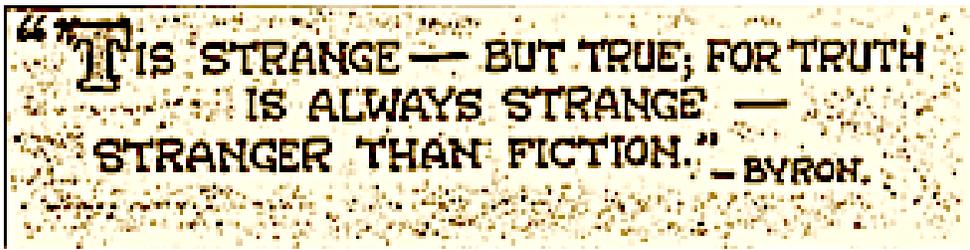
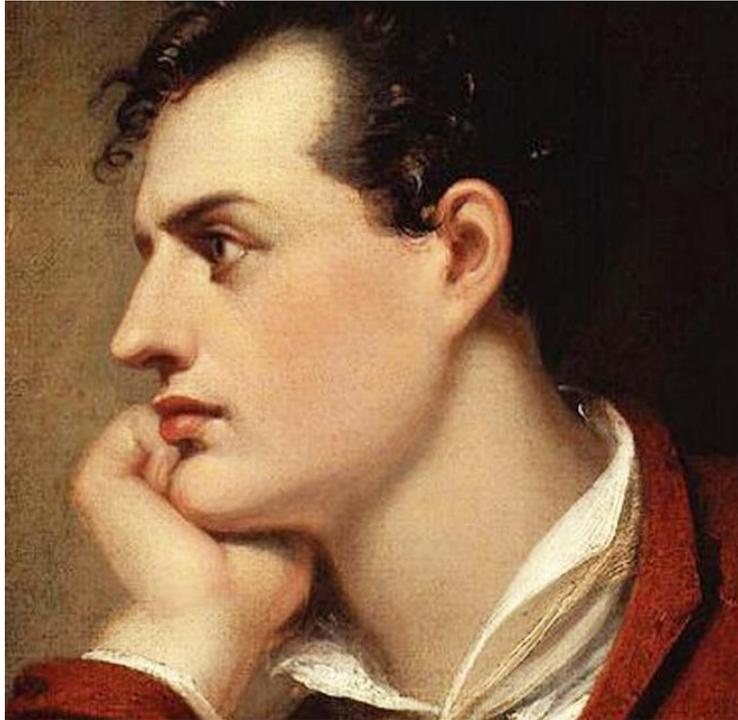


Strange, But True, Part 3



George Gordon, Lord Byron, English poet and one of the leading figures of the Romantic movement, penned these famous words, which appeared in his 1819 satiric poem *Don Juan*. And have you not found this to be true, that truth is indeed stranger than fiction?



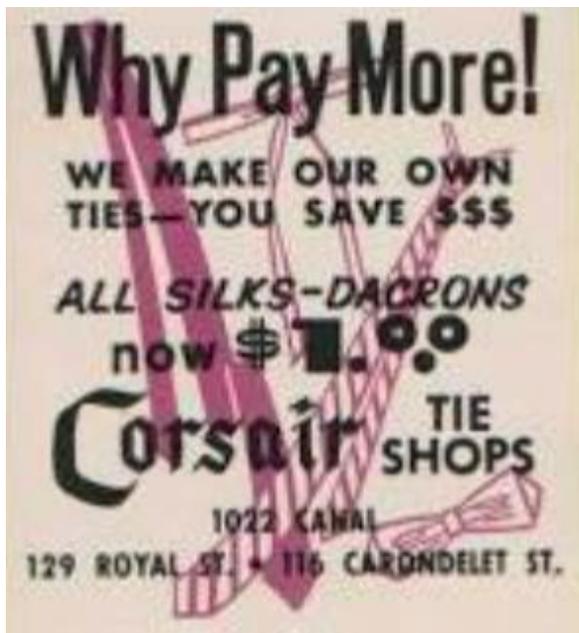
Lord Byron (1788 – 1824)

An earlier tale in verse by Lord Byron, *The Corsair*, was published in 1814. Believed to be based on the life of privateer and hero of the Battle of New Orleans, Jean Lafitte, this poem was extremely popular and influential in its day, selling ten thousand copies on the very first day it was available for sale. In it, Lord Byron wrote:

"He left a corsair's name to other times, Linked one virtue to a thousand crimes."

A corsair is a pirate, buccaneer or privateer, from the mid-16th century French *corsaire*, from the medieval Latin *cursarius*, from *cursus* meaning "raid, or plunder", a special use of the Latin *cursus* (course), from *currere* (to run).

Strange, yet strangely logical, is that New Orleans would have a Corsair Necktie Company. It was founded in 1950 by Morris A. Green, who had earlier moved to the Crescent City to become the Production Plant Manager and Vice President of Wembley Neckwear.



From a Corsair matchbook cover old woodcut of "Lafitte's Pyrates"

If Ever I Cease To Sew

Two notices appeared in the *Daily Picayune* on February 11, 1872. One announced that "If Ever I Cease To Love" was being performed that evening "at the Academy of Music" and the other was a most unusual proclamation from the very first Rex, King of Carnival, Lewis Salomon:

"The King of Carnival has decreed that the procession shall stop in front of the Singer sewing machine establishment, No. 89 Canal street, and inspect the splended array of sewing machines, in order to give maskers a chance to see the perfection of the mechanical arts."

The above stop was at the store of William E. Cooper & Co., local agents for the "Singer Improved Family Sewing Machine", located on Canal Street, "the second door from the corner of Chartres".



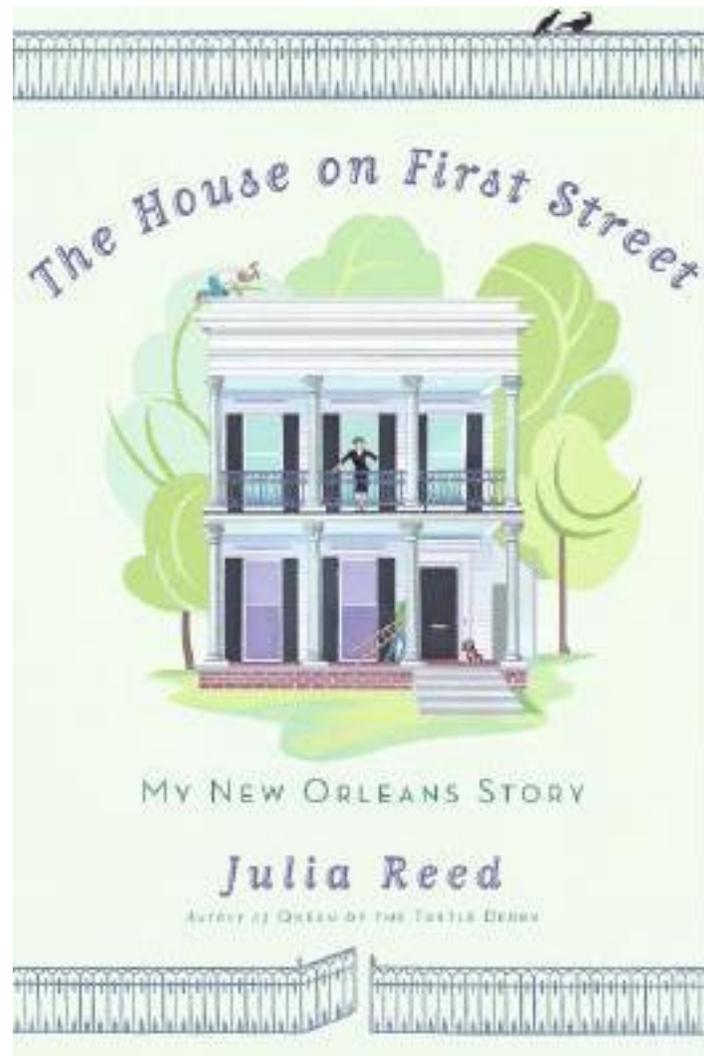
1871 model Singer Sewing Machine

Who's On First?

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Geography Division, the most common street names in the United States are:

- (1) Second (Second is first.)
- (2) Third (Third is second.)
- (3) First (First is third.)
- (4) Fourth (OK, Fourth is actually fourth.)
- (5) Park (Park is Fifth)
- (6) Fifth (Our Washington Avenue is where Fifth should be.)
- (7) Main (Our "main" thoroughfare is Canal Street, which isn't even in the Top 20.)

Four of the Top 7 above (First, Second Third and Fourth Streets) can be found in the New Orleans Garden District.



One Sure Way To Avoid Voting For President

William Ziegler's very strange obituary in the *Times-Picayune* on Aug. 12, 2016, explained how such a decision was avoided:

"William Ziegler escaped this mortal realm on Friday, July 29, 2016 at the age of 69. We think he did it on purpose to avoid having to make a decision in the pending presidential election. He leaves behind four children, five grand-children, and the potted meat industry, for which he was an unofficial spokesman until dietary restrictions forced him to eat real food. William volunteered for service in the United States Navy at the ripe old age of 17 and immediately realized he didn't much enjoy being bossed around. He only stuck it out for one war. Before

his discharge, however, the government exchanged numerous ribbons and medals for various honorable acts. Upon his return to the City of New Orleans in 1971, thinking it best to keep an eye on him, government officials hired William as a fireman. After twenty-five years, he suddenly realized that running away from burning buildings made more sense than running toward them. He promptly retired. Looking back, William stated that there was no better group of morons and mental patients than those he had the privilege of serving with (except Bob, he never liked you, Bob). Following his wishes, there will not be a service, but well-wishers are encouraged to write a note of farewell on a Schaefer Light beer can and drink it in his honor. He was never one for sentiment or religiosity, but he wanted you to know that if he owes you a beer, and if you can find him in Heaven, he will gladly allow you to buy him another. He can likely be found forwarding tasteless internet jokes (check your spam folder, but don't open these at work). Expect to find an alcoholic dog named Judge passed out at his feet. Unlike previous times, this is not a ploy to avoid creditors or old girlfriends. He assures us that he is gone. He will be greatly missed."



William Ziegler elected not to elect.

Hard To Fathom

A fathom is a unit of measurement chiefly used in reference to the depth of water. Strange as it may seem, when the city of New Orleans was first laid out by chief engineer Pierre Le Blond de La Tour, it consisted of city lots and squares measured in fathoms. Each settler who appeared was given a lot measuring ten fathoms front by twenty deep (10 x 20 fathoms). Since a fathom is equal to six feet in length (or 1.8288 meters), each lot was 60 by 120 feet.

Each block (or square) had five lots of ten fathoms (50 fathoms total frontage) on each side with two key lots of ten by twenty-five fathoms

facing the side streets, creating a total of twelve lots per square. This made each square 300 feet by 300 feet (or 50 fathoms by 50 fathoms).



Circa 1720 detail of the city showing the twelve lot per square layout

The word *fathom* comes to us from the Old English *fæðm*, meaning “outstretched arms,” since it was originally the span of a man’s embracing arms that was the basis for the measurement. A *league*, another measurement often connected with the sea (such as *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under The Sea*), is equal to three statute miles when measuring distances on land or three nautical miles for measurements involving the sea. A nautical mile is 1.1508 miles, or 6,076 feet (a difference of about 13%).

I hope the above explanation wasn’t too deep.

The Southern Yatch Club?

While discussing topics of a nautical nature, were you aware that New Orleans' Southern Yacht Club (second oldest in the United States), established on July 21, 1849, first met in Pass Christian, Mississippi?

The Southern Yatch Club

Will hold their first meeting on July 4th—and continue them semi monthly throughout the season. As heretofore, every exertion will be used to maintain the reputation of the house as a *first class Hotel*, in all its appointments, and to render the sojourn of *families* and bachelors pleasant and agreeable. R. H. MONTGOMERY, Agent.
Pass Christian, Miss., May 11, 1850-1f.

☞ Letters, papers and other mailable matter left at the office of M. Judson, Esq., at the corner of Camp and Canal streets, will be forwarded daily by the way mail.

Stranger yet, whoever was in charge of putting the above notice in the newspaper, had trouble spelling the word *Yacht*. It appears as *Yatch*, which, in this instance, rhymes with "down the *hatch*".

The July 4th, 1850, "first meeting" date mentioned above was also the date of the initial "Race to the Coast", the oldest point-to-point regatta in the Western Hemisphere, a race that continues to the present day, with the course beginning on the shores of Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans and finishing in Gulfport, Mississippi.

The above notice appeared June 1850 in the *Concordia Intelligencer*, a mid-nineteenth century newspaper published in Vidalia, Louisiana.

And Lord Byron was right. "Truth is always strange – stranger than fiction."

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Strange But True, Part 3"
Ned Hémard
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