

# LIVING WITH HISTORY IN NEW ORLEANS' NEIGHBORHOODS

## Garden District



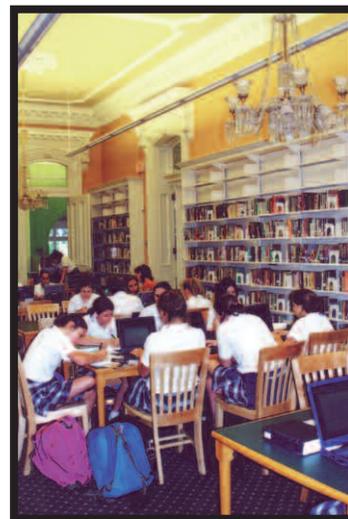
PHOTO: MARY FITZPATRICK

**PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER OF NEW ORLEANS  
INVITES YOU TO EXPLORE THE LOCAL SIDE OF LIFE  
IN THE GARDEN DISTRICT, A DYNAMIC NEIGHBORHOOD  
GROUNDED IN A SENSE OF TRADITION.**



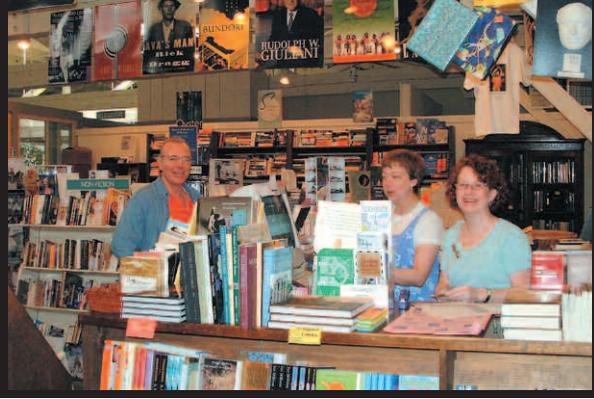
The Classic Revival mansions and charming cottages of the Garden District are famous around the world, thanks to picture books and well-organized tours. What visitors rarely see, though, is the close-knit neighborhood that keeps this historic district alive and thriving.

Neighbors here know and look out for one another. They expect to see familiar faces as they jog under the oaks near Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 in the early morning or when they take the dog for a ramble down Prytania Street at dusk. The same faces will likely crop up in the coffee shop or bookstore at The Rink, a neighborhood shopping arcade, or at one of the neighborhood



restaurants along Magazine Street. Garden District residents can even call world-famous Commander's Palace a neighborhood eatery. The restaurant annually hosts the Garden District Association's "Fall Affair" to raise funds for neighborhood projects.

Settled by American businessmen, most of them "Yankees" eager to escape the Creole-dominated politics of New Orleans, the Garden District was laid out in 1832 and incorporated as the City of Lafayette in 1834. Cotton brokers, shipping agents and financiers built fortunes in the



boom years leading up to the Civil War, then established their families in elegant yet restrained houses on the new city's spacious lots. By the time New Orleans annexed the area as the fourth district of the city in 1852, travel writers had already dubbed it the "Garden District" for its capacious, showy gardens. A small group of favored architects, including Henry Howard, Lewis E. Reynolds and William Freret, won numerous commissions here, while other builders followed their lead and consulted the same pattern books.

Today's Garden District is a dynamic community grounded in a strong sense of tradition. Some of its homes

are still known by the names of the families that built them over a century ago, and official flags designating Mardi Gras royalty are a common sight here during Carnival season. At the same time, the area has met modern challenges by organizing for zoning and security

measures to protect the neighborhood's environment and buildings. In 1939 residents formed the Garden District Association, now a formidable force for preservation of the residential integrity of the area. A Garden District self-taxing district established in 1998 provides the neighborhood with extra security.



# TOURS

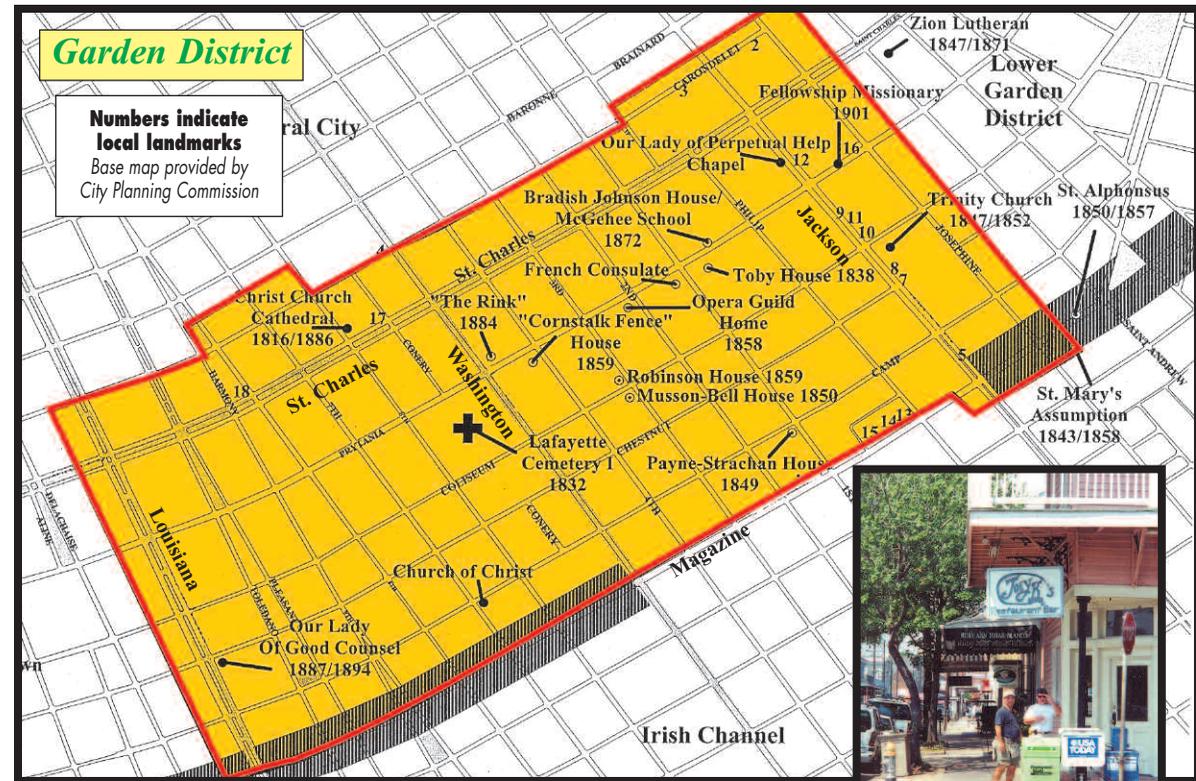
*We encourage you to use good judgment and common sense in taking these tours.*

## TOUR A

### Magazine St. (ride/walk)

The Magazine St. bus (#11) will take you through the Garden District stretch of Magazine St., but the only way to truly experience its variety and richness is on foot, slowly.

Begin at Washington and Magazine, where a modern chain store sits diagonally across from a family-owned antiques and woodworking shop. Larger, national businesses have made some inroads on the street, but the vast majority of its shops, restaurants and cafés are small and locally owned. Walk uptown, in the direction of ascending numbers, taking time to poke in the shops. The former Salvation Army building on your right in the 2900 block now houses a health club, offices and retail shops, all gathered around a courtyard restaurant that has become a popular meeting place. This area abounds in fine examples of adaptive reuse: the store at the end of the block (corner 7th St.) was once an auto repair shop, while the condominium complex across the street was an orphan asylum. Joey K's, at the corner of 7th St. in the 3000 block of Magazine, is a neighborhood fixture that draws Garden District residents from all levels of society. The next two blocks hold a variety of shops selling everything from cigars and locks to sterling silver, and the left-hand side of the 3200 and 3300 blocks offers a range of casual and ethnic restaurants. Continue as far as Louisiana Avenue to sample some of the street's more eclectic stores and galleries, or veer off to the right to explore the residential district. Seventh Street is particularly lovely.



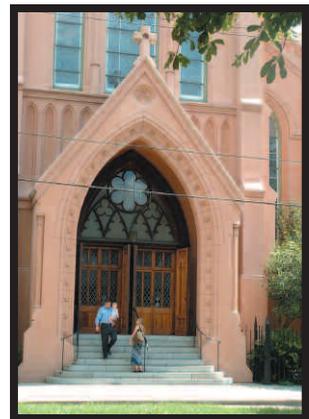
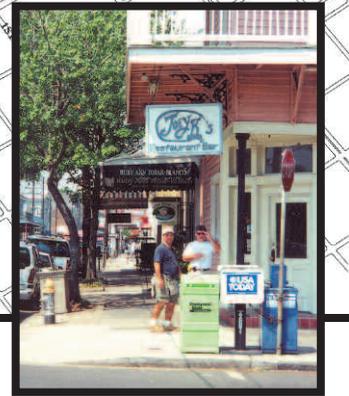
## TOUR B

### Prytania St., Washington St., and Jackson Ave. (bike/walk)

The Garden District has no public square per se, but the corner of Prytania and Washington has been a quasi-public gathering place since the 1880s when Clara Hagan built the Crescent City Skating Rink (now The Rink shopping complex) at 2727 Prytania Street. Across Washington Ave., the former Behrman Gym, where "Gentleman Jim" Corbett trained for his 1892 World Championship fight against John L. Sullivan, is now a private home. Lafayette Cemetery No. 1, on the other side of Prytania, was an integral part of Buisson's town plan. Today, it is popular as a setting for films. From here you can spy world famous Commander's Palace restaurant at the corner of Coliseum St. and Washington Avenue. Continue down Prytania in the direction of descending street numbers. The justly famous, monumental houses here are homes, not museums, and their well-tended gardens and facades are a testament to the care Garden District folks lavish on their historic residences. Davis House (1858), now The Women's Guild of the New Orleans Opera Association (2504 Prytania), is one of the few buildings in the district that can be rented for special events. The Second Empire Bradish Johnson House (1872) at 2343 Prytania bustles with life as the main building of the Louise S. McGehee School for Girls, one of the city's

leading private K-12 academies. Across Prytania, the Toby-Westfeldt House, known locally as "Toby's Corner" (2340 Prytania, circa early-mid 1830s) is thought to be the oldest extant building in the Garden District. It has been in the same family for five generations and is the home of the 2003 Queen of Carnival. Continue to Jackson Ave. and turn right to discover Trinity Episcopal Church

(1329 Jackson Ave.), whose outreach and social programs make it a keystone of Garden District life. To return to the starting point wander back through the residential streets, particularly First and Third streets.





- 1832 Samuel Jarvis Peters buys Livaudais Plantation; hires Benjamin Buisson to lay out a grid with large lots
- 1833 New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad (later the St. Charles Avenue Streetcar) chartered; begins operating in 1835
- 1834 Peters' suburb incorporated as the independent City of Lafayette
- 1837 Banking panic crushes local economy until mid-1840s
- 1848-1865 Most Garden District houses built
- 1852 City of Lafayette annexed to newly unified New Orleans
- 1861 Onset of Civil War; many Garden District residents relocate to North due to Union sympathies
- 1865-1873 Second building boom in district
- 1873 Financial panic; district real estate doesn't recover until around 1890
- 1885 Newcomb College for Women established in former Robb Mansion on Washington Ave.
- 1918 Newcomb moves Uptown
- 1939 Garden District Association established
- 1954 Robb Mansion demolished; property subdivided for houses
- 1971 Garden District placed on National Register of Historic Places
- 1972 St. Charles Avenue Association established; wins 1-year moratorium on demolition on St. Charles Avenue
- 1973 Path of St. Charles Avenue Streetcar put on National Register of Historic Places
- 1976 New Orleans City Council gives Historic District Landmarks Commission oversight of St. Charles Ave. from Jackson Ave. to Jena St.
- 1998 Garden District self-taxing district established to provide for additional security in neighborhood

## Annual Events

- February or March: Mardi Gras parades on St. Charles Ave.
- March: St. Patrick's Day Parade on Magazine St.
- Spring: Garden District Association garden tours (every third year)
- Fall: Garden District Association Fall Affair at Commander's Palace
- December: Preservation Resource Center Holiday Home Tour

## Neighborhood Associations

- Garden District Association
- St. Charles Avenue Association



**Published by**  
**PRESERVATION RESOURCE CENTER**  
**OF NEW ORLEANS**  
**923 TCHOUPITOULAS STREET**  
**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70130**  
**504/581-7032**  
**www.prcno.org**

*Since 1974 the Preservation Resource Center has promoted the preservation, restoration and revitalization of New Orleans' historic neighborhoods and architecture.*



This brochure is made possible by a generous grant from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities