

Quotable New Orleans, Part 5

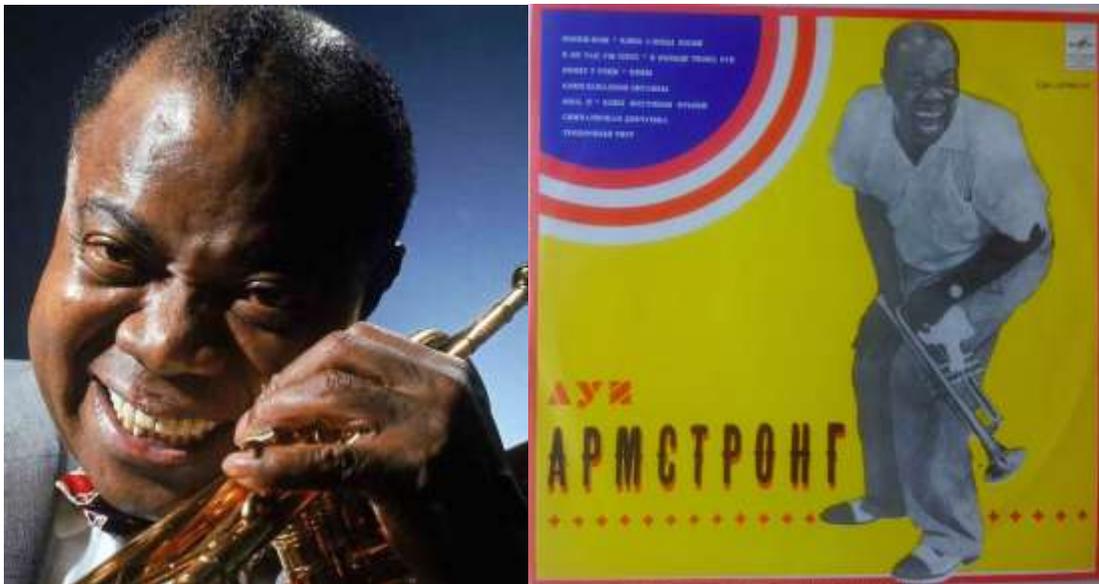
There are so many wonderful quotes connected with “The City That Care Forgot,” some of which have been undiscovered for years and others that are newly emerging. Once again, in my fifth collection of memorable quotes on New Orleans, I offer a few gems that are either on the city itself or in some way connected to those things that make the city unique, such as its music, food and character. Please savor these new entries below.

On Jazz and New Orleans Music:

Man, if you have to explain it, it ain't jazz.
- LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Asked one time after a concert in the U.S.S.R. if he thought the Russians understood jazz, Satchmo had this to say:

Pops, sometimes I don't understand it myself.
- LOUIS ARMSTRONG



Louis Armstrong, with his engaging smile, and on Russian album

I always kept my records clean. They had a good beat, a simple background, simple lyrics, simple themes about everyday life.
- FATS DOMINO

Jazz is not just “Well, man, this is what I feel like playing.” It's a very structured thing that comes down from a tradition and requires a lot of thought and study.

- WYNTON MARSALIS

The blues. It runs through all American music. Somebody bending the note. The other is the two-beat groove. It's in New Orleans music, it's in jazz, it's in country music, it's in gospel.

- WYNTON MARSALIS

(In 1957) When I got to Philadelphia, (black-radio station disc jockey) Georgie Woods called me up to rehearse and said, “My God, you're white!” And I said “Well, we can't all be perfect!”

- FRANKIE FORD

New Orleans is not a museum. That's an important aesthetic of the Festival. People don't understand that. New Orleans is just as alive as it's ever been. There are more Mardi Gras Indians, more brass bands, more jazz funerals, more second-line parades – more of everything.

- QUINT DAVIS, producer of The New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival



Louis Moreau Gottschalk

A great short biography of New Orleans-born composer and virtuoso pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk (May 8, 1829 – December 18, 1869):

Before his death at the age of forty in 1869, Louis Moreau Gottschalk achieved a stunning list of 'firsts'. He was the first American composer to be hailed in Europe; the first American virtuoso (on piano) to be saluted by the likes of Chopin; the first American musician to erase the hard line dividing 'serious' from 'popular' genres; the first to introduce American themes into European classical music; the first Pan-American artist in any field; and among the first American artists to champion such causes as abolitionism, public education and popular democracy. Above all, he was the first to capture the syncopated music of South Louisiana and the Caribbean in enduring works that anticipate ragtime and jazz by half a century.

- FREDERICK STARR, Author of: *Bamboula! The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (Oxford, 1996)

On Mardi Gras:

And there were dresses splendid, but fantastical,
Masks of all times and nations, Turks and Jews,
And harlequins and clowns, with feats gymnastical,
Greeks, Romans, Yankee-Doodles, and Hindoos.

- Poetic description of Mardi Gras
in the *Picayune*, March 4, 1840

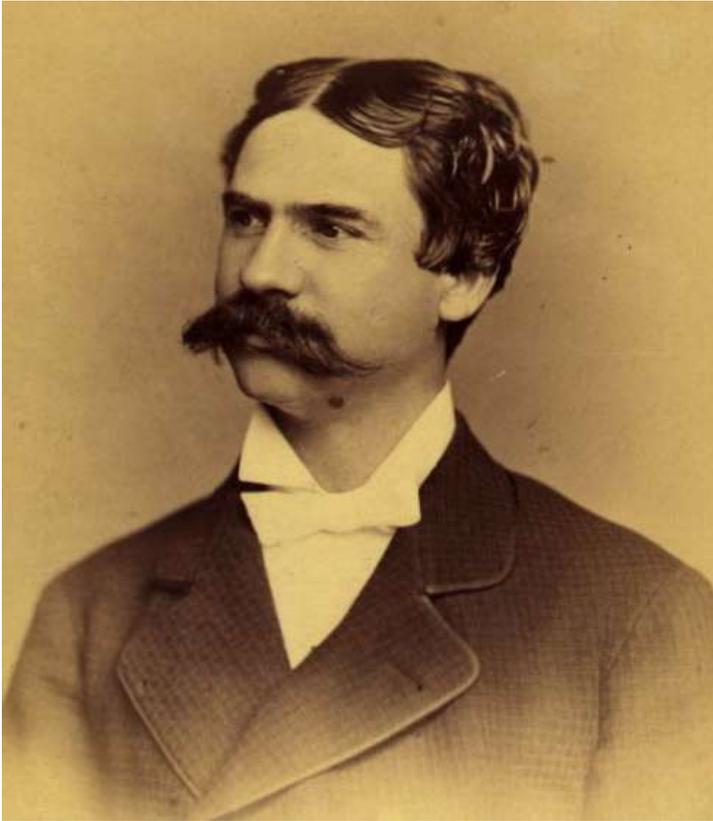
On Climate Change:

The climate of New Orleans is a piece of mosaic-work among the climates of the earth; and it defies the ingenuity of classification or consistency of description. The wind and the sun in New Orleans are "to one thing constant never," but always in warfare. It would seem, upon thinking upon it, that every emigrant from the different latitudes, zones, and tropics of this terrestrial ball, brought with him thitherward a bit of his own home climate by way of a souvenir; and that with the collected bits an involuntary joint-stock climate company has gone into operation; which said company, however often it liquidates, always recovers again, and continues operations more vigorously than ever.

- A. OAKLEY HALL, *The Manhattaner in New Orleans: Or, Phases of "Crescent City" Life*, 1851

On Politics:

Dammit. Corruption is demoralizing down here. But it's the fashion.
- HENRY CLAY WARMOTH, Louisiana's first elected Reconstruction Governor, in 1868



Of a Literary Nature:

The only excursion of my life outside of New Orleans took me through the vortex to the whirlpool of despair: Baton Rouge. . . . New Orleans is, on the other hand, a comfortable metropolis which has a certain apathy and stagnation which I find inoffensive.

- JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE, *A Confederacy of Dunces*

In New Orleans ... I found the kind of freedom I had always needed, and the shock of it – against the Puritanism of my nature – has given me a subject, a theme, which I have never ceased exploiting.

- TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Friends are God's way of apologizing to us for our families.

- TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

And a Gumbo of Other Quotes:

If I could put my finger on it, I'd bottle it and sell it. I came down here originally in 1972 with some drunken fraternity guys and had never seen anything like it - the climate, the smells. It's the cradle of music; it just flipped me. Someone suggested that there's an incomplete part of our chromosomes that gets repaired or found when we hit New Orleans. Some of us just belong here.
- JOHN GOODMAN

Yes, he's a fable with touches of satire and pathos. That hand on the back of his coat: That's the world holding him down.
- SID NOEL RIDEAU, quote on his alter ego, Morgus the Magnificent



Momus Alexander Morgus

Opposite the city the river takes a considerable sweep, forming a beautiful crescent, along which New Orleans is situated.
- JOHN PINTARD, ESQUIRE, an observation made on a trip to New Orleans in 1801

I have saved a fortune by strict economy, while others had spent one by their liberal expenditures.
- JUDAH TOURO

New Orleans is the boomtown that never booms.
-OWEN BRENNAN, late New Orleans restaurateur

These elements of New Orleans possess an astonishing vitality that has spoken to people around the world and shaped much of the best of what we think of still as American culture. Jazz music, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll, Creole cooking, Mardi Gras, the architecture of the French Quarter, the literary traditions of Williams and Faulkner and Percy and Kate Chopin, the Mardi Gras Indians ... It is not something that you find only in a tourist guide; it is a reality lived by its inhabitants every day, and as often as possible by those who love visiting.

- TOM PIAZZA, *Why New Orleans Matters*

It is possible that the most remarkable thing about New Orleans is that it is here at all. A product of a nearly incredible succession of accidents, mistakes and bizarre circumstances, the city survives as an organism with a life of its own – a perverse but determined organism defying reason and probability.

- from *A Guide to New Orleans Architecture*, published by the New Orleans Chapter of the American Institute of Architects

Who Shot the La La? I Don't Know.

- OLIVER "WHO SHOT THE LA LA" MORGAN



Oliver ... well, you know the rest

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Quotable New Orleans, Part 5"
Ned Hémard
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