

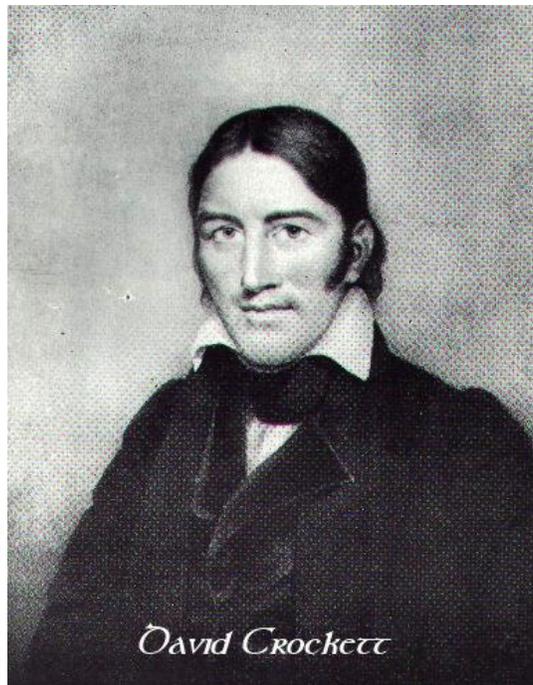
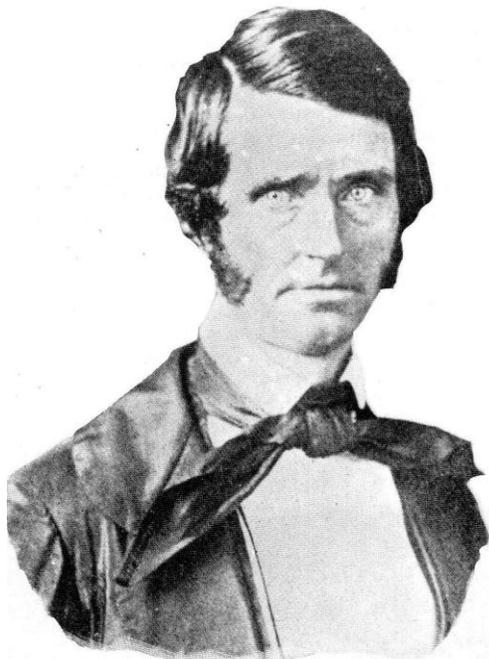
NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Vignettes of Interest

You might find it interesting that Davy Crockett's son, John Wesley Crockett (July 10, 1807 – November 24, 1852), was a commission merchant in New Orleans, published a New Orleans newspaper, *The Crescent*, and served as Superintendent of the Custom House on Canal Street. His firm, Crockett, Frost & Co., published *The Crescent* for a few short years beginning in 1848.



John Wesley Crockett (left) and his famous father, Davy (right)

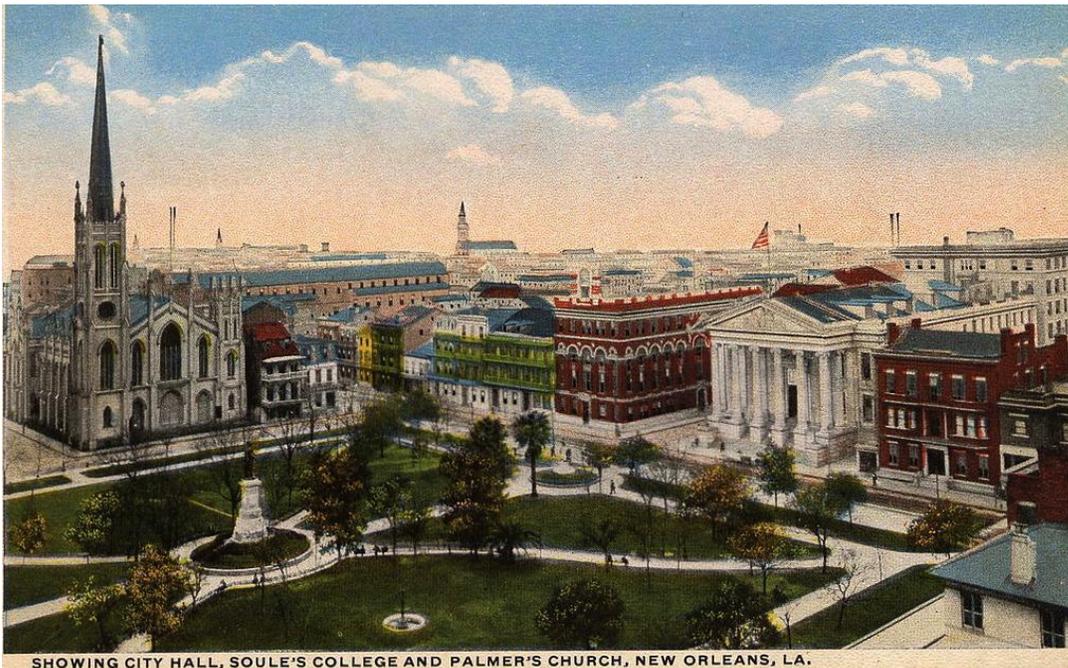
Below is John Wesley Crockett's obituary as it appeared in the New Orleans *Picayune* December 3, 1852:

"OBITUARY. – The Hon. John W. Crockett died in Memphis, Tenn., on the 24th ult., aged forty-five years, four months and fourteen days. Mr. C. was the son of the Hon. David Crockett, the great pioneer of the West, who fell at the memorable defence of the Alamo, in Texas, in 1836. Mr. J. W. Crockett had served six sessions in Congress, and was

well known to our citizens as one of the former proprietors of the Crescent newspaper, and also as a commission merchant in this city. In 1849 he was appointed by Gen. Taylor Superintendent of the New Custom House, which office he resigned, we believe, in 1850. Last February he removed to Memphis, where he resided until his death. He was a gentleman of rare ability and fine social qualities, and the announcement of his death will cast a gloom over a large circle of admiring friends and acquaintances all over the Union."

John Wesley Crockett (Whig), who represented the same district as his father, Davy (National Republican, or Anti-Jacksonian), Tennessee's Twelfth Congressional District, is interred at Old City Cemetery in Paris, Tennessee, home of the "World's Biggest Fish Fry" and a 60-foot tall replica of the Eiffel Tower. Incorporated in 1823, the city was named after Paris, France, in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette.

Visiting New Orleans in April 1825, Lafayette stayed for several days of festivities and lodged in the Cabildo, site of the Louisiana Purchase transfer ceremonies in 1803. The Marquis, who led troops alongside George Washington in the American Revolution, was honored with a square in his name. This popular park in the Faubourg St. Mary, dating back to 1788, was previously named Gravier Square.

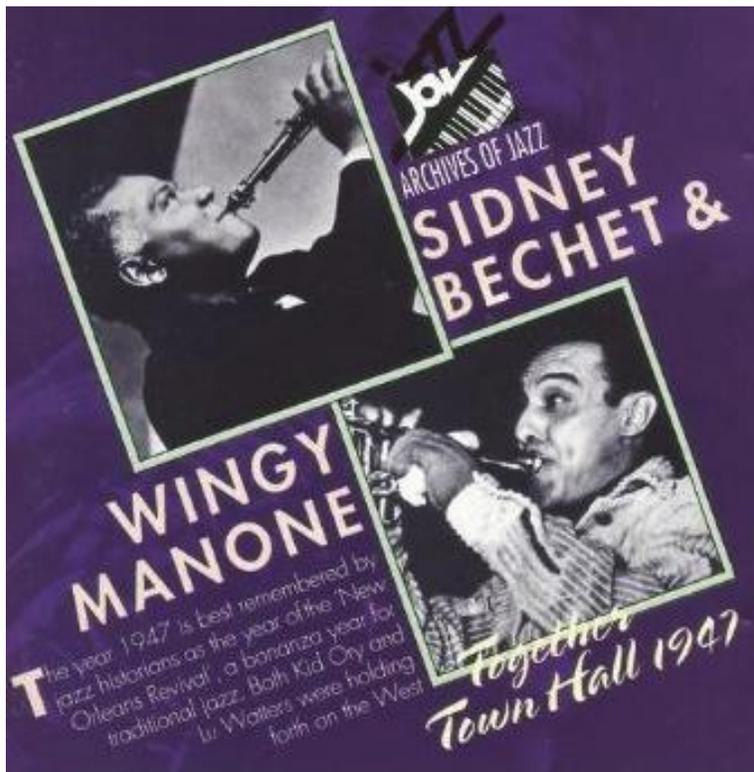


Postcard view of Lafayette Square in New Orleans, circa 1900

As shown above, City Hall (today called Gallier Hall) stands on the St. Charles side of the square; and in years gone by, the First Presbyterian Church of Rev. Dr. Benjamin Morgan Palmer once stood on the uptown side. With a steeple 219 feet from the ground, the tallest in the city, the church (designed by architect Henry Howard) was destroyed in the Hurricane of 1915.

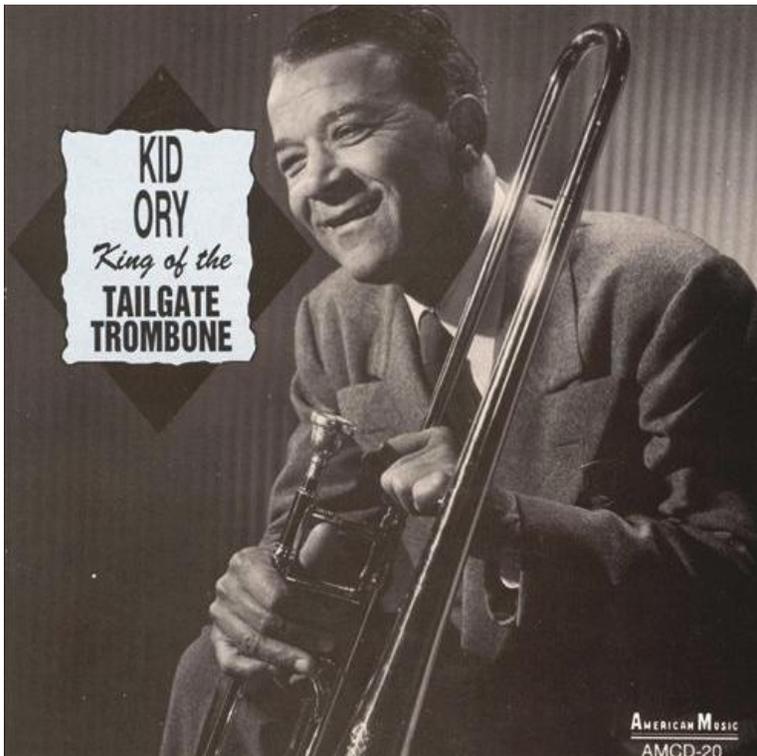
Lafayette Square is home each year to the Young Leadership Council's Wednesday at the Square series of concerts and the Crescent City Blues & BBQ Festival (presented by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival and Foundation)

Speaking of Jazz, did you know that New Orleans born jazz trumpeter, singer, composer and bandleader Joseph Matthews Manone (February 13, 1900 – July 9, 1982) was known as "Wingy" Manone because he lost an arm in a streetcar accident. He adapted to his prosthetic limb so naturally that his disability was virtually unnoticeable to the public. This did not stop jazz violinist Joe Venuti, however, from kidding his good friend. He once sent "Wingy" a single cufflink on his birthday.



And then there's the tailgate. It's evident that most everyone knows that to "tailgate" means to drive too closely behind another vehicle. And then there's the "tailgate party" or just "tailgating," a popular secondary interpretation in New Orleans, Southern Louisiana, as well as the rest of the country. It indicates hosting or attending a social gathering at which an informal meal is served from the back of a parked vehicle, typically in the parking lot of a sports stadium. One local company even offers everything needed for the ideal tailgate party, from "stadium seating" and "a high-tech sound system" with five large-screen HDTV's "equipped with a high-definition satellite dish that gets the very best sporting events" to a deluxe multiplayer "limousine styled video game theater." And there's no limit to the quality and imaginative variety of "tailgate" food and drink. Just fire up the portable grill and eat like a linebacker.

And did you know that “tailgate” has a totally different meaning to any savvy jazz aficionado in the Crescent City.



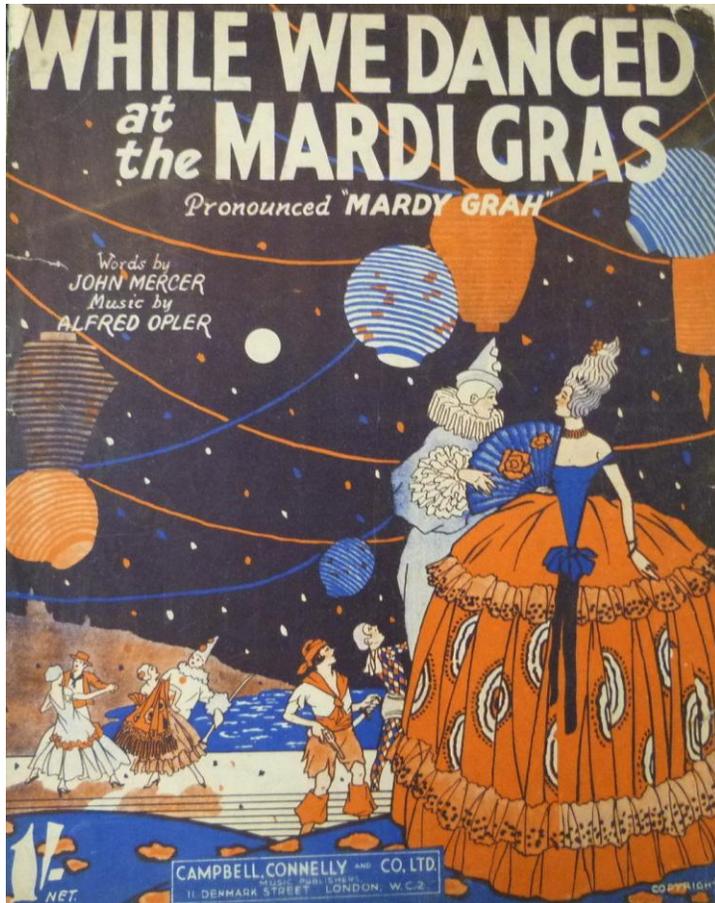
Edouard “Kid” Ory (December 25, 1886 – January 23, 1973), one of the most influential trombonists of early jazz, was the first to develop what is known as the “tailgate” style, in which the trombone fills in a rhythmic line between the melodic phrases of the trumpets and cornets. Born in Laplace, Louisiana, Ory moved to New Orleans as a young man.

The trombone’s role in a New Orleans marching band was to play the bass line and lay down the beat. But back in the early days, bands drove around town in wagons for “cutting” contests, each trying to win the crowd’s approval. Before long, Ory traded his wagon in for a truck. As a trombonist, he had to position himself in the back of the wagon or truck and aim the slide over the “tailgate” and away from the other band members. From his spot on the “tailgate,” Ory improvised with fills, gutsy glissandi and jazz rhythm and phrasing. His audacious brassy sound came to define the trombone’s role in New Orleans jazz.

Ory had one of the best-known bands in New Orleans in the 1910s, hiring many of the great jazz musicians of the city, including cornetists Joe “King” Oliver and Louis Armstrong.

And there is a popular Dixieland song, known as *The Tailgate Ramble*. It was composed and made famous by none other than “Wingy”

Manone. Johnny Mercer, who also wrote the words to *While We Danced at the Mardi Gras*, provided the lyrics.



Apart from Mardi Gras Day, the most significant day for the Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans is their "Super Sunday," which is held on the third Sunday of March, around St. Joseph's Day. The Indians don their feathers and new suits at A. L. Davis Park (at Washington & LaSalle Streets).

LaSalle Street is named for the French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle (November 21, 1643 – March 19, 1687), who in 1682 gave Louisiana its name, claiming the entire Mississippi River basin for France. La Salle named the region in honor of France's Sun King Louis XIV, who holds the record for reigning longer than any other major European monarch: 72 years, 3 months and 18 days. La Salle was slain in Texas by one of his own men.

Many people are not aware that De La Salle High School on St. Charles Avenue is *not* named for him. Seems like a recent history of New Orleans biographies got that wrong, too.



St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle

Instead, the initially all-boys uptown school, founded by the Christian Brothers, was named for the French priest and educational reformer who founded the religious teaching congregation known as the Christian Brothers: St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle (April 30, 1651 – April 7, 1719). The school became coeducational in 1992.

St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, proclaimed by Pius XII as the patron saint of teachers in 1950, was an affable man of great practical ability, refined manners and a cultured mind. He dedicated a large part of his life to the education of poor children in France and, by so doing, started many lasting educational practices. He is considered the founder of the first Catholic schools, of which there are many in New Orleans.

Butter is big in New Orleans. After all, how could there be Trout *Meunière* without it? Or Bananas Foster! Or a Popeye's Biscuit? But did you know that New Orleans played an important part in the way butter is packaged and sold in the United States. In fact, a prestigious New Orleans social club changed the very shape of American butter.



Butter in 4-ounce "prints"

Before the 19th century, the vast majority of butter was made by hand, on farms. Eventually, butter was made in factories, which appeared in the United States in the early 1860s. Traditionally made into small, rectangular blocks by means of a pair of wooden butter paddles, butter was soon being produced by machines known as "butter printers" and the finished product was a one-pound block, or "print." Other machines were created to package and wrap the butter and, since butter was traditionally sold a pound at a time, the carton was sized to fit a pound. But in 1907 a major change was made.

The previous year, Swift & Company began manufacturing butter in their first creamery located in Hutchinson, Kansas. The Swift distributing plant in New Orleans was serviced from the plant in Kansas and a large volume of business was developed.

According to Mr. Herbert J. Bird, formerly of Swift & Company, a letter was received early in 1907 from the manager of the company's New Orleans unit informing them of a customer's request. The chef of the New Orleans Chess, Checkers and Whist Club inquired if he could "be supplied with butter in 1/4 pound prints which would enable him to slice off for table use without waste or delay."



New Orleans Chess, Checkers and Whist Club, co. Baronne and Canal

No one at the Kansas plant has ever heard of packing butter in quarters. Pounds were the smallest unit packaged. Still, they obliged by slicing the regular pound print into four equal portions, wrapped them up separately and placed them in a regular butter carton.

In the United States, that's the way it's been done ever since. Thanks to a culinary request from the New Orleans Chess, Checkers and Whist Club, butter is today produced in four-ounce sticks, individually wrapped and sold four to a one-pound carton.

The Chess, Checkers and Whist Club was founded in 1880 and held its first meeting July 21st of that year. At first the members met in a single room and dedicated themselves to the study and cultivation of the "scientific games of Chess, Checkers, and Whist." Paul Morphy, whose renown as a chess-master is second to none in the history of the game, was in frequent attendance at the club until his death on July 10, 1884. The year before he died, Morphy saw the club's move to handsome quarters at the corner of Canal and Baronne, which was consumed by fire in 1890. Mr. Bertrand Beer, the building's owner, offered to rebuild the club (according to the *Picayune*) "with wide galleries all around ... the same width as the banquettes." He did indeed rebuild the club as in the photo shown above, where in 1907 the club's chef was determined to get the slicing of butter down pat.

My final vignette of interest took place five years before the incident surrounding "Butter's Checkered Past," and it involves the Presbyterian orator and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church previously mentioned, Benjamin Morgan Palmer. Palmer is noted for having delivered a powerful Thanksgiving sermon in 1860, which was largely influential in leading Louisiana to secede and join the Confederacy. Palmer also established the Southwest Presbyterian Seminary, now Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. Relocated to South Claiborne Avenue, the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans in the 21st century is now more widely known for its progressive stands on race and other social issues.



Benjamin Morgan Palmer in later years

But on May 5, 1902, another tragic streetcar accident occurred. Dr. Palmer, "The Venerable and Beloved Man of God," according to the *Picayune* the following day, was "struck by an electric car," breaking one leg which had to be amputated. He died three weeks later, it was reported, by "the severe shock engendered by that fateful accident." Unlike "Wingy" Manone, Dr. Palmer was unable to overcome his injuries.

What is truly curious is that Dr. Palmer was struck on the corner of St. Charles and Palmer Avenue, the street named in his honor.

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Vignettes of Interest"
Ned Hémard
Copyright 2016