

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

The Beatles Visit New Orleans and A Nightingale Sang in Jackson Square

On Wednesday evening at 8:00, September 16, 1964, four British troubadours were scheduled to begin their concert at City Park Stadium before some 13,000 screaming and swooning fans at \$5 a ticket. Many New Orleanians were about to "Meet the Beatles."



The Beatles meet the "Lord Mayor" of New Orleans, Victor H. Schiro

In the late evening of September 15, 1964, a large number of fans waited for The "Fab Four" at the Lakefront Airport, but the foursome's plane was actually diverted to "Moisant" – New Orleans International Airport - instead. Mayor Victor H. Schiro officially declared September 16th to be "Beatles Day", and presented each of them a key to the city. They autographed the official proclamation and addressed him as "Lord Mayor." For the first time on their U.S. tour, manager Brian Epstein allowed a newsreel cameraman to film the group's press conference.

The Beatles were excited about their visit to New Orleans because they wanted to meet Fats Domino, whose music they much admired. After their press conference, the boys from Liverpool got to meet Fats and chat with him. They also serenaded their idol with their rendition of "I'm In Love Again" and he sang along. They would record some of his songs and he would return the favor in 1968 by recording "Lady Madonna" and "Lovely Rita."



Times-Picayune photo of swooning teen girl at City Park Stadium, where the NOPD said they administered spirits of ammonia to more than 200 people during the Beatles' performance

At 9:25 P.M., the Beatles took the stage at City Park Stadium, and within fifteen minutes, hundreds of teenage girls bolted from their seats and attempted to storm the stage. While performing songs such as "I Want To Hold Your Hand" and "All My Loving" these beguiled Beatlemaniacs were kept back by policemen and security guards with some difficulty, although no one was hurt.

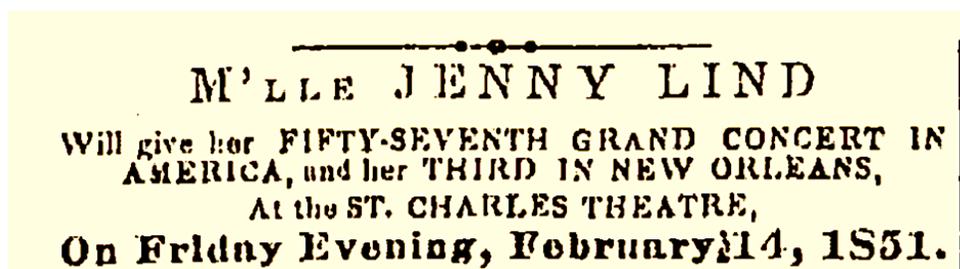
The Beatles loved the music of the Crescent City and recorded many New Orleans songs, including "Lawdy Miss Clawdy" by Lloyd Price. John Lennon's Rock 'N' Roll album contained his covers of Fats Domino's "Ain't That A Shame," Lee Dorsey's "Ya Ya," Lloyd Price's "Just Because" (also by Larry Williams) and Larry Williams' "Bony Moronie." Other Larry Williams songs cut by the Beatles were "Dizzy Miss Lizzy," "Bad Boy," "Slow Down," as well as "She Said Yeah" by Paul McCartney. Paul also did a version of Roy Brown's "Good Rockin' Tonight" and two of Fats' tunes, "I'm Gonna Be A Wheel Someday" (also by Bobby Mitchell) and "Coquette."

The ticket stub from the Beatles' New Orleans concert is today a rare collector's item. The lads stayed in town at the Congress Inn on Chef Menteur Highway. WNOE-AM Radio had been in charge of the motel stay as well as advertising and promotion for the concert. Part of WNOE's post Beatles visit campaign was to take the sheets slept upon by John, George, Paul and Ringo, and (after cutting them into small pieces) award them as souvenirs to loyal radio listeners. Not only Beatle bed linens but sliced up microphone cords and mikes were also packaged as a marketing gimmick. Where did they get such an outlandish idea? It had all happened before in New Orleans 113 years earlier.



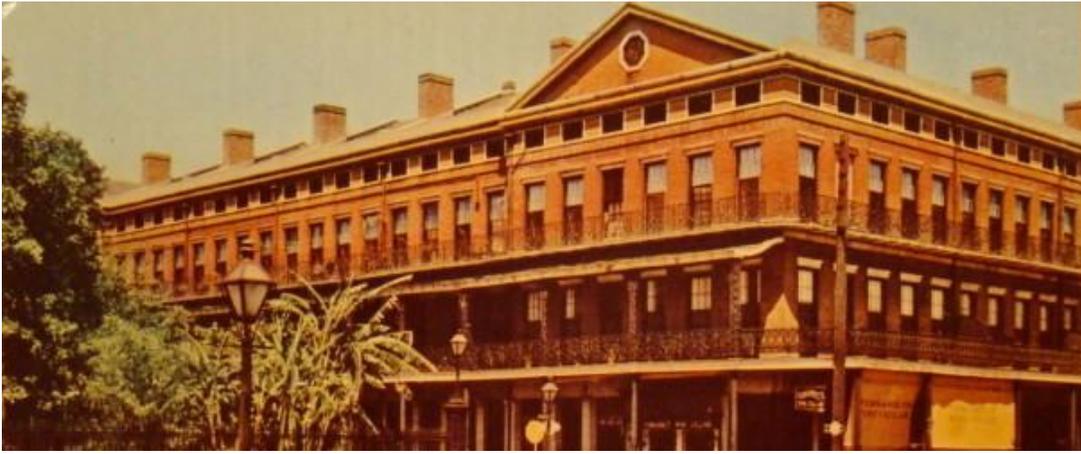
Beatles ticket stub

Jenny Lind, the famous Swedish light opera singer, was the mid-nineteenth century equivalent of a rock superstar. It is ironic that she departed to the states from the Beatles' hometown of Liverpool on August 21, 1850. Brought to America by Impresario Phineas T. Barnum, she was booked in New Orleans (after Charleston and Havana) for a month in 1851 to sing a dozen performances at the St. Charles Theatre. She was an instant sensation.



Ad in the Daily Picayune for Jenny Lind's Valentine's Day Concert, February 14, 1851

Micaela Leonarda Antonia Almonester y Rojas, the Baroness Pontalba, had just completed her famous apartments and offered to let Jenny Lind be her guest in one of the flats. It was not typical of the Baroness to be so gracious, but the Swedish Nightingale nonetheless accepted her warm invitation.



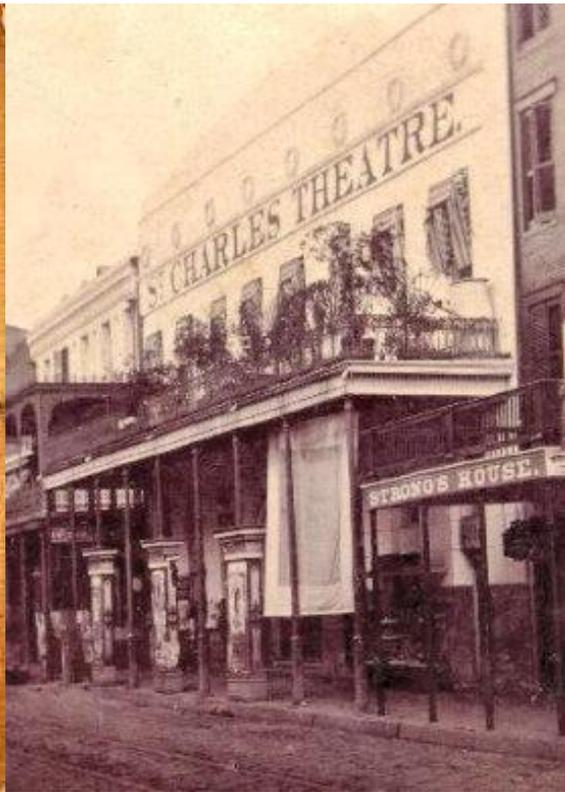
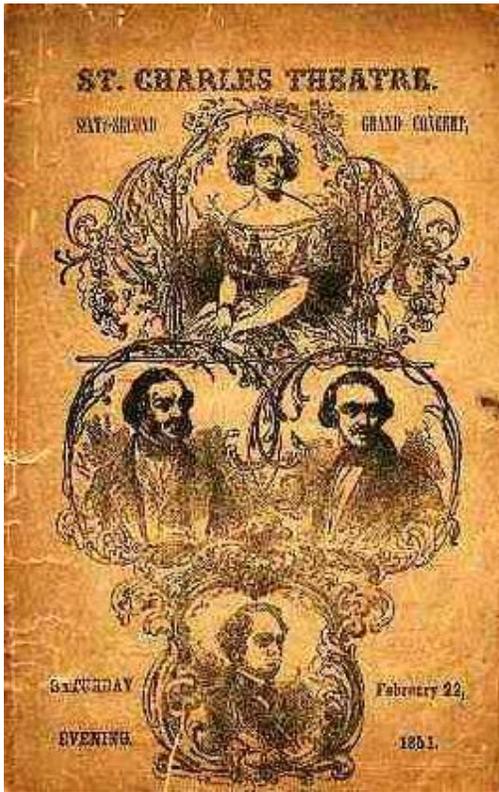
The historic Pontalba Apartments



Jenny Lind, The Swedish Nightingale

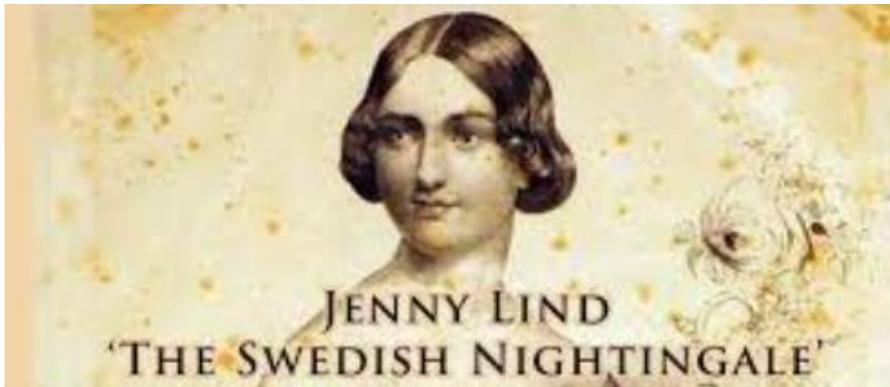
The Baroness Pontalba

Jenny Lind was an overwhelming success at the St. Charles Theatre and each evening she would appear on the balcony over Jackson Square to greet her many admiring fans. People down below applauded and tossed up bouquets of flowers to the lovely chanteuse extraordinaire. When her singing engagement came to an end, the Baroness gathered up the entire contents of the apartment. Not only all the furniture but also the chamber pot was auctioned off to the highest bidder. Everything the soprano songstress touched was sold and brought in a tidy sum for New Orleans' shrewdest businesswoman. Jenny Lind and P. T. came out all right, as well. Her 95 concert U.S. tour grossed Lind \$176,675 and Barnum \$535,486 in 1851 dollars. "Lindomania" lasted only another year when the partnership broke up over finances and other issues.



*St. Charles Theatre Program
Jenny Lind, featured performer*

The St. Charles Theatre





Ecstatic New Orleans Beatles fan



Curlered fans at Lakefront Airport

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