

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Nashville and New Orleans

Nashville, Tennessee and New Orleans, Louisiana, are cities that have shared numerous connections through the years. Perhaps the most obvious of these is that both cities are renowned as music meccas. New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz, and Nashville is home to the Grand Ole Opry and the Country Music Hall of Fame.



Lower Broadway in Downtown Nashville

The Country Music Hall of Fame had only three inductees its very first year (1961): Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams and Fred Rose. All three were inducted posthumously. Two-time Louisiana Governor Jimmie

Davis, who once said "If you want to have any success in politics, sing softly and carry a big guitar," was the only inductee in 1972. He enjoyed his honor for quite some time (until November 5, 2000), living to over 101 years of age.

Country music pioneer and superstar Jimmie Rodgers was known as "The Father of Country Music" and "The Singing Brakeman" for his years working for various railroads. He worked part of that time as a brakeman for the New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad, which ran between Meridien, Mississippi (Rodgers' birthplace) and New Orleans. Few people remember Louis Armstrong's trumpet solos on several of Jimmie Rodgers' classics, but Armstrong's contributions are important. The songs *Blue Yodel #9* and *Waiting for a Train* are among Satchmo's collaborations with "The Singing Brakeman". It is difficult to imagine those recordings without Rodgers' country guitar and Mississippi drawl complemented by Armstrong's New Orleans trumpet.

Another obvious link with Nashville is Andrew Jackson, the hero of the Battle of New Orleans and the seventh President of the United States. The Hermitage is Jackson's historic plantation home, located in Davidson County, just ten miles east of downtown Nashville. It was owned by "Old Hickory" from 1804 until his death there in 1845, but he only lived there occasionally until he retired from public life in 1837.



The Hermitage

Jackson can be seen in a familiar pose in front of the Tennessee State Capitol Building in Nashville. If one experiences a feeling of *déjà vu*, it

is perfectly understandable – for that equestrian statue is identical to the one that the Baroness Pontalba had prominently placed in New Orleans' *Place d'Armes* (today known as Jackson Square). Clark Mills was the sculptor, and there are two other castings (four in all) of this

famous work. Another is located in Washington, D.C., in President's Park, also known as Lafayette Square, situated on the north portico side of the White House; and there is also one in Jacksonville, Florida.



Clark Mills Statue of Andrew Jackson at the Tennessee State Capitol

The building behind Jackson is the Tennessee State Capitol in Nashville. It was designed by architect William Strickland, who modeled it after a Greek ionic temple. It is one of only ten state capitols (Louisiana is one of these) that does not have a dome. The cornerstone was laid on July 4, 1845 and completed in 1859, five years after Strickland's death. Strickland was a student of Benjamin H. B. Latrobe, architect best known for his design of the U.S. Capitol as well as for his work in New Orleans. Latrobe, who died in New Orleans, has been called the "Father of American Architecture". William Strickland also designed the U.S. Branch Mint on Esplanade

Avenue, New Orleans (1835-1838). Strickland, who is buried in a crypt within the Tennessee State Capitol, was also an early proponent of railroads. This brings us to another interesting historical tie New Orleans has with Nashville, one that never actually came to pass.



Architect William Strickland U.S. Branch Mint, New Orleans

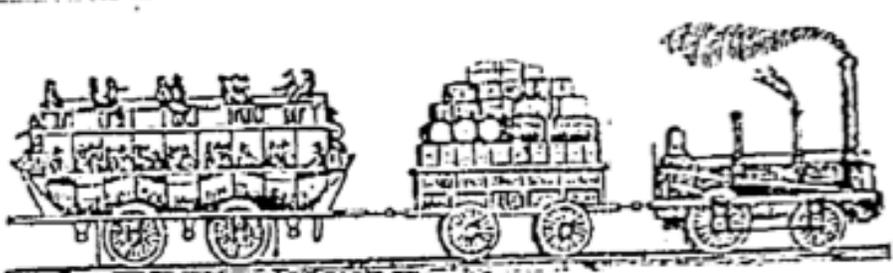
In 1830s New Orleans, Cornelius Hurst was what the *Picayune* called "one of the pioneer American sugar planters," but with a decidedly un-Creole name. Upriver from Rickerville (the faubourg that would later include Joseph Street and Jefferson Avenue) was the ten-arpent plantation once owned by Jean Baptiste Francois LeBreton. LeBreton's property was purchased by Cornelius Hurst, Julia Robert Avart and Pierre Joseph Tricou in 1832 and divided among them the following year. Cornelius Hurst acquired Tricou's tract later that year, creating a parcel two-thirds the size of the original LeBreton tract (or just under seven arpents wide) and constructed a mansion on Tchoupitoulas Street in the faubourg's lowermost corner. Avart's third became the Faubourg Bloomingdale in 1841, home to Uptown's State Street.

Faubourg Hurstville became the initial subdivision of what is now Uptown New Orleans. It ran along the Mississippi River from Joseph Street to "the Bloomingdale Line" between Eleonore Street and State Street, continuing away from the river to Claiborne Avenue.

An initial subdivision of Hurstville was done by 1834, and Mr. Hurst had names for his streets. Eleonore Street was named for his wife, Eleanor Smith. He also had a daughter named Eleanor. Arabella Street he named for his other daughter and Joseph Street for his son.

Benjamin Street, according to a family obituary, was named "for a close friend". There is a Hurst Street named for the family patriarch, but Hurst hoped that the faubourg's main thoroughfare, Nashville Avenue, would land his entire family on Easy Street.

Nashville Avenue was named and laid out in the anticipation of hosting a terminal, or spur, of James Caldwell's New Orleans and Nashville Railroad Co. with the dual hope that it would connect these two great cities and increase the value of Hurst's newly acquired residential real estate. Sadly, the Panic of 1837 scuttled the railroad project, which went bust - and so did Mr. Hurst.



Office New Orleans & Nashville Railroad Co. }
 December 7, 1833. }

FOR THE RACES EVERY DAY.

A TRAIN of Cars will leave the Depot, foot of Canal street—

Depart—	Return—
8 A. M.	8½ A. M.
9 "	9½ "
10 "	10½ "
11 "	11½ "
11½ "	11¾ "
12 M.	12¼ P. M.
12½ P. M.	12½ "
1 "	1½ "
2 "	2½ "
3 "	3½ "
4 "	4½ "
5 "	5½ "

Passage, fifty cents, which will entitle each passenger to two tickets, one to go, the other to return.

Passengers are particularly requested to purchase tickets, as by it much confusion and delay will be saved to the collectors.

JAMES H. CALDWELL,
 President.

dec 9 1w

Picayune ad for the New Orleans & Nashville Railroad Co.

Hurst's mansion, located on the once oak-lined Tchoupitoulas Road that led to the plantation of Étienne de Boré, now Audubon Park, eventually passed into the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Schwartz. A

learned man who loved growing camellias, Mr. Schwartz ran an antiquarian bookstore on Chartres Street while his wife served as hostess of the famous ante-bellum hotel, the Conti Veranda in the French Quarter. When she died in 1913 at age 92, the *Picayune* announced that the big beneficiaries of her fortune would be the Charity Hospital and the School Board of New Orleans. Her residence,

the Hurst mansion at 5619 Tchoupitoulas, between Joseph and Arabella streets, would remain in that location for just a few more years.



Nashville Avenue



*Hurst daughters Arabella
and Eleanor*

February 1921, the *New Orleans States* announced that "the old Hurst mansion" would have a new home. "Its cypress shingles are warped and twisted from summer's sun and winter's rain," but a new owner, Isaac Hull Stauffer (great-grandson of President Zachary Taylor) was going to dismantle it piece by piece and restore it "to all its former splendor on Metairie Ridge". Stauffer purchased the mansion's new location, "opposite the Country Club golf course," reported the *Times-Picayune*, "for \$12,000 from Friedrichs and Dupas." The historic dwelling's removal was scheduled for the fall. Armstrong and Koch were the architects, and the new address was 3 Garden Lane (where it stands to this day). Visitors to the home have found it "particularly amazing," reported the *Times-Picayune* in 1939, "that every piece of woodwork in the home is hand-carved and that many of the beams were transported by barge from the upper Mississippi valley."



The Hurst Mansion, today at 3 Garden Lane off Metairie Road

Nashville, Tennessee, was officially founded in 1779 by James Robertson, John Donelson and others near the original Cumberland River settlement of Fort Nashborough. It was named in honor of Francis Nash, an American Revolutionary War hero. In the early 1710s, a French fur trader named Charleville (from Antoine Crozat's Louisiana concession) ran a trading post nearby at a place called French Lick, but it was gone by 1740.

The New Orleans Mint was officially established on March 3, 1835, during Jackson's presidency. The action was considered necessary because President Jackson in 1832 had vetoed a rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States. The President believed that the bank extended credit to northeastern commercial concerns at the expense of the ordinary frontiersmen with whom he strongly identified. Another reason was that in 1836 Jackson had issued an executive order called the Specie Circular which required all land transactions in the United States to be transacted in cash. Both of these actions increased the necessity of minted money. Coincidentally, Jackson's fiscal policies were partly responsible for the Panic of 1837, which brought an end to the Nashville railroad dreams of Cornelius Hurst.

Another Nashville creation born in New Orleans is the Faucon salad. Prepared with hard boiled eggs, bacon and bleu cheese dressing served over iceberg lettuce, it is popular there still and available in a few key locations. Xavier Faucon, a transplanted New Orleans chef born in France, served the salad in his café on Union Street in Nashville. He and his son, Leon Paul Faucon, ran the operation until 1926 when Leon died and Xavier retired. Arnaud's in New Orleans once featured "Lettuce Faucon" and "Mixed Faucon" on the menu for 40 and 50 cents, respectively.

Cornelius Hurst, originally from Wilmington North Carolina, died of cholera April 25, 1851. His wife, a Pennsylvania native, died of a protracted illness November 15, 1844. Her obituary listed her name as "ELEANOR", although the street spelling is "ELEONORE". Hurst's son, Joseph, died at age two. His daughter, Eleanor, died on the ninety-sixth anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1911. She had been married twice, first to Robert Shortridge and secondly to William A. Willett. Notice her name is also spelled ELEANOR in her obituary.

WILLETT—On Sunday, Jan. 8, 1911, at 4:30 o'clock p.m., Mrs. ELEANOR WILLETT, daughter of the late Cornelius Hurst, widow by first marriage of Robert B. Shortridge, by second marriage of William A. Willett, aged 55 years.

Friends are invited to attend the funeral services, at the residence of her brother-in-law, S. D. Moody, No. 4518 St. Charles Avenue, This (Monday) Afternoon, at 3:30 o'clock.

Interment private.

Another Hurst daughter, Gabriella, was born in 1838 after the street naming had transpired. She died at 90 years of age, but missed out on having a street named for her. She was married to Samuel Dean Moody of Massachusetts, "one of the oldest financiers and capitalists" of New Orleans, reported the *Gulfport Daily Herald*. He died in 1912, and she followed in 1928. "Mrs. Moody was a belle of ante-bellum days and for many decades a social favorite," reported the *Times-Picayune*. She was survived by a daughter, Olive Hurst Moody, who later married George Wasson. Olive died in 1955. Gabriella's sister Eleanor had a daughter, too: Gabriella Willett.



Eleanor Hurst Shortridge Willett
Her dad, as Jimmie Rodgers sang, was Waiting for a Train.

It must be further noted that the Natchez Trace, also known as the "Old Natchez Trace," has connected Nashville with Natchez, on the Mississippi River. It is an historical path that extends roughly 440 miles, connecting the Cumberland, Tennessee and Mississippi rivers. Animals since prehistoric times have followed this geologic ridgeline, linking the salt licks of central Tennessee to the grazing lands to the south and on to the Mississippi River. Native Americans followed these paths, as well.



Yours truly, with Andy Jackson in Nashville

A President from Tennessee,
A salad's popularity,
An architect who gave us much,
And music with an Armstrong touch.

A mansion weathered by the rain,
It lives again on Garden Lane.
The Nashville train that never came,
So much in common we can claim.

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Nashville and New Orleans"
Ned Hémard
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