

Haunter of Ruins
*The Photography of
Clarence John Laughlin*

On Exhibit Through March 21, 1998



The White Hand of Deception, No. One (1981.247.3.263)

“Satirical symbol of the politicians and the seekers for power who, while they carefully conceal their true natures, and purposes, extend the white hand of deception.”

— Clarence John Laughlin

HAUNTER OF RUINS

The definitive Laughlin archive housed at the Historic New Orleans Collection is the basis for *Haunter of Ruins: The Photography of Clarence John Laughlin* as both book and exhibition. Over several years, thousands of prints and texts (letters, manuscripts, articles and essays, both published and unpublished) were examined in order to present the visual and verbal fullness of Laughlin's work. Though the architecture, clothing, automobiles, and other props that appear in Laughlin's pictures date them in the strictest sense, the currency of their content and pertinence to the issues of any day are what keep them intellectually fresh. The importance of architectural preservation, the folly and madness of global war, and the loss of individuality in a society that Laughlin viewed as increasingly impersonal and mechanized are but some of the themes he explores. Laughlin's own words, as well as those of his correspondents, complement the photographs and propel them past a strict documentary or artistic context to what Laughlin called the "third world of photography" where symbols and psychological issues are in play.

— John H. Lawrence
Director of Museum Programs

- Laughlin exhibition on view
October 7, 1997– March 21, 1998
- *Haunter of Ruins* available from the Shop and from fine bookstores.
See order form on page 15.

CONSIDERING CLARENCE JOHN LAUGHLIN

*The following reflections are taken from the essays included
in the recent Bulfinch publication*

Haunter of Ruins The Photography of Clarence John Laughlin

IMAGES AND WORDS

CLARENCE JOHN LAUGHLIN was born near the city of Lake Charles, Louisiana, in the southwestern corner of the state in 1905. While he was still a young boy, his family moved to New Orleans, and with the exception of a brief sojourn in New York in the early 1940s and time spent in Washington, D.C., during World War II, he remained a resident of the city for virtually his entire life....

Like so many important aspects of his life, Laughlin's career as a photographer was essentially of his own making....

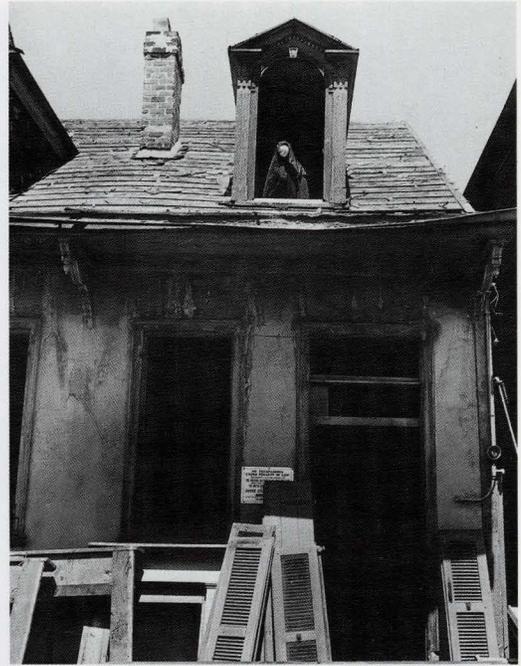
...A glimpse into the Laughlin subconscious is gained from examining the nearly two dozen distinct groupings that he made for his more than seventeen thousand pictures, created for the most part between 1935 and 1965. Although organizing his photographs into groups is something that Laughlin had decided upon early in his career as a photographer, he was always tweaking the groups and their contents. The ultimate arrangement occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s: Laughlin had virtually ceased being an active photographer, and he spent several years refining the group structure and the written captions to his work....

...The care with which the titles were constructed point again to the primary role of language that Laughlin envisioned in his completed work. Indeed, he felt a photograph to be incomplete if it lacked a sufficiently poetic title and caption.

— John H. Lawrence



Figure in a Crypt (1981.247.3.754)



Dweller in an Empty House (1981.247.3.195)

THE WONDER AND TERROR OF CLARENCE JOHN LAUGHLIN

For patrons and critics of 20th-century art, Laughlin's photographs — especially his experiments with surrealism — place him in a distinct pantheon of American photographers. For his longtime friends, however, Laughlin is the subject of a favorite anecdote. As is often true of people with extraordinary talent, acquaintances find it easier to reminisce about eccentric mannerisms than to summarize the intensity of genius — and yet on closer examination the familiar story speaks to both.

Friends playfully suggest challenging the authenticity of a purported Laughlin photograph if it lacks the imprint of one of Clarence John Laughlin's shirt buttons pressed into its surface. Before he relinquished a photograph to the gaze of his visitor, the story continues, it was Laughlin's custom to clasp the print to his chest while exhorting the prospective viewer to a full anticipation of its merits.

— Jon Kukla

CLARENCE LAUGHLIN: THE FULLNESS OF ABSENCE

Clarence Laughlin, living in New Orleans, amid the debris of cultures that had already questioned themselves to death several times over the past three centuries, must have felt keenly the despair of the various losses documented by the existentialists. He adopted their themes, but chose surrealism — the most literary of all our century's movements — to express himself. Surrealism, which is shockingly and self-consciously "revolutionary," is also profoundly conservative: it uses all the available materials. Its chief technique is collage...

...Clarence Laughlin is the Charles Baudelaire of New Orleans. The particular feeling Baudelaire called "spleen," which is a mixture of melancholy, rage, eros, and resignation, radiates from these photographs. The "black sun" of Baudelaire and of the surrealists illumines Laughlin's New Orleans with its funeral rays.

— Andrei Codrescu



Figure Head (1981.247.1.643)

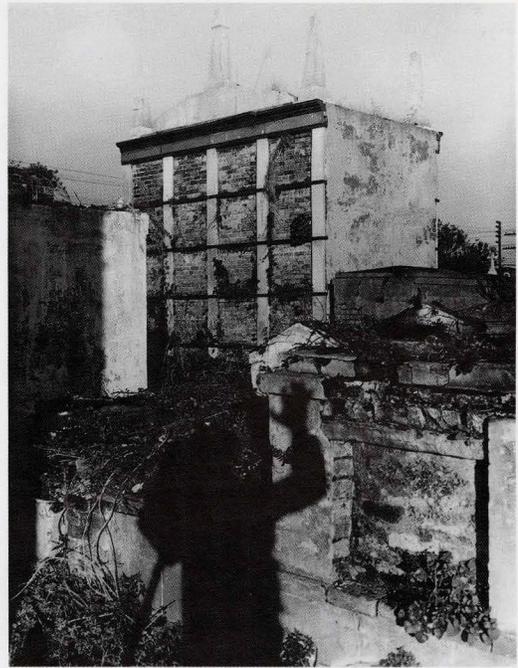
"Again, there is the mood here of Celtic legend, the lonely and lovely figure in a wind-blown castle of death, yearning to be released. Her chin cleaving the clouds like the prow of the ship of life in the city of the dead." — Clarence John Laughlin

CLARENCE, A CELEBRATION

Visual poems, he called them, these photographs that told a thousand poems a thousand ways without needing a word of explanation. Still, Clarence insisted on explaining, until at last, near the end of his life, he began to type up explanations of the meanings of the photographs and would go around to galleries and affix them to the inside of the mounting of the frames. I remember the first time I saw one of these altered frames. Joshua Paillet was standing before it in his gallery sighing and smiling the smile genius calls up....

... The gifts he left us are many, but for me, who was once a poet, these visual poems, with or without their wordy explanations, are especially dear. I was only feeling my way into my own work when I knew and learned from Clarence, when he would sit me down and get out the photographs and make me listen. Things are not as simple as they seem, he seemed to say. Things have many meanings. There are rooms within rooms within rooms. The conscious mind is the size of a screw on the doorbell of the door leading to the house of the unconscious.

— *Ellen Gilchrist*



Portrait of the Photographer as a Shadow (1983.47.3.711)

LAUGHLIN, FREUD, CHOLESTEROL, AND KILZ: A CAJUN TOUR GUIDE SPEAKS OF PEACE

I like this one best. "Portrait of the Photographer as a Shadow." You can see the photographer's shadow, his hand up as though he's touching the stone shafts. What's going on in this one, do you think? Yes, it could be just as solemn with the same realizations and reminders. Or did Laughlin find a kind of humor that day, just as we did today? And a bit playful, you know, mischievously playful and solemn at the same time, as he held his breath and lifted his hand. As though he recognized the irony, and he took a deep breath — thinking all the while maybe of the audacity that any mortal would dare paint on the walls of such an awesome city as this — held up his hand and held his breath to stifle the giggle.

— *Albert Belisle Davis*



The Desiccated Heart (1983.47.4.7186)

AN ASTONISHED EYE LOOKS OUT OF THE AIR

He called himself All Eyes, but his real name was Clarence John Laughlin....

...He rambled all around, in and out of the town. He was a sight and a half. He saw "things." He was a phantast. He was Mr. Eye-Magination. He could animate a frozen turnip. . . . He was definitely *too much!* And *how* I miss him! Every time I encounter the Marvelous, in a place, in a person, in a book, in a building, in an object, I want to send a fax to CJL in the Elysian Fields and tell him about it....

All Eyes was like Claude Monet, one of his masters, who told us: "...try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house, a field or whatever." I'm sure that Clarence taught me as much about *seeing* language as much as Charles Olson, my own master, taught me about *hearing* words. When I started making poems in the 1950s, the South was full of amazing hand-painted signs. CJL showed me how to see what was there, as well as what wasn't there.

—Jonathan Williams



The Mighty Pillars, No. Four (1983.47.3.500)

MEMORY, MINT JULEPS, AND MY GRANDFATHER

Memory, my grandfather used to say, is a most amazing thing. It is what makes a human being human....

Whenever he began talking like that, it meant that he was about to launch into one of his long disquisitions....

He settled himself on the front porch, in a cane rocker specially made to accommodate his long legs....

There, whatever the weather, in his chair on his porch, he had his drink — toddy, he called it... In cold months the porch was enclosed by an elaborate set of hinged windows, awkward heavy panels that took several days to install. During warm weather those panels were stored under the house in neat three-deep piles. There was plenty of room for them there — it was an old-fashioned house, built high off the ground. Its dim sheltered spaces provided convenient storage for adults. For children the entire area was a mysterious playground, cool in summer, cold in winter, smelling always of the heavy rich sweet earth.

— *Shirley Ann Grau*



The Besieging Wilderness (1981.247.3.63)

TERRIBLE BEAUTY: CLARENCE JOHN LAUGHLIN'S MYTHOLOGIES OF MISERY

Clarence John Laughlin viewed this century as darkly as Yeats viewed it — even Yeats at his most apocalyptic, Yeats at his most prophetic. . . . Laughlin, like Yeats, and also like William Blake, another poet, artist, and apocalyptic visionary, constructed vast mythologies to give form to his thought and out of which he fashioned his art. . . . Most photographers are primarily interested in, to put it simply, making good pictures — which Laughlin did very well — but his primary concern was not the photographs but, like some Old Testament seer, prophecy and lamentation. Photography was merely the vehicle, the shape of his voice, the solidifications of his eye. “I am not primarily interested in the camera as a recording mechanism, but rather, in its possibilities as an extension of the inner eye,” he once wrote. . . .

Even in Laughlin's most placid images one always feels the hint of something disturbing, the certainty that something is going wrong. In those beautiful and seemingly peaceful images, a great deal has often gone wrong, in fact. The passing away and destruction of much of New Orleans and of so many of Louisiana's plantations served as Laughlin's metaphor for the ruin of the world.

— *John Wood*



"Cajun Girls" by Clarence John Laughlin (1981.247.1.890)

LAUGHLIN AND A COMPUTER SYSTEM CALLED HOMER

Finding associated themes in the lengthy captions that Clarence John Laughlin wrote for his photographs will soon be possible. A research project at the Wharton School of Business provides the answers. Director of systems Chuck Patch is the liaison between the group in Pennsylvania and the Collection's Laughlin archive.

While Clarence John Laughlin is well known for his romantically charged photography, fewer people are aware of the importance that he attached to his writings. Laughlin is said to have remarked that he was "a writer first, a book collector second and a photographer third." In the course of his career he fought many battles over the editing of the texts that accompanied his images. Laughlin is unusual among 20th-century artists in the degree to which he explicitly laid out his aims and how he intended to achieve them. The lengthy and elliptical captions he wrote for each of his photographs often run to several paragraphs, ultimately adding up to more than 1,000

pages of typescript. The Laughlin archive contains many boxes of his correspondence — letters sent and received — with many contemporary artists.

Laughlin's writings provide an astonishingly detailed map of his idiosyncratic thought processes. Indeed, the Laughlin archive is a gold mine for researchers interested in everything from 20th-century *avant-garde* art to 1950s magazine publishing. But, as in any gold mine, the ore must be separated from the tailings; researchers face mountains of paper to sort through in search of the themes that connect Laughlin's work to his time. The Laughlin Collection illustrates a common problem in historical research: lim-

ited resources and time will result in limiting the scope of a research project.

In 1994, the Historic New Orleans Collection had the opportunity to participate in an open-ended research project in computerized information retrieval, conducted by Dr. Steve Kimbrough of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. Dr. Kimbrough was interested in the problem of extracting useful information from large bodies of text. Because of their size, frequency of use, and the fact that they were already in electronic form, the Laughlin photograph captions were chosen as a test-bed to use in Kimbrough's studies. Over the intervening years, Kimbrough and his graduate students created a set of powerful software to retrieve relevant information from the captions. At the heart of these tools is a computer algorithm that can detect "semantic latency": information that is relevant to a researcher's request, even when the terms used by the researcher to query the data do not actually appear in the text. If, for example, he queries the Laughlin captions for "gothic architecture," the program would retrieve not only those captions but also many that refer to "fantastic architecture." Why? Because Laughlin so often used the terms together in his captions that the retrieval system calculates a high probability that photographs of "fantastic architecture" will also be of interest to the researcher. The Wharton group did not stop there. They went on to create a unique "hypothesis generator," which they called "Homer," after the ancient Greek poet.

Homer was built to satisfy one of the project's initial aims: a computer system that would help the researcher "tell a story" by identifying common themes in a large body of text. In appearance, it resembles a spreadsheet, a common computer application familiar to many people. Unlike conventional data-retrieval systems, however, Homer does not simply pull up database records in response to a query. Instead, it takes the query term provided by a researcher and presents a list of the other terms that appear in conjunction with it throughout the

DIRECTOR

Punch-buggy yellow! Autumn has arrived, my teenaged daughters have returned to school, and again they've left me with a heightened awareness of Volkswagen "beetles."



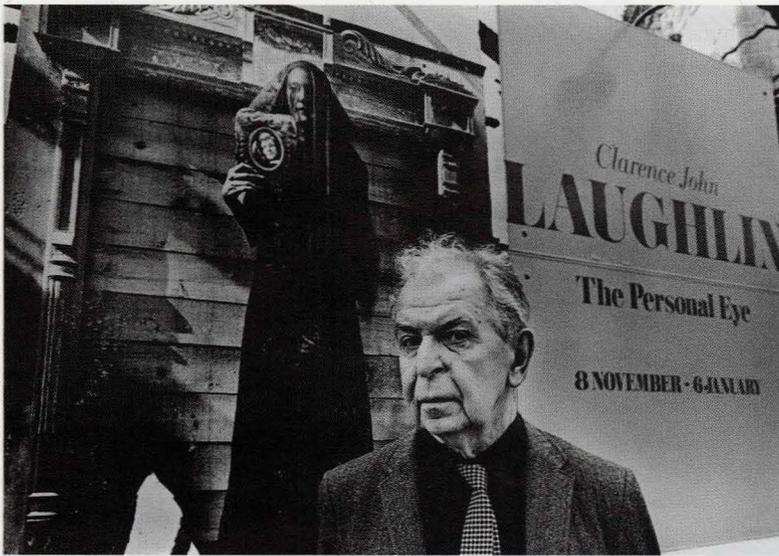
This year, however, as the Collection unveils the *Haunter of Ruins* book and exhibition, chance encounters with colorful "punch-buggies" along the streets of New Orleans enhance my appreciation of Clarence John Laughlin.

The game is simple. The first person to spy a Volkswagen calls out "punch-buggy" and its color, strikes another player, and wins a point. Convertibles get extra points. The game continues all summer, and although points are rarely tallied, fathers generally lose to daughters (who presumably practice all year). By autumn, however, fathers become aware that a beige Volkswagen is often parked near Magazine and Walnut Streets; that another beetle inhabits Prytania Street near Valence, and there's the one that just turned the corner. *Punch-buggy blue!*

The game makes us take notice. So does a genius.

During the years of preparation for *Haunter of Ruins*, I learned to take Clarence John Laughlin seriously. The events of his lifetime — the Great Depression, World War II, and all the rest — forced his generation into an earnest encounter with reality, and with meaning, that makes intellectual discourse at the end of the 20th century seem shallow. Half a century later, the raw shock conveyed by his words and images, by the intensity of Laughlin's genius, remains morally instructive. He makes us take notice of important things. *Punch-buggy true.*

— Jon Kukla



Clarence John Laughlin at the Philadelphia Museum of Art by Michael P. Smith ©1973 (1985.181.8)

text. Homer then further subdivides its results according to a third criterion, which is currently limited to date ranges. Following the spreadsheet metaphor, the terms are arranged in rows, while the date ranges form the columns. Using the same query posed above, Homer would tell us that from 1935 to 1940, the terms "gothic architecture" and "fantastic architecture" frequently occur together with the word "Louisiana." Two decades later, "Louisiana" no longer figures in the top five words, replaced instead by "California." Already we can hypothesize that Laughlin developed an interest in "fantastic architecture" in Louisiana during the early part of his career and continued to explore that interest in different parts of the country.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Homer is that it is truly a tool for scholars. By providing a broad overview of the terms in a collection of documents, it makes patterns easy to see. But not all patterns are valid; it takes a person versed in the subject to tell the difference between those that might be true and those that are spurious. Garrett Dworman — the researcher on the Kimbrough team who conceived and developed Homer — made that discovery. While testing Homer, Mr. Dworman became fascinated by a strong correlation between the terms "fantasy" and "Zulu" that appeared between the years 1935

and 1940. He conjectured a wide variety of esoteric explanations before John Lawrence, the Collection's resident Laughlin expert, pointed out that Laughlin photographed the Zulu carnival parade extensively during this period.

Until this year, Dr. Kimbrough's work was conducted in an informal collaboration with THNOC. In late spring 1997, the nature of this collaboration changed when the Collection awarded a contract to the Wharton group to develop an operational version of Homer, to be installed on a public-access terminal in the Williams Research Center. The project, currently underway, will result in an enhanced version of the system, allowing record retrieval directly from Homer, and an expanded database including the manuscript from Laughlin's never-published book, "Lost New Orleans." The University of Pennsylvania plans to apply for a grant to expand the project to other THNOC collections.

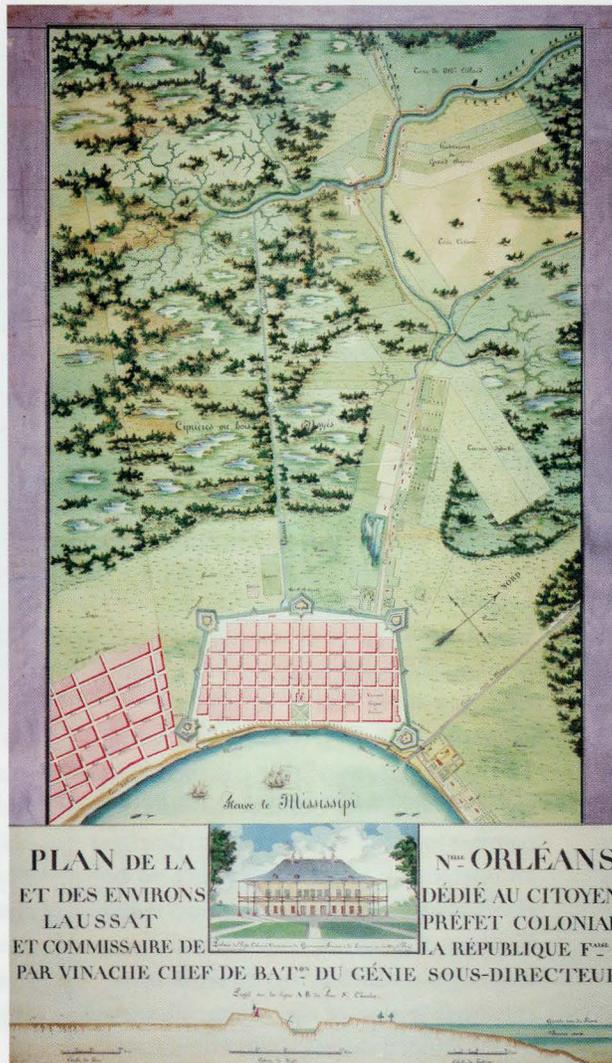
Both Homer and its associated technologies have excited the interest of museum and archives professionals at meetings held in 1994 and 1996. This technology holds great promise as the practice becomes more common to collect archival information in digital format and to digitize collections already in archives. Remember, you saw it first at the Historic New Orleans Collection.

— Chuck Patch

Three French Mapmakers and the Louisiana Purchase

Maps, like other documents from which later generations piece together their history, generally are created for some immediate purpose. Highway maps of the 1930s, for example, guided travelers to their destinations (and advertised brand-name gasolines or motor oil). None of their creators and distributors, however, could have anticipated that, years later, 1930s maps might help a geographer estimate wetland erosion, a sociologist trace patterns of urban sprawl, or a historian explain the Louisiana Maneuvers, when Eisenhower and his comrades practiced for World War II. Similarly, three early 19th-century maps owned by the Collection illuminate the era of the Louisiana Purchase. Facsimile editions of these maps are now available from the Shop at the Collection, but in its day, each map was created for distinct reasons. Knowing those circumstances deepens our appreciation both of history and of the maps themselves.

In 1800, Louisiana was caught between Great Britain and Napoleon Bonaparte. After reclaiming the colony from Spain by secret treaty, Napoleon sent Pierre Clément Laussat to rule Louisiana as his prefect, or governor, while he moved armies and fleets like pieces on a chessboard that extended from the steppes of Russia westward across the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains. The big picture was simple: Napoleon dominated the Continent, Britannia ruled the waves, and New Orleans controlled the Mississippi. Prominent among the military officers who arrived with Laussat in March 1803 was Joseph Antoine Vinache, chief of the



New Orleans in 1803 by Joseph Antoine Vinache (1987.65 i-iii)

engineering battalion assigned to New Orleans. Laussat and Vinache knew that French Louisiana was only as secure as New Orleans.

One enduring result of Vinache's efforts to defend New Orleans is a large and colorful watercolor map that now hangs in the Collection's galleries. The map conveys information that was essential to the work of the prefect and his engineer. Along the bottom edge, for example, Vinache drew cross-section profiles of the earthworks, moat, levee, bature, and high- and low-water levels along a line extending from the center of

Fort St. Charles (at the lower corner of the Vieux Carré) into the river.

Once Napoleon decided to sell Louisiana, the original purpose of Vinache's map-making shifted. The map became a tribute dedicated to Laussat, a memento of their joint efforts. Both as art and as cartography, Vinache's map exemplifies the French military engineering tradition and its extraordinary visual record of New Orleans landscape and architecture. Comparable documents from English colonies along the Atlantic coast, if they exist at all, rarely achieve such precision and artistry. The most detailed map of 18th-century Williamsburg, for example, was drawn about 1781 by a French military officer responsible for billeting troops who served at the siege of Yorktown. The Frenchman's Map, as it is known in Virginia, proved invaluable to the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg. In New Orleans, the high standards of the French military engineers are evident in cartographic and architectural drawings of surveyors' sketchbooks and notarial documents well into the 19th century.

Vinache's map shows New Orleans at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in great detail: the city's street grid and fortifications; houses and fields along the Mississippi River, the Esplanade Ridge, and Bayou St. John; and vast swamps and forests surrounding the city. Vinache showed his own residence (a small red rectangle in what is now the Tremé neighborhood), but he lavished his attention on a decorative drawing of Marigny plantation, which Laussat used as his residence and headquarters. The Vinache map of 1803 began as a tool for safeguarding French imperial interests in North America. It

was completed as a keepsake. Today, it is treasured as a beautiful and accurate depiction of New Orleans at the moment that the United States gained possession of the entire watershed of the Mississippi River.

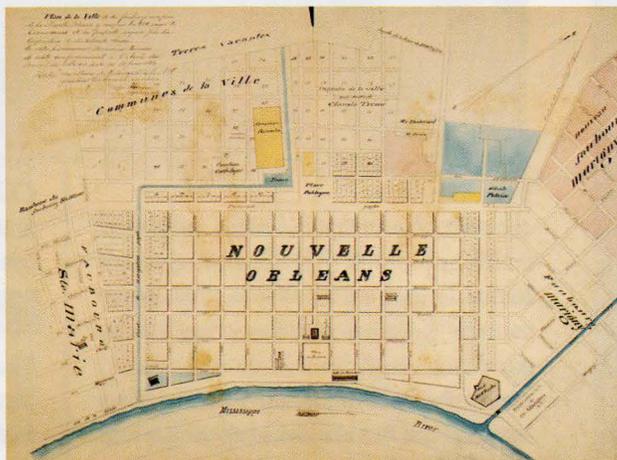


Prosperity, growth, and the Louisiana Purchase were directly responsible for the Jacques Tanesse 1812 map of New Orleans. In 1803, France had ceded the *communes de la ville* (city commons outside the forts and ramparts of the old city) to the United States, and in 1807 the federal government transferred title to the city. In June 1812, three months after Louisiana achieved statehood, the city council asked Tanesse to prepare a “map of the city and incorporated neighborhoods of New Orleans, including the 600 rods of townships and the property acquired by Mr. Claude Tremé’s corporation.” By dividing the former *communes de la ville* into 310 lots for sale and assigning numbered squares to the commons area and Tremé, Tanesse drew the master plan for the rapidly growing city. His original map got such heavy use that city surveyor Jules Allou D’Hemecourt made a fresh copy in the 1870s. Among the many landmarks, new and old, identified by Tanesse in 1812 (and carefully copied by D’Hemecourt) was the anticipated canal that gave its name to Canal Street. The canal was never built, but its presence on the Tanesse/D’Hemecourt map reminds us that the January 1812 arrival of the steamboat *New Orleans* (the first steam-powered vessel successfully to navigate the Mississippi) presaged the bustling age of the steam navigation throughout the Mississippi watershed after the War of 1812 had been won.



Ten years after the Battle of New Orleans confirmed American possession of the Mississippi, engravers recorded the Louisiana Purchase and American expansion

on a French-language map entitled *Carte de l’Adjonction Progressive des Divers États au Territoire et à l’Union Constitutionnelle des États-Unis de l’Amérique du Nord*. This handsome map, published in 1825, coincided with the Marquis de Lafayette’s extended tour of the United States and with heightened European interest in the young republic. The vast expanse of *Ancienne Louisiane* is



The Tanesse map of 1812 was copied by D’Hemecourt in the 1870s (1966.33.30).



The Louisiana Purchase and American Expansion to 1825 (1970.7)

prominent, but close examination reveals that its boundaries are not those of the western watershed but rather the result of diplomacy: To the north, negotiations between John Quincy Adams and the British in 1818 drew a border along the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. Similarly,

Adams negotiated the vertical western boundary of the Arkansas territory in the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 with Spain. The map also shows the U.S. acquisition of East Florida from Spain in 1821, and, west of the Rockies, expresses American rather than British claims to the disputed northern boundary of the Oregon Territory.

Population statistics given for all the states and some territories give further hints about European curiosity. Total population figures are given from the first national census in 1790 and, as an index of growth, from the census of 1820. Census figures from 1810 were used for slave populations, however, possibly to coincide with the 1808 closing of slave importation permitted by the Constitution or perhaps simply because the 1810 figures were more convenient. Slavery was a matter of interest to Americans and Europeans alike — especially on a map that reflects the onset of sectionalism and the eventuality of the Civil War.

When Louisiana was admitted to the Union, the remaining territory acquired in 1803 was re-named Missouri. “The Missouri Question” soon threatened the country. Compromises over slavery written into the Constitution by the Convention of 1787 unraveled as a direct result of the Louisiana Purchase. In 1820, the Missouri Compromise bought a few more years of national unity by prohibiting slavery north of 36°30’ and admitting slave and free states in pairs to ensure a balance of power in the Senate.

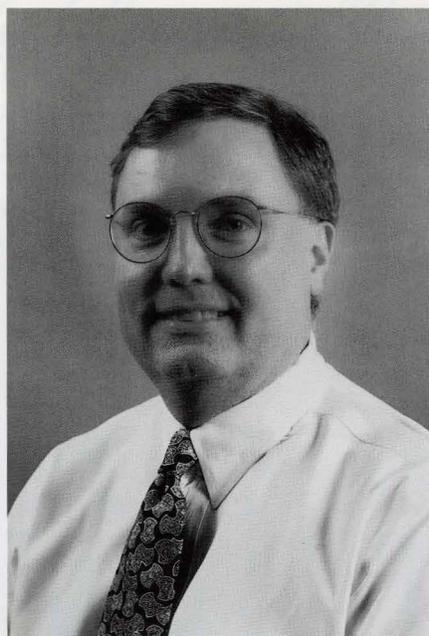
In 1803 and 1812, Vinache and Tanesse drew maps for their own reasons that now illuminate the Louisiana Purchase. In 1825, anonymous French engravers created a map of the Louisiana Purchase and Missouri Compromise. It now illuminates the coming of the Civil War as well.

—Jon Kukla

GERALD PATOUT APPOINTED HEAD LIBRARIAN

Gerald Felix Patout, former head librarian of the West Bank campus library of Delgado Community College, joined the staff as head librarian at the Historic New Orleans Collection in August. A graduate of the University of Southwestern Louisiana, he brings to the Collection a wealth of library experience. He received the M.S. degree in instructional media and educational administration from Old Dominion University, the M.L.I.S. from Louisiana State University, and a C.A.S. in information administration and management from Columbia University.

Mr. Patout is a native of south Louisiana and comes from a family of sugar growers and food connoisseurs. Chefs are frequently found in the family tree. Mr. Patout is no exception. Recalling his years in New York City, he tells about teaching Cajun cooking in his spare time and carefully transporting sausage for gumbo on the subway to his classroom in lower Manhattan — a Lands' End bag kept the aroma from attracting attention while in transit. "We cooked three things. Chicken and andouille gumbo, pralines — cooked in the microwave — and jambalaya," he remembers. It was the height of the Cajun cooking craze and classes were packed. "And chefs came to learn how to make a roux."



Mr. Patout mentions his apartment on the upper West Side, his walks through Riverside Park on his way to Columbia, and the "finest teachers I ever had" — in particular, Kathleen Molz, the Melvil Dewey Professor of Library Science. Under her guidance, he made a study of the rare books belonging to a small eastern college that was considering the transfer of its fine collection to another institution. He recommended that the books remain where they had been for 100 or more years. "The library is the core of the school," he said.

He also worked in the media center and computer applications laboratory of Milbank Library at Teacher's College/Columbia University. After graduate work (and an "A" from Professor Molz), he was hired to direct the central corporate library of Domino Sugar Corporation in New York. There he found an unexpected benefit of the job included attending their food-tasting seminars.

In 1993, Gerald Patout returned to Louisiana and within weeks was directing Delgado's West Bank library. Now the next stage of his career begins as he assumes duties at THNOC's Williams Research Center. He is looking ahead to a time when technological applications will make the Collection's vast historical resources as close as a computer screen. Mr. Patout relishes the task.

— Louise C. Hoffman

WILLIAMS



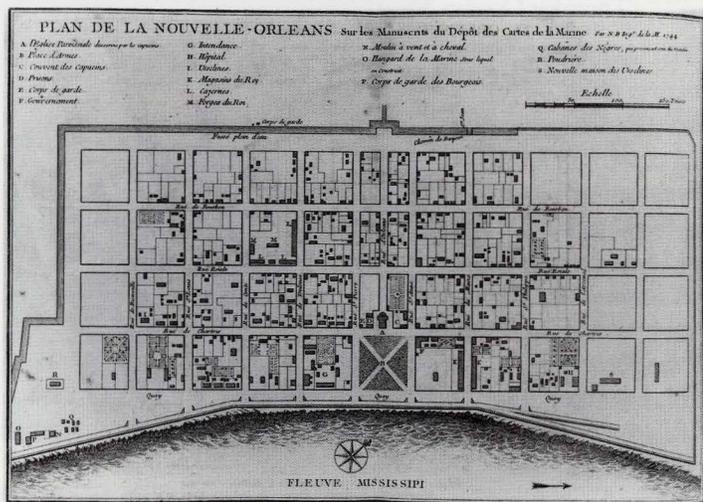
THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION encourages research in the Williams Research Center at 410 Chartres Street from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday (except holidays).

Cataloged materials available to researchers include books, manuscripts, paintings, prints, drawings, maps, photographs, and artifacts about the history and culture of New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Gulf South. Each year the Collection adds thousands of items to its holdings by donation or purchase. Only a few recent acquisitions can be noted here.

LIBRARY

Pierre F. X. de Charlevoix (1682-1761), Jesuit priest, professor, and explorer, wrote an important early work on the French experience in North America, *Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France, avec le Journal Historique d'un Voyage fait par l'ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* (Paris, 1744). Issued in three volumes, volumes one and two contain a history of Canada to 1736, with some sections about Louisiana. Volume three is Charlevoix's account of his travels in New France between 1720 and 1722. Each volume contains numerous plates of botanical studies and maps.

Charlevoix's *Journal* is written as a series of letters addressed to the Duchesse de Lesdiguières. There is no indication that these were actually mailed to the duchess, who had died in 1741; but the letter form, probably a literary device, gives the text an almost personal tone. Visiting New Orleans early in 1722, Charlevoix asks the reader to "imagine to yourself two hundred persons, who have been sent out to build a city...on the banks of a great river, thinking upon nothing but...putting themselves under cover from the injuries of the weather,



Plan de la Nouvelle-Orléans (97-225-RL.2), 1744

and in the mean time waiting till a plan is laid out.... M. de Pauger, whom I have still the honour to accompany, has just shown me a plan of his own invention." The area in Pauger's plan is known today as the French Quarter, or Vieux Carré. Widely read when it was first published and often reprinted, Charlevoix's history of New France remained for many years the best source about French-held areas of the New World.

— Pamela D. Arceneaux

MANUSCRIPTS

Two recent purchases strengthen the manuscripts holdings relating to colonial Louisiana.

■ Charles Gravier Vergennes (1717–1787), French foreign minister under Louis XVI, wrote *Mémoire historique et politique sur la Louisiane*, ca. 1770, as Spain was taking possession of Louisiana from France. It was not published until 1802, a year before the Louisiana Purchase. This handsomely bound 180-page manuscript, apparently copied for a member of the court, reviews French strategies concerning Louisiana after the Seven Years War (1756–1763).

Noticias Curiosas, a collection of 18th-century manuscript letters and documents, contains commentary, primarily Spanish, on various political and

military events in the New World and Europe. Of particular interest is "Diario de las Ocurrencias en la Expedicion para la Provincia del Nuevo Orleans," a 33-page section devoted to New Orleans, dated 1769.

■ A scrapbook of memorabilia related to the

Evangeline legend, has been added to the holdings. Assembled by André A. Olivier, the scrapbook's contents include photographs of tourists in front of the store Olivier opened in St. Martinville in 1925, where he often told the story of Evangeline and Gabriel, and the business card that identified him as Official Historical Guide for the Land of Evangeline.

— M. Theresa LeFevre

CURATORIAL

Jack Hudson's gift of two aerial photographs of West End provides a different perspective from other views of the area that are in the Collection's holdings. These photoprints show the harbor with marina, the Southern Yacht Club and New Orleans Yacht Club, the U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse, and the Point, as well as cars and pedestrians along Lakeshore Drive.

■ Coralie Guarino Davis has augmented her previous gift of family photographs with five cartes-de-visite. The portraits were taken between 1868 and 1906 by Louisiana photographers John Hawley Clarke, A. Constant, Aristide Daliet, and Thomas Chaillol.

■ Joy P. Oalman has donated an ink drawing of the Battle of Liberty Place, which she drew in 1979.

— Judith H. Bonner

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APRIL–JUNE, 1997

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STAFF

IN THE COMMUNITY



Alfred Lemmon

Dr. Alfred E. Lemmon was appointed co-chair of the awards committee of the Society of American Archivists. Dr. Lemmon presented a talk on the Collection's Cuban microfilming project at the symposium, History and Historical Archaeology of the Gulf Coast, sponsored by the Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference in October. He also has been appointed to the editorial team of the Handbook of Latin American Studies published by the Library of Congress.

John H. Lawrence taught a course in the photographic history of New Orleans at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts. His photographs were also exhibited at the New Orleans Academy and at the Contemporary Arts Center. He was interviewed by WWNO-FM and the *Times-Picayune*. WDSU-TV interviewed John Magill about the closing of Krauss Department Store on Canal Street. This fall he is teaching a course about the physical growth of New Orleans at UNO's Metropolitan College.

Judith H. Bonner chaired the curators committee exhibition competition for the Southeastern Museums Conference. Mark Cave was interviewed about the 150th anniversary of Longfellow's poem *Evangeline* by WDSU-TV, WVUE-TV, and the *Times-Picayune*. He attended the annual meeting of the Oral History Association and spoke to Les Femmes Savantes Book Club. Louise Hoffman was elected to the board of the Publishers Association of the South at the PAS annual meeting in Mobile. Pamela Arceneaux presented a slide lecture, "A Red-Light Look at New Orleans History," at Maxwell's Toulouse Cabaret. Dr. George Reinecke gave a lecture on musician Manuel Manetta at Tulane University.

THE COUNTING HOUSE LECTURES

"A Red-Light Look at New Orleans History," Pamela Arceneaux
Thursday, October 23, 7:30 p.m.

"New Orleans Cemeteries," Sandra Russell Clark and Patricia Brady
Tuesday, October 28, 7:30 p.m.

"Vieux Carré Architecture," Malcolm Heard
Thursday, November 6, 7:30 p.m.

"The Baroness Pontalba and Her Buildings," Christina Vella
Thursday, November 13, 7:30 p.m.

All lectures will take place in the Counting House
The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street

LAUGHLIN SYMPOSIUM

Jon Kukla, John H. Lawrence, and essayist Jonathan Williams discussed *Haunter of Ruins* on October 12. They were joined in autographing by essayists Albert Davis, John Wood and others and by editor Patricia Brady. Gallery talks will be presented during November and January at 12:30 on Wednesdays.

PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Patricia Brady wrote "The Seductive Face of Death," the introductory text to a book of photographs by Sandra Russell Clark, *Elysium: A Gathering of Souls*, just published by LSU Press.

CHANGES



Steve Sweet

Steve Sweet has been named head preparator. Joining the staff are Marcia Wilderman (B.F.A., Loyola University), assistant preparator; Ann Tenold (M.A., arts administration, UNO; M.A., art history, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), assis-



Marcia Wilderman



Ann Tenold



Kimberly Kowal



Barbara Lopez

tant registrar for the Williams Residence; Kimberly Kowal (M.L.I.S., LSU), library; Barbara Lopez, the Shop. Ellen Bullock was a volunteer intern in September.



THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION QUARTERLY

Editors:
Patricia Brady
Louise C. Hoffman

Head of Photography:
Jan White Brantley

The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly is published by the Historic New Orleans Collection, which is operated by the Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation, a Louisiana nonprofit corporation. Housed in a complex of historic buildings in the French Quarter, facilities are open to the public, Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Tours of the history galleries and the residence are available for a nominal fee.

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ISSN 0886-2109 © 1997
The Historic New Orleans Collection

Additional photography by:
Dustin Booksh and Cornelius Regan



Christmas spoon

THE SHOP

The Shop is now offering a personal shopper service to help with the selection of executive gifts and with gifts for special promotions, conventions, and sales meetings. Museum reproductions are always appropriate and provide lasting reminders of items in the holdings of the Historic New Orleans Collection. Handsome map facsimiles available from the Shop are an 1803 plan of New Orleans dating from the year of the Louisiana Purchase by Joseph Antoine Vinache (\$25); the Jacques Tanesse/Jules

Allou D'Hemecourt plan of New Orleans in 1812 (\$20); and an engraving that shows the Louisiana Purchase and American expansion to 1825 (\$20). (See page 10.) The Shop has an especially fine collection of antique jewelry and silver, as well as original prints.

Now available from the Shop is a sterling silver Christmas spoon (\$45, pictured at left), reproduced from the original, popular shortly after the turn of the century. The front of the spoon depicts St. Nicholas, his elves, and a chimney hung with stockings; a filled stocking and holly leaves decorate the back. Call 504-598-7147 for more information.

LAUGHLIN BOOK

PUBLISHED BY BULFINCH PRESS

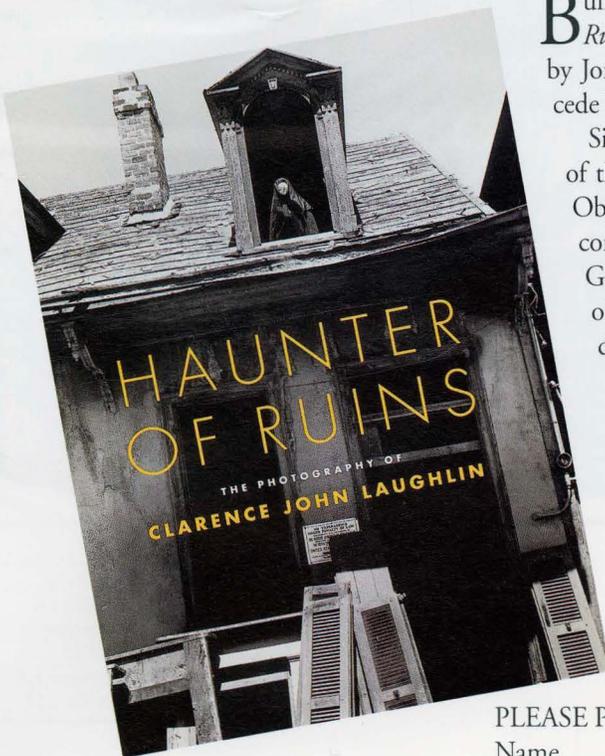
Bulfinch Press, a division of Little, Brown and Company, published *Haunter of Ruins: The Photography of Clarence John Laughlin* in September. An introduction by Jon Kukla and an introduction to the photographs by John H. Lawrence precede Laughlin's powerful photographic images.

Six essays by noted authors are paired with photographic sections entitled "Poems of the Interior World," "Visual Poems," "Plantation Ghosts," "The Magic of the Object," "Fantasy in Old New Orleans," and "Lost New Orleans." An appendix contains Laughlin's descriptions of his photographic groups, as exemplified in Group S, "The Magic of the Object," where he tries to show "the secret language of inanimate objects, the hidden images of man's hopes and joys, his dreams and desires, by which he makes more human the inhuman world around him."

Haunter of Ruins brings the work of a master photographer once again to the public's attention.

Please send *Haunter of Ruins: The Photography of Clarence John Laughlin*, 112 pages, 69 photographs (ISBN 0-8212-2361-5), 1997.

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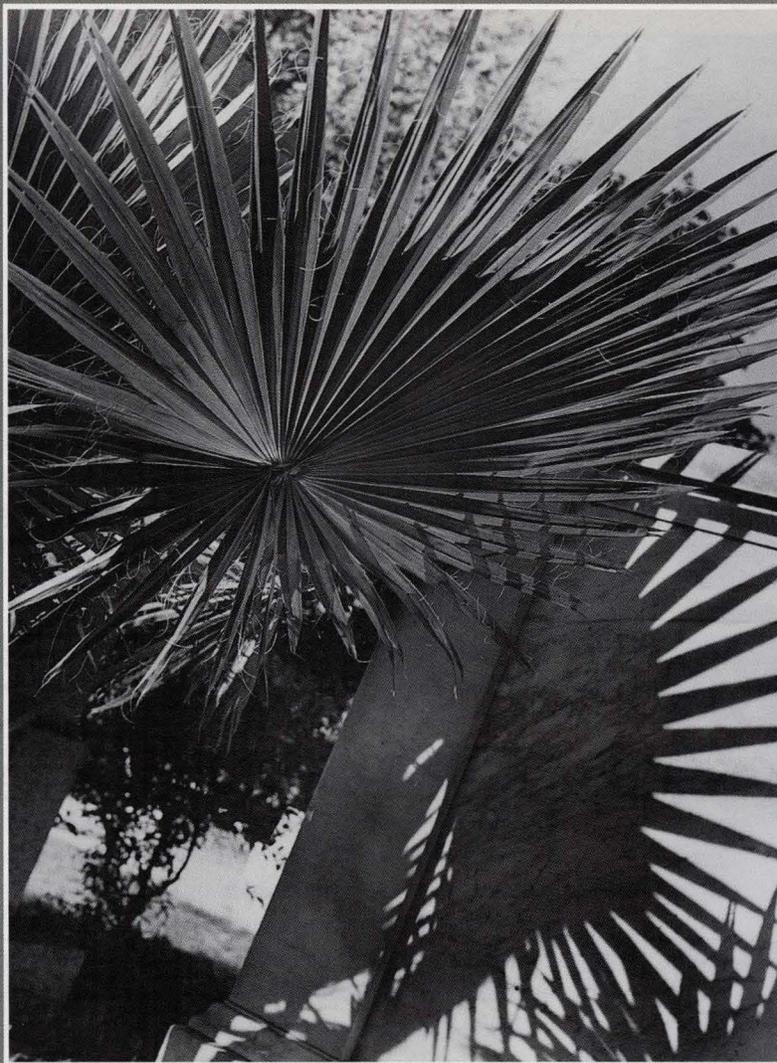
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Sunbursts (1981.247.3.753)
by Clarence John Laughlin

A LAUGHLIN CELEBRATION

Hunter of Ruins: The Photography of Clarence John Laughlin — both the exhibition and the book — celebrates Laughlin's extraordinary talent and career. In 1941, Laughlin wrote to Man Ray: "I quite agree with you that the photographer who produces a photograph which is merely technically good, owes more to the discoveries of the laboratory technicians than to himself. However, the imagination transcends all technical perfection, and sometimes even converts a technical disadvantage into a further success."



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QUARTERLY

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