A Free Guide to Leisure and Attractions Courtesy of The Natchitoches Times

July 2012
Welcome to Natchitoches: Enjoy your stay in our historic town

Entering downtown historic Natchitoches, visitors feel transported to an earlier era. Traveling along bumpy brick roads reminiscent of pre-asphalt travel, you notice ornate ironwork on the bridges and shops, horse-drawn carriages around the historic district and locals who smile and greet you with a friendly wave. Welcome to Natchitoches.

Founded in 1714 by Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, the city of Natchitoches was originally established as a French outpost on the Red River to facilitate trade with the Spanish in Mexico. The fort, which was to be discovered, was built somewhere along the west bank of the Red River near a village of Natchitoches Indians, a Native American group whose tribal name means “Chinquapin-eaters.”

At the time of the establishment of St. Denis' fort, navigation of the Red River was prohibited by a massive log jam that was broken up during a flood in the 1830s. Thus, the Red River changed its course, leaving a 36-mile-long oxbow lake called Cane River that runs through the downtown National Landmark District.

Once a bustling riverport and crossroads, Natchitoches gave rise to vast cotton kingdoms along the river. Affluent planters not only owned charming country plantations, but kept elegant houses in town. The Red River’s abandonment of Natchitoches isolated the community, preserving its historic buildings and the deeply-ingrained traditions of its residents along the Cane River.

With its French, Spanish, Native American, African and Anglo-Saxon influences, Natchitoches maintains a colorful palette of ethnic tradition, hospitality and pride in the past that residents share with visitors.

Poignant tale of love and history entwine at Melrose Plantation

Marie Therese Coin-Coin, an enslaved woman, and Claude Thomas Pierre Metoyer, her French owner, had many children together after Coin-Coin was freed. On land acquired by land grants, the Yucca House and the African House was built. The Yucca House remained the large structure on the plantation until 1833 when the main house, known as Melrose, was built.

After 1884, Melrose Plantation became a hub of art and education under the ownership of John Hampton Henry and Miss Cammie Garrett Henry. Miss Cammie, as she became known, made Melrose a haven for artists and writers. At the time there was a field hand and cook at Melrose who also became known as a renowned artist. Clementine Hunter, one of the south’s most primitive artists, began painting the people, life, and scenes of Cane River. Hunter was in her 90s when she began painting and continued until a few months before her death in 1988. Clementine is Louisiana’s most famous folk artist, and her paintings are on display at the plantation.

The APHN hosts the Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival each summer. Explore Natchitoches.com

For more information on local history and events contact: Natchitoches Parish Tourist Commission 781 Front Street; Natchitoches, LA 71457 (318) 352-8072 or 1-800-259-1714 Web site: www.natchitoches.net

Travel Info
Motorists can access up-to-date travel information by dialing 511 or by visiting www.511la.org. Out-of-state travelers can call 1-888-ROAD-511 (1-888-762-3511).
Looking Back: A journey through the past with NSU archivist

By Rae Anne Firmin

Archivist Mary Linn Wernet classifies knowledge of the past as a basic human need. She gives the example of adopted children who often desire to learn about their biological families. Wernet remembers her sister’s foster child being curious about his background. “When we found out that he was from Miami, Fla., we had a celebration for him. We had cake and hung Miami Dolphin flags everywhere.”

Wernet’s fascination with the history began at an early age and evolved into a passion for research and learning. “If you want to learn everyday, this is the place to work,” she says of the NSU Cammie G. Henry Research Center, located on the third floor of Watson Library.

During her years as archivist, she has visited with countless Frenchmen tracing their roots back to Natchitoches, as well as Germans with ties to the Kisatchie region. She is always amazed when Europeans traveling the United States say Natchitoches is the best stop they’ve made. Comments like these prevent her from taking the city for granted.

“The tables have turned,” she says, “We were the ones traveling from Europe, going to New Orleans, and we would come to Natchitoches and say, ‘ahhh, what a delightful place!’”

She credits this shift to the revitalization of downtown as well as preservation organizations that attract tourists with something for everyone, whether it’s researching family history at the genealogy library or taking a stroll through APHN’s Tour of Homes.

The research center is home to hundreds of photos revealing the development of downtown and landmark events that helped shape the life locals enjoy today. Chapters could be written on the transformation of the Church Street Bridge alone.

Imaging specialist and webmaster Sonny Carter speculates that the bridge was not essential until transportation had progressed significantly. After all, the river’s main function was for imports and exports.

Carter, born and raised in Natchitoches, recalls the tales his father told of taking the ferry in school each morning since it was much quicker than going all of the way around the river.

Another interesting aspect of downtown history is the condos on the corner of Church and Front Streets. For some, the building holds childhood memories of sneaking into it as an abandoned theatre.

But, before the theatre, it was a hotel, bearing the names The Lecomte, The Lecompte and The Wimp. Carter says when they added that second story, locals called it “Natchitoches very own skyscraper.”

Wernet says one thing that hasn’t changed about downtown is its charm. “You can see Dallas from far away and when you enter the city, it swallows you up. Our downtown is not overpowering. It’s always been inviting from every angle.”

July 4 fireworks planned

Celebrate the Fourth of July at Celebration on the Cane on Wednesday, July 4 in downtown Natchitoches.

The celebration begins at 6 p.m. on the riverbank with a musical performance by The Glenn Rainey Band. The Glenn Rainey band brings the funk with an upbeat, melodic, and energetic groove inspired by New Orleans and fueled by soul.

The band will perform from 6-9 p.m. on the downtown stage. Vendors will sell refreshments including cold drinks and snow cones. Fourth of July memorabilia will also be for sale.

The highlight will be a spectacular fireworks show over Cane River Lake at 9 p.m.

All events are free and open to the public.

July 2012  HIST

Cane River Creole: A National Park just down the road

Along the banks of picturesque Cane River is a national park that preserves significant pieces of American history. Cane River Creole National Historical Park includes Oakland Plantation and the outbuildings at Magnolia Plantation. Magnolia Plantation is privately owned.

The park’s mission is to preserve the resources and cultural landscapes of the Cane River area and to enhance the understanding of its peoples and traditions.

Park rangers at the two sites will help visitors explore the French and Spanish colony of Louisiana, and what that meant to the origins of the cotton plantations along Cane River. Visitors will gain a greater understanding of Louisiana’s plantation economy and its labor practices of slavery and later tenancy, and get a peek into the lives of the people who lived on the plantations.

Visitors can learn about the families, both owners and enslaved, who built the plantations, whose descendants stayed for many generations and may live in the Cane River area today.

Guests can find out why a plantation is more than just a “Big House” and learn about the historic and contemporary definitions of the word “Creole.” Those interested can study the vernacular architecture of the park’s 45 historic buildings and get ideas about how they adapted to Louisiana’s climate.

Oakland Plantation conducts tours seven days a week at 1 p.m. Magnolia Plantation is open for ground tours Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

To reach Oakland Plantation from Natchitoches, take Hwy. 1 south to the village of Natchez and turn left at the flashing yellow light on to Hwy. 119. Follow Hwy. 119 and turn right at the stop sign on to Hwy. 494. Continue approximately 4 miles to Oakland Plantation on the right-hand side of the road.

From Interstate 49, take exit 127, the Flora/Cypress exit. Head east towards Cypress on La. 120. Cross over La. Hwy 1 and continue for approximately 4 miles on Hwy. 494. Oakland Plantation will be on the left.

For more information, contact Oakland Plantation at (318) 356-8441.
NSU announces summer musical productions

NSU Theatre and Dance will be a bit nostalgic this summer with two shows featuring music from the past. The Summer Dinner Theatre will perform "The Taffetas: A Musical Journey through the Fabulous Fifties" July 25-28 and Aug. 1-4.

Performances will be on the A.A. Fredericks Auditorium stage. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m. Shows start at 7 p.m. Tickets are $25 for dinner and the show. Reservations are required. For more information or to make reservations, contact Jane Norman at 357-4483 or e-mail normanj@nsula.edu.

"The Taffetas" is set in the 1950s. The setting allows the audience to imagine they are watching a television review featuring a group of four girls singing many of their favorite songs. The show will feature songs such as "Mr. Sandman" and "I'm Sorry." The show was conceived by Rick Lewis. Andrew Lewis is director and choreographer. Michael Rorex is musical director.

"It's kind of a sister show to Forever Plaid, which featured four male singers performing songs from the same era," said Lewis. "This is an enjoyable show without a lot of dialogue with some nice light-hearted songs from the past."

Northwestern Theatre and Dance will present a Summer Theatre Camp for children ages 8-13, July 25-Aug. 1 from 1-4:30 p.m.

Participants will audition and rehearse for an original musical "The Time Team," which will be performed Aug. 2-4.

The cost for the camp is $150, which includes snacks each day. A $25 deposit is required by July 11 with full payment due by the start of the camp.

For more information call 357-4483 or e-mail normanj@nsula.edu.

Natchitoches celebrates Bicentennial

Louisiana became the 18th state of the union April 30, 1812. Natchitoches will celebrate the bicentennial with events throughout the year.

"Natchitoches Before 1812" will be the featured exhibit at the Cammie Henry Research Center (third floor of NSU Watson Library). The research center will display "Natchitoches After 1812," June-August. Visiting hours are Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m.-noon.

The Cane River Creole National Historical Park staff will present free 30-minute programs on the Bicentennial every Saturday from June-August. Call 356-8441 for information on place and time.

Schedule of events:

July 20-21
Northwestern Folk Festival will be in Prather Coliseum on the NSU campus. The theme is "Louisiana Folk Music."

Sept. 21-22
Louisiana Studies Conference will be in the NSU Student Union. The theme will be "Louisiana Art." (free)

Oct. 1
The Natchitoches Christmas Festival Poster, "Louisiana Bicentennial 1812-2012," will go on sale.

Oct. 12-14
The Northwestern State ROTC color guard presented the colors May 19 at the Fleur de Lis Stage. Among those participating were, from left, Father Ryan Humphries, Dr. Christopher Gilliam, Councilman Jack McCain, re-enactor Tommy Adkins, Tony Vets, Sandy McNeely and Dr. Colleen Lancaster. Adkins raised the French flag at the beginning of the program and fired a musket to open the observance.

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Documentary traces steps of female photographer who worked here in 1940s for Farm Security Admin.

Local producer Daniel Graves released “Natchitoches Parish, Summer-1940” on DVD. The half hour program is based on photographs taken by Marion Post during her stay in Natchitoches in June and July over 70 years ago.

“It took me over a year to retrace her path,” Graves said, “and bugging a lot of people around here about what was where and when. Folks don’t really look at the 20th century as being history, but you try to find out about 1940 Natchitoches. It’s hard to find many people who remember details.”

Marion Post worked for the Farm Security Administration photographing its cooperative farm programs throughout the South. She began in Virginia, worked down to Florida, across to Louisiana and, eventually, back to Washington D.C.

The following year, she married Lee Wolcott and went on to become famous as Marion Post Wolcott.

The photographs Wolcott took while in Natchitoches Parish give people an idea of what the area was like in the 1940s. She photographed the everyday life of farmers, businessmen and families.

Graves hopes the video will jog some memories so he can learn more about the pictures.

“There were young boys and girls photographed that would be in their 70s or 80s today,” he said. “Now, there might not be many who can watch this and say, ‘Hey, that’s me and my dad or mom,’ but there should be some folks who can remember from family photos what their parents looked like as kids. Anybody who can point something out, I am all ears.”

Graves has been producing documentaries aimed at eighth grade Louisiana History curriculums since the 1990s. He has covered the Civil War in Louisiana, Louisiana prehistoric archaeology and Huey and Earl Long. He has also produced programs on Natchitoches history, such as “Life on Magnolia Plantation 1930s-1950s,” “A Walk Through Melrose with Francois Mignon” and numerous short features promoting Natchitoches tourism.

“Natchitoches Parish, Summer-1940” follows suit with Graves’ Louisiana History documentaries and can be used to show area eighth graders how life has changed over the last 70 years. With the subject being a famous photographer, the DVD can also be utilized as a learning tool for photography students.

The Natchitoches Historic District has been named as one of the top five Most Romantic Main Streets in the United States. The announcement was made by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The other four Most Romantic Main Streets include Middletown, Conn.; Mariion, Ind.; Franklin, Tenn. and Paducah, Ky.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation sought the country’s most romantic Main Street districts, seeking those places that offer unique experiences as well as atmosphere, history, charming streets for strolls, wedding destinations, quaint B&Bs, special historic spots and much more.

After scouring the country, the National Trust for Historic Preservation chose Natchitoches as one of the destinations that meets this criteria.

Special emphasis will be placed this year on promoting downtown Natchitoches as a premier wedding destination, particularly through a new water feature and garden area located in Virginia Baker Park along the downtown riverbank.

**Natchitoches has ‘Most Romantic Main Street’ ❤️❤️❤️

The DVD Daniel Graves produced is available at Kaffie Fredericks, Georgia’s Gift Shop and Cade’s Pharmacy.
About Natchitoches Meat Pies

The Natchitoches meat pie is a regional dish whose ingredients include ground beef, ground pork, onions, peppers, garlic, oil, and a pie shell.

Natchitoches meat pies are often fried in peanut oil because of the oil’s high smoking temperature. A number of restaurants in the historic district in Natchitoches serve meat pies, and frozen pies are available from grocers in northern Louisiana.

It has a savory meat filling in a crescent-shaped, flaky wheat pastry turnover. It is similar to a Spanish picadillo beef empanada. Varieties are throughout the colonies of the Spanish Empire.

This meat pie is not generally available from other ethnic regions of Louisiana “The Picayune’s Creole Cook Book” published 1901 by The Times Picayune of New Orleans contains nothing comparable to Natchitoches meat pies in its list of over a thousand recipes.

Recently, Natchitoches meat pies sold at food booths have become popular at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

The recipe has evolved over the last 300 years. Ground pork or pork sausage is now blended into the ground beef for additional flavor.

Onions, bell pepper and when used garlic and parsley provide aromatics. Ground black pepper and cayenne pepper are added to get attention without being uncomfortable. Flour is added to browned meat and vegetable mixture to dry, thick and loosely bind the filling.

The meat filling can be used in other foods (e.g. tacos, tamales, enchiladas, stuffed bell peppers) but the turnover crust is a defining element. Traditional size is approximately 4 ounce (by weight) on 5"- 6" diameter pastry dough.

Filling should be made the day before to allow flavors of the ingredients to meld. Filling, dough and tools should be chilled before assembly. Warm filling will cause the dough to disintegrate.

In the first part of the 20th century, meat pies were sold from home kitchens or from carts by street vendors.

By 1967, Natchitoches meat pies were produced in commercial kitchens. Now, they may be ordered online. This progression has allowed more people to experience the memorable meat pies and their fame continues to grow.

Louisiana Public Broadcasting aired a program January 20, 2007 describing how to make Natchitoches meat pies.

It is available on DVD entitled “A Taste of Louisiana with Chef John Folse & Company: Our Food Heritage - The Spanish Shows.”

The annual Meat Pie Festival, held in September, celebrates the Natchitoches meat pie. It includes pie making demonstrations, a meat pie cook-off, live music and more. The festival draws visitors from around the globe to sample the tasty pies.

Long-overdue Veterans Memorial Park becoming reality at last

A group of dedicated veterans and business people in Natchitoches are well underway to seeing the dream of the Natchitoches Parish Veterans’ Memorial Park become a reality.

The park will be located behind and beside the Old Natchitoches Parish Courthouse at the corner of Second and Church streets.

Fundraising recently got a boost from the Louisiana Legislature that appropriated $50,000 for the park. The organizing committee will raise the remaining money through selling brick pavers that bear the name of parish veterans who are deceased.

The park will have a 1,900 square foot brick walkway that will support the pavers fundraising project. Brick pavers can be purchased and inscribed with a veteran’s name, rank, branch of service and dates of service. Up to 8,000 bricks will be placed in the walkway at the park with possible expansion.

The trees located in the park will remain. The design includes a spraying fountain with a curved wall to screen the air conditioning unit behind it.

A bench will be located in front of the fountain with five columns marked with the symbols of the five U.S. military branches. Names of Natchitoches Parish veterans that died in war will be etched in between the columns.

The committee will choose between a 20- and 30-foot pole, depending on park design that will be donated by Woodmen of the World.

Applications for the purchase of pavers are available.
Northwestern State University has been an important part of the Natchitoches community since it was established in 1884. Three columns of the Bullard Mansion that originally stood on the grounds, serve as the unofficial symbol of the university.

Northwestern State has been dedicated to preparing teachers for careers in education since its founding in 1884. One symbol of that legacy is the one-room schoolhouse, which was the St. Nichols School, which was established in south Natchitoches Parish in 1906. The school was in use until 1924 and was donated to NSU in 1981.

Northwestern’s students and faculty share diverse talents in drama and art with the community. The A.A. Fredericks Fine Arts Center regularly features performances by the Natchitoches/Northwestern Symphony Orchestra and theatre department.

The Hanchey Gallery often exhibits the best works of its faculty and students.

The archives of Watson Library and the Williamson Museum in Kyser Hall exhibit historical holdings from the local and regional culture. Contributions from citizens and historians represent archaeological resources of Indian and antebellum influences.

The Wellness, Recreation and Activity Center is located in the heart of the Northwestern State campus and provides more than 10,000 square feet of space with weight and cardio machines, basketball courts, racquetball courts, an area for aerobics, a jogging track and more.

For many the residence for 10 Northwestern presidents, the Old President’s Cottage was renovated for the Alumni Center in 1984. Built in 1927 of French Normandy architecture, the building has been designated a national landmark.

NSU Demons play Southland Conference football at Turpin Stadium.

The Hanchey Gallery often exhibits the best works of its faculty and students.

Chaplin Lake further enhances the historic campus that serves more than 9,000 students.

The historical significance of Cane River Country is undisputed. Because of this heritage, the federal government chose Natchitoches as the site for the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. The Old Women’s Gymnasium, Nelson Hall, has been restored for the permanent headquarters of the center.

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Auto Tour of the Cane River

OAKLAWN PLANTATION, 1830, is the restored home of “Steel Magnolias” author Robert Harling. This bousillage, three-story structure displays Creole architecture common to Cane River Country. The 680-foot oak avenue is the third longest in the state.

BEAU FORT PLANTATION, 1790, was built on the former site of Fort Charles. It is an early Creole-style home and features an 84-foot gallery and covered rear patio. Many special occasions are conducted at Beau Fort.

OAKLAND PLANTATION, 1821, now part of the Cane River Creole National Historic Park contains the finest examples of Creole architecture. The first cotton in the state was planted on this plantation.

THE ST. AUGUSTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH is located at Isle Brevelle and was founded and built by Augustine Metoyer and his brother Louis Metoyer in 1803. St. Augustine Church is the first church in America established and maintained by free people of color. In 1829, when it was blessed as a mission, it was given the name St. Augustine in honor of St. Augustine. It was blessed as a church parish in 1856, and at that time, had four missions attached to it: St. Ann's on Old River, St. Joseph at Bayou Derbonne, St. Ann's, Spanish Lake and St. Charles, Bermuda. The church was used as a film site for Steel Magnolias.

THE BADIN-ROQUE HOUSE is one of five structures of its type remaining in the United States and the only one of its kind in Louisiana. Badin-Roque is listed on the National Register for historic places and has been nominated for National Landmark status. It is owned and maintained by the St. Augustine Historical Society.

MAGNOLIA PLANTATION, 1830s, is one of only two National Bicentennial Farms west of the Mississippi. Except for the Big House, the complex is now part of the Cane River Creole National Historic Park. The original walls and foundation were reused after being burned by General Banks in 1864. The two and one-half story structure has 27 rooms, including a Catholic chapel. The only cotton press still in its original location is here along with the only row of brick slave quarters still standing in Louisiana. The plantation is closed to the public.

MELROSE PLANTATION, 1796, is a National Historic Landmark. The complex includes the Big House, African and Yucca houses, weaving cabin and original home of primitive folk artist Clementine Hunter. The plantation is rich in history and culture that began with Marie Therese Coincoin, an owner who was a freed woman of color. The cultural highlights of the site were furthered during the Henry years as Miss Cammie provided writing quarters for writers. Clementine Hunter, renowned folk artist, painted here while employed as a domestic servant. Her murals adorn the walls of the African House and her work is displayed in a gallery within the Big House. Melrose serves as the annual location for the Melrose Arts and Crafts Festival in June. Tours are available daily.

CHEROKEE PLANTATION, 1839, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was the site of the famous Bossier-Gaillanne duel, that was fought on the savannah at the rear of Cherokee. This restored raised cottage is an important Creole structure and is often featured during the annual Natchitoches Pilgrimage in December.
The American Cemetery represents many cultures and countries that influenced the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase. The site is the original location of Fort St. Jean Baptiste.

Cane Country cavalier Louis Juchereau de St. Denis founded Natchitoches in 1714. Fort St. Jean Baptiste was the French outpost he commanded. A replica of the fort was built and presents frequent living history programs.

Front Street of Natchitoches boasts historic sites that earned the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase National Historic Landmark designation. Santa, and the Christmas Belles as helpers, greet guests during the holiday season at the Santa Claus House on the riverbank. The Roque House, also along the riverbank, was relocated to its present location. An example of Creole architecture, the Roque House is constructed of bousillage, a mixture of Spanish moss, deer hair and mud.

Several organizations that contribute to civic and preservation interests in Natchitoches have restored landmarks for use as headquarters. The Prudhomme-Rouquier House was restored by the Service League of Natchitoches.

The Cunningham Law Office, left, serves as headquarters for the Natchitoches Historic Foundation and is open daily providing tourism information. The Lemee House is one of several properties maintained by the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches.

The Natchitoches Parish Old Parish Courthouse is now closed as a museum. It is on Second Street across the street from Church of the Immaculate Conception.

ST MAURICE
46. Trinity Episcopal Church
47. Cunningham Law Office/Chamber of Commerce
48. Bishop Martin’s Residence
49. Catholic Rectory
50. Church of the Immaculate Conception
51. Old Courthouse Museum

53. New Courthouse
54. Old Masonic Lodge
55. Exchange Bank
56. H.A. Cook Building
57. Fort Claiborne Guest House
58. Wells Home
59. Rose Lawn House
60. Wheelwright Inn
61. The Blessed House

Bells toll antebellum histories surrounding the two landmark churches of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, left, and Trinity Episcopal Church, below.
Natchitoches residents were extras, including Norm Fletcher and Lori Tate. Fletcher and Tate played the bridegroom’s parents.

Robert Harling, author of “Steel Magnolias,” received a star on the St. Denis Walk of Honor. Each of the stars in the feature film received a star. Conferring the award was renowned sportsman and Natchitoches resident Grits Gresham. Much of the story came from real life, based on the sacrifices of Harling’s sister, Susan, and mother, Margaret, in his hometown of Natchitoches.

The actresses commented on the strength of the characters and the sense of community that drew them to their parts. Meeting many of the real-life counterparts of their characters also contributed to their acclaimed performances.

Robert Harling, author of “Steel Magnolias,” portrayed M‘Lynn Eatenton, the warm-hearted but iron-willed mother of a young bride.

Natchitoches residents were extras, including Norm Fletcher and Lori Tate. Fletcher and Tate played the bridegroom’s parents.

Robert Harling, author of “Steel Magnolias,” played the minister who married Shelby and Jackson Latcherie.

The Steel Magnolias House on Jefferson Street was used during filming as the home for M‘Lynn and Drum Eatenton. It is now a bed and breakfast inn.

Truvy’s Beauty Shop was transformed into a Christmas wonderland as the city celebrated its annual Christmas Festival. Dolly Parton’s quick wit and Southern charm shine in her role as Truvy Jones.

Sally Field portrayed M‘Lynn Eatenton, the warm-hearted but iron-willed mother of a young bride.

Produced by Ray Stark, “Steel Magnolias” was directed by Herbert Ross. Victoria White was the executive producer and Andrew Stone was the associate producer.

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2. Northwestern State University Field House, post-game interviews.
3. American Cemetery on Second Street between Demeziere and the railroad tracks, Shelby’s funeral.
4. Lemee House, 310 Rue Jefferson, Ouiser’s house.
6. Trinity Episcopal Church, 533 Second St., Truvy’s church.
7. Private home, 301 Rue Toulene, Mrs. Robeline’s boarding house.
10. Blanchard Building, 700 block of Front Street, adjacent to Ducournau Square, Truvy’s No. 2.
11. Riverfront behind Roque House, 800 block of Washington Street, Easter egg hunt.
12. Private home, 515 St. Maurice Lane, Annelle and Sammy’s home.
13. Private home, 453 Henry Blvd., Truvy’s house.
14. Brookshire’s, Dixie Plaza Shopping Center, 318 Dixie Plaza on Keyser Avenue, shopping with Clairee and Ouiser.
15. Natchitoches Parish Hospital, 501 Keyser Ave., baby’s birth.
Travel Guide: We have an app for that

Available for free in January through Apple iTunes, the Explore Louisiana Crossroads Visitor Guide Application (APP) will allow users to take advantage of the advanced capabilities of the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch user interface.

“The Explore Louisiana Crossroads APP will be an easy-to-navigate tool for both pre-trip planning and to get information while onsite at a variety of recreational sites in the area,” said Brandi Bradford lead park ranger with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “It is intended both for visitors to the Natchitoches area, as well as local residents who may want to explore more of the historic, natural, and recreational treasures that the Crossroads offers.”

Features of the Explore Louisiana Crossroads application include:

- Quick access and Google map locations for all recreation sites, historic sites, dining, shopping, lodging, camping, boating, fishing and other activities available to visitors coming to the La. Crossroads Region.
- Directions, details of what to find at each site, hours of operation, fees and other important info to get visitors to any site they want to find.
- Historical and heritage information about one of the richest historic areas of the state.
- Auto and walking tour guides for the historic and natural resource sites in the area.
- Quick access to Northwestern State University, the City of Natchitoches along with safety information, emergency contacts and more.
- Quick dial from your iPhone to contact all listings and links to area Web sites.
- Links within each visitor’s guide to other information and interesting sites you may also want to see during your trip.
- Safety information for all types of recreation activities you may want to try during your visit.
- Emergency contacts and other services that you may have need of during your trip, such as post offices, banks, hospitals and other services.
- History and significance of the Natchitoches region
- Directions, details and Google map locations for area sites
- Auto and walking tour ideas
- Safety, service and emergency contact information
- A consortium of Natchitoches organizations joined together to provide content for this APP. Project partners include: Natchitoches Area Convention and Visitors Bureau - City of Natchitoches - Association for Preservation of Historic Natchitoches - Mélrose Plantation - Cane River Waterway

Banks on Cane River
Our role in the Civil War

By the late Tom Murchison

Natchitoches and the Cane River country played a prominent role in the War Between the States. Geographically remote from the actions East of the Atchafalaya, Natchitoches had escaped from Union occupation, but all of that changed in February of 1864 when Lincoln ordered General Nathaniel B. Banks to move up the Red River with the object of taking the then Confederate capitol, Shreveport, and carrying the Invasion into East Texas.

As a bonus, Banks had his eye on the tens of thousands of bales of cotton stored on the rich agricultural lands along the Red and Cane Rivers. Banks was a political commander with little military experience and he bit off more than he could chew even though he outnumbered his Rebel opponents and was supported by a strong flotilla of gunboats under the command of the capable David Porter. Banks marched toward Natchitoches from Alexandria and after numerous skirmishes occupied our town on March 30. Porter reached Grand Ecore April 3.

Confederate General Richard “Dick” Taylor, outnumbered and under orders to retreat, withdrew westward to Mansfield and Banks followed. Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor, was a Louisiana planter with no formal military training.

However, he was extremely intelligent and a born warrior. On April 8, at Sabine Crossroads near Mansfield, he defied the orders of his superiors at Shreveport and led a small army of Louisiana and Texas troops and delivered a bold, smashing attack against Banks and completely routed them.

The next day, Taylor, with help from fresh Missourian and Arkansan troops fought the Union army to a standoff at Pleasant Hill. Banks retreated again, back through Grand Ecore and Natchitoches and down Cane River with Taylor’s Rebels snapping at his heels.

Banks’ men tried to burn Natchitoches down on the retreat but failed. However, they succeeded in burning just about everything else along Cane River, including plantation homes, barns and even slave cabins. It has been said that the sky was lighted by burning buildings from Grand Ecore to Cloutierville. But the Yankees didn’t come back and Northwest Louisiana remained free until the final surrender.

The Red River adventure was a total military disaster for the Federals and a great embarrassment for the Union. It is significant that this was the last campaign won by the South. Natchitoches was liberated by Taylor’s troops and thus the city was under Union control less than a month.

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Cook and customers share Waddle-N memories

By Rae Anne Firmin

Lt. Richard Robertson, NPD, watched as a demolition team destroyed the remnants of what was once the Waddle-N-Grill. “There sure were a lot of memories in that old building,” he said. What initially seemed to be a nostalgic tale of good times took an unexpected turn. “Yep, I sure hated that Waddle-N,” he said.

Richard’s father, Leo Robertson, began managing the restaurant for Firal and Joyce Ryder in 1963 and continued for nearly 20 years. Leo’s wife, Josephine, and three of his sons worked right alongside him.

Richard says, “I’d get off of school, do homework from 3-5 p.m., then cook and wash dishes with dad at the Waddle-N till 11 p.m.” He worked Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Richard began his job at the diner when he was 9-years-old, bardy able to see over the counter, and remained until he was 18.

He swore that if he ever got away from the Waddle-N, he’d never be in the restaurant business again.

Leo worked seven days a week, putting in 18-20-hour days. And, on Sunday mornings, the father of five would fish until it was time to clock back in that afternoon. “The man never slept,” says Richard. “He’d make me and Mama go fishing with him. I didn’t want to go fishing. I was tired. But, when Daddy asked us to do something, we did it. Back then, there was no asking your parents ‘why’?”

Richard developed character and a strong sense of discipline from his father’s forcing him to work as a youngster. Working instead of playing was an largely foreign concept to today’s youth.

On the job, Richard also witnessed business transactions of a strange kind. “People like T.J. Foshee and Hugh Bernard would sit there at the center table and make big money deals with just a handshake. There would be no paperwork at all,” he explains. Other regulars joining them at the center table were Bill O’Bannon, James McKnight and Irby Knotts.

Josephine and Leo Robertson managed the Waddle-N-Grill for nearly 20 years.

Attorney and former state senator Don Kelly remembers the Waddle-N as having a political, yet informal atmosphere. “I was usually an early morning customer,” he says. “It was kind of the same crowd every morning. There were police jury members like David Carter, Latief Ackel and Robert Lucky in there. No formal meetings, just breakfast and coffee. People just picked at each other about politics the same way they do today.”

Sam Gongre, who owned and operated the only taxi service in town, would stop by every morning at 3 a.m. like clockwork. He’d sit at the counter just long enough to quickly slurp down a cup of coffee and hit the road again. “He’d leave two quarters on the table every morning,” says Richard. “One for the coffee and one for the tip.”

Jack McCain J.r. and his father, Jack McCain Sr., were also daily patrons. They’d walk in at the same time every afternoon, drink coffee and then head back across the street to McCain’s Auto (NAPA Auto).

Attorney Jack Brittain Jr. compares the old Waddle-N to Lasyone’s. “The regular crowd would go in and drink their morning coffee and read The Natchitoches Times.” Brittain reluctantly adds, “Then, of course, you had the night crowd...” The Waddle-N-Grill was open 24 hours a day, making it the ideal eatery after a night of partying.

Richard remembers high political officials and society people stumbling in at all hours of the night. He’d ask his father, “Hey dad, isn’t that...?” His father would respond, “Yeah son, that’s who you think it is. Don’t stare. Just keep working.”

On a particularly memorable evening, little Richard watched as a few customers entertained themselves by blowing up condoms and letting them sail through the smoky diner. “Daddy, ain’t those...?” Leo cut him to the quick. “Yeah son. Just keep working.”

One night, Richard stood helplessly looking over two college students who had passed out drunk on their plates. He tried to wake them so they could pay their tabs and be on their way, but wasn’t having much success.

Police officers, Doug Masters (retired NPD captain) and Calvin McFerrin (second in command at Natchitoches Detention Center), thought it only right to lend a helping hand. Masters attempted to wake one of them by forcefully shaking his shoulder. No luck.

“No, no. This is how you do it,” said McFerrin. He grabbed the other guy by the hair, lifted his head up off of the plate and gave

See Waddle Inn Page 15

Homemade Waddle-N burgers and steaks became so popular that owner Firal Ryder opened 3R Beef World in back of the diner.

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Nature appears to be at its best in Kisatchie National Forest

Visitors to Kisatchie Ranger District can enjoy panoramic views from the sandstone bluffs on the Longleaf Vista Recreation Area, feel the cool currents, white sandy beaches and rocky rapids at Kisatchie Bayou, experience a wilderness challenge in the nationally designated Kisatchie Hills Wilderness, drive leisurely along the 17-mile Longleaf Trail Scenic Byway or ATV trail riding on the Sandstone Trail.

The Longleaf Vista Recreation Area lies on a ridge that provides excellent views of the 8,700 acre Kisatchie Hills Wilderness, which surrounds the Vista on three sides. This popular day-use recreation area offers a variety of opportunities including picnicking, a 1.5 mile interpretive trail and access to the wilderness.

Locally known as the Little Grand Canyon, the wilderness area is a favored place among hikers and horseback riders who often enter along the Backbone Trail.

Kisatchie Bayou Recreation Area offers day use picnicking, swimming, fishing and canoeing on the bayou, and hiking, biking and horseback riding on the Caroline Dormon Trail. Camping areas are oriented towards walk-in tent camping along the banks of Kisatchie Bayou.

The district administers two developed recreation areas, Kisatchie Bayou Recreation Area and Longleaf Vista Recreation Area. User fees are charged at Kisatchie Bayou and the Cane and Lotus Hunter Camps.

Day-use fees are $2 per vehicle at Kisatchie Bayou, $2 per vehicle at Cane and Lotus and 50 cents per person, walk or bike-in.

Camping fees are $2 per night at Kisatchie Bayou and $3 per night at Cane and Lotus.

The district offers visitors numerous dispersed activities that include nine scenic overlooks, 12 miles of wilderness hiking trails, canoeing over 20 miles down Kisatchie Bayou, 50 miles of multiple use trails and a 17-mil national scenic byway and panoramic vistas.

The National Red Dirt Wildlife Management Preserve is a popular area for various hunting opportunities. State licenses and regulations apply, along with an additional management preserve permit issued by the Forest. Seasonal designated camping areas or Hunter Camps are established in and around the management preserve during hunting season.

For more information, call or write to Kisatchie Ranger District, Hwy. 6 West, Natchitoches, LA 71457, (318) 352-2568.

Step back in time at Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site

The commandant's quarters are foggy with smoke that trails from the fireplace.

Next door, well-worn leather shoes wait next to a soldier's bed and rumpled bedcovers in another belle a straw mattress beneath. If this place looks as though the garrison has just stepped out, then the staff at Fort St. Jean Baptiste have succeeded.

Named for a French patron saint, the fort's original location is unknown, though it is believed to have stood where the Old American Cemetery is today.

The fort that visitors tour today is a reconstruction based on historical records.

Though it's hard for visitors to believe, nothing inside its walls is a genuine artifact from the 18th century—except, perhaps, the fire-damaged mud that is mixed with moss and grasses to seal the walls (what the French called "bousillage").

But the fort is not meant to be a museum of 18th century treasures. The goal of this State Historic Site is to interact with visitors, letting them experience the culture of everyday life.

"We are moving towards living history," says Interpretive Ranger Darren Vermillion. "We keep fires going in the houses, bake bread... and basically try to make the fort look alive."

Vermillion says that part of their goal is to debunk the stereotypes associated with the oldest town in the Louisiana Territory.

"Natchitoches was not the back woods in the 1770s," he explains. "It was a booming community!"

The original garrison stationed at Fort St. Jean Baptiste had a double purpose: keeping a close eye on the Spanish at Los Adaes to the west and being a center for trade. The later boosted the economy of the French colonists and became the main business of the garrison. Good relations with the Native American tribes also encouraged the soldiers to assimilate their clothing styles and habits.

"The soldiers adapted to Louisiana woods," says Vermillion. "They adapted to Native American dress and wore their style clothing, such as leggings."

Vermillion and the rest of the staff authenticate their costumes further by skinning, tanning and making their own deer skin coverings.

Tanning demonstrations occur throughout the year.

Fort St. Jean Baptiste is open daily except holidays, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to make group reservations, contact the site at 318-357-3101.

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Colonial Natchitoches

“Colonial Natchitoches” is on display at Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site Museum. A section of the exhibit honors reenactors who have participated in the fort’s living history events over the past 20 years. They demonstrate how chores like cooking, tanning and washing were done in the colonial period. A favorite among youngsters is musket and cannon firing. Museum staff members, from left, are Tommy Adkins, Rhonda Gauthier, Kimmi Brazzel, Justin French and J.D. Cox.

Artifacts from Oakland Plantation are on loan from the Cane River Creole National Historic Park.

Waddle-N memories continued...

A teenage Richard Robertson selects premium beef from the meat counter at 3R Beef World, once located behind the Waddle-N-Grill.

him the wake-up call of his life.
It was so loud, it woke up the boy’s partner in crime across the table who said, “He can’t do that can he?” Seeing stars, the red-faced college kid responded, “Well, he did.”

Police officers would stop by around the clock to check on things and grab a quick bite. Even on Christmas, when the Waddle-N was closed, Leo remembered the officers. “Dad and mom would cook and open our home to police officers on Christmas so that they would have a place to come and eat during their shift. We’d have a big ole’ meal,” says Richard.

Though the diner was his least favorite place to be as a teenager, Richard admits it’s where some of his fondest memories were made.

Marina owner Robert Walker worked for Ryder as general manager of his other businesses and was quite familiar with the Waddle-N. “People would literally waddle in at about 2 a.m. for breakfast. We’d put down a dozen eggs some nights. Leo was a hell of a cook.” They served breakfast, steak, burgers, fried chicken and just about anything a hungry customer could want.

Their homemade hamburger patties became such a hot commodity that Ryder, also a cattleman, opened 3R Beef World in back of the restaurant.

A Family Dollar will replace the building that once housed the diner and meat market.

But, to those who worked and played in Natchitoches in the ’60s-’70s, that sacred spot on South Drive will always be remembered as the old Waddle-N.

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Research Center displays pre-1812 artifacts

NSU’s Cammie G. Henry Research Center is celebrating the Louisiana Bicentennial with an exhibit entitled “1812-2012 Louisiana Statehood Bicentennial Natchitoches: Paths to Statehood.”

“The exhibition begins with the Caddo Indians of the 1540s, introduces the French and Spanish into Natchitoches, touches on the Louisiana Purchase and highlights Natchitoches during the U.S. territorial period through statehood in 1812,” says NSU archivist Mary Linn Wernet.

“Natchitoches: Paths to Statehood” will run through mid-June and may be viewed in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center on the third floor of Watson Memorial Library on the NSU campus. Hours are Monday-Thursday 8 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m.-noon.

Hours and staffing are subject to change. Guests should call 357-4585 or e-mail Wernet at wernet@nsula.edu before planning a visit.

From July through mid-December, the research center will feature an exhibition celebrating Natchitoches up to 1850s.

For more information on the center visit library.nsula.edu/cammie-henry-research-center.

Rebel State Historic Park Site offers visitors tour of beautiful countryside plus museum

Rebel State Historic Site is located in Natchitoches Parish, 3 miles north of Marthaville off La. 1221. Originally home to the grave of an unknown Confederate soldier, the site now features the Louisiana Country Music Museum, which explores the development of country music in Louisiana. The museum, which depicts a stringed musical instrument in its architectural design, also honors the contributions of the many Louisiana natives who have become prominent in the country music and gospel music professions.

The museum contains costumes, instruments and pictures that have been donated by performers, including a Roy Acuff fiddle and yo-yo, as well as one of Hank Williams Jr. shirts.

Also on site are an amphitheater where performances are held, including the annual Spring Fest featuring local food, arts, crafts; and the state Harmonica Contest. Picnic areas with barbeque pits and a picnic pavilion equipped with kitchen facilities are available on a first come, first serve basis. Guided tours of the museum are offered daily. Admission: $2/person; free for Seniors (62 and over) and children 12 and under.

Hours of Operation: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Contact Information: 1260 Hwy. 1221, Marthaville, LA 71450; 318-472-6255 or 888-677-3600.

Read Historic Natchitoches online at www.natchitochestimes.com