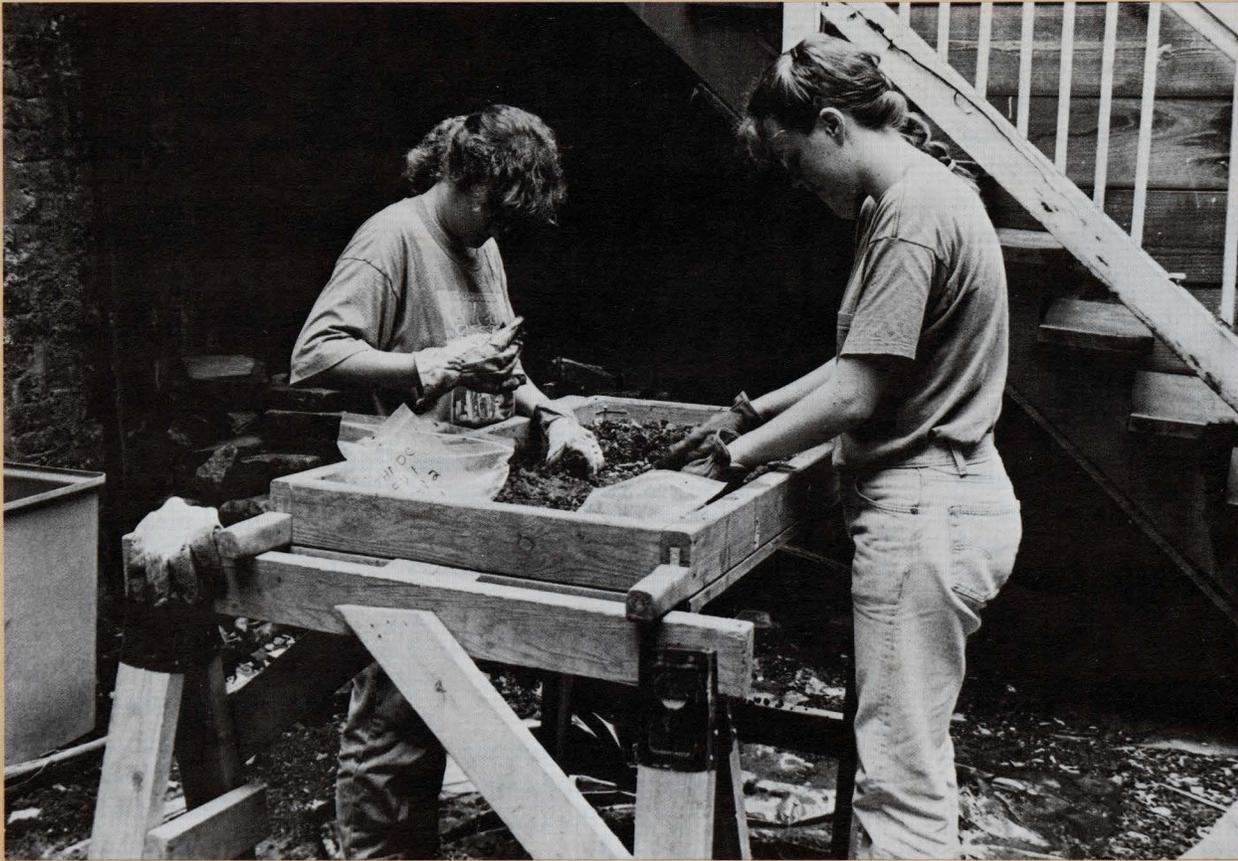
Patricia Brady, director of publications, will be a featured speaker at the annual Booklovers Brunch, sponsored by the New Orleans/Gulf South Booksellers Association on Sunday, November 17, at Patout's Restaurant on Royal Street. Authors Louis Edwards, Stephen Ambrose, and Sheila Bosworth will share the program with Dr. Brady.

Speakers Bureau

Staff members have recently made presentations to the following organizations: **Jon Kukla**, Jefferson Parish Genealogical Society and New Orleans Art Association...**Pamela Arceneaux**, Naim Conference Group...**Alfred Lemmon**, Lafourche Heritage Society.



Seated, **Judith Bonner**, **Samuel George**, **Carol Bartels**, **John Lawrence**, **Maclyn Hickey**; standing, **Doug MacCash**, **Chuck Patch**, and **John Magill**



Archaeology interns screen dirt through one-quarter-inch mesh at the Historic New Orleans Collection's cottage on Toulouse Street. The Collection commissioned the archaeological investigation before beginning work on the building. (See story on page 1.)

 THE HISTORIC
NEW ORLEANS
COLLECTION
NEWSLETTER

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