Facts You Might Not Know About New Orleans

1) Mayor Abdiel Daily Crossman (1804 – June 13, 1859) is the only Mayor of New Orleans (serving four consecutive terms from April 6, 1846 to March 26, 1854) who (like his father) was once a hatter by profession. When he first arrived in New Orleans, Crossman had only five dollars in his pocket. To simplify, he referred to himself as just “A. D.” Crossman.

September 18, 1845, ad in the Times-Picayune, revealing A. D. Crossman sold hats before he threw his in the ring

Mayor A. D. Crossman
2) Novelist Anne Rice (born Howard Allen Frances O’Brien 1941 in New Orleans) received her inspiration for *Interview with a Vampire* from watching *Dracula’s Daughter* at the Granada Theater in New Orleans. When first screened at the Granada in October 1936, the *Times-Picayune* described it as a “spine-tingling film” in which “Count Dracula’s daughter, tainted with the curse of the strange creatures of the night, is the center of adventures which will frizz the human hair.” Anne Rice lived on St. Charles and Philip, and the Granada was located on the corner of Baronne and Philip streets.

3) Magazine Street was *not* named for a gunpowder magazine. According to Meigs O. Frost in his article on New Orleans street names (*Times-Picayune*, September 6, 1936), “Magazine Street was named for a tobacco warehouse and other warehouses at today’s Magazine and Common streets corner, in colonial days, not for a gunpowder magazine.” The word used on old maps is *magasin*, the French word designating where a warehouse stood. If there had been a powder magazine, explained Frost, such a building would have been marked *poudrière*, as in other places. Writing later in his popular *Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children and Other Streets of New Orleans*, John Churchill Chase, agreed that it was “named for the *magazin* or *almazon*,” meaning a warehouse that held “tobacco and other goods”.

4) Mother’s Restaurant (401 Poydras at Tchoupitoulas), established in 1938 and renowned for its po-boys, is *not* open on Mother’s Day. Another interesting fact is that founding owner Simon Landry coined a definitive term for a much-desired New Orleans food item. One version of the story has a customer asking him to add the bits of roast beef (that had fallen off while carving) back into the gravy for his
sandwich. Simon spontaneously replied: “You mean some of the debris?”

A more detailed account, which was related in a 1979 article in the Times-Picayune, names the customer as Times-Picayune advertising executive Larry DeBuys. DeBuys wanted his po-boy to consist of these wonderful shredded beef remnants.

“Since your name is DeBuys, we’ll just call your sandwich a ‘DeBris,’” declared Simon Landry.

The “Ferdi” po-boy served at Mother’s, which has ample amounts of roast beef, ham and the debris, was named for a customer named Ferdinand Stern.

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The Granada Theater in New Orleans

5) Donald Link’s popular seafood restaurant Pêche occupies a building that started as a carriage house and stables. Then it was a mortuary, the one in which Jefferson Davis, past President of the Confederate States of America, was embalmed. After that, the building was used to store coffee beans. Jefferson Davis died in New Orleans in 1889. A number of years earlier at the 1860 Democratic National Convention in Charleston, South Carolina (in a strange twist of history), Benjamin Franklin Butler (later reviled as the occupying Union General of New Orleans) voted for Jefferson Davis to compete for the presidential nomination.
6) New Orleans’ historic Jackson Square, roughly the size of a city block, was designed after the famous 17th-century Place des Vosges in Paris, France, by the architect and landscape architect Louis H. Pilié. The Place des Vosges is the oldest planned square in Paris and one of its finest. It is situated in the Marais district and straddles the dividing-line between the 3rd and 4th arrondissements of Paris. There is a Marais Street in New Orleans, marais meaning “marsh” or swamp” in French.

7) Charity Hospital is almost as old as New Orleans itself, founded on May 10, 1736, by a grant from a French sailor and shipbuilder named Jean Louis, who died in the city the previous year. His intention, as stated in his will, was to finance a hospital for the colony’s indigent. The hospital was first located on the intersection of Chartres Street and Bienville streets.
8) When garlic is added to the “Trinity,” it is referred to as “The Pope”. The “Trinity” or “Holy Trinity” is the South Louisiana equivalent of the French *mirepoix* (usually chopped celery, carrots and onions). Among Creole and Cajun cooks, the local version is onion, bell pepper and celery mixed in roughly the same quantities and the basis for several classic local dishes, such as jambalaya, gumbo and *étouffée*.

9) From November 17, 1924, until she died on November 14, 1960, an Indian elephant named *Itema* entertained visitors to the Audubon Park Zoo. She was named for the New Orleans *Item*, which promoted a campaign in 1921 that encouraged the schoolchildren of the city to donate pennies for her purchase. People would say “Up,” and *Itema* would put her foot up on the iron rail, raise her trunk upward into the sky and open her mouth to catch a peanut. Many believed *Itema* performed that trick just for them, but she’d do it for anyone just to get that next peanut.

10) Truman Capote (born Truman Streckfus Persons), while visiting the Carousel Bar, liked to boast that he was born in the Monteleone Hotel. He wasn’t. Although his mother did live there at the time of her pregnancy, she did make it safely to the hospital in time for Truman’s arrival. The Monteleone has quite a number of other literary connections, such that in June of 1999, the historic hotel was designated an official literary landmark by the Friends of the Library Association. Only two other U.S. hotels share this honor: The Plaza and the Algonquin, both in New York.
11) One last bit of information on Union General Benjamin Franklin “Beast” Butler: His father, Captain John Butler, besides serving under Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans, later became a privateer, meeting his death from yellow fever in the West Indies not long after Benjamin Butler’s birth in 1818.

12) Of the 425 Confederate generals, not one was born in New Orleans. The small town of Lincolnton, North Carolina, however, located approximately forty miles northwest of Charlotte, produced four.

13) Sidney Bechet (notable jazz saxophonist, clarinetist and composer), as well as his teacher, master clarinetist Lorenzo Tio, Jr., were both born in New Orleans. Not only that, they provided their names to two of Woody Allen’s adopted daughters: Bechet Allen and Manzie Tio Allen. The “Manzie” comes from jazz drummer Manzie Johnson, who grew up in New York and played in Bechet’s band.

As for the “Tio” name, almost any modern day jazz clarinetist who plays in a classic style can trace his or her musical roots back to the Tio family of New Orleans, back to those days when jazz was in its infancy. Besides Lorenzo Tio, Jr. (born 1893), the other significant members of his musical family were his father, Lorenzo Tio, Sr. (born 1867) and his uncle, Louis “Papa” Tio (born 1862). This talented Tio “Trinity” played a vital role in bringing classical music theory to the ragtime, blues and jazz musicians of the Crescent City.