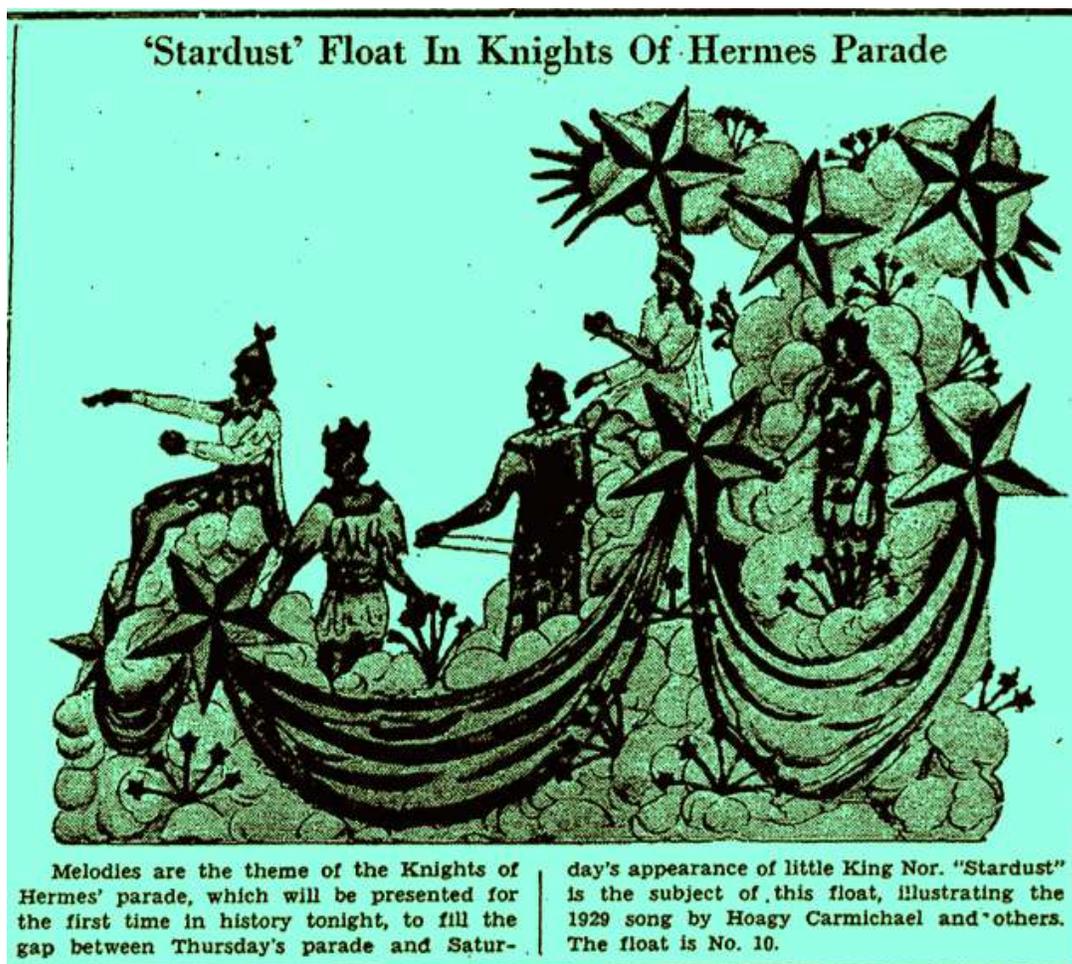


Zorro Rides Again

In 1937, New Orleans became the first city in the United States to be provided funding under the Wagner Act. Contracts for the St. Thomas and Magnolia housing projects were the first signed by FDR under Senator Robert Wagner's legislation, and with it the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) was created. A young LBJ was one of the principal authors of the Housing Act of 1937, and he saw to it that the first three grants were announced in alphabetical order (with Austin being mentioned before New Orleans and New York).



Hermes makes its debut, The New Orleans Item, February 5, 1937

Also that year, New Orleans saw the debut of a vibrant new carnival organization, the Knights of Hermes (which continues to charm the city with its annual parade). Hermes, HANO and housing were the talk of the town, and Hitler was the talk of the nation.

For those who wanted some form of escapism, there was always the local movie house. Among numerous neighborhood theatres, there was the Bell, the Cortez, the Casino and the Carrollton (which had been rebuilt the year before). Or perhaps one visited the Imperial on Hagan Avenue (Jefferson Davis Parkway today) followed by a stop at the Parkway Bakery (also on Hagan ... then as today).



New Orleans-born John Carroll in 1937's "Zorro Rides Again"

1937 produced great films like Frank Capra's "Lost Horizon", the Marx Brothers in "A Day at the Races", "Stella Dallas", "Topper" and "The Awful Truth". In addition to these classics were the serial Westerns from Republic, and 1937's "Zorro Rides Again" was one of these

twelve-chapter runs. A modernized version of the beloved Zorro saga, this series has as its hero the great grandson of Don Diego de la Vega (the original masked swordsman).



John Carroll (1906 – 1979), nee Julian J. Lafaye, Jr.

The dashing Zorro heir (aka James Vega), played by New Orleans-born actor John Carroll, must also fake it as a fop. The handsome, mustachioed Carroll outwits his villainous adversary, J. A. Marsden, portrayed by Noah Beery. Beery had previously delivered one of his most memorable characterizations in the 1920 role of Sergeant Gonzales in "The Mark of Zorro" opposite Douglas Fairbanks.

The original Zorro story was Johnston McCulley's 1919 novella "The Curse of Capistrano", but in 2005 Chilean author Isabel Allende penned an origin story for the caped hero. In this prequel she added a

bit of New Orleans flavor by having young Diego and his companions captured by Jean Lafitte and his notorious crew. And as guests of the Baratarian buccaneers, Don Diego and company would also encounter voodoo queen Marie Laveau. What more could one ask for?

John Carroll was the stage name of Julian Joseph Lafaye, Jr. (July 17, 1906 - April 24, 1979), and he spent some intriguing years leading up to his becoming an actor. Leaving home to seek his fortune at a young age, he made his way to the capitals of Europe. There he combined such unusual talents as becoming a successful racecar driver and studying operatic voice in Milan, Italy. Initially working as a stunt man in the early 1930s, Carroll climbed his way toward leading man status. He made his screen debut in "Hi, Gaucho!" in 1935 where he appeared with his first wife (the exotic Hungarian-born actress, Steffi Duna). When she first came to this country, she spoke very little English.

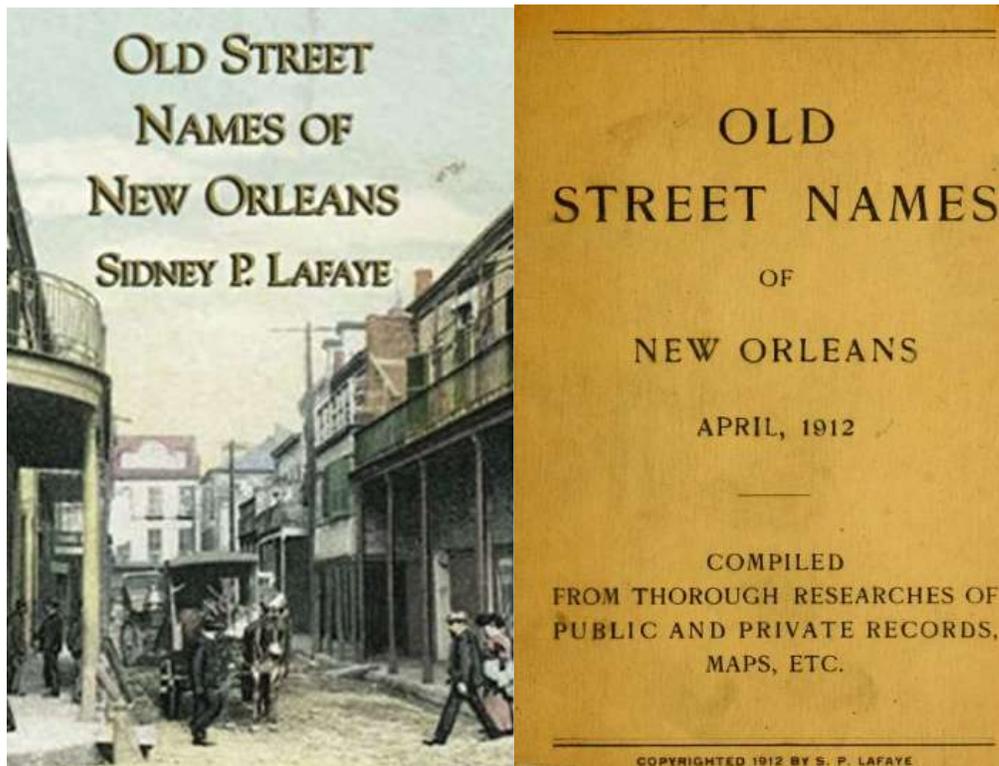


Lake Pontchartrain blue crabs, or spiders?

The late Prieur Leary related in his autobiography that Julian Lafaye was his wife's first cousin. Two Fauconne de Calongne sisters were the link; one married a Lafaye and the other a Hartson. He described Steffi Duna as a "talented actress" who was "awaiting her forthcoming pregnancy" in Mandeville, Louisiana, as a guest of the Hartsons. Prieur and John Carroll went out on Lake Pontchartrain to catch some imposing lake crabs, but these "terrible looking crustaceans" with "large defensive claws" caused Steffi to jump back "horrified". She said, "Where did you get them spiders?" This did not prevent an enjoyable crab boil.

Carroll is probably best known for his role as Woody Jason in "Flying Tigers" with John Wayne (1942). He worked steadily in films through the mid-1950s (even singing occasionally) and continued to make wise investments throughout his life. He and Steffi Duna divorced in 1938, and his second wife was Lucille Ryman, an MGM talent executive.

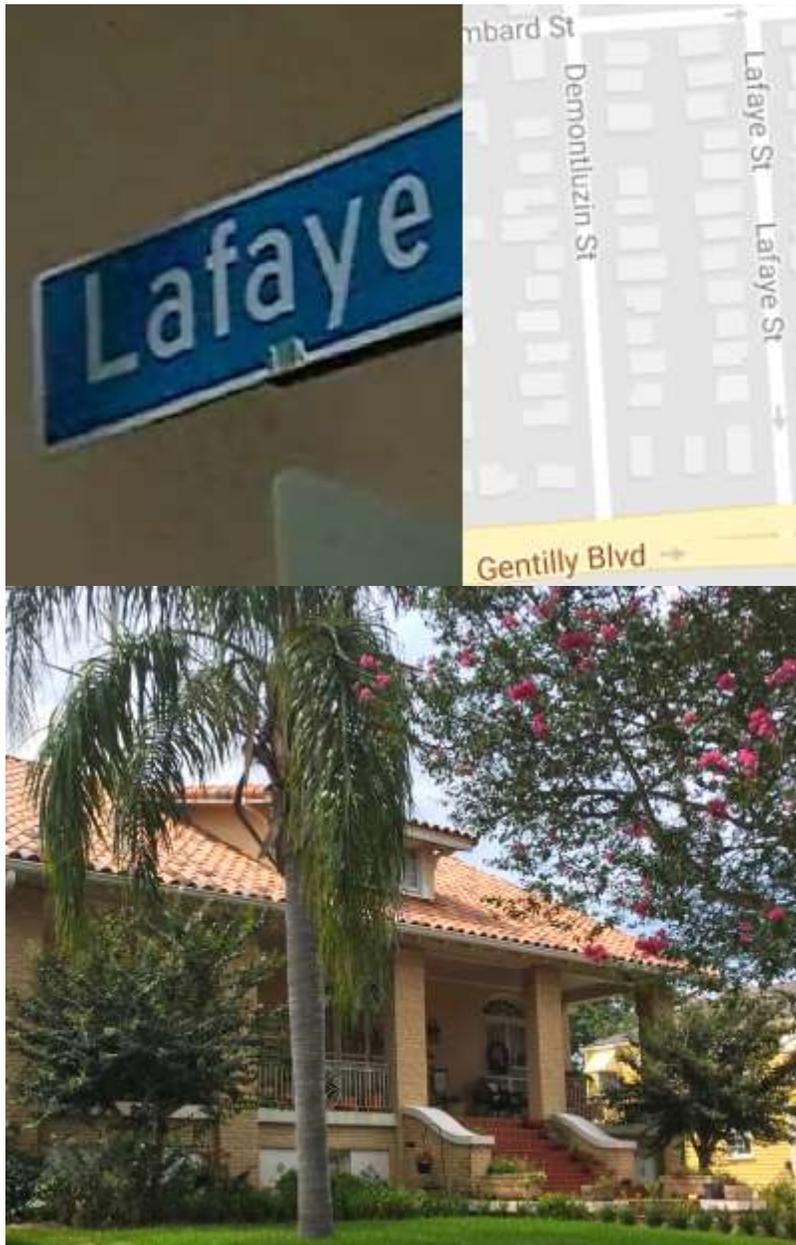
One of John Carroll's relatives was Sidney Paul Lafaye, who (decades before John Churchill Chase wrote *Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children and Other Streets of New Orleans*) compiled *Old Street Names of New Orleans*, published in 1912.



Unlike Chase's work, which chronicles the city's history through the naming of its streets, Lafaye's book simply lists the old and new street names of New Orleans (as of 1912) in alphabetical order by the old street names in one section and the new street names in a second section.

Another Lafaye family member, Edward Emory Lafaye, was a city commissioner of public property. In 1909, he along with Michael Baccich and Colonel Roch Eugene Edgar De Montluzin were instrumental in the development of Gentilly Terrace. What evolved was a neighborhood of impressive homes, particularly evident on the lake side of Gentilly Boulevard between St. Roch and Franklin

Avenues. The homes were quite striking and were built up high upon the terraced lots. There is even a Lafaye Street in the area.



Gentilly Terrace, bounded by Elysian Fields Avenue to the west, Filmore Avenue to the north, People's Avenue to the east, and Dahlia Walk and Benefit Street to the south

Mostly constructed in the years 1910-1940, these homes were designed to resemble English Tudor cottages or were built in the Mediterranean-revival style. Many display a Spanish accent, and (according to the Preservation Resource Center) the neighborhood

contains "the largest collection of California Craftsman-style bungalows (built around 1910-1926) in the state". Any of these superb haciendas would have made Zorro feel quite at home.

Actor John Carroll Dies; Played 'Zorro' in Movies

United Press International

HOLLYWOOD — Actor John Carroll, a star in Hollywood's swashbuckling era who played the title role in several Zorro movies, has died of complications from leukemia at the age of 72.

Carroll, who was once considered a rival to Clark Gable and in 1956 became the first actor to receive a percentage of his films' gross, died Tuesday at his home in Hollywood Hills.

Burial was scheduled Friday at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, following a requiem mass at St. Finbar's Catholic Church in Burbank.

Carroll, a French-American born in New Orleans, studied opera in Italy and came to Hollywood in 1923 as a race driver.

His pictures, besides the Zorro series, included *No, No, Nanette*, *Rio Rita*, *The Marx Brothers Go West*,

Angel in Exile, *Bedside Manner*, *Sunny and Susan* and *God*.

Flying Tigers, which he made in 1942 with John Wayne, was the story of his best friend, Beau Sangster.

"He never felt he ever accomplished anything," his wife, Lucille Ryman, a former MGM talent executive, recalled.

"He was never happy with any of the roles he played in pictures. To him, the Zorro role was just a stunt."

Pal of Erroll Flynn

Carroll's personal life was considered a mirror of his movie roles. A pal of Erroll Flynn, he gained a reputation as an adventurous playboy and at one time the two actors lived with Fidel Castro in Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains.

He gave up his movie career during World War II to serve as an Air Force pilot in North Africa, where he broke his back in a crash.

Lexington Herald, April 26, 1979

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"Zorro Rides Again"
Ned Hémard
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