

Quotable New Orleans, Part 6

It is time once again for another installment of memorable quotes connected in some meaningful way to America's most romantic and interesting city. In this sixth offering, provided once again are keen observations relating to the Crescent City's charm, food, music, culture and character. So find a comfortable reading chair, and contemplate if you will these additional insightful comments and *bon mots* below.

Views of New Orleans and its French Quarter

The composite face of New Orleans is an old face and a young face, worn and some think repellent, in places, but fair and sweet and good to look upon in others. But whether worn or fresh it is an interesting face, a face of charm and character.

- NATHANIEL CORTLANDT CURTIS (1881 – 1953)



Dauphine Street from St. Louis Street. Painting by Nathaniel C. Curtis, Sr., gouache on heavy paper (1925)

The Nathaniel C. Curtis quoted above was the father of Nathaniel C. "Buster" Curtis, Jr., who was the lead architect on

the Superdome, the Rivergate and other important projects during his 30-year partnership with Arthur Q. Davis as Curtis & Davis Architects. The senior Curtis, also accomplished in his field, first came to New Orleans in 1912 to head Tulane University's new school of architecture. Three years later, he protested in vain against the destruction of the historic old St. Louis Hotel in the French Quarter.

The finest thing we saw on our whole Mississippi trip, we saw as we approached New Orleans in the steam-tug. This was the curving frontage of the crescent city lit up with the white glare of five miles of electric lights. It was a wonderful sight, and very beautiful.

- MARK TWAIN, *"Life On The Mississippi"*

First, let me tell you something about our Quarter, the Vieux Carre. Do you know our Quarter, with its narrow streets, its old wrought-iron balconies and its southern European atmosphere? An atmosphere of richness and soft laughter, you know. It has a kind of ease, a kind of awareness of the unimportance of things that outlanders like myself – I am not a native – were taught to believe important.

- WILLIAM FAULKNER (1897 – 1962)

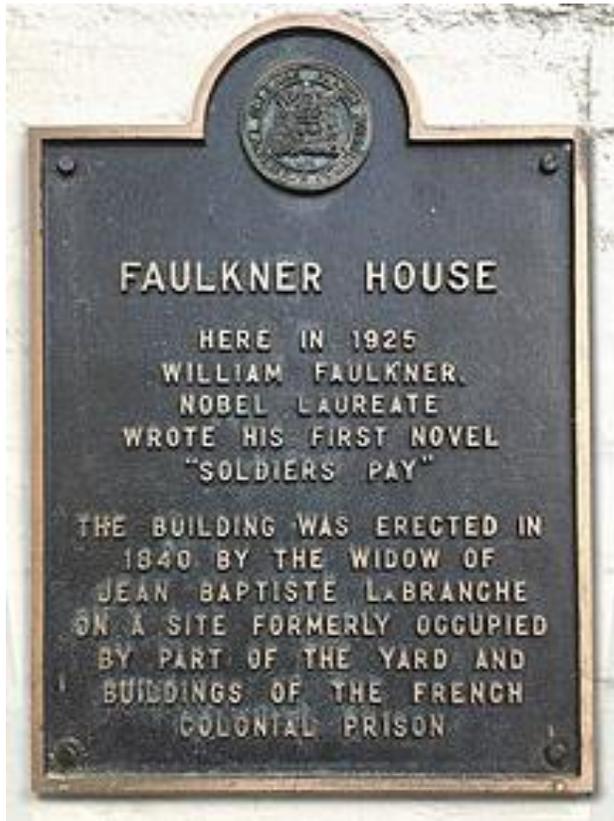
William Faulkner, American author and Nobel Prize laureate from Oxford, Mississippi, came to New Orleans to visit acclaimed novelist and short story writer Sherwood Anderson, who assisted the young writer in publishing his first two novels. In 1925, Faulkner resided in a yellow four-story house on Pirate's Alley, today the home of Faulkner House Books.

Another description of the city by Faulkner:

- New Orleans.

A courtesan, not old and yet no longer young, who shuns the sunlight that the illusion of her former glory be preserved. The mirrors in her house are dim and the frames are tarnished; all her house is dim and beautiful with age. She reclines gracefully upon a dull brocaded chaise-longue.

- WILLIAM FAULKNER, *"New Orleans Sketches"* (1925)

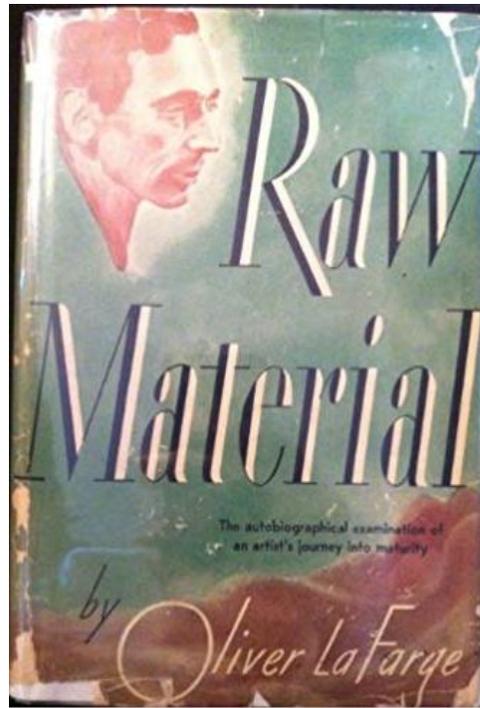
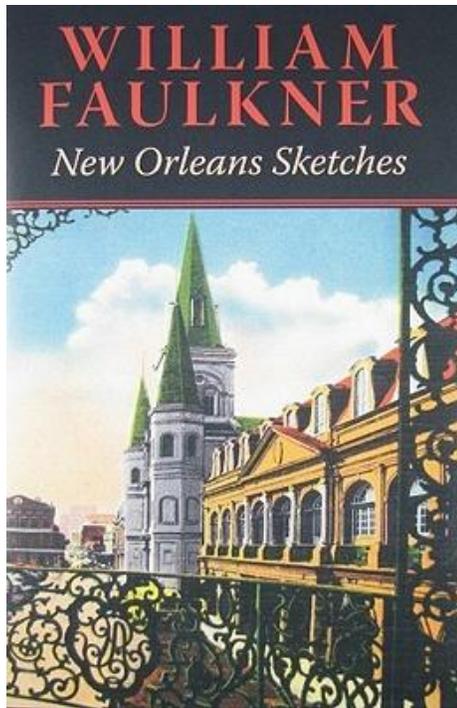


Faulkner House historic marker and the house on Pirate's Alley

The Quarter was a decaying monument and a slum as rich as jambalaya or gumbo. ... There were sailors of all kinds, antique dealers, second-hand dealers, speakeasies galore, simple workmen, a fair variety of criminals, both white and coloured nuns, the survivors of a few aristocratic Créole families clinging to their ancestral homes, merchants of all sorts, and whole blocks of prostitutes. Except for part of Royal Street and a section around the Cathedral which had been brushed up and enjoyed the tourist trade, this was the real thing in slums.

- OLIVER LA FARGE, from his autobiographical memoir *"Raw Material"* (1945)

Pulitzer Prize winning novelist and anthropologist Oliver La Farge's description of the New Orleans French Quarter of the 1920s (before gentrification).



Works of William Faulkner (1925) and Oliver La Farge (1945)

We all seemed to feel Prohibition was a personal affront and that we had a moral duty to undermine it.
- ELIZABETH ANDERSON

In the quote above, Elizabeth Anderson, Sherwood Anderson's third wife, was commenting on the high life in the French Quarter during that same period.

On Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras is a spirit ... an immortal one ... as immortal as man's ability to make believe, to escape the dreariness of everyday life that is man's portion to have fun, laugh and to play ... Mardi Gras is very old, but it is also very young ... The face it wears is not necessarily its last. It will exist in other forms, in other times, in other places.
- ROBERT TALLANT (1909 – 1957), New Orleans author, "Mardi Gras"

Human bodies are seen with heads of beasts and birds, beasts and birds with human heads; demi-beasts, demi-fishes, snakes' heads and bodies with arms of apes; man-bats from the moon; mermaids; satyrs, beggars, monks, and robbers parade and march on foot, on horseback, in wagons, carts, coaches, cars, &c., in rich confusion, up

and down the streets, wildly shouting, singing, laughing, drumming, fiddling, fifeing, and all throwing flour broadcast as they wend their reckless way.

- COLONEL JAMES R. CREECY, describing New Orleans Mardi Gras in 1835, *Scenes in the South, and Other Miscellaneous Pieces* (1860)

On Creoles

Creole babies with flashing eyes

Softly whisper their tender sighs

- HENRY CREAMER (1879 – 1930), lyricist, "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans", music by John Turn Layton, Jr.

Published in 1922, the song "Way Down Yonder in New Orleans" was advertised by successful African American songwriters Creamer and Layton as "A Southern Song, without A Mammy, A Mule, Or A Moon". Creamer, born in Richmond, Virginia, and Layton, born in Washington, D. C., were attempting to rise above the Tin Pan Alley clichés of the period.



On the Creoles' "native vivacity":

This vivacity, indeed, is peculiar to the French, and in no situation does it wholly forsake them. To this may be ascribed their passion for social intercourse, which is always gratified when opportunities permit. They are particularly attached to the exercise of dancing, and carry it to an incredible excess. Neither the severity of the cold, nor the oppression of the heat, ever restrains them from this amusement, which usually commences early in the evening, and is seldom suspended till late the next morning. They even attend the balls not unfrequently for two or three days in succession, and without the least apparent fatigue. At this exercise, the females, in particular, are extremely active, and those of the United States must submit to be called their inferiors.
- MAJOR AMOS STODDARD, *Sketches, Historical And Descriptive Of Louisiana* (1812)

On Creoles at a ball:

The dancing of the ladies was what is to be expected of French women; that of the gentleman, what Lord Chesterfield would have called, too good for gentlemen.
- BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE (1764 – 1820), *The Journal of Latrobe*

On Our Music

"If I couldn't put it in a groove, people weren't going to move."
- COSIMO MATASSA

On Our Cuisine

How much pepper! What highly seasoned food! But especially how much pepper! Real fire, this food of Louisiana.
- PIERRE CLÉMENT DE LAUSSAT, French Colonial Prefect (1803)

When questioned on what's the best city to eat in America:

In America, there might be better gastronomic destinations than New Orleans, but there is no place more uniquely wonderful. ... With the best restaurants in New York, you'll find something similar to it in Paris or Copenhagen or Chicago. But there is no place like New Orleans. So it's a must-see city because there's no explaining it, no describing it. You can't compare it to anything. So, far and away New Orleans.
- ANTHONY BOURDAIN

To me, Popeyes is exotica ... I was eating noodles and roast goose and Chinese food for the past 10 days. So to be back and eat some American food, well, I will weep with gratitude at macaroni and cheese.

- ANTHONY BOURDAIN

Celebrity chef and travel documentarian Anthony Bourdain made the above quote after dining at the Popeyes in Lafayette, Louisiana, in May 2018. He died by suicide less than a month later on location in France for his American travel and food show on CNN, Parts Unknown.

Two things draw me to New Orleans – its past chess history and its present gastronomic achievements.

- EDWARD LASKER (1885 – 1981)

Edward Lasker, who emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1914, was a renowned international chess master. He was inducted into the World Chess Hall of Fame in 2017.

On Love and Death

You should celebrate the end of a love affair as they celebrate death in New Orleans, with songs, laughter, dancing, and a lot of wine.

- FRANÇOISE SAGAN (1935 – 2004), French playwright and novelist

And All That Jazz

Jazz is any known melody performed by two or more musical voices improvising collectively in 2/4 or 4/4 time and syncopated.

- AL ROSE (1916 – 1993), nee Etienne Alfonse de la Rose Lascaux, jazz historian who believed there was only “one kind of jazz”

And Last, But Not Least

Last, but not least, by way of enjoyment, was the final session of forty members around the festive board at the well known Antoine’s. It was an hour of rare goodfellowship not soon forgotten. Nor will the charming old city of New Orleans be soon forgotten by those who were fortunate enough to attend the thirty-ninth session of the M. T. N. A.

- REPORT OF THE MUSIC TEACHERS’ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION on its 39th annual session in New Orleans, December 1917, *Eastern Music Supervisors’ Bulletin*

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Quotable New Orleans, Part 6"
Ned Hémard
Copyright 2019