

NOTES AND ISSUES

PUBLISHED BY THE PARKVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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NO. 12

JAY BATT SPEAKS AT JANUARY MEETING; MEMBERS USE OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS

District A City Councilman Jay Batt spoke at the January general meeting, answering questions from members and sharing with them his vision for the District for 2004. Seventeen members were present at the 90 minute meeting, which was held at Vincent Hall at Holy Rosary.

Mr. Batt said that he would work with the Association to address the continued problem of the parking of cars on the banks of the Bayou. He was optimistic that the problem would be taken care of quickly.

Residents of Olga Street expressed to Mr. Batt numerous problems they have been experiencing, including inadequate drainage. Members of Mr. Batt's staff were present taking notes so action is expected.

Geoff Coats and Ed Melendez of the Urban

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City Councilman Jay Batt told Parkview members that he will work to enforce City parking regulations along Moss Street.

PARKVIEW HAS SOLID FIRST YEAR

In its first year of operation the Parkview Neighborhood Association welcomed 57 individuals and families into the group as dues paying members, surpassing the first year target of 50.

There are about 350 homes in Parkview. About a quarter of these homes have been targeted with direct mail about joining the Association.

Two area businesses have now joined the Association: Fellini's Cafe and Parkview Tavern.

The membership

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**MARATHON
SET
FOR SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 29**

PLAN AHEAD FOR
TRAFFIC CHANGES

FROM PAGE ONE

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Conservancy addressed the group on its Buy Local campaign, which encourages New Orleanians to shop at locally owned businesses. One question that was asked was how “local” was defined. Mr. Melendez, confessing that sometimes that issue can be tricky, said that his organization has developed a formula that they have confidence in to make the determination. More information on this well regarded 501(c) (3) non-profit can be found at www.urbanconservancy.com

Lynn Chiche of SpayMart spoke of her group’s successful history of educating dog and cat owners of the importance of spaying and neutering their pets. She said that SpayMart now operates a low cost clinic to accomplish her organization’s goals. SpayMart is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that relies completely on donations and grants. For more information visit www.spaymart.com.

A possible special crime prevention taxing district for Parkview was discussed. It was determined that the Upper Hurstville district Uptown is comparable to Parkview in size, number of residents and the types of crimes being committed in the neighborhoods, so a representative of that organization will be invited to attend the next Parkview meeting, which will be in April.

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rolls include homeowners and tenants; residents living here for 80 years and those who moved in a few months ago. Every street except Ida and Orleans has at least one member.

The target for membership this year is to add 25 new members. So far in January seven new members have joined the Association. A table will be set up near the Engine House on the day of the Presidential Primary, March 9th, in order to solicit membership. This has been done in the past and has proven to be effective.



SPOT NEAR POST OFFICE STILL AS DANGEROUS AS EVER

Despite letters to the City bringing attention to this problem, the lack of a sidewalk and a crosswalk near the post office has still not been addressed. At left is the view that a pedestrian will see as he tries to find his way amongst the weeds and overgrown grass.

END OF THE YEAR FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Board of Directors of the Parkview Neighborhood Association presents to the membership, for its approval, the end of the year financial statement of the Association. All bank statements of the Association are open to inspection by the membership at any member's request.

REVENUE

Family Memberships	\$675.00
Individual Memberships	\$390.00
Business Memberships	\$50.00
Advanced Renewals	\$75.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,190.00

EXPENSES

Check Printing Charges	\$18.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$18.00

BALANCE **\$1,172.00**

Notes: All first year expenses of the Association were covered by anonymous donations. This was done in order to keep the Association solvent. However, in this second year the Association will begin paying its own way. The biggest expense will continue to be the mailing of the monthly newsletter.



The Farmer's Market, held each Thursday afternoon from 3:00 until 6:00 in the parking lot of the Can Company, is continuing to grow and prosper. Information on this weekly event can be found at crescentcityfarmersmarket.org

Pictured at left are two happy vendors holding a healthy child.

PARKVIEW OPINION

EDITORIAL

OUR FIRST YEAR

With the end of 2003 the Parkview Neighborhood Association has now completed its first year of operation. The organization was incorporated in the Summer of 2002 and memberships were first solicited in January 2003.

The Association had a rough start as there was much opposition to any new neighborhood group being formed. We were told that Parkview was too small to have its own Association. We were also told that the neighborhood would reject the Association. A year later the people of Parkview have proven both of these objections to be wrong.

Yes, we are a small group, but that is our greatest strength. Each street in Parkview is but a few blocks from every other street. We drive the same roads and walk the same sidewalks. We all share the same civic concerns and problems, and ultimately we will all work together to find solutions.

PAULETTE IRONS, PEPPI BRUNEAU, JAY BATT

City Councilman Jay Batt attended the January Parkview meeting, and we appreciate his coming by to address the group and answer questions. During the course of the year Senator Paulette Irons and Rep. Peppi Bruneau also attended meetings, and we are thankful for their involvement. We hope during this year that all three will continue to be a part of our Association.

OLGA STREET

Residents of Olga Street made it clear at the January meeting that their street needs attention, especially as to drainage. We hope that Mr. Batt will be able to follow through on his offer to address these problems.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Thanks for the coverage in your recent newsletter of the Simply Living TV shoot at Fair Grinds Coffeehouse.

I believe the neighborhood responded well to the call for interesting items and host Wanda Urbanska filmed a number of items brought in by various New Orleanians. She also interviewed others about special activities in New Orleans, and visited the Crescent City Farmer's Market. All in all, she seems to have found a rich source of material here, and it is my hope she will return to New Orleans.

Incidentally, if there are WYES members and viewers reading this, it would be nice if they could contact the station and indicate they would like WYES to pick up the show.

Robert Thompson
3133 Ponce de Leon

Letters may either be e-mailed to mctullis@bellsouth.net or simply mailed to Parkview Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 791577, New Orleans, LA 70179.

**CITY PARK HISTORY 100 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH;
ALLARD TOMB WILL REMAIN UNMARKED – 1904**

Editor's Note: In the early 20th century the affairs of City Park were widely reported in the city's newspapers, most notably *The Daily Picayune* and *The Times-Democrat*. The City Beautiful movement was in full swing by this period, and its major tenets, particularly an appreciation of aesthetics, were most evident in New Orleans in the development of parks. Since the development of Parkview is so much linked with the development of the park, we are continuing with a series focusing on how activities at the park were reported a century ago. The following is from an article in *The Daily Picayune* from February 1904:

The New Orleans City Park Improvement Association held its regular monthly meeting at headquarters, on the park grounds, yesterday forenoon. The meeting was called to order by First Vice President E. W. Smith, and Secretary Joseph Bernard, Second Vice President V.J. Botto and Commissioner V. Anseman (Superintendent of the park), Y. Biri, Jr., A. Blais, Charles F. Claiborne, Charles Dittman, F.J. Dreyfous, H.L. Frantz, August Glaudot, Jr., P.A. Lelong, E.J. Reiss, P. Torre, J.J. Weinfurter and Philip J. Schoen were present.

A communication was read from Mr. R.B. Morris, in which he stated that, in consideration of the exclusive advertising privilege in the City Park, he would give exhibitions of moving pictures in the park throughout the summer free of charge.

The Treasurer's report showed that the receipts during the month of January added to the cash balance Jan. 1 last, amounted to \$4,267.24. The expenses during the month being \$2,585.31, there was left a cash balance in bank of \$1,681.93.

The report of the Executive Committee showed that the shellroad, which, was commenced about a month ago, was now nearly completed, and if the surface clam shells would be delivered promptly, the road could be finished this month.

The Committee also suggested that the entrance to the park for picnic wagons should be through the Orleans Street gate to the park, and, to facilitate the entrance and egress of such wagons, it would be well to construct a tap road from the gate to the new road, which would require about a thousand barrels of shells. As the cost for this would not exceed \$110, it was decided to adopt the suggestion.

Superintendent Anseman reported that some of the picnic tables were in need of repairs, and also that a number of new tables were required. Smaller tables

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PARKVIEW HISTORY

(Continued from page 5)

than those put up several years ago would answer as well as the larger ones, and the cost would be about one-half. The benches also required repairs, as did also the boathouse. He also reported that he had engaged the services of a ship carpenter to repair some of the boats. His suggestions were adopted and actions approved.

He also suggested that new water barrels were required, and he was instructed to order them.

The Superintendent reported that he had received from Texas, and also from Mr. Rowe, of Gretna, a number of trees, which he had planted out already.

A letter had also been received from Congressman Meyer, informing the Association that he had shipped a number of trees for the park from Washington. A vote of thanks was adopted.

The dancing platform is also in need of repairs, but there appeared to be an inclination on the part of some of the members to do away with the dancing platform entirely. No action was taken, and the matter was referred back to the Executive Committee, with full power to act. Commissioner Claiborne was of the opinion that a floor of schillinger pavement, which would not wear out, should be laid, whereupon one of the members suggested that probably Mr. Claiborne was speaking in the interests of shoemakers.

With regard to the inscription which was ordered to be placed on the old tomb in the park, the Executive Committee reported that the following had been decided upon:

“Robert Allard, Died 1837”

Superintendent Anseman, however, stated that the year of death was not the correct one, while another member stated that he had heard it reported that none of the Allards had been buried in the tomb. Mr. Dreyfous was of the opinion that no inscription at all should be placed on it. There was a kind of mystery about the tomb, and he thought that this very fact would in itself be a matter of interest, so he thought it would be better not to attempt to raise the veil, but to leave the people who visited the tomb figure out or solve the enigma. At all events, it was better not to place any inscription than to give the public false information.

It was decided to replace some of the wooden swings with rope swings.

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PROBLEMS REPORTED BY MEMBERS

NOTE: If you have a problem to report that you'd like for the Association to take action on, please let us know either at 483-0733 or mctullis@bellsouth.net

DATE PROBLEM REPORTED	DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM	STATUS OF RESOLUTION
Feb. 2003	Parking of vehicles on the banks of the Bayou, especially near the Magnolia Gardens/Harding Bridge.	Jay Batt said at the January meeting that he would address the problem with Cabrini, and if necessary, have ticket writers at the scene.
March 2003	Roosevelt. Automobiles parked improperly make it difficult for large emergency vehicles to travel down the street.	Thoughts needed by members on how to address this problem. Another Roosevelt resident has recently brought this matter to the Association's attention.
Oct. 2003	Near Post Office on Jeff Davis. There is significant brush growth between the post office and the Stone Center that causes serious obstruction of a driver's vision when traveling on Jeff Davis from the post office towards Canal Street. There is no side walk on the post office side of the street, so pedestrians must walk in the street, creating an even more dangerous situation at that curve in the road.	Letters have been sent to the City expressing concern about this situation. This may be one of those problems where nobody wants to take responsibility. The growth, weeds and grass may be on a railroad right of way. Councilman Jay Batt responded by sending a letter to the Department of Public Works asking for their attention to this matter. This has been months now and still nothing has been done.
Oct. 2003	Vehicles traveling down side streets at high rates of speed; endangering children and pets.	The problem may be a result of construction on Carrollton and may work itself out once this work is completed.
Jan. 2004	Drainage problems on Olga Street.	Jay Batt listened to Olga Street residents complain of this problem. He said he would look into it.

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The Committee reported that the plate intended to be placed upon the Anseman bridge had been received, and everything was in readiness to place it on the bridge.

P. Torre, Chairman and Commissioners Schneidau and Weinfurter, the Committee appointed to draft resolutions on the death of the late Commissioner Louis A. Richards, submitted their report, which was adopted and a copy of the same ordered to be sent to the bereaved family.

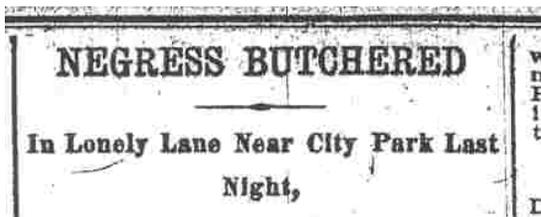
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PARKVIEW HISTORY

CARROLLTON AND DUMAINE THE SCENE OF 1909 MURDER

On the night of Monday April 19, 1909, John O'Neil and William Henry, both of David Street, were out walking their dog on Carrollton Avenue near Dumaine Street, when their dog began barking at something down in the roadway. As they looked toward the figure in the road they saw two men ducking into the weeds at this intersection. O'Neil and Henry, sensing something was peculiar, began walking hurriedly up Carrollton toward City Park Avenue, where they met a chauffeur who went with them back to scene of this strange happening.

The figure in the roadway was the body of a black woman, and she was terribly beaten. In one of her hands a gray hair was clutched. "That hair," said Coroner O'Hara, who was at the scene speaking to Chief of Detectives Reynolds, "was broken off. It is a hair from a white person's head."



Murders of blacks received very little public attention in 1909 unless they were lynched by a mob, and then in that case the only purpose of the publicity was to frighten other blacks into staying in their place, lest they would be next. All the more surprising to see the next day's issue of *The Daily Picayune* carrying a lengthy article on the crime. The headline read, "Negress Butchered In Lonely Lane Near City Park Last Night," and the article called the crime "one of the ugliest murders in some time."

All four daily papers covered the crime with the Picayune's morning competition *The Times-Democrat* providing the most coverage.

The woman was indeed terribly beaten. She was hit with a blunt object twice in the face, with the first blow cutting "the countenance" and breaking her neck. Her clothes were full of blood, and it was presumed that death was quick. The autopsy report, which is available at the New Orleans Public Library, reports of three wounds ("an irregular wound over the right eye the full length of the eye brow down to the bone"), and from this the coroner concluded that death was the result of "fractures of face and neck and internal and external hemorrhaging.

The murder took place on a Monday night and by the next afternoon the body of the woman was available for viewing in the morgue in the hopes that she could be identified. It was reported that "thousands of negroes from all parts of New Orleans viewed the body."

Because the body was unidentified she was, according to the *Item* "embalmed by undertaker D.W. Rhodes preparatory to being placed in the morgue refrigerator."

The police wasted no time in rounding up suspects. As early as Tuesday morning, the day after the murder, Jane Voorhees, described as a "mulattress living at 1318 Gravier Street, told the police that she saw two men together with the unidentified dead woman about 4:00 PM the day of the murder. Voorhees claimed that she saw the three together in a carriage

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PARKVIEW HISTORY

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that passed her at the corner of Gravier and Franklin, and that the now dead woman had a roll of bills in her hand. Based on Voorhees information Detectives Glynn and Gorman rounded up Joe Marshall (aka Joe Danger) and Arthur Jackson.

These were apparently the wrong men, as later that night all of the detectives, together with many patrolmen of the Fourth Precinct, took part in a manhunt. The entire block bounded by Dorgenois, St. Peter, Rocheblave and Carondelet Walk was searched. The police were ready to face off as they were armed with "repeating shotguns and rifles." They were looking for Pearl Flowers, a fugitive wanted for questioning in another murder. He was nabbed at the corner of St. Philip and Rocheblave.

POLICE ARREST SUSPECTED NEGRO AFTER LONG, EXCITING MAN HUNT

Flowers, "a gingerbread colored negro about 25 years old," was charged with the murder. He was also charged with the rape of Rachel Harris after Harris identified him as the assailant. After his booking at Parish Prison, Flowers was taken to the morgue to view the body, but Flowers said he had never seen the woman before. He wasn't believed. Later, according to a news story, Flowers "was sweated" by Coroner O'Hara and detectives.

Meanwhile, Alexander Ford, who lived at 3235 Grand Route St. John, was concerned that his wife had been missing for two days. Ford said that his wife left to go to a lawn party and never returned home. A friend who worked at the House of Detention told Ford that he should view

the body in the morgue. When he did he saw that it was his wife Virginia Ford. The police questioned Ford, but it appears that he was never a suspect.

BODY OF MURDERED WOMAN IDENTIFIED; PEARL FLOWERS CHARGED WITH CRIME

Virginia Ford, also known as Florence Deslisie, was 20 years old and had lived in New Orleans her entire life. She had been in trouble with the law and had a police record. She had served time for larceny and her picture was found in the "rogue's gallery." *The Picayune* ran what appears to have been this police photo of Ford on the day her body was identified. (Editor's Note: In 1909 it would be extremely rare for a black woman's photo to appear in *The Daily Picayune*. Unless, of course, she was a despised criminal or a faithful servant.)

The suspect Flowers was rooming at the home of Julia Hall, 2432 Orleans Street, at the time of the murder of Virginia Ford. He was seen by Hall standing at the cistern washing a shirt that Hall said was soaked with blood. She also said that Flowers' trousers were covered with blood. Hall called the police.

The murdered woman's husband said that he had worked with Flowers in Bogalusa and that while there Flowers had run into trouble after taking several shots at white men. Flowers was described as a

"vicious-looking negro. In his forehead, just above the nose, he has a hole in his skull about the size of a fifty-cent piece. This was caused by the kick of a horse when

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PARKVIEW HISTORY

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he was a boy. The flesh of course has grown over the wound but every beat of the pulse may be seen plainly."

The authorities who examined Flowers, including the coroner, commented about his strange behavior and even speculated on his mental condition.

That certain climatic conditions affect the fellow seems certain. Even Ford (the murdered woman's husband) declares that at times he has seen Flowers shaking from head to foot. He believed it was temper. Headaches are frequent with the prisoner. He says so. And he claims that he has had convulsions. Under certain conditions it is believed that he is abnormal and it may be that he can only regain his normal condition by satisfying himself by the sight of blood.

Other charges quickly poured on Flowers. According to *The Times-Democrat*, "Flowers was partially identified through a Bertillon picture, as a negro wanted for the murder of A.J. Wall, eight miles south of Newton, Mississippi, Oct. 8, 1908. A scar on his forehead, his age, weight and general appearance tally exactly with the picture in the hands of the police and an effort will be made to have him identified positively. There is a \$400 reward standing for the arrest of Flowers, who there (in Newton, Miss.) went under the name of Shep Jones.

Flowers was a well known woman beater. Regina LeBlanc said he beat her unmercifully several times. Rachel Harris said that Flowers told her he had secured a job for her at \$25 a month. They were on a streetcar together heading to the West End. When they got off the car Flowers tried to assault Harris and when Harris resisted Flowers beat her terribly about the face and head. "The negress still carries ugly scars on her face as a result of the beating," reported a story in the *Item*.

There is no record of Flowers ever being tried for the murder of Virginia Ford. Instead he was charged and tried for assault with intent to murder Rachel Harris. However, the verdict was not guilty by reason of insanity. Flowers was committed to the Louisiana State Insane Asylum on July 27, 1909. It is presumed that he died there.

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On motion of Commissioner Dreyfus, an election to fill the vacancy was then held, the result being that John Tobin was elected by a unanimous vote.

It was resolved to have the President appoint a committee on festivals.

The Central Commission on Parks and Avenues was tendered the use of the meeting rooms of the Association, and then the meeting adjourned.

**SEVENTH ANNUAL USED BOOK SALE SUNDAY MARCH 7TH
AT HOLY ROSARY; DONATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED**

Holy Rosary's annual used book sale will take place on Sunday March 7 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at Vincent Hall, 1324 Moss Street. The sale benefits the Archival Project, which is dedicated to the study of the culture and history of the Bayou St. John area.



Donations of books and other materials is now being collected. A large box in the vestibule of the church is available to drop donations. If you need to have them picked up please contact Mark Tullis at 483-0733 or mctullis@bellsouth.net

**MARDI GRAS MARATHON SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY FEB 29;
ROUTE TRAVELS ALONG BAYOU – PLAN AHEAD**

The 39th Annual Mardi Gras Marathon will take place on Sunday February 29th, starting downtown at 7:00 AM. The course of the race will run along Moss Street on the Parkview side of the Bayou. During this race getting across the Bayou in an automobile is nearly impossible. We are at mile marker ten, so even with the 7:00 start time, streets crossing Moss will be blocked off from 7:45 AM until 10:30 AM.

A map of the course can be found at www.mardigrasmarathon.com

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH: ST. LOUIS NO. 1 CEMETERY

The Historic Preservation Program at the University of Pennsylvania has been actively involved in research and tomb restoration at St. Louis No. 1. The results of its research is now available at <http://cml.upenn.edu/nola/>.

This site will interest anyone who has family buried at the cemetery, as a search engine is available to help people locate tombs and inscriptions on tombs. Maps are provided to pinpoint exact locations. The architecture of tomb building is discussed in great detail with colorful photographs and computerized images.

Only a university drawing on its vast resources could produce such a sophisticated site. Prepare yourself for a real visual treat.

PARKVIEW NEWS

NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN UP MAN RECEIVES RECOGNITION

Dr. Richard Datzman, who has been picking up trash along Esplanade and City Park avenues since 1996, received two notices of recognition in mid January. First the City Council through Councilman Jackie Clarkson presented Dr. Datzman with a certificate of appreciation. Then, on January 18 he was the subject of an Angus Lind profile in *The Times-Picayune*.

Dr. Datzman, 82, a retired radiologist and native of Fort Wayne, Indiana, moved to New Orleans in 1977. The long walks each day that Dr. Datzman accomplishes while picking up the trash is all part of a well managed exercise regimen he maintains, which begins each morning at four o'clock when he goes for his work out at an area athletic club. According to the Lind profile, Dr. Datzman said of exercise, "If you don't keep movin', well, I've seen people deteriorate in the apartment (Park Esplanade). And I want to go out kicking."



Dr. Datzman, at right, receives a neighborhood award from Robert Thompson, co-owner of Fair Grinds Coffee Shop, located in Faubourg Pontchartrain.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY SUMMIT SET FOR MAY

The first ever Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Summit will be held in New Orleans in May. The program, which is sponsored by numerous Federal and state highway and transportation agencies, will cover a broad range of topics, including enforcement, education and engineering issues. The exact date and location has not been decided yet, but the summit will be just one day.

For more information, please contact Karen Parsons of the Regional Planning Commission at either kparsons@norpc.org or 568-6620.

CALENDAR LISTINGS SOLICITED

We are trying to include a monthly calendar of events in the newsletter. If you know of a neighborhood event that should be included, or someone who lives in Parkview who is participating in an event that should be brought to our attention, please submit the listing to mctullis@bellsouth.net or fax it to 488-6581.

RESTAURANTS (CONTINUED)

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very little money, especially in Louisiana where most people are good cooks. And, produce is not expensive, if one knows how to shop smart.

Given the higher prices in restaurants these days, eating out has less to offer than before. Yet, we see more new restaurants opening all the time. So, what are these restaurants thinking? Do they understand market-share? Or, are they just splitting up the dining public into smaller pieces of the same pie?

The Mid-City area already has a number of restaurants with staying power. Among these Cafe Degas, Chateaubriand, Mandina's, and Michael's Mid-City Grill will probably be with us for some time. And, these places have never depended on out-of-towners for their survival. They are solid, professional, and they have a following that will carry them well into the future. Gabrielle and Christian's had a bit of national fame for awhile, but they don't seem to be hurting with the decline in tourism.

So, what about the streetcar line? Will tourists take the time to ride out Canal to Carrollton, then spend an evening in a restaurant, then ride back to town? I'm sure some will, but the leisure tourist with the time for adventure is becoming evermore scarce as the numbers dwindle. The convention-type tourists have no time for such, preferring to walk Bourbon Street (if they go out at all). And, the cruise ship type tourists have food on the ship, already paid for.

So, what is the future of restaurants without tourism? Quality and value, in my opinion. Local people know what they are getting. They are not going back to a restaurant a second time if they don't get what they pay for. They know better. Again, it's just too simple to prepare good food at home, rather than feel cheated every time they pay the higher price of eating out.

Tourists, on the other hand, have to eat out (unless they cook in their hotel room). And, they aren't going back a second time anyway. With the economy the way it is, they are looking for value too. Quality is okay when they can get it, but this is not a top priority anymore. The new wave of three star quality hotels and restaurants proves my point. Conventioneers aren't going to book a table at Brigtsen's or Upperline three months in advance like they did some eight years ago. That is history.

And, what about the 40% decline in tourism since the peak in 1999? With the numbers of visitors going down, restaurateurs continue to invest in their immediate future. This sounds crazy but some seem to have a great deal of confidence in themselves. They must know something I don't.

Chris Herndon is a tour guide and free lance travel writer. His website is www.tourwithchris.com

BOOK REVIEW

DECAYING NEW ORLEANS OBSERVED FROM A BIKE; COMIC NOVEL OFFERS KEEN INSIGHTS INTO CITY

Near the end of Michael Patrick Welch's novel *The Donkey Show* (Equator Books; 2003), Patrick, the main character in this semi-autobiographical comic tale set in post-September 11 New Orleans, is trying to move his girlfriend Mizzy's stalled truck when he sees one of his students coming his way. Anthony, a high school student at the Uptown public high school where Patrick teaches, is, according to Patrick, the only good kid in his class, a class filled with teenage thugs and junior conmen. Mizzy, glad to meet the kid that Patrick has spoken so highly of, promptly offers Anthony a shot at splitting the hash that she and Patrick have just stolen if Anthony will help Patrick push her truck. Patrick, himself still high on Ecstasy, laughs, and, in perhaps his only moment of moral responsibility, warns Mizzy that she is going to get him fired.

Moral responsibility? What Anthony could not have possibly known was that Patrick took the job at Magnolia High School, teaching a Creative Writing Class, only after being unable to hang on to a job cleaning out cages at a vet's office, and that Patrick's contract with the School Board calls for him to get paid at the end of the semester. A lump sum deal that he was planning to use to escape to Costa Rica for the Summer. Anthony could smoke all the hash he wanted. All that worried Patrick was that somehow word of this would get back to the school, spoiling his vacation in Central America.

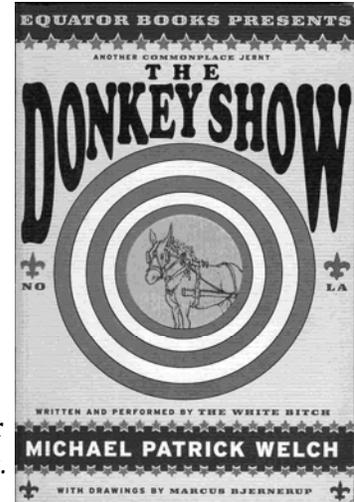
Besides this indictment of the Orleans Parish Public School System, Mr. Welch has much more to say about life in

New Orleans, with many of these observations being witty and sharp, as well as painfully true. Mr. Welch, a native of Florida and former staff writer for the multiple Pulitzer Prize winning *St. Petersburg Times*,

is 29 years old, the same age as the Patrick in his novel, and although he has been in New Orleans just a short time he has managed to pick up a strong eye for local color and scenes, dialogue and perhaps most remarkable, subtle racial conflicts, all of which translate into a well written and often quite funny first novel.

New Orleans in real life attracts the lost and the lonely, as well as those who see the daily action of Bourbon Street as irresistible. The literature of the City is no different. Central to nearly all New Orleans novels is the character moving here to discover himself, becoming an artist, playing jazz or enduring a search for a dozen other nonexistent vocations. This often dooms the novel from the beginning. Mr. Welch though avoids this classic local pitfall on page eight when we learn that Patrick, living in Florida, is convinced to move to New Orleans after needing only to hear that it is a cheap place to live. With that nugget of wisdom in hand Patrick then seeks out the hotel or restaurant gig that

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BOOK REVIEW

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will afford him the life he wishes to lead. The job secured, Patrick is content to rent out a one room apartment on Esplanade Avenue in Faubourg St. John and ride his bike about town, avoiding potholes and crime scenes.

It is from his bike or an RTA bus that Patrick sees his New Orleans and being so close to the street illustrates well Mr. Welch's own powers over this urban terrain. Marching bands play in and out of the story and Patrick remarks that "New Orleans is the only place in North America where band kids are revered by their classmates, rather than considered dorks. When school lets out, every bus stop down Esplanade to the French Quarter is an awkward, shrieking, brass jam session." Patrick shares seats on RTA buses with his students, and he comments that all the students in New Orleans take the public buses to school, adding that he has never seen a yellow school bus.

Patrick, while expressing empathy for students that haul \$100 pairs of sneakers in their book bags but still can't afford the stamps to send field trip permission forms to their parents at Orleans Parish Prison, fails to make any sincere effort to help these students out of their poverty. Instead he asks the students to write of their first drug experience, and to prove that he has his own story to tell Patrick reads to his class a piece about how a bad acid trip on his 26th birthday *almost* caused him to lose his girlfriend. With a constant string of profanities spewing from his mouth (which even offends the students) Patrick is unfit to teach or have any role at all with children. You wish him well on his hopefully speedy return trip to Florida.

Locals, especially those who enjoy the nightlife, will find many familiar names in *The Donkey Show* – Dixie Tavern and Pal's are just two of the bars that are mentioned. Trying to guess places Patrick describes but doesn't name will provide challenges for natives, as well as fodder for arguments. Some events you'd rather forget. The Briede murder is recounted forcefully; obviously having a strong impact on Mr. Welch as he was writing his novel. Reality writing does have its limits though. Patrick, who regularly takes liberties with a coffee shop's refill policy (i.e. steals), is angry at being caught and describes the accusing manager of the CC's on Esplanade as being "young, fat, buried in base makeup." A cruelty that only makes the author seem as bitter as his character.

Every novel set in New Orleans written in the last twenty years will undergo a rigorous comparison to *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Mr. Welch knowing this beats the critic to the analysis. The students in Patrick's class, we learn, are familiar with John Kennedy Toole and at times Patrick compares his plight with that of Ignatius. This is especially true as Patrick, like Ignatius, narrates the story from the perspective of the many jobs he has, with the characters at these jobs providing the muscle to push the story along.

The Donkey Show is an intelligently crafted novel and rewarding to read. It should find its way into the hands of any serious student of this City's modern literary tradition. New Orleans has always attracted young aspiring writers, but usually they only talk about writing. In Mr. Welch's case he has actually produced a splendid chronicle of 21st Century New Orleans.

RESTAURANTS

TOO MANY RESTAURANTS? TOO FEW?

RESTAURANT OUTLOOK FOR 2004

by Chris Herndon

2004. The "Year of Cheap Wine" on my calendar. The economy is coming back, yet, tourism in New Orleans is projected to be 40% off the high from 1999, 16% off from last year. New restaurants are still opening, new hotels are still being built, and the convention center will continue to expand. One can only speculate that someone knows what they are doing.

The cruise ship business is going to continue to grow with the building of a new wharf. New museums and art galleries have created a new audience for New Orleans, as has the Harrah's casino. The music festivals are forever popular. With new ones being created and growing in popularity, the future should be so good.

Then, there's Mid-City. A new streetcar line on Canal making the turn at Carrollton should be the window of opportunity for the "Carrollton Corridor" to prosper and do well. Carrollton now has its own restaurant row from Tulane to City Park avenues. These are eateries designed for the local clientele, none of them tourist traps in nature. Some are ethnic, some are sports bars, some are higher-end, some are not.

How a local clientele can support so many restaurants without an input from tourism is something to ponder. It's not like this part of town has a large number of high-income families to support so many restaurants; but, they

seem to survive, with the exception of Cafe Indo, which went out of business before the chaos that came with the construction of the streetcar line. This is unfortunate because this was a good little restaurant, perhaps the most ambitious food that this area has seen.

Restaurants go out of business for many reasons. It's a fickle business, with employment problems, permit problems, parking problems, landlord problems, etc. Throw in a few original personalities with big egos and it's no wonder that so many restaurants fail. It is rumored that Pho Tau Bay will take over Indo's location, but this seems to be taking forever. A local Vietnamese chain would be successful here, no doubt. It's cheap, clean, efficient and business worthy.

Of course, this would put the squeeze on the competition across the street, two new restaurants that are not as cheap. Who is going to go to Brewhouse Grill and Sea Level on a regular basis when a better bargain is only a few feet away, where service is faster and the food has more bang for the buck?

This brings us to the subject of value. Things have changed, not just because of September 11. The economy had a good scare in the early part of 2001 and is now recovering, but Americans are definitely more dollar-conscious. Eating out is not necessary for locals. It is a given that one can prepare very good food for

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