

Appendix H:

History of the Lafitte Gardens

The Lafitte Greenway Community Gardens

DRAFT

By: Kelly Bond, Friends of Lafitte Greenway

Ms. Emelda Paul

Lafitte Gardens:

The Lafitte Corridor had a large garden stretching from North Galvez and Lafitte to North Prieur and Lafitte. This garden was run by two older men, from around the 1940's through 2005 when Katrina hit. After the storm, they did not return to the garden and no one took it over. The gardeners grew all types of vegetables and herbs including cabbage, bell peppers, mustard greens, turnips, and parsley.

One of the gardeners was very particular about how things were grown and how the garden was operated. His nickname was "Kite Stick". The gardeners sold all food grown to the local community. This food was both fresher and cheaper than produce available at the local corner stores, making the gardens a great community asset. Residents would stop by in the early morning or early evening to purchase food when the garden was "open". Sometimes residents were allowed to go in and pick their own food.

Fencing surrounded the gardens, providing security, in addition to a watch dog inside. All equipment was kept in a tool shed located within the fence. Ms. Paul believes the gardeners were from the rural country, as they had a lot of experience farming and were very knowledgeable. Aside from the two main gardeners, neighborhood youth would help to maintain the gardens.

Before the gardens were constructed, the "Veteran's Project" was there. This was housing for veterans which was eventually demolished.

Personal Home Gardens & Mel's Experience with Cooking:

Ms. Paul remembers many residents having their own personal gardens at their homes. Her friend grew lots of flowers and small red peppers. Ms. Paul would pickle the peppers.

Peppergrass is a native and wild growing plant, similar to mustard greens in taste. It used to be everywhere all over the city, which residents would harvest. Women would go out wearing an apron and hat to harvest this green with a knife. They would collect it in a brown bag, wash it at home, and cook it down with other greens. It was often served over rice and pig tails.

Ms. Paul wrote down all her recipes to give to her children and grandchildren, titled "A Peek into Mel's Kitchen." She finds it very important to pass along recipes, culture, and family traditions to the next generation. She feels that many of today's youth don't know enough about home cooking and rely too much on fast food. When she was in school she learned about cooking from home economic classes, as well from her mother at home. Having a mentoring program in the new community gardens would be very important to teach young people how to grow food, what food looks like, and how to cook it.

Railroads:

The railroad tracks ran alongside the former gardens, remaining in operation until the late 1970's. This rail line was used to transport goods, with a "cotton shed" located on the Conti St. side of the current Sojourner Truth Community Center. This "cotton shed" was the drop-off point for the trains.

Lemann Playground:

There were two playgrounds located to the south of the gardens. Lemann #1 was for White people, and Lemann #2 for Black people. The Lemann #2 space was used much more than the other. There were always events and activities going on, as well as children playing. A woman near this park held onto all the sports equipment. Ms. Paul played a large role in keeping this space clean and safe. She would contact Councilmember Troy Carter when something needed to be fixed (i.e. lights). Families would gather here to picnic and spend holidays outside.

Farmers' Market:

There was a farmers' market for two years before Katrina, located from Orleans and Claiborne to St. Phillip and Claiborne. Ms. Paul was involved with this. The market had lots of different vendors selling everything from produce, hot food, and drinks to beauty products and wind chimes. The Lafitte Resident Council ran this market.



Ms. Dianne Alfred

The former Lafitte Gardens were located around Lafitte St. and North Johnson St., and run by an older man. He grew and sold many types of vegetables, including mustard greens and peppers. The garden was very well kept and easily accessible to the community. This was an asset for the neighborhood, allowing residents to walk only a short distance to purchase fresh healthy food. Now there is limited fresh food available at corner stores, with the majority of food processed. Younger children only know processed food because that is what they are surrounded by. The new community gardens, and especially the farmers' market, will be crucial to improving the eating habits of the community.

The New Orleans Historic Collection

Sanborn Maps:

The 1983 Sanborn Maps show a playground along the Lafitte Corridor. The railroad lines are still documented in these maps as well. Friends of Lafitte Greenway possesses a copy of these maps.

The playground is named, "The Richard B. Lemann Memorial Playground." Based on the portions of the maps available, the playground begins at Marais St. and stretches north until at least N. Prieur St. The playground is surrounded by Lafitte Ave. and Toulouse St.

Sixth Ward/Treme/Lafitte Neighborhood Profile:

From this document, dating December 1978 and published by the Office of Policy Planning, there were multiple resident surveys conducted relating to green space. A survey of "Citizens' Attitudes on Needs for Parks," show that 51.9% of respondents wanted more parks in 1977. A survey on "Citizens' Attitudes on Need for Playgrounds" show that 64.9% of respondents wanted more playgrounds in 1977. Finally a survey on "Citizen Attitudes Toward Planting More Trees," show that 39.7% of respondents wanted more trees planted in 1977. Friends of Lafitte Greenway has copies of these survey results, including other data.

Established in the early 1840's, the Treme' Market was the City's 4th public market. It was demolished by 1940, as it was no longer included in the Sanborn Maps. It was located between Marais and Villere Streets.

The Richard B. Lemann Memorial Playground is included in the Facility and Resource Inventory of the 1978 Neighborhood Profile. It is #43 on the list, with an address of 521 Marais St. The playground is sponsored by the New Orleans Recreation Department.

The Times-Picayune Archives

The following two images are of newspaper clipping discussing the Lemann Playgrounds.

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<h2>City to Dedicate Space for Two Lemann Memorial Playgrounds</h2>	
<p>Plans for the creation of two playgrounds, one for white children and the other for negroes, with funds given by Dr. and Mrs. I. J. Lemann, 6119 St. Charles avenue, in memory of their son, Richard Berthelot Lemann, who was fatally injured in an automobile accident a year ago, were announced Tuesday by Mayor T. Semmes Walmsley at a special meeting of the commission council.</p> <p>The playgrounds will be on the filled-in bed of the old Carondelet canal on Lafitte street. Each of them will be 300 feet long and 100 feet wide. The white playground will extend from North Claiborne avenue to Marais street and the negro park will extend from North Claiborne avenue to North Prieur street.</p> <p>An ordinance dedicating the land, which is owned by the city, for playground purposes was introduced by Mayor Walmsley, following his presentation of a letter telling of the Lemann donation for equipment.</p> <p>Each of the small parks will be known as the Richard Berthelot Lemann Playground in memory of the son of the doctor, under the</p>	<p>provisions of the ordinance introduced by the mayor.</p> <p>Out of the grief suffered by Dr. and Mrs. Lemann following the death of their son August 14, the mayor said, was born the desire to create a memorial to him. Young Lemann, who was 21 years old, had finished the first year of his business course at Harvard university, from which he was graduated the year previous to his death. He was on a vacation trip en route from New Orleans to Woods Hole, Mass., accompanied by his older brother, Paul, when he stopped in Central Alabama at the camp of a former schoolmate.</p> <p>In the early morning they went swimming and later they found that the crowd was "out of cigarettes." Richard volunteered to go to a store seven miles away and on the winding road he collided head-on with another automobile. He was killed instantly.</p> <p>The mayor said that since the youth's death his parents have desired to erect some type of memorial to him which would be "in keeping</p>
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THURSDAY, SEPT. 6, 1934

Work on Lemann Playground Will Require 100 Men

Construction of Lafitte Avenue Parks Gets Under Way

Construction of the Richard Berthelot Lemann Playground on Lafitte avenue between Marais and Prieur streets got under way Wednesday morning, according to information issued at the city engineer's office.

The two parks project, made possible by a \$15,000 donation by Dr. and Mrs. I. I. Lemann in memory of their late son, will give employment to approximately 100 men for the next three months.

The donated funds will be used for playground equipment, the city dedicating the land and the ERA furnishing labor at an expenditure

of approximately \$20,000. Albert Wyler, representative of the city engineer's office, will supervise the work.

The donation and land dedication call for the construction of a white playground extending from North Claiborne avenue to Marais street and a park for negro children from Claiborne avenue to Prieur street.

A section for small children, equipped with slides, swings, seesaws, a wading pool and other devices will be constructed at the uptown end of each playground. The plans also call for an indoor baseball diamond and basketball, deck tennis and handball courts. The boys' division will adjoin the girls' grounds.

The Aldan Valley of Siberia is so abundant with platinum that natives are said to make bullets of it.

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