

CHRIS CHAMPAGNE

# SECRET LOUISIANA

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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## WILLIS-KNIGHTON TALBOT MEDICAL MUSEUM

13

*A little-known showcase of vintage medical equipment*

2105 Airline Drive, Bossier City  
318-212-8472 – [museum.wkhs.com](http://museum.wkhs.com)  
Free admission  
By appointment only

Visible only by appointment, the Willis-Knighton Talbot Medical Museum is one of the least-known museums in the state. Embedded in the Willis-Knighton Innovation Center, a facility at the forefront of medical education, the museum showcases vintage medical equipment. The intimate exhibits allow visitors to get an up-close look at the lifesaving innovations of early and mid-20th-century medicine.

The docent-led tour starts with a look at a lovingly restored Reconstruction-era doctors' buggy, followed by an overview of the development of modern medicine, with an emphasis on the Shreveport area.

The highlights of the museum – of great interest to almost anyone in the medical field but also to those who have a keen sense of history – are the once “modern” versions of an operating room, obstetric

equipment, an anesthesia machine, and even a tool kit of stainless-steel medical instruments from World War II.

The museum has a large exhibit dedicated to the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1873, an eerie echo of the Covid pandemic. Half the population in Shreveport contracted Yellow Fever during the epidemic and half of them died.

One of the most fascinating exhibits honors the career of Dr. Siporah S. Turner, an African American woman who graduated with honors from Meharry Medical School in Nashville in 1907 and practiced in Shreveport, specializing in women's health. She also ran a nursing school with her mother, Delilah Robinson.

Another exhibit honors the nurses of Shreveport. Yet another is a display of patent medicines: It is eye-opening as these elixirs were popular in U.S. society as late as the 1950s, claiming to cure all ailments when in reality they had no effect whatsoever.

The museum is located in a brand-new facility providing state-of-the-art instruction for medical and nursing students. Virtual patients simulate seizures, bleeding, and a full range of real-world reactions that give medical students a true feel for the emotional aspect of practicing and providing medical treatment for real people.



## BLUE TILE IN BENTLEY HOTEL ATRIUM

⑫

*An imperfection as recognition that only God can create perfection*

200 Desoto Street, Alexandria  
318-442-2226  
visithotelbentley.com



Hidden in plain sight among the thousands of tiles in the 10,000-sq.-ft floor of the elegant mosaic below the Bentley Hotel atrium, you'll find what is thought to be a signature of the artist/craftsperson who laid the tiles. It can take a while to find it unless someone points it out.

Among a palette that includes red, green, ivory, black, and gold hexagonal tiles, you'll find only one blue tile. One can imagine the artist's sense of pride and fun running through the tiles and thinking that even 100 years after this blue dot was set here, people might share a sense of joy by searching for it.

Joseph Bentley wanted to use as many local and American materials as possible in his hotel, and the foundation relies on limestone from the Red River. However, he still needed to import Italian marble to supply much of the sense of luxury that lives on today.

The one-off blue dot in the Bentley floor mosaic also points to an almost universal human custom practiced by artists of many cultures: incorporating an imperfection in their art as recognition that only God or nature can create perfection.

This custom is common to almost every culture. It is found prominently in Islamic art. The Navajo add imperfections to their designs called *ch'ihónit'i*, or spirit lines. Hagi pottery of Japan has built-in flaws, and even European craftsmen would add imperfections to buildings. Intentional flaws can also be found in some architectural designs: for example, in the National Cathedral in Washington, DC (when walking toward the altar down the main aisle, you must take a slightly left course to see the altar because the Great Choir area is slightly off axis to the rest of the design).



## THE TREES OF SOLES

⑤

*Hang your burdens and make them lighter*

Take Exit 97 on I-10 at Scott

Drive north on Louisiana Highway 93 for 2.5 miles

Take a left at Cocodril Road for 2 miles



On a dusty gravel country road about 2 miles from Louisiana Highway 93, it may take time and perseverance to find three tall trees decorated in a haphazard way with numerous pairs of shoes twined by shoelaces, nailed to the trees, or attached any which way the owner of the shoes could think of.

These are the Trees of Soles, a play on words (soles and souls), which provide a sense of pedestrian wonder for the visitor who stumbles upon them as they sit in a rather off-the-beaten-path spot.

Humankind has a way of finding endless ways to connect to the spiritual universe and few are as creative and touching as the Trees of Soles. A sign explains that the trees are places to hang your burdens and make them lighter.

You can bring footwear that may have been worn in difficult times of your life and throw it up into the limbs of the trees or nail it to the trunks if you desire. There are no cut-and-dried rituals although the long wind-up and toss toward the sky seems to be the preferred method.

And shoes do end up here. A lot of them. Tennis shoes, sandals, clogs, cowboy boots, dress shoes, rubber wading boots, flip flops, Nikes, baby shoes and women's pumps to name a few.

The trees have inspired and touched many who come to see them. The message is clearly a Christian one with references to Jesus central to the sign, but the inspirational message conjured from simple everyday things has a decidedly uplifting tone here.

Originally there was just one Tree of Soles. It was knocked down by Hurricane Lili in 2002.

An added plus (especially for those who are new to the area) is the fact that Exit 97 is kind of a Cajun specialty meat mecca. There are at least four large Cajun meat markets and for those who wish to partake of this south Louisiana treat, that is reason enough to stop at Scott.

## GRAND OPERA HOUSE OF THE SOUTH

8

### *A large dose of elegant nostalgia*

505 North Parkerson Avenue, Crowley  
337-785-0440  
thegrandoperahouse.org  
Mon–Fri 8am–noon

In a revitalized downtown Crowley, the rice capital of Louisiana, a once almost forgotten masterpiece sits inside a four-story building. After entering a marquee that says “Grand”, you see an exquisite wooden staircase that rises to the second floor and then you anticipate what awaits inside.

The sight is breathtaking as you enter a fully remodeled and restored theater that brings you back to the early 20th century. It looks just like



the theaters you see in period films before silent or talking movies when America's entertainers toiled and dazzled in the footlights.

The building was constructed in 1901 by a livery stable owner/sheriff and for nearly 40 years it served as hub of activity in Crowley, bringing national and international stars to Acadiana. Among the luminaries who graced its stage were Enrico Caruso, Clark Gable, Huey Long, Madame de Vilchez-Bisset of the Paris Opera, and even Babe Ruth.

The award-winning design that brought the theater back to life was the brainchild of architect Donald J. Breaux. It features four boxes close to the stage with plush armchairs upholstered in gold fabric, and angel medallions hand-painted by local artist Rhonda Stevens. The overall look of the mostly wooden structure is retro, with a large dose of elegant nostalgia. The building measures 33,000 sq. feet and seats 400.

The first floor had as colorful a history as the theater, as it once housed a saloon, a cafe, a mortuary and a pool hall. It was an early 20th-century mini-mall with vaudeville shows upstairs and later it also showed silent and talking films.

On the second floor, you'll find a small museum that testifies to the rich history of this building, with period clothing and theatrical costumes, props, photos and original playbills.

Closed around 1940, the building sat silent yet mostly intact, said to be all but forgotten as downtown Crowley (like so many once thriving small town main streets) fell on hard times. The renovation of the space and its resurrection are credited with revitalizing the downtown area of Crowley.

In 1999, philanthropist and entrepreneur L. J. Gielen purchased the building and started on the task of restoring it. In 2004, it was turned over by the Gielen family to a non-profit that runs it today. Since 2008, with the help of funds from the state of Louisiana and the federal government as well as local organizations, it has been back in business with a vengeance. National, international and local talent grace the stage regularly.

It is now truly a community space. Local children and teenagers can and do get their start on the same stage where the most famous acts in showbiz appeared. The local kids often leave a mark backstage as their contribution to the arts scene.

The Grand Opera House of the South prospered back in the day because of the presence of the railroad, the track being only a few blocks away from the theater. As Crowley was halfway between New Orleans and Houston, it was also a natural spot for travelers and entertainers to stop for the night.



## ORPHAN TRAIN MUSEUM

18

### *A poignant story*

223 South Academy Street, Opelousas  
337-948-9922  
laorphantrainmuseum.com  
Tue–Fri 10am–3pm, Sat by appointment  
Admission charge

In the heart of Opelousas, at the Le Vieux Village Complex, the Orphan Train Museum recalls a poignant story: Many of the orphans who grew into adulthood did not even know about the train as it was not talked about freely at the time.



In the early 1900s, there was a large orphan population in places like New York City. At a time when social services (where they even existed) were in their infancy in America, the New York Foundling Hospital was run by the Sisters of Charity. The sisters reached out to the wider Catholic communities around the United States with an appeal to take these children in.

The people of Opelousas responded in a big way. In 1907, the first orphan train arrived in the town. One man, Rev. John Engberink, a priest in Opelousas, had gone to New York to claim the children with orders from the Catholic communities of Opelousas. Parents there would get a receipt telling them when their children would arrive. Each child had a number, and the parents would have a matching number.

Opelousas at that time was a mostly French-speaking community, which apparently proved confusing for the new arrivals. Siblings were sometimes separated because of the language differences. In at least one case, a brother and sister were separated at the station and were only reunited 60 years later.

The Sisters of Charity and the church took assiduous notes of the children's passage and arrival to keep track of them and to make sure they were not abused and had been placed in loving environments.

Today, there are hundreds of descendants of the orphans who arrived from New York in 1907 and 1920. The museum was started by some of these descendants, and there is a brick memorial with the names of family members who were on those trains or are descended from them.

The museum has large numbers of photos, train benches, train station carts, and numerous examples of the clothes that the orphans were wearing when they arrived. There is also a mural by artist Robert Dafford depicting the train's arrival in 1907. It shows an orderly scene with Father Engberink in a prominent position. However, oral history contends that the situation was rather more chaotic than the mural might indicate!

In 2020, Alice Kearns Bernar remembered her arrival: "I had a tag in the bottom of my little dress. I was addressed to the people because they had ordered me through the Catholic priest to come there. I was sent like a package." Her dress and tag can be seen in the museum.

Today, the Sisters of Charity in New York help descendants of the orphan train trace their lineage.

The Orphan Train Museum in Opelousas is one of two such museums in the United States. The other is in Concordia, Kansas.

## FRENIER CEMETERY

29

### *The setting for a supernatural tale*

110 Frenier Road, Laplace  
504-467-0758  
cajunprideswamtours.com  
Daily 9:30am-4:15 pm

Under a canopy of trees on the edge of a swampy area where once a small town stood is a cemetery with a unique origin story. Here once stood Frenier. Today, if you want to see the place, you must take a tour and approach from the water. The remote spot does not disappoint as a setting for a supernatural tale and you'll have no trouble visualizing some powerful juju from your perch on the flat-bottom tour boat.

Julia Brown, a resident of Frenier, was quite a colorful character. She was a *traiteur*, a Cajun faith healer. Residents of the town would go to her to cure their ailments. As legend has it, they stayed away from her most of the rest of the time as she was also thought to be a voodoo priestess.

Ms. Brown, a Renaissance eccentric, was also an oracle. She had, over time, predicted more than a few disasters in other localities nearby,

and these prophecies had come to pass. She is said to have sat on her porch, guitar in hand, playing and singing songs. One of her lyrics, as the story goes, was: "One day, I'm going to die and take the whole town with me ..."

There is no record as to whether the residents held their breath when she finally died but, as might be guessed, her funeral was well attended: No one in the community wanted to tempt fate or curry disfavor with Ms. Brown, even or perhaps especially from beyond the grave. On the day of her funeral, September 29, 1915, a Category 4 hurricane hit the New Orleans area. Only about 25 miles from New Orleans, the entire town of Frenier was wiped off the map.

Every resident of Frenier was killed save two. They moved out as soon as they could, leaving nothing of the town but the cemetery. The dead were buried in unmarked graves, with Ms. Brown's grave sitting perhaps 100 yards away from the others. (After a while, a fence and gravestone were placed to remember the other residents.)

Today, the land is surrounded by water. On your visit, you'll see a lot of gators but also raccoons, turtles, blue herons and herds of wild pigs who share the bayou landscape with the vanished town.



## PETER PAN HOUSE

39

### *A reminder of the clubhouse of Peter Pan in Neverland*

2206 Louisiana Highway 308, Raceland  
 Best seen from Louisiana Highway 1, bayou side, for unintrusive photos  
 Approx. 6.6 miles west of intersection of Louisiana Highway 182  
 or 7.7 miles east of Louisiana Highway 20  
 Private residence



On Bayou Lafourche near Raceland, a haphazard collection of architectural elements might at first look like a pile of random junk. Yet this is the home and creation of artist Juliana Martin and her husband, Lance Martin. Known as the Peter Pan House, it reminds people of the clubhouse of Peter Pan in Neverland. The singular structure is best seen from across Bayou Lafourche on Louisiana Highway 1, the backyard of the home.

Started in 2004, it is a work in perpetual progress. Juliana says she has an inordinate amount of creative energy, and she needs an outlet for it. She is the artist in residence and her husband supplies the carpentry skills.

The house includes (among other things) hundreds of miscellaneous pieces of bric-a-brac, numerous salvaged windows and cypress doors, many from New Orleans, as well as an abundance of wooden shutters, mantles, doors and Victorian architectural curlicues.

The backyard consists of connected slides (eight in all), various bits of playground equipment, multiple decks, boardwalks, trampolines, hammocks, tug boat ropes, tunnels, a barge tethered to a boat launch, several road signs, an old fire hydrant, and perhaps the most distinct and most talked-about feature: water slides saved from defunct water parks in nearby Houma.

The water slide that leads to the brown waters of Bayou Lafourche led to rumors that the Martins were opening a water park. But when the authorities came by to investigate, they just found a unique home.

The property has had to be expanded to accommodate the couple's growing children, and daughter Avah and son Tolan have what many kids would consider dream bedrooms. Avah has a slide that leads down from an elevated bed, and Tolan has a tunnel in his bedroom that leads toward the bayou and gives him a vantage point from on high to survey the unique backyard.

As to the genesis of the Peter Pan House, Juliana says it was simply that the family moved in and started doing what they do. Basically, "just what came to mind," according to the couple.

A wooden dwelling serves as Juliana's office and brainstorming space. The interior is illuminated by Christmas lights, wooden carvings, paintings and statues, and a few other things such as her office chair (a wheelchair).

People often ask the Martins, "Why?". To which Juliana answers, "Why not?"

## BIG SHRIMP BOOTS

41

*A Cajun symbol thanks to the Duke of Wellington ...*

114 Tourist Drive, Gray  
Exit 202 off Louisiana Highway 90  
985-868-2732  
explorehouma.com  
Daily 9am-5pm



Outside of the Tourism Welcome Center at Gray Louisiana, a 7-ft. 6-in. pair of shrimp boots, an avatar of Cajun culture, makes a perfect photo op for tourists looking for a souvenir of their trip down on the bayou. The boots display a very south Louisiana symbol and the Cajun propensity to make fun of themselves.

A recognizable symbol to Louisianians, the boots are a staple of shrimping and fisherman design, yet they do serve a purpose: They keep your feet dry and perhaps afford a safe foothold so you won't fall off the boat.

Shrimping is a thriving way of life in this part of the world and has a documented history as an entrepreneurial endeavor going back as far as a report by the French explorer Le Page du Pratz in 1774. The industry pumps millions of dollars into the economy of Louisiana.

Among playful nicknames for the white boots are Cajun Reeboks, Chalmette Nikes, and Cocodrie Converse. You will even find beauty queens wearing them at pageants or they might appear in miniature as a Mardi Gras throw. The boots are a sure sign of the link to the local zeitgeist.

Yet, the origin of the design of the modern shrimp boot – adapted to make it easy to kick off if you fall into the drink (as it might be problematic to swim in waters teeming with alligators) – has a far-reaching historical connection.

The year was 1817, and the celebrated British war hero the Duke of Wellington tasked his personal shoemaker to design a boot based on the Hessian boot. Hoby, the shoemaker, streamlined the boot, and the fashion caught on in Britain. The upper class wore the new Wellington boot, which you may know as a “wellie.”

In 1852, Charles Goodyear patented a process to vulcanize rubber in the manufacture of tires. A gentleman named Hiram Hutchinson purchased the patent with the idea of using it to make boots. Hutchinson, an American, opened his footwear manufacturing plant in France under the name A l'Aigle, which references the American Eagle. At the time, all agricultural workers in France toiled in the fields in wooden clogs. Soon everyone was plying their trade in rubber boots, keeping their feet drier and healthier.

In the trenches during both World Wars, the British army ordered the Wellington boots for its soldiers. Sometime in the years following World War II, the rubber boots – the forerunners of today's Cajun Reeboks – became a staple of the fishing industry.

## DWIGHT EISENHOWER'S AIR FORCE ONE

42

### *The smallest plane ever used as Air Force One*

Regional Military Museum  
1154 Barrow Street, Houma  
985-873-8200  
regionalmilitarymuseum.com  
Mon-Fri 10am-4pm, Sat 10am-2pm

**A**t the center of one of the exhibition rooms at the Regional Military Museum in Houma, an Aero Commander 680 twin-prop plane built in 1956 sits with the words "Air Force One" prominently proclaimed.

This was the plane that President Dwight Eisenhower used for short flights that did not require a large aircraft. Eisenhower, a pilot, loved to fly the plane himself, mostly on flights to his home town of Gettysburg or to Camp David, the famous presidential retreat he renamed after his grandson.

The plane, which may be examined from up close, was used until Eisenhower's term ended in 1961 and today it seems extraordinary that a U.S. president was squired around in what by today's standards is a very small aircraft. Measuring approximately 35 x 14 ft. with a 44-ft. wingspan, the plane weighs in at 4,200 lb. As such, it was the smallest plane

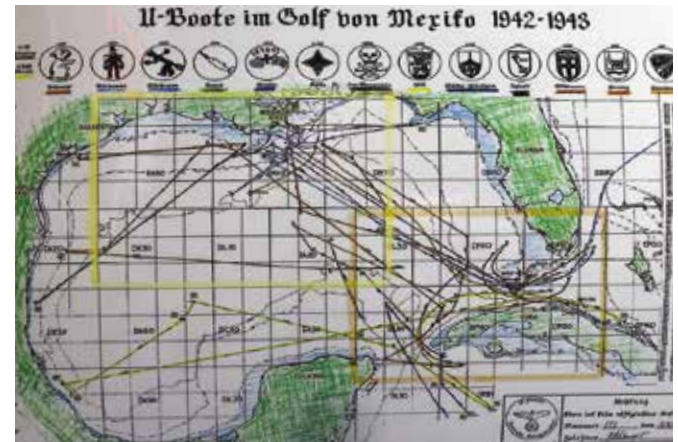


ever utilized as Air Force One. It could accommodate eight passengers and was equipped with a bed after Eisenhower suffered a heart attack.

The plane's flight log is on display at the Regional Military Museum and visitors are welcome to thumb through it. One of Eisenhower's passengers noted in the log is Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander of the British Eighth Army during World War II.

The plane was taken out of presidential service in 1960 and bounced around since then before landing in Houma. For a time, it was used by the civil air patrol in Nebraska and then as a parachute jump training vehicle at the Air Force Academy. It eventually ended up at the Wedell-Williams Aviation & Cypress Sawmill Museum in Patterson. When the museum expanded and modernized, the plane was loaned to the museum in Houma in 2010. The back wall had to be removed to accommodate the 44-ft. wingspan: As the wing is made from one piece, it couldn't be removed.

The rest of this very fine museum has an extensive display relating to all the conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries.



German U-boat map of U-boat activity in the Gulf of Mexico in World War II.

### *Two Air Force Ones in the air at the same time*

Few people know that there are two Air Force Ones: At any given time, when the U.S. president is in flight, there are two planes in the air to foil any foul play. But this model plane was the first to have the blue-and-white painted emblem still used today on the outside of Air Force One.

## THE OLD HICKORY RAILROAD

①

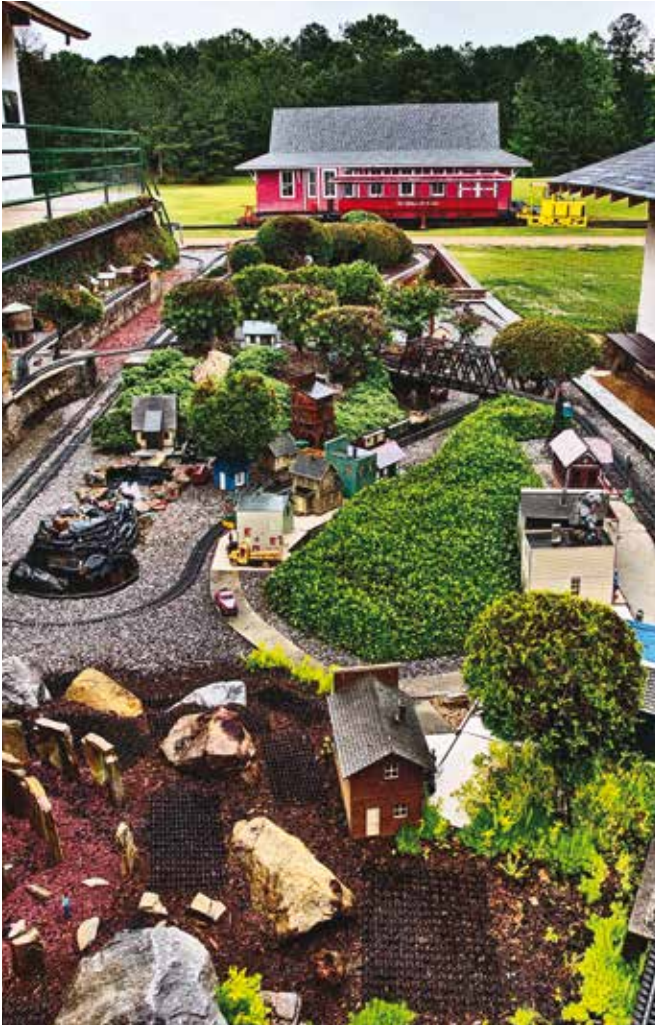
*A wonderland in an unexpected place*

3312 College Street, Jackson

225-634-7397

[louisianasteamtrain.com](http://louisianasteamtrain.com)

2nd and 4th Sat of the month: 10am–2pm



Right on College Street (named after the fact that Centenary College was first situated here), just two blocks from Louisiana Highway 10, you'll find an extraordinary pathway back to your childhood or just an amazingly playful situation that probably appeals to the child in every one of us: a model train wonderland in an unexpected location.

Up on the hill where the Republic of West Florida Historical Museum is situated, this little gem of an outdoor model train display is complete with trucks, railroad cars, tunnels, trestles and miniature buildings from the heyday of railroads in one of the most skillfully put-together setups you will likely see anywhere.

This miniature world is the creation of the Greater Baton Rouge Model Railroaders, a non-profit organization that has been in existence for over 20 years.

The beautiful outdoor train display, often landscaped with real plants, including what appear to be sculpted bonsai trees, is only scratching the surface of this attraction.

Inside the several buildings of the Republic of West Florida Museum is a galaxy of model trains with up to seven layouts at any given time. Everything from O, H, S, G gauge, N, HO and even a Z scale, which, for those not in the know, is the smallest model train size.

There are up to five complete track systems, each equipped with all the bells and whistles of model railroading. There are track switches, bridges, water towers and train cars of every description and color as well as buildings, train depots and small “humans” to give a sense of scale (some appear to be in poses that add to the sense of whimsy).

Twice a month (see opposite), train enthusiasts are there to explain the gamut of the model train world: the setups, the gauges, the history of the different companies and all the whys and wherefores of model training. The non-profit also teaches about real railroading and explains how this practical, yet romantic transportation system works in the real world.

Another feature is a special setup to accommodate model steam train engines: You can see them in action as well, with a view of the technology that hurtled the U.S. into the future over 175 years ago.

You can learn model making, model landscaping, how to make realistic scenery and how to build your own miniature railroad. You can also bring your own model train cars and equipment and get instruction on how to get them rolling again.

## A PENCIL-EMBEDDED CEILING ⑫

*The result of a substantial bomb blast that rocked the Senate in 1970*

Louisiana Senate Chamber  
900 North Third Street, Baton Rouge  
225-342-7317  
[crt.state.la.us/tourism/welcome-centers/state-capitol/](http://crt.state.la.us/tourism/welcome-centers/state-capitol/)  
8am–4:30pm daily (except New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day)

As you enter the ornate Louisiana Senate Chamber after walking through the impressive mural entitled “The Abundance of Earth” from the Rotunda, look up as you enter the beautiful Art Deco Louisiana State Senate Chamber: You will see an object embedded in the ceiling in one of the 64 hexagonal tile sections, one for every parish in Louisiana. The object may be a little hard to glimpse from the vantage point of the Senate floor, but it’s a pencil that has been stuck there since 1970. The best vantage point to see it is from the right side of the chamber.

The pencil, along with another piece of wood, came to be embedded at the top of one of the columns due to a substantial bomb blast that



rocked the Senate in 1970: Luckily, the chamber was empty as it was a Sunday morning. At a time when the Louisiana legislature was engaged in a heated debate on the passage of a right to work bill, many people believed the blast was related to this contentious labor issue.

There are press reports claiming that there was a note-taking responsibility for the bomb as retaliation for the police shooting of three African Americans. As time goes by, the truth seems to become more elusive. Whoever was responsible and whatever their motives, the culprits were never found.

Luckily the bomb, which was reported to be up to 30 sticks of dynamite, went off when there was no one in the chamber, and no one was hurt. However, the explosion was so powerful that it tore away the first few rows of the chamber; two of the original four marble columns had to be restored.



The Senate Chamber itself is a sight to behold, a masterpiece of Classicism and Art Deco. Built in 1939 to Huey Long’s specifications amid the Great Depression, its lavish materials and artistic extravagance belie the fact that it was constructed in the midst of hard times. The ornate walls and columns of Famosa Violet marble from Germany and Brocattelle Violet marble from France speak to Long’s goal to build a legacy. The floors are made from Roman travertine. The desks are fashioned from American walnut and inlaid with white holly. There are hand-carved chairs for every desk and Art Deco ornamentation wherever your eye wanders. Louisiana politics is often as colorful as the ornate Louisiana Capitol built by Huey Long. On September 8, 1935, Long was assassinated in the corridors of one of the crowning achievements of his political career. Whenever you find yourself in the Louisiana State Capitol, you should linger and take in the Art Deco majesty of the place. It’s nothing short of a masterpiece of interior design.

## HURRICANE KATRINA MEMORIAL 24

*One of the most atmospheric symbolic artifacts you'll ever see*

*Shell Beach at Land's End, at the end of Highway 46  
50 miles from New Orleans*



The Katrina memorial at Shell Beach is one of the most atmospheric symbolic artifacts you'll ever see: It sits at the end of the tangible land and arises from the sea that gives life to the community of St. Bernard.

The memorial – a metallic cross with the stylized face of Jesus – sits a few feet offshore at land's end on Shell Beach. It juts out of the waters joined by a black marble roster of the names of all the citizens of St. Bernard who perished in the flooding of the monster hurricane in 2005.

St. Bernard Parish was one of the Louisiana areas hardest hit by Katrina, but it did not receive as much media attention as New Orleans (which it abuts) even though it was almost entirely under water. Indeed, if the flood lines on New Orleans homes are a literal sign and reminder of Katrina's fury, it's telling that many homes in St. Bernard have no flood lines ... because in most cases the houses in this low-lying parish south of New Orleans were completely covered by the floodwaters.

As you drive toward Shell Beach today, you'll see many houses and house trailers now built high in the air in anticipation of future floods. The sight speaks volumes about the vulnerability of coastal communities in an age of heightened climate awareness.

### *"Sportsman's Paradise"*

As you get closer to Shell Beach and the Katrina memorial, you are treated to the picturesque scene of a maritime area dedicated to fishing and shrimping: boat launches, advertisements for oysters by the sack, shrimp for sale, stacks of crab traps, numerous vessels hanging above the water awaiting the next fishing trip, shrimp boats docked after working the Gulf all night. These and other accoutrements of local occupations and pastimes make Louisiana live up to the nickname that for years graced its auto license plates: "Sportsman's Paradise." The shrimp boats, with their unusual design, symbolize a way of life in peril due to climate change.



CHRIS CHAMPAGNE



**SECRET**

# LOUISIANA

## AN UNUSUAL GUIDE

The smallest church in the world, the grave of two dogs who got married, a tree where old shoes promise to unburden your soul, the only example of Congo-style architecture built by African Americans, the one-time capital of Texas, one of the most humorous “battles” of World War II, millions of years-old fossils on the side of a highway, the site of the finest wedding ever to take place in the South, the world’s largest bald cypress tree, the flag of the Republic of West Florida (an independent country for two months in 1810), the world’s largest chimpanzee sanctuary, the highest natural summit in Louisiana, the oldest human-fabricated structures in the Americas, one of the most mysterious headstone carvings you’re likely to see anywhere, the only international boundary marker in the contiguous United States, the smallest plane ever used as Air Force One, a full dinosaur hidden in the heart of Baton Rouge ...

An indispensable guide for those who thought they knew Louisiana well or would like to discover another side of the state.

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