

LOUISIANA homes & gardens

YOUR COMPLETE HOME & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE | MARCH 2010

INSIDE LOUISIANA B&Bs

Celebrating Hays Town Architecture

Regional Modernism

Up Close with Ernest Gaines

The Grand Gardens of Houmas House

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reissuing in DVD format the half-hour documentary we made about him several years ago. The DVD will include several special features including a long interview with Mr. Town, his own sketches he published in his book, *The Architectural Style of A. Hays Town*, and photographs by Philip Gould from Cyril Vetter's book, *The Louisiana Houses of A. Hays Town*. The 176-page book features Gould's photos of various Louisiana homes including Town's own home in Baton Rouge.

"Hays was known as a modernist," asserts Dr. Brooks. "At age 60 he started designing post-modern versions of French colonial architecture. He moved us out of the '50s architecture into a more familiar architecture where outdoor and indoor living was connected through patios and courtyards that he had seen in New Orleans. It looks traditional but it was actually a contemporary idea. Once he started doing these houses, he actually closed his practice in Baton Rouge. It was one of the largest in the state. He started designing homes one at a time. He designed 1,000 of them."

The legacy of Town lives on in the gracious homes and buildings he created and in the lives of the many Louisiana architects he has inspired. Some of his clients have said that Town was more than an architect; he would often become a friend of the family. "When we give the Lifetime Achievement Award to a family, it will be a celebration where we can toast him one more time," Dean Brooks concludes. For further information on Festival of the Arts, visit the website <http://arts.louisiana.edu>. ♦





Nottoway splendidly rests along the **Great River Road** in the small town of **White Castle** in the heart of Plantation Country. Guests can stay overnight in the mansion and smaller overseer's cottage in spacious rooms and suites filled with antiques (newlyweds enjoy the honeymoon suite with a private pool).

Daily tours are given at Nottoway, which has 64 rooms on three floors, six interior staircases, 22 massive square columns, 165 doors, and 200 windows in addition to extraordinary plaster frieze work. The restaurant offers better-than-average food, including shrimp and grits for lunch and crawfish bisque, duck *confit*, and Angus steaks seared on a pecan-wood grill for dinner.

Take a short detour less than five miles from Nottoway and head toward **Bayou Goula**, where you will discover the world's smallest church, the **Chapel of the Madonna**. To the right of the door, mounted on the wall, is a wooden box where a key to unlock the front door is contained (if it isn't there, check the top of the door frame or ask the neighbor). The church was built in 1890 by a devout woman to fulfill a promise she had made during a sick child's illness. A special mass honoring the child is held each August.

**EXPLORING
PLANTATION
COUNTRY**



Majestic Nottoway plantation rests along the Great River Road in the small town of White Castle.



ANOTHER
SIDE OF
NEW
ORLEANS

In the New Orleans area, there are numerous historic B&Bs awaiting discovery. A few worth considering are located on the edge of the French Quarter on Esplanade Avenue including the **Ashton's Mansion** (circa 1861), which has a charming courtyard with a 300-year-old oak tree and is furnished with period antiques. The guest rooms have modern conveniences including telephones. The B&Bs on Esplanade are a short distance from City Park, the New Orleans Museum of Art, and the adjacent **Botanical Gardens**. Stop in for lunch or dinner at **Café Degas** on Esplanade and enjoy classic French cuisine in a small open-air dining room with a tin roof and an oak tree growing in the center of the room that is strewn with twinkling white lights. This is a romantic place to land during a rain storm. The tiny bar is popular with locals.

Another fine B&B worth visiting on Esplanade is the **Degas House**, which was home to French Impressionist Edgar Degas. The beautifully restored mansion is open for tours and has an elegant yet intimate B&B with a lush courtyard. Also on tree-lined Esplanade bordering the French Quarter is the **HH Whitney House** (circa 1865), an Italianate mansion that serves as a luxury B&B with antiques, ornate plaster rosettes and archways, fireplaces, cypress millwork, balconies, a swimming pool with a hot tub, tropical gardens, and a player piano. Past City Park is the **House on Bayou Road** (circa 1798), a B&B that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It features porches, lush patios and gardens, large antique-filled rooms, and a serene pond for a country plantation experience within the city.

In the midst of all the great antique shops, world famous old-line restaurants, and galleries in the **French Quarter** is the historic **Monteleone Hotel** featuring the **Carousel Bar** that continually rotates and overlooks the bustling French Quarter. It is a popular gathering spot for the local literary community (check out the **Tennessee Williams Festival** in March, with events at the hotel).

Uptown on **Magazine Street**, which stretches six miles along the Mississippi River, it is fun to get lost for a day in the art galleries, quaint boutiques, and antique shops (where you can easily bargain and get great deals). There are many wonderful restaurants run by renowned chefs including **Lillette**. Stop in for a romantic al fresco dinner at **Martinique's Bistro**, **Blue Frog Chocolates** for designer sweets, and **Martin's Wine Cellar** for good deals on fine wines.

A recommended B&B on Magazine Street in the Lower Garden District is the elegant, Greek Revival **McKendrick-Breaux House**. The nine spacious guest rooms feature king and queen beds, luxurious linens and bath robes, private baths with claw-foot tubs, and modern amenities including telephones with private voice mail, internet connectivity, and cable television. You will also find works by local artists and fresh flowers in your room. A tropical courtyard connects the two guest houses and there is a private parking lot for added convenience.

"I had been dreaming about opening a B&B for a while, ever since I started staying in them years ago," says owner Brett Ruth, who lives with his wife in the house. He has an amazing collection of more than 5,000 college and high school yearbooks from 1885 to 1945. "I'm the major collector and archivist for early yearbooks in the country," he says. "I've been collecting, repairing, and archiving them for around 10

years. When people come here we are happy to do a little research for them, their parents and grandparents. We have two very large bookcases of yearbooks in both parlors," he adds. An elaborate breakfast is offered featuring homemade baked goods such as scones, muffins, and cranberry nut bars.



The McKendrick-Breaux House in New Orleans features nine spacious guest rooms.

