

SECRET

NEW ORLEANS



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JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

M.S. RAU ANTIQUES' SECRET ROOM ②

An eclectic catalog of goods only hinted at by the storefront

630 Royal Street

Tel: 1-888-711-8084 or 855-640-8046

Email: info@rauantiques.com

Open: Mon-Sat 9am-5:15pm

#5 Marigny-Bywater bus or Riverfront streetcar



M.S. Rau Antiques - North America's largest antique emporium - is well known for its luxurious French Quarter showroom, beautiful antiques and jewelry from Cartier, Tiffany and Van Cleef & Arpels. Its "secret room," is much less famous, though it can be accessed by simply asking for it politely.

A secret trompe l'oeil door opens into a tastefully lit corridor with a row of pedestals displaying exquisite and expensive works of art, such as Napoleon's death mask. Over three floors, the secret room houses an array of museum quality treasures, many with great historical as well as artistic value.

On any given day you may find here original paintings by the likes of Monet, Norman Rockwell, Toulouse Lautrec, de Kooning, Hassam, Chagall and Van Gogh, just to drop a few names.

Other interesting artifacts that are on hand or have previously been for sale are mint quality vintage arcade games, a player piano in a gorgeous wood armoire with player violins, a World War II Enigma machine, a 150,000-year-old Ice Age bear skeleton standing eight feet tall, and even an intricate seven-piece bedroom set from the bedroom of King Farouk. All of these have at one time been among the eclectic catalog of goods only hinted at by the small, ornate storefront on Royal Street. And the collection is always changing because, unlike in a museum, everything you see here is for sale.

The sex chair of Queen Victoria's son, Prince Edward

The most provocative and talked about item ever sold at M.S. Rau was a sex chair built in the 1880s for Queen Victoria's son, Prince Edward. It was designed to hold his weight during forays to French bordellos in the days before he became King Edward VII.

MARBLE HALL

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The finest business hall in the world

423 Canal Street

Tel: 504-589-6094 ext 111 (call ahead to make arrangements)

[www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/actionParameter/](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/actionParameter/exploreByBuilding/buildingId/925)

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Open: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm

Canal streetcar

A magnificent public space now hidden from view inside a federal building on the second floor, the Marble Hall is perhaps the most beautiful interior in New Orleans.

Called the finest Greek Revival interior in the United States, in its heyday it was considered the finest business hall in the world. Today it sits mostly silent, used only sparingly for special occasions. It is a revelation when first seen, but is relatively unknown even among lifelong Orleanians. It stands 55 feet high, 128 feet long and 54 feet wide, its cornice supported by 14 huge 41-foot Corinthian columns, each topped with the heads of Mercury, god of commerce (among other duties), and Luna, whose crescent shaped brows are a nod to the crescent shape of the city.

The ceiling is a geometric pattern of glass that allows natural sunlight to enter the chamber. Hand cranks that were once used to open the

roof for ventilation in the days before air conditioning are still present. On the N. Peters Street entrance, now the side entrance, are large bas-relief sculptures of Bienville (the founder of New Orleans), Andrew Jackson (the hero of the Battle of New Orleans), and a pelican feeding her young, the symbol of the State of Louisiana.

Construction began in 1848 with a cornerstone laid by the great American statesman Henry Clay, but the building was not finished until eight architects later, after the intervention of the Civil War in 1881. Ship's captains would declare their cargo and pay their tariffs in this great room, the floor of which lay over a large carriageway to transfer that cargo. The room was used for this purpose right up until Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Renovated in 1961 and again in 1993, the building now houses various federal offices. As of 2008, part of the building has been home to Audubon Butterfly Garden and Insectarium, the largest free standing insect museum in the United States. Take a close look at the front exterior of the massive U.S. Customhouse near the foot of Canal Street and you'll see large modified Egyptian Revival columns. You'll probably be struck by the size of the building that occupies a whole square city block. In fact, when work to build the structure commenced in 1848 it was to be the second largest building in the United States behind the United States Capitol. Not everyone was impressed, though; Mark Twain remarked that it reminded him of a large icebox.



NEUTRAL GROUND COFFEEHOUSE

A 1960s time capsule

5110 Danel Street

Tel: 504-891-3381

www.neutralgroundcoffeehouse.com

Open: every day 7pm–Midnight

St. Charles streetcar

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Closed tight during daylight hours, the multi-colored pastel wooden doorway on Danel Street in Uptown New Orleans is the home of a rarity among American coffeehouses. It opens not in time for traditional morning coffee, but at 7pm, seven days a week.

Coffee is, in fact, not the *raison d'être* for the Neutral Ground; music is.

The decor has been described as funky, mellow, early flea market, laid back, eclectic and a 1960s time capsule. Indeed, the overall feel of the place is peaceful and welcoming and could almost be described as a 'found environment'.

As you enter, your visual sense is overloaded; from the barge board walls to the array of mismatched furniture, including an old sofa or two, an easy chair, picnic tables, bar stools and church pews; a pressed tin ceiling and a pillow room, which is like a suburban den meets a yurt-enclosed area in the back, tricked out with pillows.

The Neutral Ground serves neither hot food nor alcohol and is open to all ages seeking conversation or community. Its main claim to fame is music.

Seven days a week, from seven to eleven most nights, musicians book one-hour slots. The style of music tends toward folk and Americana, but you'll also find jazz, hip-hop, pop standards and rock played by a range of ages.

Many locals started out here. The coffeehouse affords amateurs and professionals alike a place to share and experiment with new songs and a live audience. The basket is passed round after the gig and many young people get the thrill of making a buck off their art for the first time.

Well known performers have played here over the years: Gina Forsyth, Jim McCormick, Lucinda Williams, Biff Rose, Pat Flory and Anders Osborne are but a few prominent locals who have gone on to successful musical careers.

The Neutral Ground started off in 1974 on Maple Street. After a fire in 1977 it became a co-op of regulars who moved to the present location in a former bar named the Red Lion. The co-op closed briefly but reopened as the Neutral Ground in 1992.

Music is not the only art form presented here. There is a poetry hour every week and a newly minted comedy hour as well. Poetry has been one of the ever-present activities here off and on since the inception of the coffeehouse, with Allen Ginsberg having read here in the early days. There is an open mic night on Sundays with 15-minute slots available on a first come first served basis.

ALFEREZ ART DECO FENCE ADORNMENTS

⑥

An artist who fought in Pancho Villa's army

Tad Gormley Stadium

City Park

5400 Stadium Drive

Tel: 504-482-4888

*Open: Tue–Thurs 10am–10pm, Fri–Sat 10am–12am, closed Monday
#91 Jackson/Esplanade bus*



It's possible that almost everyone in New Orleans has passed through the gates of the Tad Gormley Stadium, yet few may have noticed the figures sculpted by artist Enrique Alferéz.

His work has been described by art critics as idealistic, democratic and physically and intellectually accessible. These qualities are clearly exhibited in his beloved metal art deco adornments on the gates of Tad Gormley Stadium. The metallic figures are in sets of six repeating forms of men and women in various sporting poses.

The pieces were originally painted black but after a recent renovation and restoration of the stadium, they are now displayed in gleaming gold that catches the light, enhancing the beauty of the works.

Tad Gormley Stadium was built in 1935. The Stadium has since served as the main venue for high school football games in New Orleans. Due to the significance of high school sports in the city's culture, the stadium has a firm place in the personal histories of New Orleans citizens. Many people are personally represented in the stadium by engraved names on the aluminum seats, purchased in order to raise funds to help refurbish the stadium.

Over the years, the stadium has served as a venue for such varied cultural events as the 1992 United States Olympic Trials for Track and Field, an iconic 1964 appearance by The Beatles, religious gatherings, and World War II bond drives hosted by Dorothy Lamour, a native of the city.

Mr. Alferéz was the son of Mexican artists and as a young man he actually fought in Pancho Villa's army before coming to the United States to study art in Chicago under Lorado Taft. He moved to New Orleans in 1929 to work for the WPA. Throughout most of the 20th century he continued to leave his mark on both the artistic and physical landscapes of the city.



COLOMBIER DE CAROL

8

A home for pigeons to roost

56 Dreyfous Drive, behind the City Park Casino Building

Tel: 504-482-4888

#91 Jackson/Esplanade bus or Canal streetcar—City Park/Museum



Many Orleanians have probably wondered about the unusual red-dish-pink hexagonal brick building that has been sitting behind the City Park casino since 1928. Newly painted since Katrina, it always seems quiet and still. Unless you've ventured across the well-worn bridge that leads to the island it sits upon, you might never guess its purpose. But if you knew the name of the small, rarely visited island, then you might easily guess what it is. Pigeon Island is a pigeonnier - a home for pigeons to roost.

Pigeonniers were designed to provide a haven for the birds. They offer small openings with ledges upon which they could perch safe from predators. The insides of the structures are also built to make it impossible for rats, weasels or foxes to scale to the height where birds might roost.

It is hard to say if pigeons ever made any extensive use of the building and these days the bird-friendly room sits mostly empty except for bird droppings, which were traditionally valued as high-grade fertilizer at the estates where the buildings were housed.

Pigeonniers, also called 'colombiers' or 'dovecotes', were very common at one time across Europe, especially in France, and were also a source of meat and eggs.

Generally, these specially designed structures were the province of the wealthy, who were the only ones allowed to have them. In fact the general population often looked upon them not only as a perk of nobility, but also as a nuisance; often the pigeons were prone to wreak havoc on crops and property of the surrounding countryside. So strong were the feelings on this issue that after the French Revolution, a law was passed to outlaw pigeonniers in France.

The City Park pigeonniers were built by Felix Dreyfous and donated to the park in honor of the birth of his first grandchild, Carol Vera Dreyfous.



MUSIC TREE

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A totem to the renewal of New Orleans

*On the bank of Bayou St. John near the intersection of Moss Street and Orleans Avenue
Canal streetcar or #91 Jackson/Esplanade bus*



At the south end of Bayou St. John, near to its intersection with Orleans Avenue, a dead oak tree has become a work of art. It is the work of master chainsaw artist Marlin Miller, who has created similar works all over the United States. The tree sports a keyboard on its trunk, a fiddle and a guitar on one side, and a pelican on another. Miller chose to preserve the narrow branches at the top of the tree by carving birds in flight.

After the initial shaping of the tree, he burnishes the surface with a torch to add depth and then varnishes it; the varnish seeps into the tree to preserve both the image and the wood itself. Finally, it is treated to protect it from termites.

Miller receives numerous requests to apply his magic to trees, so he must pick and choose his subjects carefully. He has specific criteria that a tree must meet to qualify for his beautiful makeovers: it must be hardwood; it must be on public property; it must be in a highly visible area; and it must have some emotion tied to it. Miller said that the tree at the end of Bayou St. John met all of these requirements "perfectly".

This tree, called the 'Music Tree', actually survived the wind and flooding of Katrina only to succumb to a lightning strike during Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

The artful transformation of the tree was at the behest of organizers of the Mid-City Bayou Boogaloo, a free neighborhood music and arts festival, wishing to focus attention on the replanting of trees along the bayou. Proceeds from the festival have gone toward repopulating the bayou with trees lost to time and hurricanes.



The tree stands as a solitary sentinel all year round, except for one weekend when the shores of the bayou become a fairground for a free music festival.

DEW DROP SOCIAL & BENEVOLENT ²⁹ JAZZ HALL

The oldest intact jazz hall in the world

438 Lamarque Street
Mandeville, Louisiana
Tel: no telephone
Email: dewdropjazzhall@hotmail.com
www.dewdropjazzhall.com



The Dew Drop Social & Benevolent Jazz Hall is an old, weathered, unpainted wooden building surrounded by moss-covered oaks on Lamarque Street in the old part of Mandeville. It looks every bit the abandoned rural southern church, but it is arguably one of the most historically significant music venues in America.

Most of the year it is locked down. Sitting idle, it appears like a southern gothic canvas out of central casting. But for a dozen or so times a year, it comes alive to fulfil its original purpose as a place to perform concerts and listen to the joyful noise of jazz.

The Dew Drop Benevolent Society was created in 1885 by civic-minded African Americans to fill a need in their community for services not available through insurance. The society's goals were to care for the sick, to provide food and housing and to offer financial assistance for members in need.

In 1895, a cornerstone was laid. The present day building opened the same year, making the Dew Drop Social and Benevolent Jazz Hall the oldest intact jazz hall in the world.

Almost immediately after its opening, jazz musicians from New Orleans started to sail across Lake Pontchartrain from the resorts on the south shore, where jazz was flourishing and evolving.

Virtually every jazz great of that time is purported to have traveled to Mandeville, then a thriving resort, to play the music that would soon take the world by storm. The likes of Kid Ory, Buck Johnson, Papa Celestin, George Lewis, Buddy Pettit and Louis Armstrong came here to play. They played not only for the crowds, but also for themselves, in an environment where they could experiment and let loose, refining their sound for the outside world.

Dew Drop lore claims that Armstrong would slip back into Mandeville during the 30s and 40s to escape the pressure of his growing global celebrity, to recharge his energy and to stay connected to his musical roots.

In the 1940s, African-American business began to succeed and the need for benevolent societies began to wane. The original community leaders who started the Dew Drop passed on and the building became almost abandoned, sitting unused for nearly 60 years.

In 2007, with impetus from the National Park Service, New Orleans Jazz Commission, the George Buck Foundation, and the City Of Mandeville, the venue was brought back into use and the sounds of traditional jazz were once again heard in the small music hall.

Today, proceeds from all events go to preserve and restore the hall and to support music education.

NORTHLAKE NATURE CENTER

The original habitat of the parish

23135 US-190 Mandeville, LA.

Tel: 985-626-1238

www.northlakenature.org

Open: dawn to dusk 7 days a week

Free entry



St. Tammany Parish, just 45 minutes north of New Orleans, is one of the fastest growing suburbs in the United States. It has seen explosive suburban growth in the past 40 years, yet the Northlake Nature Center, located just east of the city of Mandeville, sits veiled from view, preserving the natural feel of the area and transporting the visitor back into the original habitat of the parish.

After parking your car in the small parking lot and walking a few feet into the trees, you experience three different eco-systems: hardwood forests, pine-hardwood forests and pond swamp. These are all accessible by modern boardwalks, with overlooks and interpretive signs along trails. A new pavilion finished in 1998 gives entrée into this primitive world and facilitates educational activities.

Trails cover nearly seven miles of the 400-acre preserve, bringing you into the heart of a Louisiana wetland. There is a grove of southern magnolias, a cypress/gum swamp and a pond created by beavers, including a lodge visible from a scenic overlook. The spot teems with natural life: indigenous plants, animals and numerous bird species ranging from ducks to songbirds and even a resident flock of wild turkeys. Bayou Castine bounds the nature preserve on the west.

One of the most notable activities at the center each year is BirdFest. This happens in spring, when Louisiana's geographic location on the migration paths for birds returning to North America from wintering in Mexico and South America lends itself to some of the finer birding in the country.

There is also a human element present here. Archaeologists have found remnants of a 700-year-old Acolipissa Native American population that called this site home. Ruins of a more recent vintage can be seen in the guise of a golf course abandoned in the 1930s when its benefactor at the time, Governor Leche, was convicted and sent to prison.

The Northlake Nature Center was established in 1982 by a nonprofit organization to preserve, study and exhibit the natural and cultural resources of Southeast Louisiana and the Florida Parishes (parishes just north of New Orleans so named because they once belonged to the Republic of Florida, a short-lived sovereign state).