

The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly

VOLUME XLIII
NUMBER 3

SUMMER 2026



WELL SUITED: Maison Blanche at Mid-Century

NEW ORLEANS
**ANTIQUES
FORUM**
2026

MATERIAL BELIEF

OBJECTS OF FAITH, SPIRIT, AND TRADITION

AUGUST 7–9, 2026



Stained glass, Kiddush cups, carved wooden pews, devotional candles: These are some of the many sacred items that give body and beauty to belief. For the 2026 New Orleans Antiques Forum, the Historic New Orleans Collection is exploring the intersection of the spiritual and material worlds, a rich landscape of antiques shaped by belief, devotion, and spiritual practice across cultures.

Forum sessions will cover a range of sacred items, including Catholic statuary, Judaica, prayer samplers, Afro-Caribbean ritual objects, and more. Attendees will learn how these objects were made, used, and kept—and how they continue to function as powerful material expressions of belief throughout the American Gulf South.

We hope you will join us for an inspiring weekend of discovery and connection in the heart of the French Quarter.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

For more information and to register,
visit hnoc.org/events/antiques-forum-2026.

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EXHIBITIONS

CURRENT

American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition

Through January 17, 2027

520 Royal Street

Designed and produced by Histoverly

Media sponsorship provided by WVUE-FOX 8

Promotional support provided by the Louisiana America 250 Commission and by New Orleans and Company

New Orleans Musicians in Art: Selections from the Permanent Collection

Through May 16, 2027

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With support from the Ruth U. Fertel Foundation

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CONTINUING

A Vanishing Bounty: Louisiana's Coastal Environment and Culture

520 Royal Street

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French Quarter Galleries

520 Royal Street

French Quarter Life: People and Places in the Vieux Carré

520 Royal Street

UPCOMING

Bunny Matthews: His Life, Art, and Obsessions

September 18, 2026–May 9, 2027

520 Royal Street

For a full calendar of events, visit my.hnoc.org.

GENERAL HOURS

520 Royal Street

Exhibitions, the Shop at the Collection, and the Café at the Collection*

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

*Café closes at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday–Saturday and 3 p.m. Tuesday and Sunday.

410 Chartres Street

Williams Research Center

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Appointments are encouraged. Please

email reference@hnoc.org or call

(504) 523-4662.



ON THE COVER

Maison Blanche window display (detail)
between 1950 and 1959; gelatin silver print
gift of Jacquelin Nelson Kellogg, 2025.0138.1.19



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Here in the heart of the French Quarter, reminders of the complex course of American history surround us: French and Spanish architecture, roadways shaped by Indigenous trade routes, music rooted in African traditions, and our unique Creole cuisine are a few tangible results of the varied forces and events that have shaped our city—and our country.

This summer marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Although geographically disparate from the 13 colonies, New Orleans was an important locus of resistance against the British during the American Revolution and played a key role in the fight for independence.

For the remainder of 2026, visitors to HNOC can experience this history up close with *American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition*, designed and produced by Histoverly. In this interactive exhibition, each visitor uses a touch screen tablet to explore 360-degree, 3D reconstructions of key moments from the revolution. The events of the era come to life, drawing viewers in and connecting them with history in an accessible and engaging way.

On the occasion of this momentous anniversary, we invite our community—near and far—to learn more about our common history; to reflect on the places, events, and everyday citizens that shaped our fledgling country; and to contemplate the future as we move forward together. —DANIEL HAMMER

CONTENTS

ON VIEW / 2

In the 1926 book *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles*, the inner workings of a French Quarter artistic circle

Off-Site

BOOKS / 8

A new biography delves into the life and work of the quintessentially New Orleans cartoonist Bunny Matthews.

COMMUNITY / 12

On the Job

Staff News

Intern Spotlight

Focus on Philanthropy

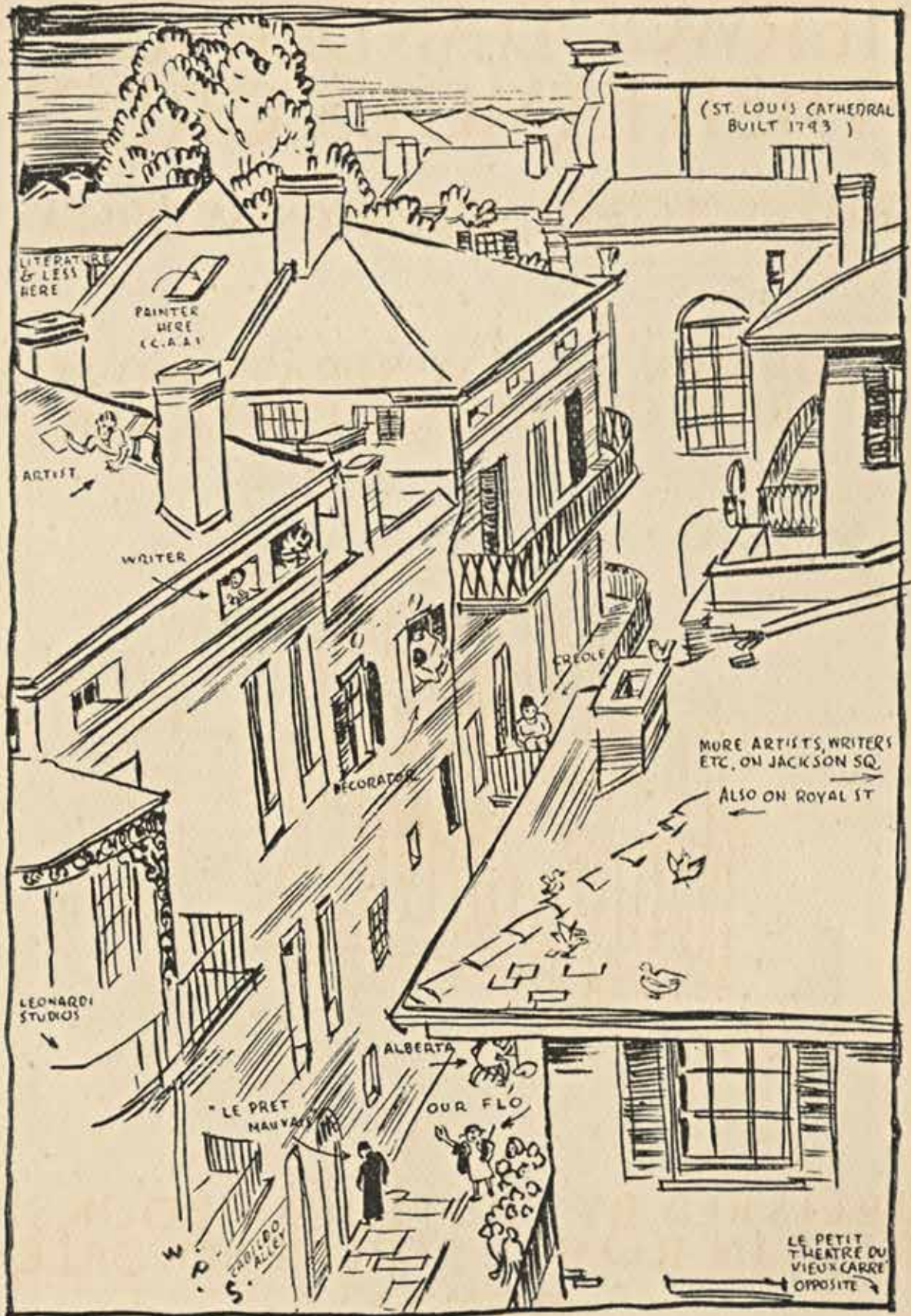
Donors

On the Scene

ACQUISITIONS / 20

Acquisition Spotlight: Creating the iconic display windows at beloved local department store Maison Blanche

Recent Additions



THE LOCALE, WHICH INCLUDES MRS. FLO FIELD



Double Bill

With an introduction by William Faulkner and clever portrait drawings, *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles* is an offbeat who's-who of 1920s New Orleans.

This article was adapted from *Dixie Bohemia: A French Quarter Circle in the 1920s* (Louisiana State University Press, 2012). Reprinted with permission.

It has been a hundred years since October of 1926, when two young men named Bill, an artist and a writer who shared an apartment in the French Quarter, decided to publish a little book. It was to be “a sort of private joke,” the artist said later, just his sketches of some of their friends and themselves, with captions and the writer’s introduction. They’d get it out in time for Christmas, amuse their friends, and maybe make a little money. Sure enough, by mid-December they had the manuscript in hand and paid a local printer to run off 250 copies. The artist signed and hand-tinted fifty or so, mostly for the friends who were included. The rest of the copies sold within a week at \$2.00 apiece, so after Christmas the printer ran off another 150 copies and they sold, too.

Ordinarily, that would have been the end of it. The book was a strictly amateur production, it was full of allusions that were unintelligible to anyone not in the circle, some of the sketches were decidedly clumsy, and the authors even misspelled a half-dozen of their friends’ names. But two facts turned this little *jeu d’esprit* into what *The Booklover’s Guide to New Orleans* calls “one of the great literary curiosities in the city’s history.” One of the Bills was named Faulkner. And the friend featured most prominently was the novelist Sherwood Anderson.

Let’s go back and start over.

When William Faulkner arrived in New Orleans in 1925, he moved in with William Spratling, an artist who taught at Tulane’s architecture school. When the two assembled their book, they were living in a fourth-floor garret on St. Peter Street. The year before, Miguel Covarrubias, a New York–based Mexican artist, had published *The Prince of Wales and Other Famous Americans*, a compilation of his caricatures of celebrities; Spratling, who admired Covarrubias, persuaded Faulkner that it might be fun to do a New Orleans version of the same thing.

The Pelican Bookshop on Royal Street was a favorite hangout of the French Quarter’s literary crowd and the “Pelican Bookshop Press” seems to have been conjured into being for the sole purpose of publishing *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles: A Gallery of Contemporary New Orleans*. The book was for sale by December 19, when Natalie Scott wrote in her social column for the *States* newspaper that it was “really a delight” (without mentioning that she was in it). It opened “With Respectful Deference to Miguel Covarrubias,” followed by a dedication “To All the Artful and Crafty Ones of the French Quarter” and the dog Latin epigraph, “Ave et Cave / per Ars ad Artis.” A classicist friend suspects this may be a lame attempt to say something like, “Look out—we’re using art to portray the artist,” and suggests that it might make more sense after a few drinks, which is probably how it was written.

Sherwood Anderson took pride of place in the title not only because he was far and away the most Famous of those included, but also because he and his wife Elizabeth were at the

EXHIBITION

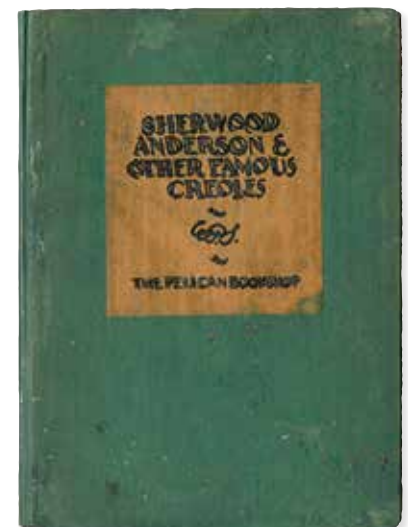
French Quarter Galleries
Ongoing
520 Royal Street
Free

Unless otherwise noted, all images are from *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles: A Gallery of Contemporary New Orleans*; by William Spratling and William Faulkner; New Orleans: Pelican Bookshop Press, 1926; 73-320-L.

A. *The Locale, Which Includes Mrs. Flo Field*

B. William Spratling and William Faulkner

C. Cover of first edition





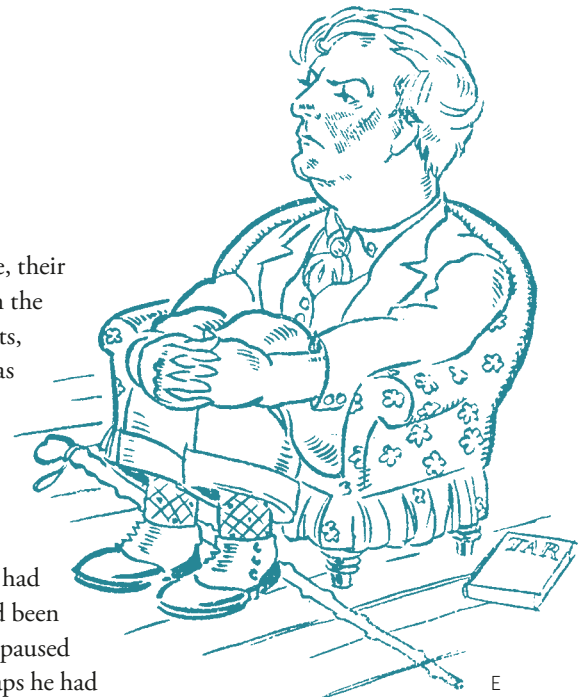
D

D. **Sherwood Anderson**
1925; gelatin silver print
by Edward Jean Steichen, photographer
1981.250

E. **Mister Sherwood Anderson**

F. **Caroline Wogan Durieux**

G. **Genevieve Pitot, Pianissimo Apassionata**



E

center of the French Quarter’s social life, their partment on Jackson Square abuzz with the comings and goings of writers and artists, practicing and would-be. Anderson’s was the first portrait in the book and Faulkner’s introduction is an unmistakable parody of the older man’s sometimes pompous style. (“When this young man, Spratling, came to see me, I did not remember him. Perhaps I had passed him in the street. Perhaps he had been one of the painters at whose easel I had paused to examine. Perhaps he knew me. Perhaps he had recognized me when I paused, perhaps he had been aware of the fellowship between us. . . .”)

Faulkner and Spratling seem to have meant their book to be a sort of teasing tribute to Anderson, but that’s not exactly how it worked out. Spratling recalled that when he and Faulkner “proudly” gave Anderson a copy of the book the evening it came off the press, he looked it over, scowled, and said, “I don’t think it’s very funny.” Spratling joked that Anderson “was taking himself very seriously at that time” because someone had recently called him the “dean of American literature,” but Faulkner, a writer himself, was more sympathetic; he came to believe that he had truly hurt Anderson by making fun of his style at a time when the older man was beginning to recognize that he had passed his prime and had nothing left *but* style. Faulkner regretted what he called “the unhappy caricature affair” for the rest of his life—although in fact Anderson may not have been all that hurt: Some years later he asked Spratling for another copy.

Anyway, *Famous Creoles* is a now a curiosity and a collector’s item. (Original copies sell for more than \$1,000—sometimes *much* more.) But is it anything more than that? Spratling himself thought so: “Though certainly not literature,” he wrote in the 1960s, “it may now be considered a sort of mirror of our scene in New Orleans,” and it is that: an introduction to a bohemian crowd of artists, writers, journalists, musicians, poseurs, and hangers-on found in the French Quarter in the mid-1920s.

The title is part of the joke. Of the 43 *Famous Creoles* (all of them white), only pianist Genevieve Pitot and artist Caroline Durieux were actually Creoles, as Creoles understand that word.



F



G

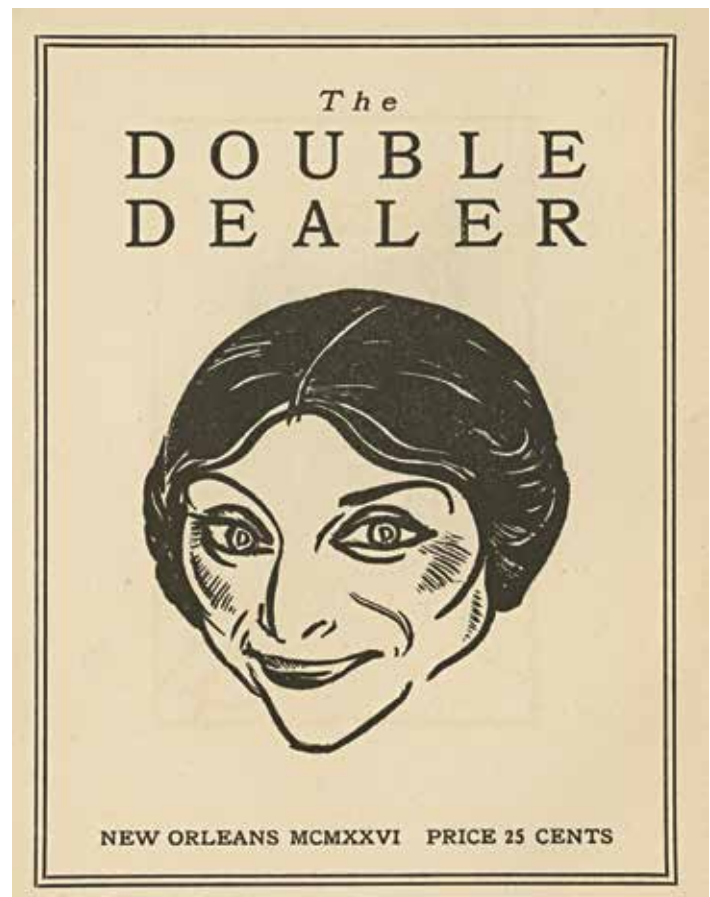
Sherwood Anderson certainly wasn't. Many weren't Famous either, by any standard, and such fame as others had was fleeting, or the kind that one of them, Meigs Frost, had in mind when he wryly remarked that "so many of us here are internationally famous locally." True, a handful have received a great deal of attention. Faulkner scholarship provides employment for hundreds around the world, and there's a respectable body of work on Sherwood Anderson. Famous Creoles Grace King, Hamilton Basso, and Lyle Saxon have at least had their biographers, and Ellsworth Woodward gets some respect as a painter from students of Southern art. A surprising amount has been written about Spratling's later career as a famous jewelry designer. But most of the Famous Creoles appear only in supporting roles, if at all, in the stories of these few.

In a few cases this neglect is undeserved. Durieux, Pitot, journalist Frederick Oechsner, and writer Roark Bradford are largely forgotten, although they have at least have entries in Wikipedia. The obscurity in which others languish is fitting, if we are to judge by literary or artistic achievement alone, but even these least Famous can be interesting in their own ways (like, say, Marian Draper, former Ziegfeld Follies dancer turned Tulane cheerleader and architecture student), especially when viewed collectively.

The Famous Creoles were not a tightly knit group. In fact, they weren't a group at all, in the sociological sense. They were divided by generation—in 1926 the oldest was 76, the youngest 20—and by social class: Some had been born to wealth or social distinction; others had worked their way up, to varying degrees, from humble origins. Some were Yankees, some Southerners, and among the Southerners the native New Orleanians held themselves somewhat apart. A few were establishment figures, a few a bit raffish. Not all were friends, or even acquaintances. But if they weren't a group, they did make up a *social circle*, a loose network of relationships linked by friends in common (if nothing else, they all knew Bill Spratling), by association with the same institutions, and by common interests.

Although social circles have no formal leaders, they may have their notables, and this one had Sherwood Anderson, "our Royal Personage," according to Hamilton Basso—"the Grand Old Man of the literati in New Orleans at the time" in Spratling's judgment. A social circle also usually has a core, and the core of this one comprised those who were regularly part of the Quarter's busy social life, a nucleus that would certainly have included Anderson and his wife, as well as Lyle Saxon and Spratling himself.

A social circle almost always is connected to one or more institutions. Institutions bring people with common interests together, and the circle they form may create other institutions, which then operate to keep the circle going. The Newcomb College Art School, Tulane University, and the daily newspapers (especially the *Times-Picayune*) brought the Famous Creoles' circle into being; its members and future members then created the *Double Dealer* magazine, the Arts and Crafts Club, Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carré, and other, less important institutions. Nearly all of the Famous Creoles were associated with



H. Lillian F. Marcus

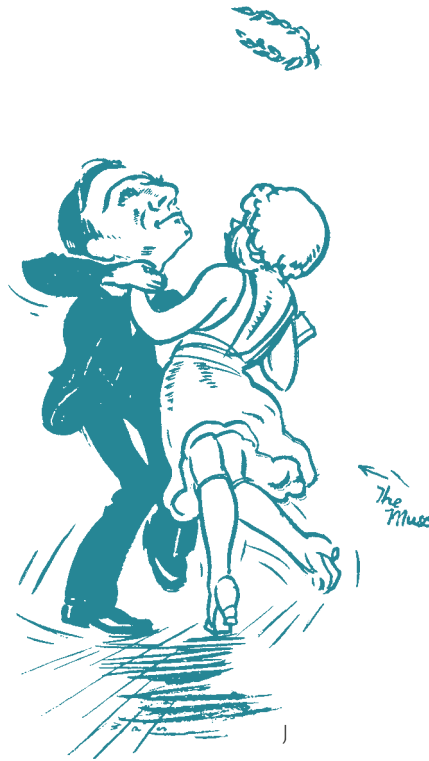
I. Marian Draper



ON VIEW

J. *Ham Basso and the Muse Do the Charleston*

K. *Odiorne of the Café du Dome and New Orleans*



more than one of these enterprises, and the criss-crossing patterns of interaction held the larger circle together. The interests that created these institutions also tied the circle together and provided topics for conversation (other than the gossip about individuals that seems always to have been a feature of New Orleans life). Those interests included art, literature, drama, and historic preservation. Nearly all the members of the circle were deeply engaged with at least one of these areas, and usually more than one.

Many of the Famous Creoles had first-hand experience with the bohemian scenes of New York and Paris, and much of this activity was a conscious attempt to create what local boy Hamilton Basso called “a sort of Creole version of the Left Bank.” It was surprisingly successful. —JOHN SHELTON REED



OFF-SITE

For the Record

Our roundup of holdings that have appeared outside the Collection, either on loan to other institutions or in noteworthy media projects

HNOC loaned six items to the **George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum** for the exhibition *E Pluribus Unum: Celebrating the American Experience*, on view June 30, 2026, through May 16, 2027.



Jordan Noble's drum
between 1828 and 1843
by Klemm and Brother, manufacturer
2019.0205



"La-La" / "Ain't It a Shame"
between 1955 and 1956
by Fats Domino
2017.0500.3



Sidney Bechet's clarinet
between 1940 and 1950
by Couesnon,
manufacturer
acquisition made possible
by the Clarisse Claiborne
Grima Fund, 2015.0152.1



Canal Bank ten-dollar note
1800s
by National Bank Note
Company
gift of Boyd Cruise and
Harold Schilke, 1959.161.3



The **Children's Museum of Indianapolis** reproduced two images for the exhibition *Tiana's Joyful Celebration*, on display through January 3, 2027.

The Four Seasons and the Coffee Pot
between 1953 and 1963; watercolor on paper
by Blaine L.
2007.0388.3



The **Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts** reproduced several still and moving images in the exhibition *From Masquerade to Masking: West Africa to the Gulf Coast*, on view through August 16, 2026.

Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club Diamond Jubilee poster
between 1990 and 1991
by Charles Collin Jr.
gift of Larry W. Anderson and Michael B.
Boulas, 2004.0016.2

The **New Orleans Jazz Museum** borrowed seven objects to be featured in the exhibition *The First Piano Professors and the Lost Music of Early New Orleans*, on view through February 29, 2028.

Portrait of Philip P. Werlein
between 1870 and 1879
by S. Moses and Son, photographer
gift of Michael Reese II, 1996.24.1



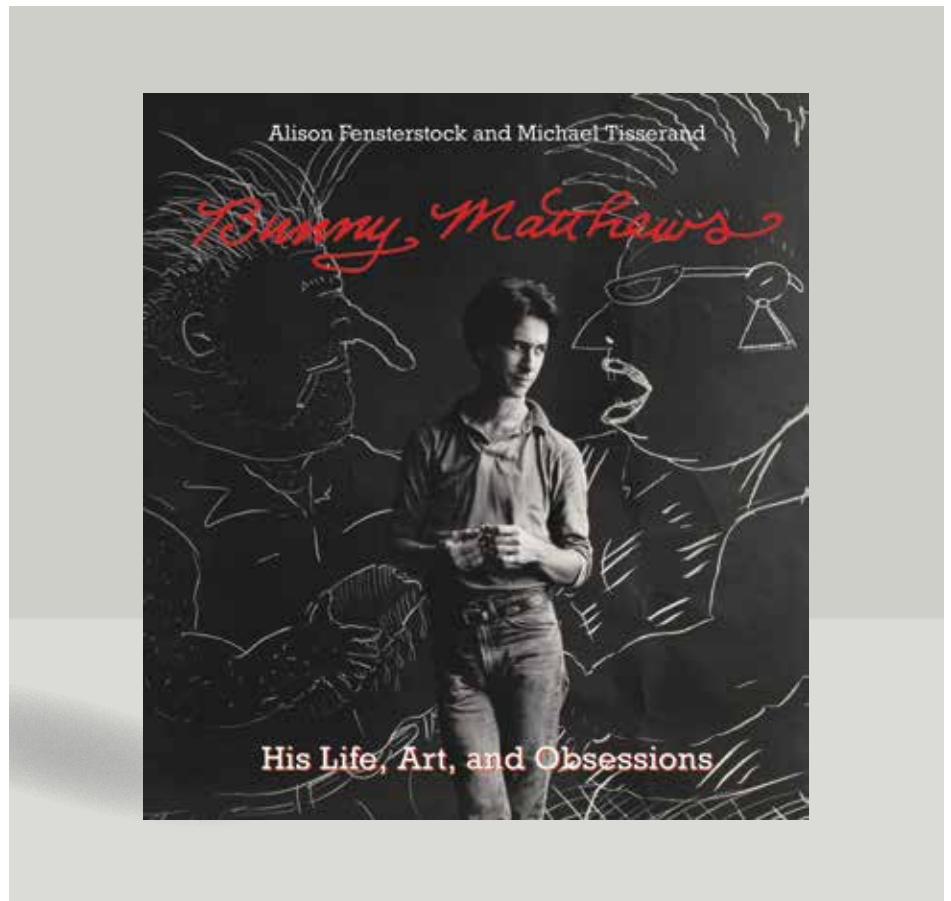
"La Marseillaise" et "Bonnie Blue Flag"
1864
86-1399-RL

Establishment of E. Johns & Co. New Orleans
between 1816 and 1875
by Jules Manouvrier, lithographer
1974.25.3.527



Former HNOC Woest Fellow **Gautham Rao** requested permission to reprint an image in his book *White Power: Policing American Slavery* (University of North Carolina Press, 2026).

Special police badge worn by St. Denis J. Villeré
1900
gift of Ernest Caliste Villeré, MSS 13.8.1



NEW FROM HNOC

Coming September 18, 2026

Bunny Matthews: His Life, Art, and Obsessions

by Alison Fensterstock and Michael Tisserand

hardcover • 10.5" x 11.5" • 336 pp.
200 color images, 200 b&w images
\$59.95

Available for preorder August 1

To preorder, visit shophnoc.com and click "Published by HNOC"

Cover image:

Bunny Matthews

1983; gelatin silver print
by Lee Crum
gift of Jude Matthews, 2022.0224.4, courtesy of Lee Crum

Character Building

An excerpt from a new biography of the cartoonist Bunny Matthews describes the genesis of a beloved local duo.

In this passage, biographers Alison Fensterstock and Michael Tisserand describe the introduction of Vic and Nat'ly to the city's newspapers.

"Another day begins at Vic and Nat'ly's, Vic and Nat'ly Broussard, your hosts." For Bunny Matthews, it would be a day like no other. His life would change immeasurably after he introduced readers to Vic and Nat'ly on January 3, 1982, in the *Times-Picayune's* revamped Sunday supplement, *Dixie*.

"One of his legacies is that he called attention to a layer of the city that was not written about, not thought about, not captured in any art form, and yet was so much part of the fabric of the city's social life, cultural life, and commercial life," said former *Times-Picayune* editor Jim Amoss. "Bunny made that happen more than anybody."

Bunny must have thought this chance would never come. Just two years earlier, he had tried without success to become a *Times-Picayune* cartoonist. So he must have been both surprised and a bit skeptical when Jeannette Hardy—later described by Amoss as Bunny's "chief encourager"—called to say she'd just been named editor of *Dixie* and ask if he could possibly work up an idea for a new weekly cartoon. Bunny didn't waste time. Soon, he was driving to the newspaper office, sketches in hand.

"I'll never forget the first time I saw them," Hardy would recall. "There was Vic with that greasy hair, that 5 o'clock shadow and that nasty cigarette stuck in his mouth. And there was Nat'ly with those pointy eyeglasses, that 1930s print dress and that mad, upswept hairdo.

They looked like creatures spawned in the swamp and seasoned with 50 years' worth of fried oysters, hot sauce and pickled eggs."

Inspired by the physical oddities of Ed "Big Daddy" Roth and R. Crumb—yet composed with thin, scratchy lines more comparable to those of Stan Mack or Jules Feiffer—the bodies of Vic and Nat'ly seemed always on the verge of collapse, sometimes looking less like human forms and more like the rotting jack-o'-lanterns seen on New Orleans stoops in warm Octobers. "One of the beautiful things about New Orleans is that a lot of it is falling apart, covered with mildew and mold, and decaying plaster; that gives it this patina which is beautiful," Bunny said. "So that's part of the funky ethos."

Bunny carried over from *Figaro* his unique style of stippling, the repetitive application of tiny dots to create shading effects. Bunny also expertly used stippling to create character, especially when drawing Vic's unshaven face. There were various shortcuts for stippling, but Bunny always did each dot by hand, no matter how long it took. "A cartoon up close is really a bunch of little dots, you know," he said.

Versions of Vic and Nat'ly had been appearing in the rotating cast of *F'Sure* since the late 1970s, even appearing in 1980 on the cover of *Figaro*. Bunny had started using the name "Vic" on various characters to honor former New Orleans Mayor Vic Schiro, a figure Bunny remembered from his childhood: "He was the guy who said during a hurricane, 'Don't believe any rumors unless they come from me.' So I liked the name Vic."

A. Drawing for Vic and Nat'ly segment on *Steppin' Out*

aired June 24, 1988; ink and pigment on paper
by Bunny Matthews
acquisition made possible by the Laussat
Society, 2022.0218.1.221



A



B. Drawing for the regular comic *Bunny Matthews in TV Focus*

published 1994; ink on paper
by Bunny Matthews
acquisition made possible by the Laussat Society,
2022.0218.1.136

C. Detail from cover, *Vic and Nat'ly's 1983: A New Orleans Calendar* by Bunny Matthews

1982
by Bunny Matthews
gift of Jude Matthews, MSS 1070.1.6.2



If the name “Vic” came from New Orleans politics, Bunny chose “Nat’ly”—one of several names he’d used for women in *F’Sure*—because he saw it as a name suffused with culture and even climate. “Part of the thing about language in New Orleans is people are real lazy, it’s so hot and humid, so they really got to shorten everything, eliminate any vowels or syllables they can eliminate,” Bunny theorized. “So instead of saying ‘Natalie,’ they go ‘Nat’ly.’”

A third named character debuted in the first *Vic and Nat’ly* cartoons: a tiny white Chihuahua named Tootsie, soon to take up residence in a teacup. Bunny later explained that both that character and Tootsie’s companion, a tiny cockroach named Rex, were directly inspired by New Orleans–born cartoonist George Herriman’s most famous creations, Krazy Kat and Ignatz Mouse, who first appeared in the margins of an early-20th-century Herriman comic about New York City tenement dwellers. “Ignatz and Tootsie are part of a cartoon tradition of little creatures or insects commenting irreverently, rather like a court jester,”

B Bunny said.

A fourth character would soon enter, as well: Vic and Nat’ly’s grandson Li’l Arthuh, an underaged force of chaos who blows up Godzilla toys in the bathtub and hopes Santa Claus will bring him a live cobra. Unlike Vic and Nat’ly, Arthuh would age through the years. In the early cartoons, he is about five years old—the same age as Bunny’s oldest son, Jude.

For his new cartoon’s setting, Bunny wanted a public space where various types of characters could wander in and out. He said he’d always loved how businesses in New Orleans were named “Something and Something.” There was Clarence and Lefty’s, credited by *Figaro* for the best po-boys in town. Or Rocky and Carlo’s Restaurant and Bar, where Bunny would end his rock and roll nights in St. Bernard Parish. And best of all, the F&M Patio Bar, named for its owners Fump and Manny, which was the Uptown New Orleans dance destination of Bunny’s teenage years. Here, he fondly remembered, East Jefferson boys and Riverdale girls could park amidst the Mississippi River wharves and warehouses, sneak a six-pack of Dixie Beer, and then while away a perfect New Orleans night with the music of Irma Thomas, Ernie K-Doe, or Deacon John.

By naming both his bar and his cartoon after the proprietors, Bunny was giving his readers a weekly opportunity to enter the doors of a legendary New Orleans establishment, at least for a few moments. Later, for *OffBeat* magazine, he’d expand on the meaning of the bar and its neighborhood:

The business is located at the intersection of two streets named after, respectively, an obscure Alsatian saint and one of the cardinal sins. A wheel-less two-tone 1959 Chevy Impala convertible stranded on cinderblocks has died on the pavement outside, perpendicular to a pothole larger than a picnic basket and deeper than most philosophical notions.

The oval windows of Vic and Nat’ly’s joint are painted black (professional drinkers preferring subdued lighting) with gold lettering proclaiming the house specialties: Seafood Cocktails Conviviality. Except for a few moments in January, the air conditioner is never shut off, coolness being yet another requisite of devoted alcoholics.

Until Bunny penned that description, the actual location of Vic and Nat’ly’s bar had been an unsolved riddle in New Orleans, comparable to guessing which town of Springfield was home to TV’s Simpsons family. If the obscure Alsatian saint is St. Claude and the cardinal sin is Desire, Vic and Nat’ly’s sat on a street corner in the Bywater neighborhood, part of the Upper Ninth Ward. —ALISON FENSTERSTOCK AND MICHAEL TISSERAND



UPCOMING EXHIBITION

Mark your calendar for the companion exhibition of the same title, opening September 18, 2026.

D. *Self-Portrait*

1980; ink on paper
by Bunny Matthews
acquisition made possible by the Laussat Society,
2022.0218.2.69

E. *Poster for Tipitina's*

between 1977 and 1984
by Bunny Matthews
2022.0209.1

About the Book

The bold personality of New Orleans's legendary cartoonist and writer springs from the page in this first monograph of his work.

Fiendishly creative, sharply observant, and deeply devoted to his city, Bunny Matthews (1951–2021) was among the most influential cartoonists and writers in New Orleans. This new biography features 400 images of Matthews's life and work and traces his path as an artist—from drawing celebrity portraits in crayon as a child to helping found or influence some of the most important local cultural entities created by his generation: Jazz Fest, Tipitina's, and WWOZ.

Matthews is best known for his cartoon characters Vic and Nat'y, two irreverent bar owners from the Nint' Ward who rank alongside Ignatius J. Reilly and Blanche DuBois in the pantheon of fictional New Orleanians. He obsessed over his native city, and throughout the four decades during which his art and writing appeared in almost every local magazine and newspaper, he revealed that city through his work, teaching New Orleans new ways to listen to itself and laugh at itself. As a critic, Matthews earnestly pursued authenticity. In his later years, he spilled thousands of words articulating what he saw as the depreciation and corruption of New Orleans's cultural capital.

His legacy lives on in the young writers he helped mentor, the cartoonists he inspired, and the yellowing clippings of *Vic and Nat'y* still found taped to refrigerators throughout New Orleans.

Matthews once wrote, "Be witty. Be nasty. Be silly. Don't be boring." That ethos animates the pages of *Bunny Matthews: His Life, Art, and Obsessions*.





ON THE JOB

Terri Simon

POSITION: Editor, on staff since 2021

ASSIGNMENT: Collaborate on researching and writing a post for HNOC's history blog

We call our blog *First Draft*, but by the time a post is ready for publication, it's gone through many stages of research, writing, editing, and revision. The process looks different for every post, but the goal is always the same: to publish articles that interest, inform, and entertain a wide range of readers.

As a *First Draft* editor, I work with writers to hone language and structure, always thinking about how to best communicate their ideas to readers. As a writer, I can focus on my own interests: I spent years fascinated by the legal case of Sally Miller, an enslaved woman whose race was hotly contested, before writing a post about her. Other posts begin as jokes: An exploration of Rome-related holdings grew from an in-office conversation about TikTok videos of women asking their boyfriends how often they thought about the Roman Empire. (As it turned out, I'm the boyfriend, and I'm always thinking about the Roman Empire.)

It's fun to pore over archival documents, to fall into research rabbit holes, then resurface to synthesize and present what I've found as a new story. And it's nice to see my name on the page. But actually, I find collaborative posts most enjoyable to work on: posts where the work—and fun—is shared, and I am folded into a byline that reads "HNOC Staff."

This February, "Who's a Good Boy? These Pups from the Past" ran on the blog. We wanted a topic that would connect to Carnival but stay relevant past Fat Tuesday. So

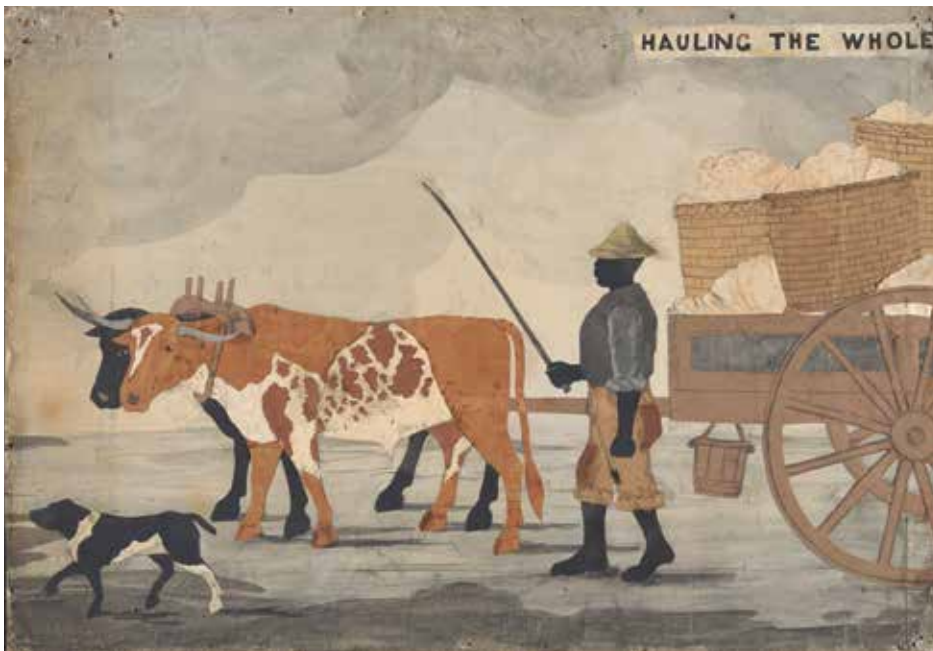
A. **Dog Pen**

1999; silver emulsion on aluminum by Deborah Luster, photographer acquisition made possible by the Laussat Society, 2023.0146.1.6

B. **Two children with dog and cat**

negative, between 1920 and 1929; gelatin silver print, between 1979 and 1983 by Charles L. Franck Photographers; Nancy Ewing Miner, photographic printmaker Charles L. Franck Studio Collection, 1979.325.4149





C. *Hauling the Whole Weeks Picking* (first of four panels)

1800s; collage with watercolor
by William Henry Brown
1975.93.1

D. *Gumbo*

between 1967 and 1970; photomechanical
print on paper
1994.93.28

E. *Man with dog*

between 1970 and 1979; ink screen print on
paper
by May Stevens
partial gift of the estate of Ed Wiegand,
2009.0202.79

the *First Draft* team—Managing Editor Molly Reid Cleaver, Web Editor Ryan Kreiser, Communications Strategist Dee Allen, and I—wrote a post highlighting dog-related items in HNOC’s holdings, to be published in time for the Barkus dog parade.

To begin, each of us searched HNOC’s catalog for canines. Our Microsoft Teams chat looked more like a group text between friends than a work exchange, as each of us dropped in weird and funny images from the institution’s holdings. We ended up with a not-so-short short list of almost 50 candidates for the post.

After narrowing down our selection of hounds, each of us chose four or five objects and set to writing, which led to another culling of entries. Despite the delightful haircuts of its human subjects, a 1920s photo of two children posing with a dog and cat didn’t have enough of a story to hold readers’ attention. My favorite entry, *Dog Pen*, also had to go. There was no way to condense the context and history of the portrait—enslavement and mass incarceration in our state, and the use of dogs to control incarcerated people at the Louisiana State Penitentiary—into a light, breezy 50 words.

We landed on 12 objects featuring dogs to highlight. Of these, I wrote about a photo of Gumbo, the original Saints mascot; *Hauling the Whole Weeks Picking*, a nineteenth-century collage depicting enslaved workers transporting cotton; and one of feminist artist and activist May Stevens’s 1970s screenprints of her Big Daddy character.

A round of revision served to meld our multiple voices into one. We wrote captions for each image and collaboratively chose a title for the piece. There was another round of editing and proofreading, and even more editorial choices came with building the webpage, as we played with how layout could help the reader move through the words and images on the screen.

If it seems like I’m glossing over who did what in those later steps—during the revision and proofing, the captioning and page building—it’s because I am. I genuinely can’t remember whether I built the website and Molly proofread it, or if she chose colors and alignment for better flow while I made sure we used a ç instead of a c in George François Mugnier’s name. Maybe it was Ryan who added a hyperlink to the catalog entry for George Rodrigue’s Blue Dog pin. Was it Dee who added the line about “canine cafés and doggie daycares”?

I think that’s what is so enjoyable about collaborative posts like this one—my contributions are folded in and added to. The end result is something different than what I’d have done solo. For me, that’s far more interesting—and rewarding—than writing on my own.

—TERRI SIMON



D



E

STAFF NEWS

New Hires

Monika Cantin, registrar. **Lindell Davis**, visitor services assistant. **Heath Luckenbill**, assistant shop manager. **Elizabeth Schexnyder**, visitor services assistant. **Kelton Sears**, communications and marketing editor. **Calvin Watkins**, facilities technician.

Title Changes

Beth Bahls is now registrar. **Nina Bozak**, senior curator. **Molly Reid Cleaver**, communications managing editor. **Roxanne Guidry**, authorities and metadata librarian. **Kylie Hewitt**, registrar. **Dana Logsdon**, assistant manager—café. **Vicki Moppert**, assistant buyer. **Eric Seiferth**, senior curator. **Beth Sherwood**, registrar.

Continuing Education

Human Resources Coordinator **Kelsi Dougherty** was selected to participate in the *Forum sur le leadership et l'engagement citoyen* (Leadership and Civic Engagement Forum) for French-speaking professionals, led by the Centre de la francophonie des Amériques in Montreal. She was also awarded financial aid by La Fondation Louisiane to attend the forum.

Publications

In '76 *Objects: A Special Issue of the American Historical Review*, Curator **Lydia Blackmore** published an article about an armoire constructed by free cabinetmaker of color Célestin Glapion.

Senior Curator **Mark Cave** coedited *Handbook of Global Oral History* (Brill, 2026).

Speaking Engagements

At the annual meeting of the American Alliance of Museums, Manager of Digital Assets and Initiatives **Kent Woynowski** and Web Content Developer **Ryan Kreiser** gave a presentation about redesigning HNOC's website.

Interpreter **Terri Rushing** was a guest on WBOK 1230 AM to discuss local music.

Senior Curator **Nina Bozak** spoke at the Tennessee Williams and New Orleans Literary Festival as part of a panel on New Orleans' historic sophistication in the arts.

At the Louisiana Historical Association's annual meeting, Associate Curator **Libby Neidenbach** presented a paper on the photographic legacy of Ursuline nun Mother St. Croix.

Lydia Blackmore gave a presentation to the Handweavers Guild of America in March as part of its Careers in Textiles Symposium.

Mark Cave presented a virtual panel for the Oral History Association on a book he coedited, *Oral History and the Environment: Global Perspectives on Climate, Connection, and Catastrophe*.

Outreach Historian **Robert Ticknor** spoke to the Jefferson Parish Genealogical Society in April about doing research at HNOC.

Visitor Services Assistant **Winston Ho** spoke about the New Orleans Chinatown at the Jefferson Parish East Bank Regional Library, at the Plaquemines Historical Association, and on *Steppin' Out* on WYES. He also gave an online presentation on Chinese American history in New Orleans to the New Orleans Public Library.

In the Community

Robert Ticknor has been elected president of the Louisiana Historical Association, while Family Historian **Jari Honora** has been elected vice president.

Mark Cave served on the French Quarter Terrorism Attack Memorial Commission, which provided recommendations to the state's governor for the establishment of a permanent memorial honoring the victims of the attack.

Awards

The 2025 HNOC publication *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration* received an honorable mention for the National Council on Public History's 2026 Book Award. *Captive State* was written by Senior Curator **Eric Seiferth**, Curatorial Cataloger **Katherine Jolliff Dunn**, and Collections Cataloger **Kevin T. Harrell** and edited by Interim Director of Publications **Nick Weldon**.



INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Zoe Seibert

PLACEMENT: Editing oral history transcripts at the Williams Research Center

SEASON: Spring 2026

Founded in the wake of Hurricane Katrina's devastation, HNOC's New Orleans Life Story Project is an oral history initiative that seeks to preserve the diverse narratives that shape our collective memory. By conducting interviews with individuals from various backgrounds, the project preserves stories reflecting the city's multifaceted cultural heritage, capturing a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives. This effort not only serves to document personal histories but also fosters a deeper understanding of how these narratives interweave to form the city's vibrant culture and complex history.

Working with Collections Cataloger Kevin T. Harrell, Tulane University senior Zoe Seibert edited approximately 30 oral history transcripts. This experience both highlights her commitment to preserving cultural narratives and underscores the meticulous attention to detail required in the field of oral history. The process involves careful listening, accurate transcription, and thoughtful editing, ensuring that each story is presented authentically.

"The ethical considerations inherent in oral history collection are paramount," says Zoe. "As I navigate this complex terrain, I try my best to remain acutely aware of issues such as consent, representation, and contextualization." Zoe's meticulous work on these personal stories will help make them accessible to diverse audiences at the Williams Research Center and beyond. —SYDNEY WESSINGER



FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

Jason and Michelle Leckert

Neal Auction Company’s Magazine Street headquarters is full of unexpected discoveries, and not all of them are up for auction. “There’s a pet in my office,” warns Michelle Leckert, president and CFO, as she leads a group up the stairs of the employee-only area. The pet turns out to be Teche, a sweet-tempered Holland Lop rabbit who scampers around the floor, sleeps near Michelle’s feet while she works, and lounges on a miniature bedstead in the corner of the office.

Michelle and husband Jason have worked at Neal for 31 and 27 years, respectively. The couple met at work and have raised their children Monet (24) and Étienne (19) during their time with the company. Michelle, who first came on board as a receptionist, recalls feeling out of place at her first interview: “I had never attended an auction in my life . . . I was raised in a small town right outside of Franklin, and it just wasn’t a world I had been exposed to.”

Jason began his career as a porter and is now the auction house’s general manager, traveling far and wide to meet owners,

photograph objects, and coordinate the transportation of auction items to New Orleans. The company prides itself on providing a personal touch for clients who may find it difficult to send valued items to auction. “If it’s a lifelong collection that their parents have had . . . I try to tell them, it’s not the end of the collection,” he says. “It’s the start of hundreds of other people’s collections, where that piece is going to be the key piece in their collections.”

While it’s challenging to choose a favorite item from the tens of thousands that pass through the auction house every year, Jason says that a recent slate of natural history–related treasures from the collection of former Louisiana governor Murphy J. “Mike” Foster Jr. was especially memorable. The auction included an oversized folio set of John James Audubon’s *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* as well as a selection of bird carvings by wood-carver Don Gomez. The collection had been displayed in a dedicated “bird room” at Oaklawn Manor, Foster’s home in Franklin, Louisiana. “Some of them

did go back to Oaklawn, which is great,” he says. “We like to see that,” adds Michelle.

Ever since HNOC hosted the inaugural New Orleans Antiques Forum in 2008, Neal Auction Company has generously served as the event’s main sponsor. When then–HNOC President Priscilla Lawrence and Jack Pruitt, director of development at the time, approached Neal about sponsoring the event, Michelle says that it was a natural fit and an opportunity to bring together antiques enthusiasts from around the region. “They love to learn, but they also love to gather and talk about what they have, what they want, what they like to do,” she says. Neal’s entire team also recently took a “field trip” to see *American Revolution: The Augmented Exhibition* at HNOC. “My favorite part was definitely the paintings talking to me,” says Jason.

The Leckerts have also been involved personally with the Collection for more than a decade—as part of the Merieult Society, then as Laussat Society members, and now as members of the Bienville Circle. This summer, they participated for the first time in an HNOC Travel trip, taking in the sights at Colonial Williamsburg. Jason’s interest in history is a family affair: “My family’s been in New Orleans since before New Orleans,” he says, explaining that his family has long-standing roots in the Bywater area.

The couple reside on the North Shore but enjoy spending time in the city, sometimes bringing their furry family members for weekend stays at the Roosevelt Hotel, where “we are known as ‘the dog and the rabbit,’” Jason says. There’s a strict “no work talk” policy at home, where they prefer to focus on other interests: cooking, collecting classic cars, and spending time on the Tchefuncte River. “The Tchefuncte is very bayou,” says Michelle, reminding her of the rural area where she grew up. “Lots of moss trees—it’s just very peaceful. For me, that’s home.”

—SIOBHÁN MCKIERNAN

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January–March 2026

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HNOC Is Reaccredited by American Alliance of Museums

This spring, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) recognized HNOC by renewing our institutional accreditation, the premier national signifier of excellence in the museum field. Through peer review and self-study, the accreditation process measures a museum's practices against a set of core standards for the field. HNOC first achieved accreditation in 1977 and has maintained it continuously since that time. The AAM peer reviewers carefully examined many facets of our work—among them educational initiatives, collection stewardship, service to the public, strategic planning, the condition of our facilities, staff satisfaction, and management of our financial resources—and found that HNOC met or exceeded all standards, noting numerous areas in which they found our work to be exemplary. Only about 4 percent of American museums are accredited by AAM, and HNOC is honored to be in that number.

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Tribute gifts serve to memorialize a loved one, express gratitude, or pay homage to an honoree.

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 The Eustis cousins: Eleanor and Sarah Young, Elizabeth Lehmann and Margaret Cupples, Susan and Judson Mitchell, and Linda and Pete Eustis and family in memory of Davis Lee Jahncke Jr.
 Fellows Design Alliance of the American Society of Interior Designers in honor of Lydia Blackmore
 Teresa A. Manix in memory of Gloria D. Manix
 New Orleans Jewish Community Center in honor of Eric Seiferth
 New Orleans Jewish Community Center in honor of Nick Weldon
 Emily Perkins in memory of Robin Holbert
 Richard B. "Dick" Stephens in memory of Anne D. Stephens, Anne Marie Stephens, and Jennifer L. Stephens

ON THE SCENE

Making Music, Yesterday and Today

In March, the award-winning **Musical Louisiana** concert series returned with a celebration of 19th-century Creole composers and innovators, presented in partnership with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and Tremé’s Petit Jazz Museum.

- A. The Black Men of Labor
- B. Oscar Rossignoli with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra
- C. Al Jackson



A



B



C



D

HNOC hosted the annual **Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference**, followed by a reception in conjunction with the Tennessee Williams and New Orleans Literary Festival.

- D. C. Morgan Babst and Maurice Carlos Ruffin
- E. Robert Quinlan, David Williams, and Bess Rowen performed a staged reading of “Fin du Monde,” a previously unpublished short story by Tennessee Williams.



E

The 2026 **History Symposium** explored how cultural exchange and trade between Louisiana and the Illinois Country shaped the early American republic.

- F. HNOC board member Lisa Wilson, board member E. Alexandra Stafford, board member G. Charles Lapeyre, board chair Bonnie Boyd, Walter Isaacson, and President/CEO Daniel Hammer
- G. Ina Fandrich, Jeanne Williams, and Claire-Marie Brisson



F



G



H



I

H. Scott Bazenet-Tilton, Manager of Programs Amy Williams, and Rudy Bazenet-Tilton

I. Rob Krumm and Dennis Stroughmatt



At a France-themed retirement fete, staff gathered to say au revoir to **Maclyn Hickey**, curatorial conservation coordinator, after 34 years of service to the Collection.

J. Collections Manager Jennifer Ghabrial, Maclyn Hickey, and Registrar Susan Eberle



A slate of programs during April's **French Quarter Fest** celebrated various aspects of the city's musical history.

M. Amor Summers, Lila Summers, Peteh Haroon, Bill Summers, Shannon Powell, Wey Simba, Ned Sublette, Yusa, Victor Campbell, Richard Derbes, Daniel Hammer, and Kathy Derbes

N. Guests enjoyed a vibrant celebration of Cosimo Matassa's 100th birthday with the Krewe of King James, the Mahogany Blue Baby Dolls (pictured), and DJ Buy It Now.

O. Matt Sakakeeny, Charlie Miller, Louis Cosimo, Deacon John, and Nick Spitzer



This spring's **Community Day** focused on musical items in HNOC's collections and featured storytelling, hands-on musical activities, and live performances.

K. A young visitor got into the groove.

L. Roscoe Reddix Jr. from Young Audiences of Louisiana entertained guests of all ages.



The Williams Research Center welcomed a group from French language and culture organization **L'Alliance New York**.

P. The group enjoyed a show-and-tell of objects relating to the history of the French in New Orleans.

ACQUISITION SPOTLIGHT

Window Shopping

Lolita Nelson's Maison Blanche display department collection*gift of Jacquelin Nelson Kellogg, 2025.0138*

Though first established in the United States before the Civil War, department stores became more commonplace around the turn of the 20th century, conveniently selling goods such as furniture, ready-made clothes, accessories, kitchenware and tableware, and stationery that were previously offered only by specialty stores. The epicenter of department stores in New Orleans was downtown Canal Street, where shoppers delighted in the wares at D. H. Holmes, Godchaux's, Krauss, Kreeger's, and Maison Blanche.

Considered by some to be the crown jewel of local department stores, Maison Blanche was founded in 1897 with the financial backing of Isidore Newman (1837–1909), a German-Jewish immigrant and philanthropist who is known for establishing the Isidore Newman School in 1903. By 1909, the store's original building at 901 Canal Street was replaced with a formidable beaux arts building that held the department store on the first five floors, with the upper levels reserved for medical and business offices. The company was sold to Philadelphia-based City Stores in 1923, but it remained locally run. Beginning in 1948 with a Gentilly store, Maison Blanche started expanding beyond the city's urban core. Stores in Metairie, Gretna, New Orleans East, and Baton Rouge followed. However, many of these branches didn't last through the 1980s, and Dillard's eventually purchased Maison Blanche only to have the last remaining store, its flagship, close for good in 1997, 100 years after its founding. The building is now the home of the Ritz-Carlton hotel.

Maison Blanche was famous for its window displays, particularly Christmas scenes that included Mr. Bingle, its seasonal store mascot. The store's visual merchandising department, colloquially known as the display department, was key in this regard, producing window installations, in-store displays, seasonal and promotional displays, and mannequin styling. The display department worked closely with other departments such as advertising and the fashion office to present cohesive exhibitions and displays, utilizing carpenters, painters, artists, decorators, and other skilled workers. Visual merchandising required a specialized skill set: Tony James, who was the director of the display department in 1973, stated that "a good color and design sense is essential along with an ability to put art forms together and a feel for fashion."





Lolita Nelson (1920–1995; pictured below, bottom left) was a member of the display department for about 40 years, beginning at Maison Blanche’s flagship store in 1942 and finishing her career at the Clearview location in Metairie. Throughout her tenure, Nelson worked on window displays and special events such as the 1959 commemoration of the Canal Street flagship’s 50th anniversary. In 1966, she helped to produce the Best of the World Festival. Held at the store’s Canal Street location, the festival displayed 850 flags, had telephone stations at which shoppers could pick up a handset and listen to recorded greetings in different languages, included an authentic tearoom sent from Japan, and featured demonstrations from international chefs, textile workers, and wood-carvers.

The Historic New Orleans Collection recently received a collection of Lolita Nelson’s Maison Blanche display department papers, donated by Nelson’s daughter, Jacquelin Nelson Kellogg. Through photographic prints, negatives, and sketches, it provides a visual documentation of Maison Blanche’s visual merchandising practices from 1921 through 1981, including images of its team building and installing sets. The collection features a series of mannequin catalogs, which depict changing fashion and style trends.



Additionally, Nelson retained Maison Blanche’s employee newsletters *Shop Talk* and *Entre Nous* from 1944 to 1981, which document the changes in the store’s corporate culture over the years. The collection brings to the forefront a behind-the-scenes department that was responsible for making Maison Blanche a magical place for its shoppers and a local landmark.
—NINA BOZAK

RELATED HOLDINGS



Maison Blanche building, 901 Canal Street
negative, 1954; gelatin silver print, between 1979 and 1983
by Charles L. Franck Photographers; Nancy Ewing Miner, photographic printmaker
Charles L. Franck Studio Collection, 1979.325.1703



Photographs from Mr. Bingle puppeteer Jeff Kent
between 2018 and 2020
gift of Jeff Kent, © Jeff Kent, MSS 629.95



Window display at Adam Hat Store, 1004 Canal Street
negative, 1953; gelatin silver print, between 1979 and 1983
by Charles L. Franck Photographers; Nancy Ewing Miner, photographic printmaker
Charles L. Franck Studio Collection, 1979.325.25

RECENT ADDITIONS

Sketches, Signatures, and a State Penitentiary

George Dureau works
gift of Arthur Roger, © HNOC,
 2025.0301

Before the New Orleans artist George Dureau (1930–2014) gained national prominence for his work as a photographer, his initial focus was drawing and painting. His budding talent as a painter was recognized at his Catholic elementary school, where his first exhibition was mounted in 1941. He went on to study art at Louisiana State University, where he was mentored by notable figures including painter and lithographer Caroline Durieux (1896–1989). He spent the bulk of his career in New Orleans, living and working in the French Quarter, where he was an active member of the gay community.

Dureau had early shows at the Orleans Gallery and what is today the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). Photography, which began as a reference for his other work, was integral to his artistic process. By the 1970s, Dureau’s photography focused on men who were often overlooked or unseen: African American men, gay men, or those with dwarfism, disfigurement, or amputation. He also left a lasting impact on the physical landscape of New Orleans, including his collaborative work with Lin Emery



on the design of a set of gates at NOMA and his design for the pediment sculptures at the former Harrah’s Casino.

Gallery owner Arthur Roger recently donated a collection of 685 unfinished pencil, charcoal, and pastel crayon drawings by Dureau, many of them signed, as well as a painting of Durieux (above). Within the drawings, which appear to date between the 1960s and 1990s, many of Dureau’s regular photography subjects are identifiable. In addition to the imagery of those with limb differences, little people, and nudes for which he is so well known, the collection includes portraits of society figures as well as what appear

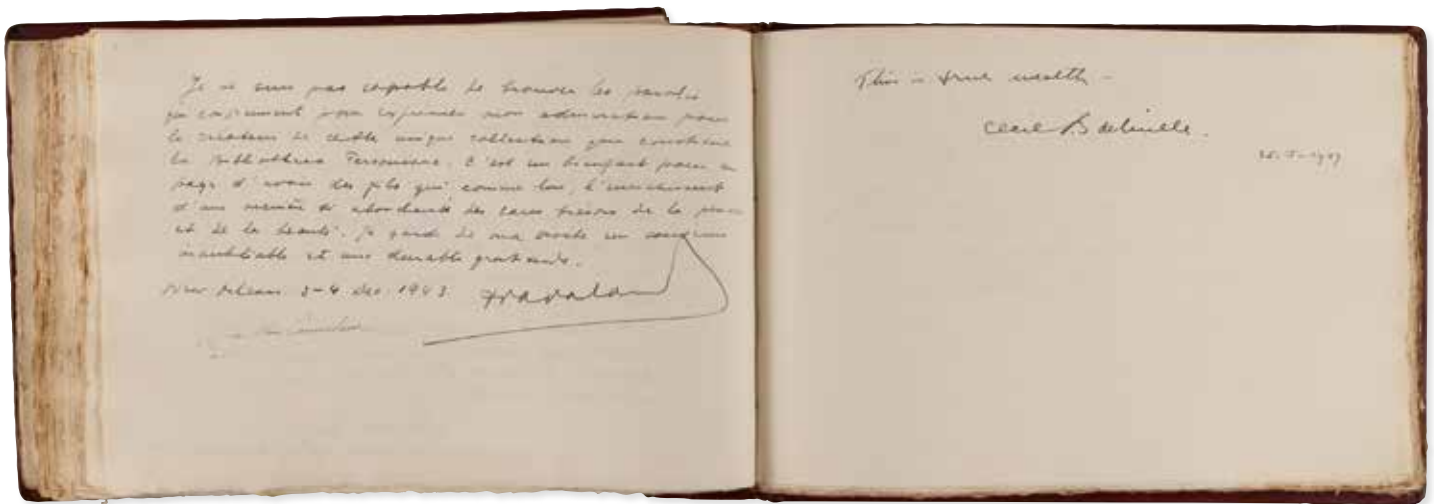
to be rough sketches from his early career designing department store window dressing. Many drawings depict mythological creatures, including centaurs, fauns, and fairies, often playfully. The group also includes drafts of his designs for the NOMA gates and the Harrah’s sculptures (below). The sketches often bear pinholes from having been hung in the artist’s studio and frequently include notes he jotted down.

HNOC also holds a significant collection of Dureau’s photography and personal papers, donated in 2015 by his brother Don Dureau. The collection has been utilized extensively by scholars and documentarians and has played a significant role in the development of both a biography and a documentary about Dureau’s life, career, and influence. This recent donation provides an important record of the development of Dureau’s artistic process and is a welcome addition to HNOC’s extensive holdings on Dureau’s life and work. —AIMEE EVERRETT AND KRISTIN HÉBERT VEIT

Visitors Book Bibliotheca Parsoniana
gift of the estate of Robert L. Redfearn,
on behalf of Lynn Alexandra Redfearn,
Robert L. Redfearn Jr., Charles E. M.
Redfearn, Douglas W. Redfearn, and
Stuart W. Redfearn, and in honor
of Robert L. Redfearn and Lynn M.
Redfearn, MSS 1137.1.1

Edward Alexander Parsons (1877–1962) was a New Orleans collector of rare books and manuscripts, and his private library of about 40,000 volumes and documents included numerous significant items relating to both Louisiana history and world history. He called his library the Bibliotheca Parsoniana, and he sold the collection to the University of Texas at





Austin in 1958. HNOC acquired Parsons’s personal papers in 1991 (MSS 665) and received additional materials in 2025 (MSS 1137). A special item in the recent acquisition is the Bibliotheca Parsoniana’s *Visitors Book*, which guests signed when they visited his home library.

The *Visitors Book* has 362 pages of handwritten entries, dating from 1928 to 1957. Visitors ranged from scholars, historians, authors, and politicians to European royalty, ambassadors, consular officers, rare book collectors, museum curators, opera singers, and actors. Some names are famous; many, although not prominent among the general public, are well known within their particular fields. Signatures in the *Visitors Book* include those of former president Calvin Coolidge (1872–1933); Hollywood filmmaker Cecil B. DeMille (1881–1959); Governor Huey P. Long (1893–1935); Edith FASTERLING (1908–1985), who in 1931 became the first woman to be a licensed airplane pilot in New Orleans; at least eight high-ranking staff members of the Library of Congress and at least 36 other librarians at various times; H. E. Winlock (1884–1950), director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and president of the American Association of Museums in 1937; Harry Ransom, a professor at the University of Texas at Austin (1908–1976);

Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897–1977), the former chancellor of Austria who was imprisoned by Adolf Hitler; Rudolf Allers (1883–1963), a psychiatrist who was an early associate of—and later critic of—Sigmund Freud; and William A. Craigie (1867–1957) and his wife, Jessie K. Craigie (1864–1947), who were both translators of Danish stories, including the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen.

Notable local visitors include artist and silversmith William P. Spratling (1900–1967); Felix Dreyfous (1857–1946), Julius Dreyfous (1896–1975), and Arthur Feitel (1891–1982), members of the board of the Delgado Museum of Art; artist and photographer Weeks Hall (1894–1958); Nella Ludwig (1902–1993), president of the New Orleans Opera Guild; and Andrew J. Higgins (1886–1952), the boat builder who played a critical role in World War II.

The entries in the *Visitors Book* demonstrate that Parsons was at the center of numerous social, cultural, and political networks, that if interesting people were going to be in town, he wanted them to visit his home and see his library—and that the interest was mutual. “This is true wealth,” wrote DeMille in his 1937 entry. Significant people associated with a wide variety of historical subjects crossed paths in the Bibliotheca Parsoniana. Their entries

in the *Visitors Book* could be the gateways to intellectual adventures and many fascinating discoveries. —MICHAEL M. REDMANN

Daguerreotype portrait of William Pratt
gift of John Sarradet, 2025.0095

A Kentucky native, William Pratt came to Louisiana in the 1840s as one of the first lessees of the Louisiana State Penitentiary. In 1844, the state handed over control of the prison and its inmates to Pratt (1802–1880) and James McHatton (1813–1872), inaugurating a long-running public-private partnership known as convict leasing, which removed the state’s financial burden of operating a prison. Pratt and McHatton used their custodianship of the incarcerated population as a labor source for financial benefit, outfitting the penitentiary with industrial textile and rope production machinery. Their administration of the prison, which was then located in Baton Rouge, was known to be particularly brutal for incarcerated people. David T. Hines (d. 1854), who was incarcerated and leased to McHatton, Pratt, and Company, wrote in his memoir, “These men laid aside all objects of reformation . . . and re-instated the most cruel tyranny, to eke out the dollars and cents of human misery.” Following the expiration of the first five-year lease in 1849, Pratt ended his partnership in the operation, while McHatton continued management of the prison with a succession of partners through the 1850s.

Collections items featured in Acquisitions might not be immediately available to view online or in the Williams Research Center reading room. Researchers can inquire about availability by emailing reference@hnoc.org.



HNOC recently acquired a sixth-plate daguerreotype (2.75 by 3.25 inches) showing a bust-length portrait of Pratt. It was initially loaned to the Collection by John Sarradet, a descendant of Pratt, for the 2024–5 exhibition *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration*. The daguerreotype includes a brass mat and cover glass held together by a brass preserver. The top half of the case is not original to the bottom; neither the interior nor the exterior designs match. It is likely that the original top case held a corresponding daguerreotype portrait of Pratt’s wife, Bernice Hackley Connely Pratt (1807–1890).

Pratt’s co-operation of the Louisiana State Penitentiary for five years in the 1840s helped lay the foundation of the state’s convict lease model, which proliferated through the end of the century. Additionally, the convict lease in Louisiana was among the first in the nation and contributed to the popularity of the leasing model for management of state prisons across the region in the second half of the 19th century. This portrait is noteworthy as the only known image of this important figure in the development of the state’s carceral system. —KEVIN T. HARRELL, ERIC SEIFERTH, AND MALLORY TAYLOR

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Maison Blanche window display (detail)

circa 1969; color photograph on paper
gift of Jacquelin Nelson Kellogg,
2025.0138.1.22



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