

# Pick your Poison: Discovering Storyville's History

By Mandy Perret

Dutchtown High

Grades 11-12

## Directions:

### All students will do the following:

1. A. Read the background information found on pages 2-5 (these pages are also attached at the end of this lesson)

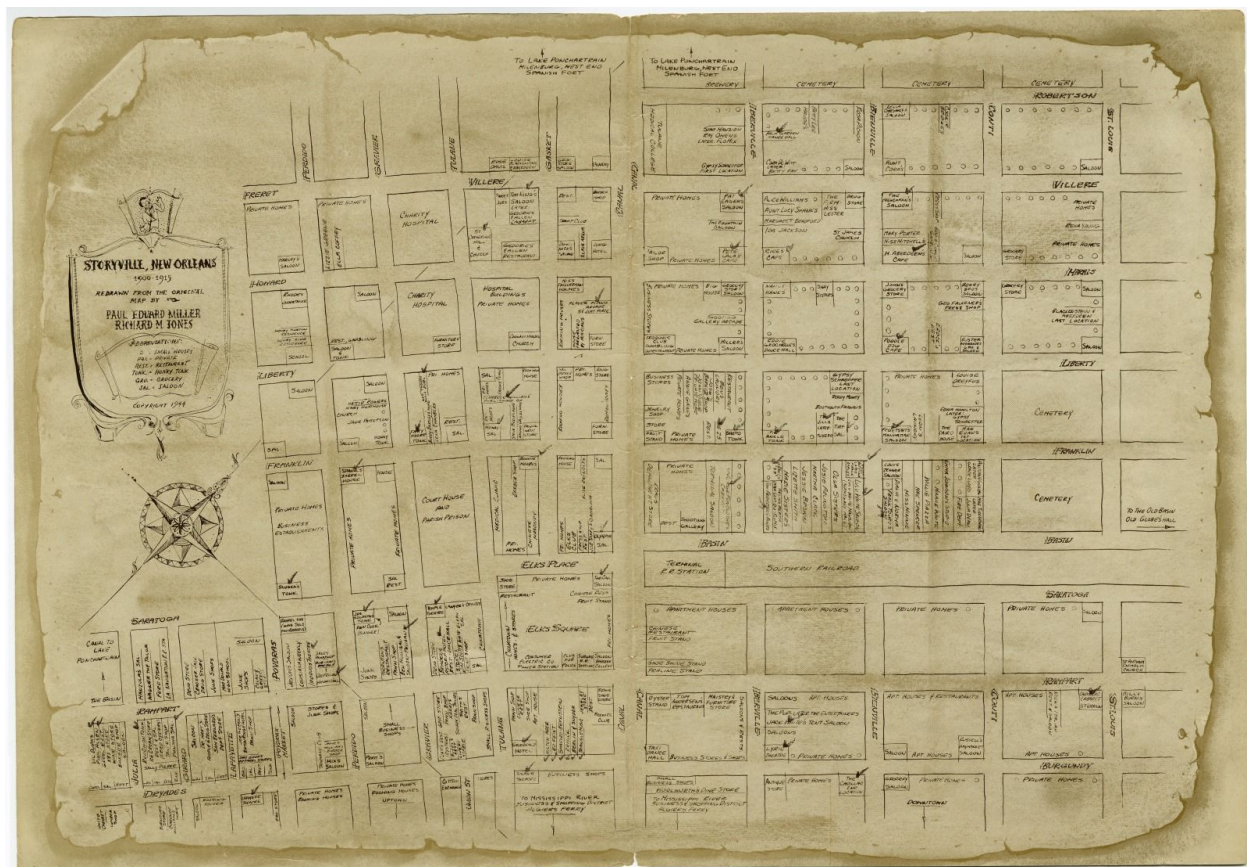
[https://www.hnoc.org/sites/default/files/quarterly/2017\\_Spring\\_Quarterly.pdf](https://www.hnoc.org/sites/default/files/quarterly/2017_Spring_Quarterly.pdf)

- B. Students can in addition or in replacement of the reading watch this video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZL0INRZS98>

2. Analyze Map Utilizing (Storyville Map, *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 1974.25.15.91)

[https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/map\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/map_analysis_worksheet.pdf)



3. After that students will learn more about the vices of Storyville utilizing the comprehensive information found here: <https://64parishes.org/entry/storyville-2>

### **3. Pick Your Poison:**

1. Music
2. Prostitution (or “Sporting Ladies”)
3. Alcohol

#### **Directions:**

Choose a topic you want to learn more about and how its presence was significant in Storyville.

#### **Part 1: Students will analyze a photograph using the National Archives worksheet**

[https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/photo\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf)

#### **Part 2: Students will analyze a writing of the time using**

[https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/written\\_document\\_analysis\\_worksheet\\_novice.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet_novice.pdf)

#### **Part 3: Listening activity utilizing**

[https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/sound\\_recording\\_analysis\\_worksheet\\_novice.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/sound_recording_analysis_worksheet_novice.pdf) unless noted in lesson (alcohol)

### **Music**

**Part I:** Photo (King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band, *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 1985.254.57)



**Part 2:** Letter from Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong Article

Letter (Letter from Jelly Roll Morton, *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, MSS 507.3)



I have never known anyone to leave N.O.  
 Victorious. the greatest ragtime player came <sup>out</sup>  
 from all over the world to N.O. if they could  
 there, because the work in this line was  
 tremendous, with fabulous gains, jazz music  
 was originated by me in a small ~~back~~  
 desolated back room by day, & the saloon part  
 with plenty daylight, the Frenchmans <sup>in</sup> this place did  
 its biggest business from 4 AM till about 1 PM  
 the back room would be lighted early in the  
 nights, about the same time the saloon lights  
 would go on, "but" apparently not used till later.  
 N.O. was accredited at that time as the second  
 greatest Tenderloin district in the world, second  
 only to Paris, France, that was before the  
 electric piano days & every house that could  
 afford it, would have, what they called, their  
 professor, Alfred Wilson, Albert Cahill, Sammy  
 Harris, did not care to work, they would  
 prefer to gamble, they all had clothes on top  
 of clothes, diamonds, studs, D. Rings, D. Suspenders,  
 cuff buttons D. Garters & etc & every place they  
 could think ~~up a place~~ to put a one or more.  
 & money had no value, for instance Ed  
 Moshay, a very mediocre pianist & big time  
 ladies man & gambler, died about four years <sup>ago</sup>  
 I understand he was broke, but left 114 ex-  
 pensive suits of clothes. well when an, a-1 <sup>man</sup>

# Article

Article by Louis Armstrong about Storyville <http://hnoc.minisisinc.com/thnoc/catalog/3/32954>

**Part III Listening:** Please pick 3 pieces

(<http://www.storyvilledistrictnola.com/svillebluesjazz.html>) and analyze

### **Prostitution**

**Part I Photo:** (Storyville Girl Posing Outdoors (standing), *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 1981.177.1)



Part II Writing: Advertisements

1. (ADVERTISEMENT FOR COUNTESS WILLIE PIAZZA'S ESTABLISHMENT AT 317 N. BASIN, *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 1978.214.5)



## Countess Willie Piazza

Is one place in the Tenderloin District you can't very well afford to miss. The Countess Piazza has made it a study to try and make everyone jovial who visits her house. If you have the "blues," the Countess and her girls can cure them. She has, without doubt, the most handsome and intelligent octoroons in the United States. You should see them; they are all entertainers.

If there is anything new in the singing and dancing line that you would like to see while in Storyville, Piazzis is the place to visit, especially when one is out hopping with friends—the women in particular.

The Countess wishes it to be known that while her mansion is peerless in every respect, she only serves the "amber fluid."

"Just ask for Willie Piazzis."

PHONE 4832 MAIN

### 317 N. Basin



## Miss Gertrude Dix

This palatial home was at one time the residence of Miss Hilma Burt, who was noted for keeping one of the best equipped places of its kind in this section of the States.

Miss Dix, while very young, is of a type that pleases most men of to-day—the witty, pretty and natty—a lady of fashion. Her managerial possibilities are phenomenal to say the least, and her success here has proven itself beyond a doubt.

Miss Dix has been with us but a short while but has won all hearts. Her palace is second to none. It is good for one who loves the beautiful to visit Miss Dix's handsome ladies—one can only realize the palace. There are no words for her grandeur of feminine beauty and artistic settings after an hour or so in the palace of Miss Dix.

Miss Dix has an orchestra in her ballroom that should be heard—all talented singers and dancers.

PHONE MAIN 299

## 205 N. Basin

2. (Advertisement for Miss Gertrude Dix's palatial home at 205 N. Basin, The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1978.214.6)

**Part III Listening:** YouTube video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h3GqSTMxaFM> (info need to be shortened 0:00-7:45) analyze using [https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/video\\_analysis\\_worksheet\\_novice.pdf](https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/video_analysis_worksheet_novice.pdf)

## Alcohol

### Part I Photo:

(<https://www.cardcow.com/231323/view-grottoe-caverns-grunewald-hotel-orleans-louisiana/>)



**Part II Writing:** Advertisements ("Washing It Down!.. Cartoon. *Times-Picayune*, Monday, April 3, 1933.)

THE TIMES-PICAYUNE, MONDAY, APRIL 3, 1933

*Washing It Down!*



**Times Picayune, April 3, 1933**

### Part III- Article

<http://sallyasherarts.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Roosevelt-Prohibition.pdf>

Analyze using this sheet <https://www-tc.pbs.org/now/classroom/acrobat/lesson05.pdf>

Advertisement: Analyze using this sheet

[http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/activities/political-cartoon/lm\\_cart\\_analysis\\_guide.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/activities/political-cartoon/lm_cart_analysis_guide.pdf)





Background information for this can be found here

[http://www.neworleansbar.org/uploads/files/Cartoons%20Through%20the%20Years,%20Part%20One%208%2010%2017\(1\).pdf](http://www.neworleansbar.org/uploads/files/Cartoons%20Through%20the%20Years,%20Part%20One%208%2010%2017(1).pdf)

### Additional Resources for Teachers

New Orleans Bar Association Article on Alcohol

[http://www.neworleansbar.org/uploads/files/Prohibition%20in%20New%20Orleans 1-8.pdf](http://www.neworleansbar.org/uploads/files/Prohibition%20in%20New%20Orleans%201-8.pdf)

Podcasts

<https://www.missedinhistory.com/podcasts/the-red-light-district-of-new-orleans-transcript.htm>

<http://www.betweenthelinernotes.com/episodes-1/2016/6/20/11-the-district>-focused on jazz

Information on Blue Books at Sporting Ladies

<http://www.storyvilledistrictnola.com/bluebook.html>

Background History <https://64parishes.org/entry/storyville-2> and

<http://www.storyvilledistrictnola.com/history.html>

Additional resource <https://wostoryville.wordpress.com/sources/>

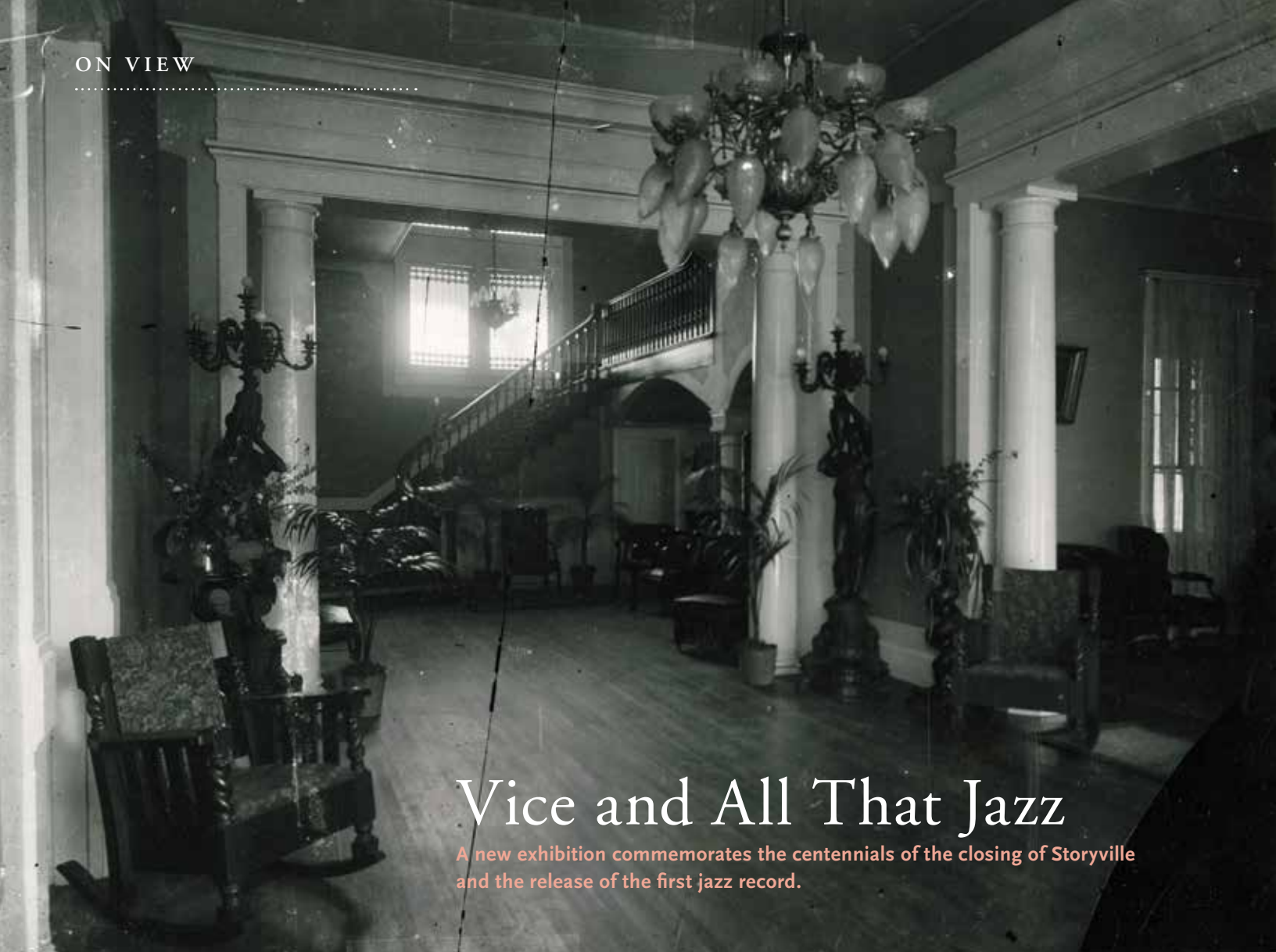
Additional reading with resources <https://archive.archaeology.org/0211/abstracts/storyville.html>

Additional reading on feminism and jazz viewpoint

[https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/New\\_Orleans\\_Jazzwomen\\_RS-2.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/New_Orleans_Jazzwomen_RS-2.pdf)

Additional reading about jazz in New Orleans

<https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/jazz-map.htm>



# Vice and All That Jazz

A new exhibition commemorates the centennials of the closing of Storyville and the release of the first jazz record.

## EXHIBITION

### *Storyville: Madams and Music*

April 5–December 2, 2017

Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres Street

Free

#### A. Storyville interior

ca. 1905; gelatin silver print  
negative by Ernest J. Bellocq  
1981.177.22

In the 100 years since its closing, Storyville has remained alive within the cultural imagination of New Orleans. Much of the city's Dionysian identity can be traced to the immensely profitable District, which grew into a leading tourist draw during its 20-year history. In addition to featuring the centennial of the closing of the District, 2017 also marks the 100-year anniversary of what is generally regarded as the first jazz record. "Livery Stable Blues" and "Dixieland Jass Band One-Step," recorded for Victor by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a group of white New Orleans musicians, was released in early March 1917 and contributed to the growing popularity of New Orleans black vernacular music among international and interracial audiences. The new exhibition *Storyville: Madams and Music* examines the rise and fall of New Orleans's red-light district while using its temporal and physical boundaries to frame a discussion on the development of New Orleans jazz.

In 1897 Alderman Sidney Story prepared and sponsored legislation to segregate and regulate the activities of New Orleans's "lewd and abandoned women," by denying them the use of housing for the sex trade outside a designated vice district, just north of the French Quarter. Concurrently, a separate red-light district for African American patrons operated quasi-legally in a nearby area, close to the site of present-day City Hall. For the next two decades, the district comprised a profitable and significant component of the city's economy as an entertainment hub, becoming a linchpin for the emerging winter tourism season.



The fabled mansions of Storyville stood clustered along or near Basin Street, facing the Southern Railway line, which terminated at the station on Canal Street. Though many of the structures existed prior to the working-class neighborhood's designation as a vice district, a few were specially built by enterprising investors to be among the most lavish bordellos in the country. The Arlington, Lulu White's Mahogany Hall, and the Star Mansion, among others, were touted as the most costly and elaborately furnished establishments anywhere. Contemporary photographs included in the exhibition depict the elegant interiors of these top-flight sporting houses—a popular euphemism designed to project a sense of elite masculinity and refinement. Artifacts from the brothels—including the transom that hung above the entrance to Lulu White's and a mirrored panel from the music room of the Arlington—demonstrate the material opulence of the buildings.

The most exclusive brothels featured piano players or small string ensembles, who worked mostly for tips. Customers frequently wanted to hear popular tunes from Broadway shows and the Ziegfeld Follies, opera and operetta favorites, and ragtime hits. Bawdy lyrics sometimes replaced the original words to the songs and were often sung by the piano player, the madam herself, or the prostitutes in her employ. Musicians had to be prepared to play anything the customer wanted to hear, the variety of which can be seen in the 20-plus copies of popular sheet music on display.

Away from Basin Street, the district also contained numerous “cribs,” crude one- or two-room structures or larger buildings partitioned into small spaces, where women worked in shifts under terrible conditions, as well as saloons, dance halls, and cabarets employing numerous musicians. Photographs in the exhibition show rows of cribs and dance clubs, and contemporary maps highlight the density and working conditions of these establishments.



C



B

**B. “Livery Stable Blues”**

by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band  
New Orleans: Victor Records, 1917  
*The William Russell Jazz Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection, acquisition made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, 92-48-L.54*

**C. View of Basin Street**

ca. 1908  
*gift of Albert Louis Lieutaud, 1957.101*

**D. Tony Jackson**

ca. 1915; gelatin silver print  
*The William Russell Jazz Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection, acquisition made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, 92-48-L.241*



D



E

**E. Jelly Roll Morton**

before 1920; gelatin silver print  
*The William Russell Jazz Collection at The  
 Historic New Orleans Collection, acquisition  
 made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne  
 Grima Fund, 92-48-L.74*

**F. Mirror panel from the Arlington's music room**

ca. 1900  
 2015.0204

**G. Blue Book**

[1903]  
 2006.0237

**H. Directory page from Blue Book**

[1905]  
 1969.19.6

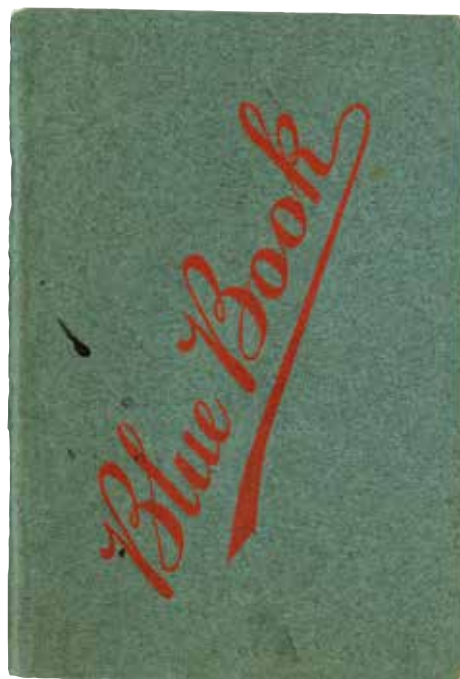
The District offered a large number of jobs and unrivaled profitability for musicians in the area, who, with only a few exceptions (the piano player Kid Ross being the most well-known), were of African descent. The sheer number of jobs and close working conditions provided a fertile environment in which to experiment, challenge, and learn from one another, and this bounty of musical exchange played a major role in the development of New Orleans jazz. Oral histories from Manuel Manetta and Rosalind Johnson and written materials from Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton—all part of THNOC's William Russell Jazz Collection—paint a vivid picture of the music scene within the brothels, cabarets, and honky-tonks. Clarinets owned by the early jazz pioneers Manetta and Johnny Dodds are also on display.



F

To help visitors navigate the District, guidebooks, known as blue books, were published and distributed with information on the various brothels and prostitutes in Storyville, as well as the best places to hear music and go dancing. A dedicated space within the exhibition focuses on the books, with digitized copies for visitors to examine in full.

Exploitation, displacement, and segregation also played principal roles in the complex history of New Orleans's red-light districts. A draft of the 1897 ordinance establishing Storyville had included a provision designating a nearby district for black patrons, but that language was removed. A prostitution district serving patrons of color already operated, and it continued to do so without the explicit legal protection afforded to Storyville. Segregation in Storyville was far from simple: many brothels were owned and staffed by women of color, and while the high-end establishments rejected black patrons, many of the cribs and lesser brothels were open across the color line. Many Storyville nightclubs operated as "black and tans"—some run by African Americans—where integrated audiences were tolerated by law enforcement and many whites eagerly consumed black culture. Cases of human trafficking and violence were not uncommon. When it was proposed early in 1917 that the district be formally segregated, which would have forced the many women of color working in



COLOR. NAME.		ADDRESS.
C	CHRISTMAS, BESSIE	1531 Iberville
C	WIBIA, Sarah	"
W	SHERMAN, FRANKIE	1533 Iberville
W	Edwards, Abbie	"
Oct.	GONZALES, ANTONIO	1535 Iberville
Oct.	West, Lilly	"
Oct.	Blackman, Pearl	"
Oct.	Cobbwell, Mamie	"
Oct.	McKnight, Lillian	"
Oct.	Cohen, Jannie	"
W	CUMMINGS, BESSIE	1539 Iberville
W	Cummings, Estelle	"
W	Aiken, Ellen	"
W	CARLTON, JENNIE	1536 Iberville
W	Raymond, Bessie	"
W	Aiken, Helen	"
W	SMITH, MARY	1535 Iberville
W	Russell, Katie	"
W	Dupre, Blanche	"
W	Marks, Mamie	"
W	HOPE, JENNIE	1540 Iberville
W	WRIGHT, ALICE	1541 Iberville
W	Smith, Nellie	"
W	DAVIS, ELZA	1545 Iberville
W	Sheldon, Ray	"
W	Davis, Silvia	"
W	LAMBERT, FANNIE	1547 Iberville
W	Wells, Maud	"
W	Clements, Stella	"
W	Leroy, Maud	"
W	Merritt, Daisy	"

G

H



**I. Storyville interior**

ca. 1905; gelatin silver print  
negative by Ernest J. Bellocq  
1981.177.20

**J. and K. Pages from *Sporting Guide, of the Tenderloin District of New Orleans, La.***

[1902]

1969.19.3

**L. *City of New Orleans vs. Willie V. Piazza***

1917; pamphlet

*The William Russell Jazz Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection, acquisition made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, 92-48-L.255*

Storyville to relocate uptown, several prominent madams of color, led by Willie V. Piazza, filed suit to retain their properties and won. A copy of the Louisiana Supreme Court's decision in the case—one of the first legal victories in the decades-long fight against Jim Crow segregation—is on display in the exhibition.

When the United States entered World War I, in 1917, the federal government prohibited open prostitution within five miles of any military installation, forcing the closure of red-light districts across the nation. Earlier that same year, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's Victor recordings became an international hit, helping to spread the popularity of New Orleans jazz music. The curtain fell on Storyville on November 12, 1917, and an era that would help define New Orleans came to a close. —ERIC SEIFERTH, PAMELA D.

ARCENEUX, AND JOHN H. LAWRENCE

