

# Success Stories

SIXTH LOUISIANA RURAL TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Natchitoches, Louisiana  
October 15-16, 1996

LOAN COPY ONLY



Participant List  
Louisiana Rural Tourism Development Conference  
Natchitoches, Louisiana  
October 15-16, 1996

Adam, Jolene  
The Acadian Memorial  
Curator/Director  
P. O. Box 379 Dept. A.M.  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

Adam, Paulette G.  
Tour Director  
Crystal Rice Plantation  
P. O. Box 1425  
Crowley, LA 70548

Adger, Helen H.  
Mayor  
Village of Gilliam  
P. O. Box 247  
Gilliam, LA 71029

Alford, Sharon  
Exec. Director  
Houma-Terrebonne Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 2792  
Houma, LA 70361

Allemond, Mark  
Main Street Manager  
St. Martinville Main St. Association  
P. O. Box 646  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

Bailey, Bill  
Executive Director  
Vernon Parish Tourism Com.  
P. O. Box 1228  
Leesville, LA 71496-1228

Baldwin, Jack & Winnie  
P. O. Box 277  
Bernice, LA 71222

Beckett, Charlene  
Abbeville Mainstreet  
P. O. Box 1170  
Abbeville, LA 70511

Benge, Dorothy L.  
President, Delacroix Corp.  
206 Decatur St.  
New Orleans, LA 70130-1016

Bias, Curtis  
Fort Jesup State Commemorative Area  
32 Geoghagan Rd.  
Many, LA 71449

Boudreaux, Gabrielle  
Vermilionville  
P. O. Box 4736  
Lafayette, LA 70502

Boudreaux-Davis, Karon  
Vermilionville  
P. O. Box 4736  
Lafayette, LA 70502

Boulet, Henri  
Community Dev. Coord.  
Houma-Terrebonne Arts & Humanities Coun  
P. O. Box 3678  
Houma, LA 70361

Bramlette, Briana  
Tour Coordinator  
Lagniappe Tours  
900 North Blvd.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Branch, Leta  
Team Member  
City of Ponchatoula  
U.S. 51 Corridor Task Force  
P. O. Box 428  
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Brignac, Audrey D.  
Tourism Coordinator  
City of St. Martinville  
P. O. Box 379  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

Brown, Gayle  
Board of Directors  
Doorway to Louisiana, Inc.  
P. O. Box 709  
Lake Providence, LA 71254

Buteau, Grace  
Travel Counselor  
Iberia Parish Tour. Com.  
2704 Hwy 14  
New Iberia, LA 70560

Byers, Wendy  
Marketing Director  
Ruston/Lincoln CVB  
900 N. Trenton  
Ruston, LA 71270

Cabral, Ruth  
Director, Tourist Center  
City of Opelousas  
P. O. Box 712  
Opelousas, LA 70571

Calcote, Sharon  
Director  
LA Rural Tourism Dev.  
LA Office of Tourism  
P. O. Box 94291  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Campbell, Donna Kay  
Dulac Community Center  
101 Coast Guard Rd.  
Dulac, LA 70353

Carmouche, Wilbert  
Tour Director  
Avoyelles Com. of Tourism  
208 S. Main  
Marksville, LA 71351

Cary, Teasie  
President  
Acadia Parish Tour. Com.  
P. O. Box 2125  
Crowley, LA 70527

Cedotal, Selma  
Tourism Director  
West Baton Rouge Tourist Com.  
2855 I-10 Frontage Road  
Port Allen, LA 70767

Chaney, John  
Communications Agent  
LA Cooperative Ext. Serv.  
P. O. Box 1032  
Alexandria, LA 71309

Charpentier, Tanya  
Asst. Director  
Houma-Terrebonne Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 2792  
Houma, LA 70361

Clement, Randy  
Cane River Creole National Hist. Park  
P. O. Box 536  
Natchitoches, LA 71457

Cormier, Mikel  
Abbeville Mainstreet  
P. O. Box 1170  
Abbeville, LA 70511

Craven, Elinor  
Office of State Parks  
P. O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Crump, Jennie  
Board Member/VP  
LA Art & Folk Festival, Inc.  
Rt. 2, Box 177  
Monroe, LA 71202

Cryer, Joy  
Administrative Assistant  
Kisatchie Delta Reg. Planning & Dev. Dist., Inc.  
1611 Arnold Dr., Bldg. 1803  
Alexandria, LA 71303-5636

Daniels, Charlene  
Main St. Manager, City of Ponchatoula  
U.S. 51 Corridor Task Force  
P. O. Box 428  
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Davis, Kevin  
Tammany Trace  
421 Ponchatrain Drive  
Slidell, LA 70458

Dearman, Scott  
Mansfield State Commemorative Area  
15149 Hwy. 175  
Mansfield, LA 71052

Dennis, Susan  
Team Member  
City of Ponchatoula  
U.S. 51 Corridor Task Force  
P. O. Box 428  
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Deville, Sue W.  
Director  
Opelousas Museum & Interpretive Ctr.  
P. O. Box 712  
Opelousas, LA 70571

Domingue, Jay  
Board Member  
Jeff Davis Parish Tourist Com.  
Creole Rose Manor  
214 W. Plaquemine  
Jennings, LA 70546

Donnelly, Keitha C  
President  
Merryville Historical Society & Museum  
P. O. Box 495  
Merryville, LA 70653

Dossman, Curley  
Councilman, City of Ville Platte  
P. O. Box 390  
Ville Platte, La 70586

Dowden, Michelle  
Executive Secretary  
Vernon Parish Tourism Com.  
P. O. Box 1228  
Leesville, LA 71496-1228

Dugas, Rochelle Michaud  
Field Coordinator  
Governor's Office of Rural Development  
P. O. Box 94004  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dunn, Myrna  
Main St. Manager  
P. O. Box 37  
Natchitoches, LA 71458

Erwin, Vera  
Supervisor  
CR2/Tourism  
P. O. Box 1312  
Tallulah, LA 71284

Feet, Shirley  
Dulac Community Center  
101 Coast Guard Rd.  
Dulac, LA 70353

Floyd, David  
Louisiana Rural Life Museum  
P. O. Box 80498  
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Fontenot, Wonda L. Dr.  
Executive Director  
Wannamuse Institute  
P. O. Box 7239  
Opelousas, LA 70571

Foreman, Debbie  
Secretary  
Rayne Chamber of Commerce  
P. O. Box 383  
Rayne, LA 70578

Fowler, Nona G.  
Home Economist/Parish Chair  
LA Coop. Ext. Service  
624 2nd St., P. O. Box 225  
Natchitoches, LA 71457

Green, Irma M.  
St. Charles Parish  
P. O. Box 302  
Hahnville, LA 70057

Gryder, Howard O.  
County Agent  
LSU Ag Center  
210 E. Water St.  
Farmerville, LA 71241

Guenard, Flo  
Board of Directors  
Doorway to Louisiana, Inc.  
P. O. Box 709  
Lake Providence, LA 71254

Guercio, Patricia  
Tourist Info Counselor  
Vidalia Welcome Center  
1401 Carter St.  
Vidalia, LA 71373

Hall, Evelyn S.  
Regional Coordinator  
LA Office of Tourism  
P. O. Box 207  
Greenwood, LA 71033

Hambrick, Kathe  
River Road African American Museum and  
Gallery  
P. O. Box 1357  
Gonzales, LA 70707-1357

Hanchey, Pat  
Public Relations Director  
St. Landry Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 1415  
Opelousas, LA 70571-1415

Hanks, Gwen  
Director  
Acadia Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 2125  
Crowley, LA 70527

Hawkins, Yvonne  
Community Development Coordinator  
Project Celebration, Inc.  
580 Main St.  
Many, LA 71449

Hearn, Redell  
Associate Director  
Southeastern LA University  
Center for Regional Studies  
SLU 730  
Hammond, LA 70711

Henning, Brenda  
La. Sea Grant College Program  
LSU  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Holloway, Clyde  
Louisiana Nursery Festival  
P. O. Box 339  
Forest Hill, LA 71430

House, John  
Mansfield State Commemorative Area  
15149 Hwy. 175  
Mansfield, LA 71052

Hyman, Hugh, Jr.  
Hugh Hyman Management  
541 Laurie Lynne Drive  
Baton Rouge, La 70819-3440

Isbell, Kim  
Administrative Asst.  
Natchitoches Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 411  
Natchitoches, LA 71458

Johnson, Ann  
Lea's Lunchroom  
P. O. Box 309  
Lecompte, LA 71346

Johnson, Lisa  
VP Tourism Marketing  
Shreveport-Bossier CVB  
P. O. Box 1761  
Shreveport, LA 71166

Jones, Betty  
Executive Director  
Natchitoches Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 411  
Natchitoches, LA 71458

Jones, Phillip J.  
Secretary  
Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism  
P. O. Box 94361  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9361

Knobloch, Michael C.  
Grants Coordinator  
City of Thibodaux  
P.O. Box 5418  
Thibodaux, LA 70302-5418

Landry, Jean  
Director  
Grand Isle Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 817, Hwy. 1  
Grand Isle, LA 70358

LaPrairie, Shelley  
Executive Secretary  
Bunkie C of C  
P. O. Drawer 70  
Bunkie, LA 71322

Larson-Martin, Sandra  
517 E. Bridge St.  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

Lasseigne, Tisa  
Clerical Assistant  
St. Martinville Tourist Information Center  
P. O. Box 379  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

LeBlanc, Scuddy J.  
County Agent  
LA Coop. Ext. Service  
8201 West Judge Perez Drive  
Chalmette, LA 70043

Leger, David J. and LaWanda  
Owners  
Hideaway Ponds Recreational Resort  
6367 Bayou Black Dr.  
Gibson, LA 70356

Leonard, Patricia  
City of Ponchatoula  
U.S. 51 Corridor Task Force  
P. O. Box 428  
Ponchatoula, LA 70454

Lewis, Vicki  
Home Economist  
LSU Agricultural Center  
1202 Homer Rd.  
Minden, LA 71055

Liffmann, Mike  
La. Sea Grant College Program  
Wetland Resources Building  
LSU  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Long, Sandy  
Executive Assistant  
Beauregard Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 1174  
DeRidder, LA 70634

Luster, Michael  
Louisiana Folklife Festival  
City of Monroe  
P. O. Box 123  
Monroe, LA 71210

Manning, Keitha Donnelly  
Merryville Historical Society  
P. O. Box 495  
Merryville, LA 70653

Marmillion, Norman  
General Manager  
Laura: A Creole Plantation  
2247 Hwy. 18  
Vacherie, LA 70090

Martin, Christi  
Tourism Coordinator  
Plaquemines Parish Economic Dev.  
P. O. Box 937  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Martin, Eddy  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Dept. CRT  
1051 N. Third St.  
P. O. Box 44247  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Martin, Eric J.  
Mayor  
City of St. Martinville  
P. O. Box 379  
St. Martinville, LA 70582

McCandless, Diane  
Executive Director  
Houma-Terrebonne Arts & Humanities Council  
P. O. Box 3678  
Houma, LA 70361

McDougall, Elizabeth  
Chairperson, Tourist Com.  
St. Bernard Parish Government  
8201 W. Judge Perez Drive  
Chalmette, LA 70043

McKee, Glenon "Red"  
Tourism Com. Member  
Vernon Parish Tourism Com.  
P. O. Box 1228  
Leesville, LA 71496-1228

Millet, Amanda M.  
Tourism Sales Manager  
Baton Rouge CVB  
730 North Blvd.  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Moore, Margaret  
Specialist, LA Coop. Ext. Service  
P. O. Box 25100  
Baton Rouge, LA 70894-5100

Moore, Viola  
Audubon State Commemorative Area  
P. O. Box 546  
St. Francisville, LA 70775

Mulkey, Merle  
President, Crescent City Host  
4000 Hwy. 59  
Mandeville, LA 70471

Mullet, Gayle D.  
Crescent City Hosts  
4000 Hwy. 59  
Mandeville, LA 70448

Mundy, Karylyn  
Tourism Board  
Plaquemines Parish Econ. Dev. Dist.  
P. O. Box 937  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Murry, Sandra  
Office of State Parks  
P. O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Norman, Sue  
Marketing Director  
Webster Parish C & V Com.  
P. O. Box 819  
Minden, LA 71058-0819

Ott, Virgie  
Tourism Coordinator  
City of Gretna  
P. O. Box 404  
Gretna, LA 70054-0404

O'Daniels, Donna  
Communications Director  
St. Tammany Parish Tourist Com.  
600 N. Highway 190, Suite 15  
Covington, LA 70433

O'Neal, John  
Junebug Productions  
P. O. Box 2331  
New Orleans, LA 70176

Panepinto, Lyle & Rhonda  
Southern Seaplane, Inc.  
#1 Coquille Drive  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Phillips, Carolyn  
Economic Director  
City of Winnfield  
P. O. Box 509  
Winnfield, LA 71493

Phillips, Dale K.  
Unit Manager  
Jean Lafitte National Hist. Park & Preserve  
501 Fisher Road  
Lafayette, LA 70508

Phillips, Joan Nunez  
President, Los Islenos Heritage & Culture  
Society  
925 Friscoville Ave.  
Arabi, LA 70032

Pitzer, Joe  
Downtown Development District  
310 E. Charles  
Hammond, LA 70401

Potts, Gregg  
Port Hudson State Commemorative Area  
756 West Plains  
Port Hudson Rd.  
Zachary, LA 70791

Prudhomme, James  
Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Commemorative  
Area  
130 Morrow  
Natchitoches, LA 71458

Ragland, Alwine M.  
Chair  
Madison Parish Com.  
Madison Historical Soc.  
206 Monroe St.  
Tallulah, LA 71282

Reed, Sandy  
Kentwood Community Dev., Inc.  
77538 Hwy. 51  
Kentwood, LA 70444

Reed, Sherian H.  
Home Economist  
LA Coop. Ext. Service  
136 S. Lee St.  
Marksville, LA 71351

Rogers, Berteal  
Home Economist  
LSU Cooperative Extension  
114 North Cedar  
Tallulah, LA 71282

Ross, Dale  
Victoria Inn  
Hwy. 45, Box 545B  
Lafitte, LA 70067

Routon, Jessica  
Office of State Parks  
P. O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Roy, Barbara H.  
Assistant Secretary  
LA Office of Tourism  
P. O. Box 94291  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Roy, Hazel  
Chairperson  
Vermilion Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 1106  
Abbeville, LA 70511

Royer, Martha  
Owner  
Maison Daboval Bed & Breakfast  
305 East Louisiana Ave.  
Rayne, LA 70578

Schauf, Laurance  
President  
Independence Chamber of Commerce  
583 W. Railroad Ave.  
P. O. Box 790  
Independence, LA 70443



Scholtz, Sally  
Amite Chamber of Commerce  
101 S.W. Central Ave.  
Amite, LA 70422

Seale, Rick  
Rebel State Commemorative Area  
P. O. Box 127  
Marthaville, LA 71450

Shirley, Karen G.  
Associate Home Economist  
LA Coop. Ext. Service  
101 W. Main, Room 108  
Winnfield, LA 71483

Sotile, Nikki  
Director  
Ascension Parish Tourist Com.  
6470-A Hwy. 22  
Sorrento, LA 70778

Spears, Donna  
Fort Jesup State Commemorative Area  
32 Geoghagan Rd.  
Many, LA 71449

Stagg, Barbara A.  
1715 Woodland Drive  
Lake Charles, LA 70605

Stagg, Jason  
Research Analyst  
LA Dept. of Econ. Dev.  
P. O. Box 94185  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9185

Staggs, Pat  
Extension Home Economist  
LA Coop. Ext. Service  
500 East Court St., Room 302  
Jonesboro, LA 71251

Stewart, Betty C.  
Executive Director  
Tangipahoa Parish Tourist Com.  
42271 S. Morrison Blvd.  
Hammond, LA 70403

Stoker, Mimi  
Home Economist  
LCES - Sabine Parish  
820 Main  
Many, LA 71449

Sulzer, Julia  
Office of State Parks  
P. O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Summerlin, Jason  
Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Commemorative  
Area  
130 Morrow  
Natchitoches, LA 71458

Tarver, Kathy  
Port Hudson State Commemorative Area  
756 West Plains  
Port Hudson Rd.  
Zachary, LA 70791

Terrell, Sharla  
Executive Assistant  
Jeff Davis Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 1207  
Jennings, LA 70546

Tettleton, Kay Lynn  
Home Economist  
LSU Coop. Ext. Service  
210 East Water St.  
Farmerville, LA 71241

Thornton, Edna  
Executive Director  
DeSoto Parish Tourist Bureau  
210 So. Washington, P. O. Box 1327  
Mansfield, LA 71052

Timmons, Anne  
Marketing Director  
West Baton Rouge Tourist Com.  
2855 I-10 Frontage Road  
Port Allen, LA 70767

Trahan, Randy  
Louisiana Office of State Parks  
P. O. Box 44426  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Tramble, Bettye  
Jeff Davis Parish Tourist Com.  
P. O. Box 1207  
Jennings, LA 70546

Tubre, Allison  
Tour Director  
Avoyelles Com. of Tourism  
208 S. Main  
Marksville, LA 71351

Urena, Heather  
Econ. Development Specialist  
Kisatchie Delta Reg. Planning & Dev. Dist., Inc.  
1611 Arnold Dr., Bldg. 1803  
Alexandria, LA 71303-5636

Varnado, Mike  
Audubon State Commemorative Area  
P. O. Box 546  
St. Francisville, LA 70775

Vernon, Robert  
National Park Service  
302 College of Design Building  
LSU  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Wagner, Robert C.  
Executive Director  
Kisatchie Delta Reg. Planning & Dev. Dist., Inc.  
1611 Arnold Dr., Bldg. 1803  
Alexandria, LA 71303-5636

Wakefield, Lisa  
Community Development Coordinator  
800 Snow Street  
Shreveport, LA 71101

Waltman, Wynne  
Account Executive  
Peter A. Mayer  
5757 Corporate Blvd, Suite 300  
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Warner, Loure B.  
Sales Manager  
Travel New Orleans  
400 Magazine St., Suite 201  
New Orleans, LA 70130

Washington, Gloria  
Tour & Travel/Convention Serv. Dir.  
Alexandria/Pineville Area CVB  
P. O. Box 1070  
Alexandria, LA 71309

Wegmann, M.K.  
Junebug Productions  
P. O. Box 2331  
New Orleans, LA 70176

Wilkinson, Ann  
Poplar Grove Plantation  
3142 N. River Road  
Port Allen, LA 70767

Young, Anita  
Director  
Gonzales Welcome Center  
1006 W. Hwy. 30  
Gonzales, LA 70737

Young, Danny L.  
Executive Director  
LTPA  
P. O. Box 3988  
Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Zimmerman, Mary  
Secretary of State Office  
3851 Essen Lane  
Baton Rouge, LA 70809

# **SUCCESS STORIES**

## **SIXTH LOUISIANA RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE**

Natchitoches, Louisiana

October 15-16, 1996



### **SPONSORS**

Louisiana Sea Grant College Program • Louisiana State University Agricultural Center  
Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism • Louisiana Travel Promotion Association

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>SUCCESS STORIES</b>	
<b>African American Culture on Display</b> .....	1
River Road African American Museum and Gallery Kathe Hambrick	
<b>Expand Your Market</b> .....	3
Southern Seaplane, Inc. Lyle & Rhonda Panepinto	
<b>Rails to Trails</b> .....	5
Tammany Trace Kevin Davis	
<b>Play the Strong Suit</b> .....	7
Louisiana Nursery Festival Clyde Holloway	
<b>Focus on the Big Picture</b> .....	9
City of St. Martinville Mayor Eric Martin	
<b>Promoting Bed and Breakfasts</b> .....	11
<i>Baldwin's Guide to the Inns of the Deep South, Louisiana and Western Mississippi</i> Winnie & Jack Baldwin	
<b>TOURISM DEVELOPMENT SUPPLEMENTS</b>	
<b>Toward a Sustainable Rural Heritage Tourism Strategy for Louisiana</b> .....	13
Report from the Lt. Governor's Rural Tourism Development Task Force Meeting, October 15, 1996	
<b>List of Success Stories: 1991-1996</b> .....	16

# **AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE ON DISPLAY**

## **River Road African American Museum & Gallery**

by  
Kathe Hambrick

The River Road African American Museum & Gallery, which opened in 1994, had a modest beginning. It began with no funds, a 1,000 square foot, one room area donated by the Tezcucu Plantation, and a volunteer with a desire to preserve the often-forgotten history of African Americans in south Louisiana. Many artifacts have been collected from the area and are being displayed in the museum, which provides through its collections and displays an accurate account of slavery and African American history along River Road.

Ascension Parish was once the location of the largest sugar cane plantations in the south. Although hundreds of enslaved people worked on the plantations, little about them had been preserved. Few talked about this history as heritage. Through this museum's collections, the story of African American contributions to the south Louisiana economy and culture are now being preserved.

It doesn't take a lot of money to start a museum. They have been started in abandoned houses that volunteers fixed up. A family's heirlooms can be

the start of a collection. Three buildings that total about 10,000 square feet in area have recently been donated to the museum, and plans are underway to purchase 40 acres along River Road to locate the museum on its own site with room for the collection to grow.

The museum is dedicated to collecting, preserving and interpreting artifacts to provide positive information about the history and culture of African Americans, and paying tribute to the hundreds of slaves who were purchased and brought to Burnside, Louisiana, in 1858. Many of their descendants continue to live in the rural communities along the Mississippi River, and visitors to the museum can research African American ancestry in the extensive records housed there.

Over 100,000 tourists visit the plantations along the River Road annually from all parts of the world on small tour buses or with family or friends. By visiting the River Road African American Museum & Gallery as part of those tours, people experience a part of history that cannot be found in history books.

The slaves who worked on the River Road plantations coped with their plight through a strong sense of family, church, and cultural traditions. The traditions have been passed down from generation to generation through art, music, dance, storytelling, cooking and crafts. Artwork housed in the museum shows this connection between past and present. African masks provide a unique link to ancient customs while crafts by today's local folk artists provide a colorful reminder of this legacy. Also on exhibit are the extensive contributions of African American musicians. A story is told through these art forms, creating a positive example for future generations.

The museum houses a rare collection of African American memorabilia, many artifacts, and historical documents. Most of these items have been donated or loaned by families throughout Ascension and surrounding parishes. Photographs of famous African Americans, including doctors, artists and artisans, entertainers and sport legends adorn the walls of the museum. A registry of African American Civil War Army Veterans from 1890 and many other memorabilia tell a little-known story about the African Americans of this area.

## EXPAND YOUR MARKET

Southern Seaplane, Inc. / Air Tours on the Bayou

by

Lyle and Rhonda Panepinto

Southern Seaplane, Inc., was started in 1954 by my father, Phil Panepinto, as a business to maintain and service seaplanes. Later the business expanded into air charter services for inland oil rigs. With escalation of the oilfield industry, the seaplane business grew to approximately 10 seaplane operators throughout southern Louisiana. Each had a fleet of 5-10 aircraft. Business was booming and no one sought the opportunity for diversification.

The primary airplane used in this type of charter was a three-passenger Cessna Skywagon. This aircraft was the industry standard from the 1960s through the '80s, and it was so effective that there was no need to look beyond it toward capabilities of other aircraft.

But when the oil industry declined, seaplane operators had to look toward diversifying in order to survive in the air charter business. It was then that we set our goal to "Expand Our Market."

The growing popularity of swamp tours in the region and my knowledge of the area from frequent flights over

swamplands led to the realization: "What better way for tourists to view the unspoiled swamplands of Louisiana than by air!" This new idea of expanding to the tourist market was both exciting and challenging.

We were faced with the first of many obstacles—getting the word out about our expansion and marketing to our new target customers. After months of calling on numerous reluctant tour planners, we met Peter Gillespie of France, Louisiana. He saw that our unique tours would add to his French programs in the New Orleans area and our seaplanes would add new destinations for his clients.

Our next obstacle to overcome was capacity—having the capability to fly an entire busload at one time. The mainstay airplane which had once serviced the oil industry was no longer sufficient because of its limited seating capacity. At three passengers per plane, we needed many planes to serve a busload. Adding the use of the Cessna Stationair, a five passenger airplane, to our fleet, enabled us to handle a busload of passengers more efficiently by using

---

fewer airplanes and pilots, thus increasing revenues. The Cessna Stationair was so popular with the tourists that we introduced it to our oilfield customers. They saw it as an opportunity to haul more personnel in one aircraft for less than the cost of two smaller aircraft. The versatility of this aircraft enabled us to better serve the oil industry and our newly expanded tourist market.

Today Southern Seaplane, Inc., operates a variety of aircraft. We now have 12 planes available, more aircraft than we had in the oilfield boom days. Our international tourist market is

steadily increasing as a rapidly growing number of French, German, British, Dutch, and Italian tourists experience the thrill of our tours each year.

The field of operators has changed, too. Although 10 seaplane operators shared the business in southern Louisiana during the highlight of the oilfield, at present there are only three left in operation. Through our efforts to diversify and expand our market, Southern Seaplane, Inc., is now the largest seaplane operation in the entire southern United States.



# **RAILS TO TRAILS**

## **The Tammany Trace**

by

**Kevin Davis**

**St. Tammany Parish Police Juror**

Through the acquisition and development of the Tammany Trace, St. Tammany Parish and the State of Louisiana are able to retain a valuable resource, an abandoned railroad corridor. This 31-mile-long and 200-foot-wide corridor traverses four municipalities and unincorporated areas in St. Tammany Parish. By maintaining this historical corridor, now serving as a multiple-use linear recreational facility, the developers have also preserved the corridor for future transportation needs derived from continuing growth.

The Shoreline Branch of the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad, now the Tammany Trace, was crucial to the early development of St. Tammany Parish. In the late 19th century, this rail line empowered St. Tammany Parish to support both a flourishing timber industry and several resort communities.

When the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad proposed plans to abandon the corridor, I was the President of the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury. I realized that this corridor was still a valuable

resource to the public. I strongly felt the corridor should be preserved for future transportation purposes, and utilized as an interim recreational facility for the benefit of St. Tammany Parish. I was able to rally intense interest and support from the members of the St. Tammany Parish Police Jury.

In my position as Police Juror and Chairman of the Regional Planning Commission, I was able to take the initial lead with the acquisition of the corridor. We negotiated the purchase of the property, instrumented a railbanking agreement with ICG Railroad for its rights-of-way, and secured a grant from the Regional Planning Commission for Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard and St. Tammany parishes to plan for the corridor's development.

A consolidated effort by the Police Jury and other interested parties was assisted by the State Legislative delegation, the Congressional delegation, and other agencies. Together we secured a \$1.4 million federal grant for the purchase of the corridor in December, 1992. The property owner

made a \$1 million in-kind donation which provided the match for federal funds. We negotiated the sale of the physical rails and were instrumental in receiving additional federal ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) monies for construction.

The first section of the Tammany Trace, 8.5 miles between Abita Springs and Mandeville, opened September 17, 1994. This first section is a 10-foot asphalt lane accompanied by an equestrian trail. On average about 1,500 users actively take advantage of this multiple use public facility per weekend—including pedestrians, roller-bladers, equestrians, walkers, cyclists, and joggers. A "trailhead" provides parking, rest room, a pavilion, and water to the users. A ranger station on the trail is located in a renovated caboose. Although rangers providing assistance and safety are stationed at the caboose, they patrol the Trace frequently. Another 10 miles is scheduled to open in Spring, 1997. The Tammany Trace Foundation, a non-profit agency, handles fundraising events for the trace.

It has raised over \$150,000 through the efforts of volunteers. I am now working on funding a full-time executive director.

The Tammany Trace offers a unique and indispensable resource to the community. Multiple benefits include recreational opportunities, tourism benefits, economic development benefits, and provision of transportation alternatives. Plans for the future include Park and Ride facilities near the Tammany Trace.

The Tammany Trace represents a pioneering planning effort in the State of Louisiana. The first 8.5 miles extend from Mandeville to Abita Springs. Eventually the Trace will cover 31 miles, linking communities from Covington to Slidell. Even though construction is not yet complete, St. Tammany Parish is already receiving substantial benefits from a multiple-use, linear recreational facility while "railbanking" an essential transportation corridor to accommodate the parish's future growth and transportation needs.

---

# PLAY THE STRONG SUIT

## Louisiana Nursery Festival

by  
Clyde Holloway

In 1980, U.S. District Judge Norman Scott ordered the Forest Hill Elementary School closed and forced many children to be bussed to Alexandria and Lecompte. The parents of students in Forest Hill objected, and opened a neighborhood school in a local church. I was the first principal of the school, which eventually grew to be Forest Hill Academy. To keep the school open, parents and school leaders were forced to conduct many fund raising events such as raffles, garage sales, bingo, etc.

In 1985, the Central Louisiana Association of Nurserymen decided to hold a Nursery Festival in Forest Hill to stimulate the nursery industry. Although the event was very successful, local nurserymen concluded that they could not run their nurseries and promote an annual festival. When the association reluctantly decided to discontinue the idea, Forest Hill Academy School leadership accepted the challenge to sponsor the Louisiana Nursery Festival.

Within several years, the nursery festival became the school's

largest fund raising project, and it continues to expand to this day. In 1990, the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service began offering 4-H events during the festival. Later, they added educational seminars, demonstrations, and a plant disease clinic. Many local nurserymen assisted in conducting the seminars and demonstrations.

Today, residents in central Louisiana know that the third weekend of March is reserved for the Louisiana Nursery Festival. Over 100 varieties of azaleas are blooming and the entire Forest Hill area looks like a large community garden. Over 10,000 people attend the annual festival to shop at nursery booths or visit some of the 200 independent nurseries in the area.

After 11 successful years of operation, the Louisiana Nursery Festival continues to offer family oriented opportunities for the participants. The festival features a queen's ball, parade, fine food, energetic entertainment, unique educational events, carnival rides, and commercial

booths. The largest family event during the festival is the nursery parade which features most organizations in the area, and many nursery floats are decorated with live plants. Thousands of people line the streets of Forest Hill while the town shuts down to enjoy the parade. Over 200 educational and commercial nursery booths are open to satisfy

anyone's desire to beautify their landscape. All proceeds from the Louisiana Nursery Festival are used to support Forest Hill Academy.

The demands of the Louisiana Nursery Festival during their busiest time of the year are truly a challenge to area nurserymen, but the benefits make it worthwhile for the school and for the nursery industry.

# **FOCUS ON THE BIG PICTURE**

## **City of St. Martinville**

by  
Mayor Eric Martin

Four years ago when I assumed the position as Mayor, the tourism budget in St. Martinville was \$5,000 a year. Although tourists had been visiting St. Martinville for years, no structured studies defined their reasons for coming to St. Martinville. Currently, the annual tourism budget is \$187, 982. Additionally, we have a tourism department with a full-time tourism coordinator. Tourism has grown in our city by focusing on the big picture.

The City of St. Martinville created a Main Street Program in an effort to revitalize the downtown area. A Main Street Manager was hired to coordinate the program, both physically and economically. Through grant monies, we spent \$100,000 on seven different buildings during the first year. The second year \$75,000 was spent on five buildings, with another \$150,000 expected to be spent in the next year. The total spent on public and private buildings is \$1,078,125. The goal of this program is to preserve the integrity of the historic district area whenever possible, and it has boosted tourism in the process.

The Historic Commission, a subcommittee of the Main Street Program, pursues a goal of preserving the historic architecture and significance of the 25 buildings located in St. Martinville's Historic District. Through this project the unique architecture of the downtown area invites many tourists to walk around St. Martinville, spend some time.

The St. Martin Parish Scenic By-Ways Committee's work is designed to encourage tourists visiting the area of St. Martinville and St. Martin Parish to remain here for longer periods of time, thereby enabling them to contribute to the area's economy. A major tourism attraction being created in St. Martinville, the Acadian Memorial, is being financed by \$514,500 in grants and donations. This endeavor was designed to memorialize the Acadians as individuals. The project is comprised of four components: (1) a 12' x 35' mural of the Acadians landing in Louisiana, painted by world-renowned artist Robert Dafford; (2) a wall of 3,000 names (similar to the Vietnam Memorial Wall) to identify exiled Acadians; (3) an eternal flame to

commemorate the ships that didn't complete the journey and were lost at sea; and (4) a mass media center to research Acadians' genealogy.

St. Martinville was a general tourist destination — some came to see the famous Evangeline Oak. But we wanted tourists to spend more time, see more in our city, and leave some of their dollars with us, so we focused on the big picture, St. Martinville. We helped our city and expanded tourism along the way.

It is truly important for you to focus on the big picture. Look at all the resources you have available in your area. Tie them together. Cooperate with the parish. Market what you have, advertise your culture and the uniqueness of your area to potential tourists. It will be a win-win situation for both the community and visiting tourists.

## PROMOTING BED AND BREAKFASTS

*Baldwin's Guide to Inns of the Deep South:  
Louisiana and Western Mississippi*

by

Winnie & Jack Baldwin

Picture a small country inn, in a quiet rural area, surrounded by huge oaks, alongside a pond, lake, river or bayou. Guests would be surrounded by antique furnishings and provided with evening refreshments, a tour of the inn, and a full or continental breakfast. Often, there are nearby attractions, even entertainment and shops. Apparently this scenario appeals to a lot of people, and those in the bed and breakfast industry have had success with it. Bed and breakfasts have been around for years in Europe, New England, and historical cities like New Orleans, or areas in the south with antebellum mansions. However, not until recently have bed and breakfasts begun to catch on and proliferate throughout the state.

Our story begins when we started freelance travel writing after retiring from the U.S. Postal Service in the early 1980s. We were successfully published in a variety of daily newspapers and small magazines and wanted to expand our horizons. We had enjoyed staying at bed and breakfasts while helping escort tours to Europe for

our son, John, and his wife, Marilyn, who are international travel consultants in Shreveport. At their suggestion, we began to compile a comprehensive Louisiana bed and breakfast guide. We gathered information by researching and then by personally visiting the inns and interviewing the innkeepers. We had a wonderful time, and in 1989 self-published *Baldwin's Guide to Louisiana Guesthouses and Bed and Breakfast Inns*, which listed 45 properties located in cities, small towns, and the Louisiana countryside.

Before the year was over, we printed an addenda of 39 additional inns. While doing the booklet, we also found time to write destination travel roundups on the states of Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and South Carolina for Weissmann Travel Reports in Austin, Texas. Then, in 1991, we inspected hotels in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi for Star Service, now a part of Reed Travel Group, publisher of a report for travel agents across the United States.

Meanwhile, we joined Louisiana Travel Promotion Association to strengthen our credentials.

Next, we began revising our guide to include the addenda and newly discovered establishments. Pelican Publishing Company in Gretna agreed to publish our manuscript, with the

stipulation that we include Natchez and Vicksburg, Mississippi, so that the book would cover a larger area.

Our final manuscript contained 161 inns and reservation services. The book, entitled *Baldwin's Guide to Inns of the Deep South: Louisiana and Western Mississippi*, was published in July of 1993.





## LT. GOVERNOR'S RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

---

**Toward a Sustainable Rural Heritage Tourism Strategy for Louisiana**  
A Report from the Lieutenant Governor's Rural Tourism Development Task Force  
September 1996

### **Background**

Louisiana's rural tourism initiative, which was undertaken some ten years ago, and adopted by the State in 1991, has been successful by all accounts. Rural parishes and communities are increasingly deriving greater economic benefits from tourism development. There are more attractions, employment and income attributed to this sector have grown, tax revenues have increased, and the number of tourist commissions has increased to over 50 statewide. The Task Force attributes most of the success to four distinct factors: (1) *enlightened leadership* at all levels of government and the private sector, which not only helped build awareness concerning opportunities, but also enthusiastically supported tourism-oriented education and training efforts for rural audiences; (2) *local and regional initiatives* that resulted in the establishment of extensive networks; these in turn created (3) many *public-private partnerships* to prepare, organize, coordinate, and promote tourism development activities, and; (4) *entrepreneurs* that founded the businesses and services that have ultimately produced the vast majority of new tourism-related jobs and added income in the state's rural areas.

The Lieutenant Governor's Rural Tourism Development Task Force has been an active participant in this development initiative since it was established in 1992. It has concluded that tourism's growth is likely to continue in rural areas; consequently, there will always be a need to identify and train leaders, build networks and partnerships, and nurture tourism businesses. A

more urgent need to be proactive and direct energies at the issue of *sustaining this development* is emerging. To meet this need, we must investigate matters that will assist rural Louisiana in developing tourism products that are (a) properly researched, planned and managed, and (b) represent a quality, authentic product demonstrating our pride and responsibility for the state's human and natural resources. These actions are based upon good stewardship as well as our focus on the future.

### **The Need for a Sustainable Development Approach**

The Task Force offers the following reasons for recommending a sustainable development approach:

- We want to build on our successes, while maintaining an awareness that growth and development are not the same.
  - There is a need for a vision/plan to preserve, conserve, while thinking about development.
  - Coordination and leadership are essential for vision/plan/implementation.
  - Tourism offers excellent opportunities for economic development in many of our rural areas.
- Louisiana possesses many unique natural and cultural resources.
  - Some of these are fragile and at-risk resources.
- Tourism attractions and activities have been expanding at a rapid rate without much regard for
  - Quality control of the tourism products.
  - Caution for development while seeking to preserve.
  - Encouraging participation without desecration.
  - Offering tourism experiences through preservation and conservation.
- Louisiana wants to successfully compete with other states and destinations.
  - This represents an outstanding opportunity for increased public-private partnerships.
  - This represents an outstanding opportunity to instill the notion to "think regionally-act locally" ("think globally, act locally").
- There is a national trend (with increased attention and funding) for more partnerships between state and federal governments, requiring the state to be responsible for guidance and coordination.
  - This represents an opportunity for national assistance and support for efforts at sustainable tourism.

### **A Sustainable Rural Heritage Tourism (SRHT) Initiative for Louisiana**

The Lieutenant Governor's Rural Tourism Development Task Force is recommending that the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism undertake a new, five-year initiative designed to develop and promote a *sustainable rural heritage tourism strategy*. For the purposes of this initiative, SRHT is "tourism that links the preservation and conservation of Louisiana's natural and cultural resources with rural economic development in order to promote sustained growth in our communities while protecting, and where needed, enhancing our valuable resources."

A parallel approach is recommended for planning, development, and implementation given that (a) such an effort is a major undertaking, and (b) the Department is diverse, as are its constituents. The parallel efforts in this approach are:

*NATURAL HERITAGE-BASED TOURISM.* Also known as ecotourism, nature-based tourism, natural history tourism, etc., Louisiana's natural heritage-based tourism depends on environmental features to attract visitors to a community. The attractions are a combination of man-made and natural resources. In order for this type of tourism to be sustainable, it must be properly planned and managed to ensure continued high quality outdoor experiences.

*CULTURAL HERITAGE-BASED TOURISM.* Louisiana's cultural heritage-based tourism captures the rural traditions, customs, beliefs, history, or folklife so that visitors can experience and share in the community's heritage. The local culture can be experienced by the physical features that remain and the traditional activities. In order for this type of tourism to be sustained, education as well as local pride and investment must be cultivated.

## **LOUISIANA RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS STORIES — 1991-1996**

### **1991**

The Old Lecompte School House, Ann Johnson - Lecompte

Small Business Development Center, Northeast Louisiana University,  
Paul Dunn - Monroe

Ponchatoula: America's Antique City, Charlene Dariels - Ponchatoula

The Piney Hills Regional Association, Sue Edmunds, Ruston Lincoln Parish  
Convention and Visitors Bureau - Ruston

Mayor Greg Marcantel, City of Jennings - Jennings

McGee's Landing, Mark Allemond - Henderson

### **1992**

Sabine River Authority, Linda Curtis-Sparks - Many

Pack and Paddle, Inc., Joan Williams - Lafayette

West Baton Rouge Museum, Karen Babb - Port Allen

Southwest Louisiana Marketing Consortium, Shelley Johnson - Lake Charles

Claiborne Parish's Handmade/Homegrown Festival, Lubertha Powell - Homer

CoCo Marina, Johnny Glover - Cocodrie

### **1993**

Plantation Pecan and Gift Co., Buddy and Carol Lee Miller - Waterproof

RV River Charters, Inc., E.G. Conrad, Jr. - New Orleans

Loyd Hall Plantation, Anne Fitzgerald - Cheneyville

Constable Dale G. Nix - Mooringsport

Sue and Harry Hebert, City of Plaquemine - Plaquemine

Southwest Louisiana Zydeco Music Festival, Wilbert Guillory - Opelousas

---

**1994**

Jean Lafitte Tourism Commission, Nancy Ting - Lafitte

Global Wildlife Center, Paula Finley - Folsom

Rochelle Michaud Dugas, Abbeville Main Street - Abbeville

The Nature Conservancy's Little Pecan Island Preserve, Allen May - Little Pecan Island

Mayor John Joseph, City of Opelousas - Opelousas

Sue Norman - Minden

**1995**

St. Francisville Overnight Association, Madeline Neville - St. Francisville

Virgie Ott, City of Gretna - Gretna

Kay LaFrance, Columbia Downtown Projects - Columbia

Ed Kelley, Cameron Parish Tourist Commission - Cameron

Doorway to Louisiana, Inc., Paul Rosenzweig - Lake Providence

River Road Plantation Parade Association, Zeb Mayhew, Jr. - Vacherie

**1996**

River Road African American Museum and Gallery, Kathe Hambrick - Gonzales

Southern Seaplane, Inc., Lyle and Rhonda Panepinto - Belle Chasse

Tammany Trace, Kevin Davis - Slidell

Louisiana Nursery Festival, Clyde Holloway - Forest Hill

City of St. Martinville, Mayor Eric Martin - St. Martinville

Baldwin's Guide to the Inns of the Deep South, Winnie and Jack Baldwin - Bernice