

Halloween in New Orleans

Mardi Gras and Halloween are especially fun times to visit New Orleans. We timed our 2009 visit to coincide with JJ Grey & Mofro's scheduled appearance at both the Voodoo Experience Sunday afternoon and Tipitina that evening. Andrew plays the bass in this group. Tipitina is the New Orleans musical venue made famous by Professor Longhair and takes its name from his blues number Tipitina. Mofro has a talented leader, JJ Grey and excellent musicians. The music is a fusion of blues and funk, and the audience reacted well to their outstanding performance. Their closing number was an excellent

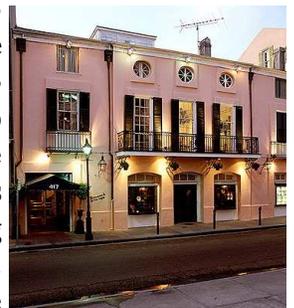


JJ Grey & Mofro

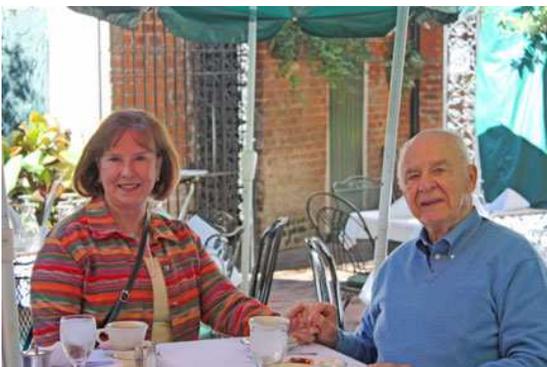
from left, Daryl Hance, guitar, Road Manager, Dennis Marion, trumpet, Art Edmaiston, sax, JJ Grey, Arthur Cole, drums, Andrew Trube, bass, Anthony Farrell, organ

rendition of the blues number *Got My Mojo Working* popularized by Muddy Waters in 1957. Andrew was a gracious host. He had us backstage prior to the performance and arranged for a place for us to sit during their appearance. After the show, we rode on the band's bus to Tipitina and was able to visualize Professor Longhair banging out *Tipitina*, *In the Night*, *Hey Little Girl*, or *She Walks Right In*. A wonderful experience!

New Orleans and gastronomical extravaganzas are almost synonymous. We missed our plane connection at Detroit and instead of arriving in New Orleans in the late morning, the arrival time was 6:00pm. The Omni Royal Orleans hotel, where we stayed, is in the French Quarter and Brennan's restaurant is only a short walk from the hotel. Friday evening was rainy and Brennan's became our oasis after the long, tiring trip from Columbus, Ohio. An excellent bottle of Cabernet and the New Orleans Turtle soup provided us with kind of the relaxed evening that traveler's enjoy. Brennan's Sunday Brunch is a wonderful eating experience. The ambiance, the outstanding wait staff, and the food is unmatched.



Brennan's



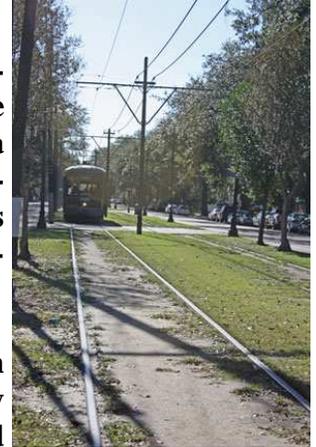
Breakfast at The Court of the Two Sisters

Crepes Fitzgerald completed our meal. We savored the culinary excellence of Gala-toire's Brunch on Saturday. In addition to the timeless excellence of the food, the upstairs bar is both interesting and fun. We were a bit early and went to the upstairs' bar and enjoyed both a cocktail and the company of a costumed Texan couple she dressed in an attractive witches costume while he had a large mock black bird on his shoulder. Saturday evening was saved for the delightful Commander's Palace. The cuisine is both modern New Orleans and Haute Creole. The bread pudding soufflé is outstanding. What caught my eye

was the men's dress formality. Most had suits or conservative jackets with ties and the men stood up when the ladies returned to the table. Quite civilized! And, much more pleasing than the modern, informal dress.

Sunday evening dining was in the Omni Royal Orleans Rib Room. I enjoyed the best prime rib ever surprisingly served with delicious collard greens. Prior to our departure, we savored the Jazz Breakfast at The Court of the Two Sisters where we enjoyed the sumptuous selection of hot and cold dishes. A visit to the French Quarter is never complete without visiting Felix's oyster bar. For a oyster aficionado, this is as close to heaven as one can get. We enjoyed heaven!

Saturday afternoon was sunny and pleasant and perfect for touring the Garden District on the St. Charles Avenue streetcar. The Garden district is considered to have the best collection of historic southern mansions in the U.S. Historically, the area consisted of plantations, but in the 19th century, parcels were sold to wealthy individuals who did not wish to live in the French Quarter with the Creoles. The area as originally developed comprised only a few homes in each block with each home surrounded by gardens, hence its name, the Garden District.



St. Charles Streetcar



Tulane University

Loyola and Tulane Universities are located on either side of St. Charles Avenue roughly across from each other. Loyola was founded by Jesuits in 1912 and is considered as one of the top ten universities in the South. Tulane's history is much longer and dates from 1834. Academically, Tulane is highly respected. It considers itself as a "selective independent research university .

Touring the Garden District with its mansions, universities and parks was especially enjoyable and worthwhile on this pleasant sunny Saturday afternoon.



Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis, King of France



The history of the Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis, King of France begins in 1727 nine years after the founding of New Orleans. A church has stood on this spot since 1727. The current cathedral was constructed in 1851 and includes some elements of the original church.

On All Saints Day, we attended a splendid mass at the Cathedral which consisted of a superb organist, a talented vocalist leading the singing, and an outstanding sermon by Monsignor Kern . The new book about St. Louis Cathedral states: “The people of the city have welcomed the famous and infamous here. A pope, generals, presidents, prime ministers, kings, and emperors have been visitors. The plain folk and the elite, side by side, are regular worshipers in this venerable house.” The Cathedral houses much art. Over the main altar is a large mural of King Louis IX announcing the 7th Crusade. Over the right side aisle is a large impressive painting of St. Francis of Assisi which shows him praying and receiving a vision of the Crucifixion. To the left of the altar is an image of the Divine Mercy which another Kowalski, Sister Faustina Kowalska originated a devotion. Sister Faustina was “a simple Polish nun who died in 1938. The ceiling contains two wonderful frescoes, the Lamb of God and the Good Shepherd. Ten excellent stained glass windows tell the life of St. Louis from his young life through his coronation, marriage, the Crusades, and finally his canonization. An outstanding cathedral with a rich history.



The French Quarter

New Orleans was founded by the French in 1718, and remained French until it was ceded to Spain in 1763 as compensation for Britain taking over Florida. The United States, by treaty, received the “Right of Deposit” which meant that it could use the city’s port. Secretly in 1800, Spain ceded New Orleans back to France. A few years later in 1803, the Louisiana territory was purchased by the United States from Napoleon in what we call the Louisiana Purchase.

The French Quarter is New Orleans’ oldest neighborhood, and the center of the original city. It is so unique and such a national treasure that it has been designated as a National Historic Landmark. Most of its architecture is Spanish. The building facades are typically stucco painted in pastel hues, and elaborately decorated with ironwork balconies. It’s the home of Dixieland music also called New Orleans jazz. Preservation Hall and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band sustain New Orleans’ music tradition. It was also the home of Marie Laveau who was a Louisiana Creole practitioner of Voodoo, and who was immortalized by the song Marie Laveau the Gypsy Queen of New Orleans by the famous Papa Celestin and the New Orleans Band in 1954.

After San Francisco, New Orleans is the place to go for a weekend (or more) getaway.