

## Fascinating Facts, Part 2

### Fake Medieval Towns

A *bourg* is defined as a medieval village, or French market town, especially one situated in the shadow of a castle. It comes from the Old French *borc*, from the Late Latin *burgus* for fortress or castle, of Germanic origin.

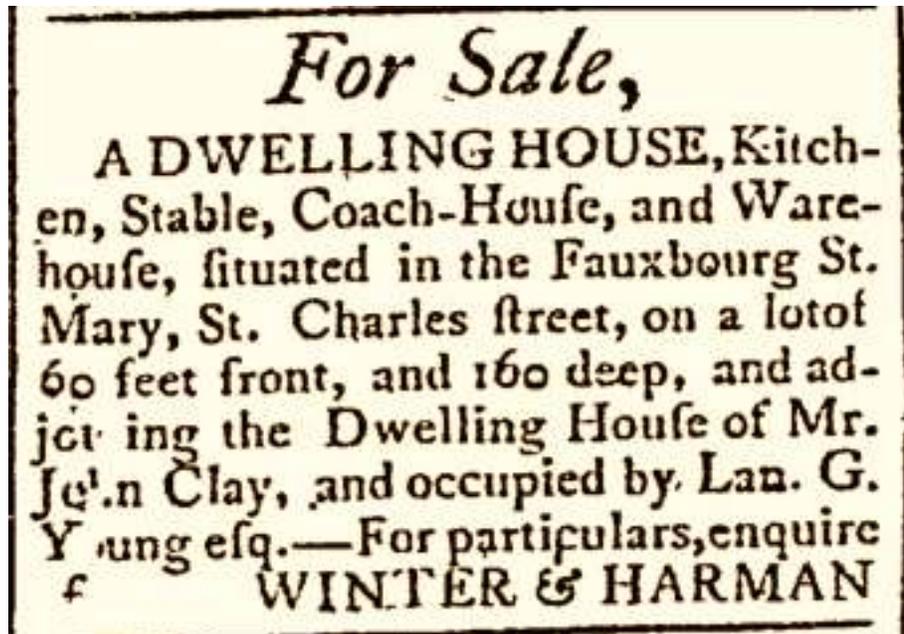
There were not any true castles in New Orleans, but there were forts, such as Fort St. Charles, which began as a bastion under the French and improved by the Spanish under Governor Carondelet. Bastions were parts of a larger fortification that projected out at an angle to the line of a wall or earthworks, so as to facilitate defensive fire in several directions. The original city had nine bastions under French rule. There are no aboveground remains of Fort St. Charles, which was in the square bounded by Esplanade, Barracks, Decatur and North Peters streets. Today, the old U.S. Mint entirely occupies the site of the old fort.



*Faubourg Marigny, 1821*

It was only logical, therefore, to call new suburban developments *faubourgs*. Faubourg Marigny was, after all, downriver and just next door to Fort St. Charles. *Faux* means false or fake in French, and *faubourg* was originally written as *fauxbourg*.

Thomas Jefferson, in his writings, used *fauxbourg* when referring to Gravier's Faubourg St. Mary, and so did the 1806 advertisement shown below:



*From the Orleans Gazette and Commercial Advertiser, July 30, 1806*

### **St. Louis Cathedral Not The First**

No, the St. Louis parish church, which stood on the site of today's basilica-cathedral, was not the first place of worship constructed in Louisiana. A Jesuit priest named Father Paul Du Ru, who accompanied Iberville, erected the first church in Louisiana at the Bayou-goula village on the Mississippi River in 1700.

In 1716, Spanish Franciscans built the mission church of San Miguel de Linares de los Adaes, at Los Adaes Post, some 21 miles west of Natchitoches, Louisiana's oldest settlement. Natchitoches was founded in 1714, four years before New Orleans, by Louis Juchereau de St. Denis. The Los Adaes State Historic Site is located on Louisiana Highway 485 in present-day Natchitoches Parish and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.

Even the Chapel of St. John the Baptist at German Settlement was constructed in 1721, before the first permanent church in New Orleans. Although New Orleans was founded in 1718, there was no actual church building until the arrival of the Capuchins in September

of 1722. Prior to that, a shed, a shack, a warehouse and a ramshackle former beer tavern served as New Orleans' first houses of worship.



*Ink and watercolor sketch of the first parish Church of St. Louis in New Orleans by Jean-Pierre Lassus, 1726.*

### **Fair Grounds Notables**

The New Orleans Fair Grounds has had its share of celebrities through the years, including the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia, former U.S. President U.S. Grant, General George Armstrong Custer, former sheriff "Pat" Garrett and Frank James, older brother of outlaw Jesse James (as well as a past member of the James-Younger Gang).

The Fair Grounds, surpassed in age by only Pimlico and Saratoga, is the third oldest racetrack in the nation. The club's inaugural meeting began just two months after Rex first took to the streets of New Orleans on Mardi Gras Day, 1872.

In addition to being asked to review the Rex Procession that Carnival Day, the Grand Duke Alexis of Russia was fêted at the grandiose Louisiana Jockey Club, previously the Luling Mansion, which had been purchased in connection with the opening of the Fair Grounds Racetrack.

Alexis, before visiting New Orleans in February 1872, went on a grand buffalo hunt only the month before. His host was General Phil Sheridan, and the excursion included not only Buffalo Bill Cody but also the ill-fated General George Armstrong Custer. Two of the party, Custer and the Grand Duke are pictured below:

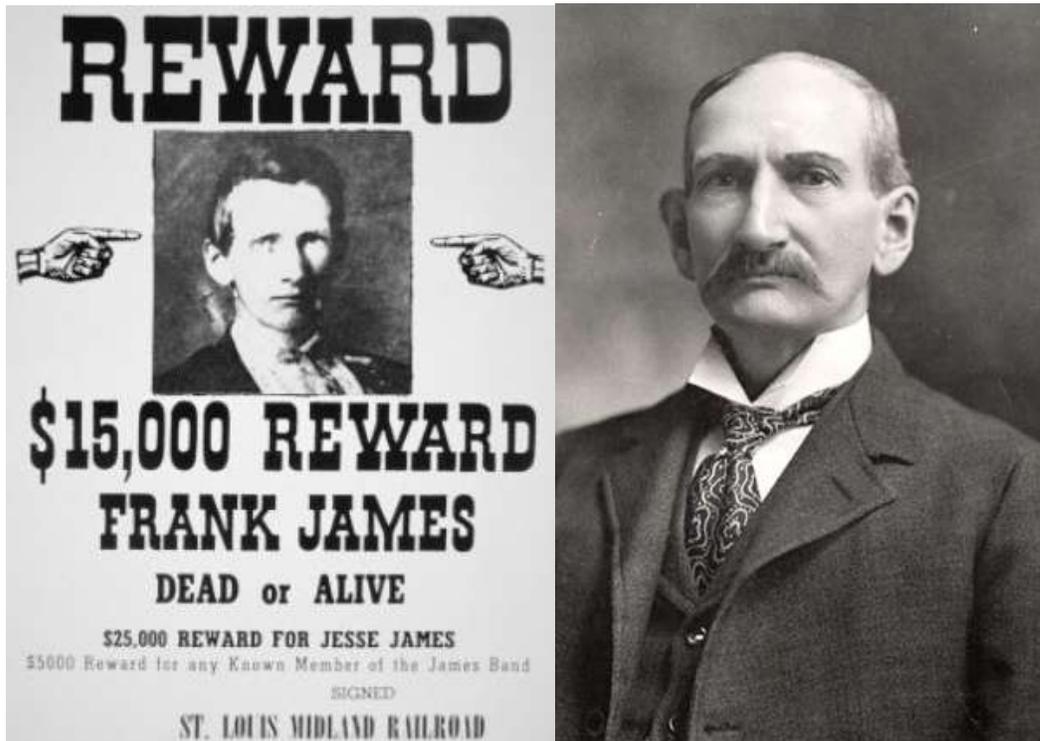


*Carte de visite of General Custer and the Grand Duke Alexis*

Custer dined with Alexis at the St. Charles Hotel on Lundi Gras, the night before Rex's first parade. Fated to die four years later in the massacre at Little Big Horn, Custer was at the Fair Grounds November 30, 1872, to enter a horse called "Frogtown," which came in second the third and last race.

Ex-President Grant was at the Fair Grounds in 1880 for the New Louisiana Jockey Club's spring meeting, which began March 30. With the War and Reconstruction now behind them, the crowd actively cheered his attendance, and he appeared to have an enjoyable time.

In December 1893, the Fair Grounds was visited by the man who became famous for killing outlaw Billy the Kid, Patrick Floyd Jarvis "Pat" Garrett, bartender, customs agent and ex-sheriff of Lincoln County, New Mexico. According to an article in the *Times-Picayune*, dated November 23, 1971, horse owner Garrett brought along with him "a modest string of rather ordinary horses."



*Frank James, youthful outlaw*      *Frank James, scrupulously honest*

Six feet tall with blue piercing eyes, Frank James (along with his more famous brother Jesse) was involved in a number of robberies that culminated in the deaths of bank employees or citizens. The most notable incident was the disastrous Northfield, Minnesota, raid on September 7, 1876, that ended with the capture or death of most of the gang. Only Frank and Jesse escaped. Robert Ford shot and killed an unarmed Jesse James in 1882, while the wanted man was standing on a chair to clean a dusty picture.

In 1904, after having been pardoned for his crimes by the governor of Missouri, Frank James was employed as a betting commissioner at the Fair Grounds by owner-trainer Samuel Hildreth, who was the largest stable owner at the track. Hildreth, known as "one of the best liked horsemen ever to race at the Fair Grounds," described James as "a man of scrupulous honesty." James, "a quiet, mild-mannered man, in appearance resembling a country merchant or deacon," placed bets for Mr. Hildreth.

### **Al Scramuzza is 90**

New Orleans' beloved Al Scramuzza, the retail crawfish empresario of Seafood City, 1826 North Broad, turned 90-years-old just this past month on September 23, 2017. Having starred in his own catchy commercials, Al is a Crescent City institution.



*Al Scramuzza, crawfish stethoscope in hand*

But did you know that in addition to creating such memorable catchphrases as "Seafood City ... Very pretty!" and "Stay wit Al Scramuzza an you'll nevah be a loozah," Al had his own record label: SCRAM Records? He had a national hit in 1969 with *Hook and Sling* by Eddie Bo.



### **Elvis: TCB and TKE**

The initials T.C.B. stand for "Taking Care of Business," a phrase Elvis was particularly fond of, as well as the name of his band. The letters TKE, on the other hand, represent the Greek letters Tau Kappa Epsilon, which brings me to the following question:

What do President Ronald Reagan, Mayor of New Orleans Vic Schiro, Lawrence Welk, Saints legend Danny Abramowicz, Willie Nelson, Danny Thomas, Sheriff Charles Foti and Elvis Presley have in common?

If you haven't guessed yet, how about these gentlemen: Lieutenant Governor Jimmy Fitzmorris, Merv Griffith, Billie Tauzin, guitar genius Les Paul, the Everly Brothers (Don and Phil), actor Dan Duryea and Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee?

The answer is that they are all fraternity brothers, members of Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity. Elvis became a TKE brother after having accepted an unusual invitation from the TKE chapter at Arkansas State College back in 1960.



*Elvis receives Man of the Year Award, October 24, 1960*

The TKEs at Arkansas State College had received some positive headlines when chapter president Rick Husky, a journalism student, succeeded in getting Ronald Reagan to stop in on the fraternity house during his visit to Jonesboro.

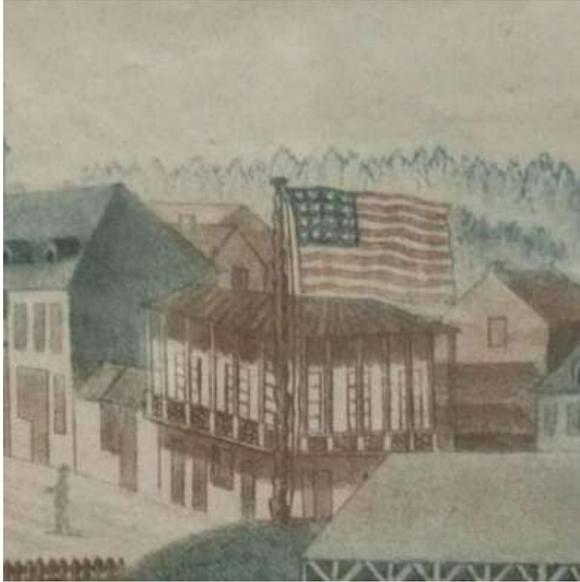
That worked so well that Husky came up with an idea to initiate someone truly famous as an honorary member: Elvis Presley! But how was he going to pull this off? Some of his brothers even laughed it off as a wild dream.

Undaunted, Husky formulated a plan to present Elvis with a "Man of the Year Award" for his many contributions to charity. Husky secured the name of Elvis' secretary from a fan magazine and sent a letter off to Graceland notifying Elvis that TKE wished to present him with this award.

Husky was shocked to receive a telegram from Elvis' secretary stating that Elvis would be happy to accept. Now all Husky had to do was race off to a local sporting goods store for an appropriate polished brass plaque. Husky and fellow TKE brothers set out for Graceland in Husky's '56 pink and white Ford for their meeting with the King. Elvis humbly accepted the award and was initiated. "One of the nicest

awards he had ever received," Elvis told them. "I always wanted to go to college but never had the chance because I couldn't afford it."

### **The Governor and the Valedictorian**



*Fort St. Charles as it appeared in 1804, a year after the Purchase*

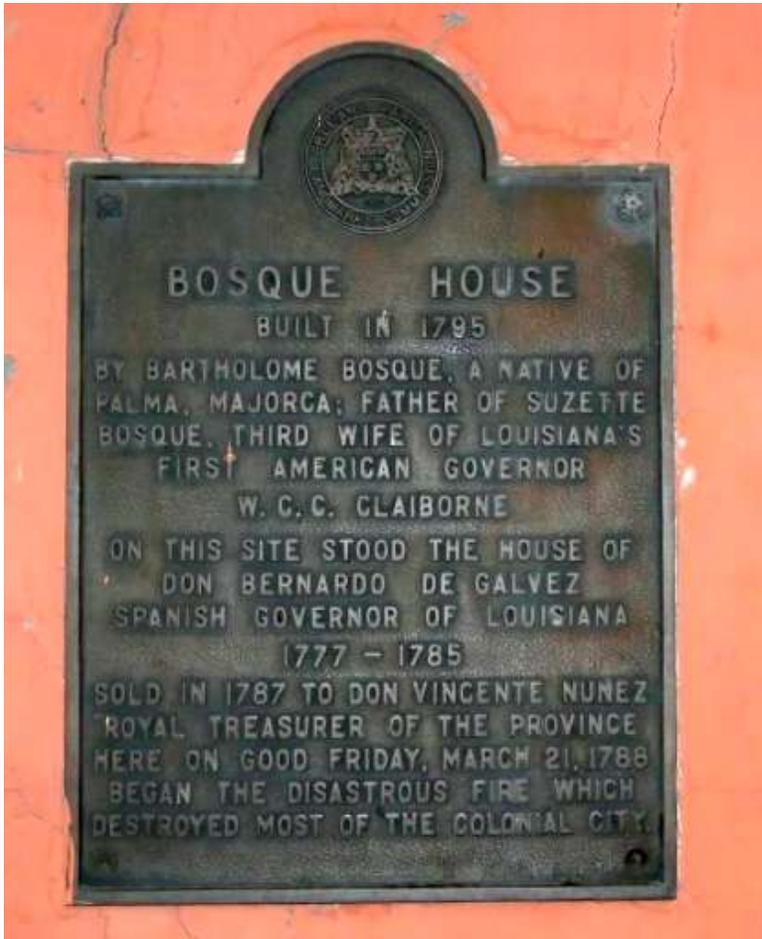
The following story was related in the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, dated November 6, 1949.

"Little Suzette was still in school, about to be graduated, when she first met the Governor. A bright girl, she had won the highest honors and had written and memorized her valedictory speech." And then she did something to compromise her day in the spotlight – she misbehaved. The school's principal laid down the law and made a pronouncement. Another girl would deliver the speech instead of Suzette.

Suzette, setting her lips, did not take this punishment lightly. She went on stage and waited. The other girl turned to face the Governor, but as he opened her mouth to begin to speak, Suzette darted forward and breathlessly exclaimed to the Governor, "That's my speech!" And "principal or no principal," Suzette proceeded to recite it.

The Governor was in fact quite intrigued, but he hid his smiles. Afterward he gently reprovved her, and although she did say she was sorry, nobody present really thought she meant it. Perhaps not even the Governor.

Not long after this event, the Governor called on Suzette's family. This time he did not conceal his smiles. He had fallen in love with the headstrong young lady. Her name was Suzette Bosque and the Governor was William Charles Cole Claiborne. The year was 1812, the year Louisiana became a state. The Governor, who had lost his first two wives to yellow fever, would take the young Suzette Bosque as his third wife.



## **NED HÉMARD**

New Orleans Nostalgia  
"Fascinating Facts, Part 2"  
Ned Hémard  
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