

# Thoughts on the Cultural Impact of Katrina: People and Things and a web-site status report

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## PART II: STATUS REPORT

### New Orleans

My inquiry into the impact of Katrina on cultural resources in the region was undertaken because I currently serve as President of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association, and as an architectural historian, I see much of the physical New Orleans as a nineteenth century city, filled, street after street (and from high style to vernacular) with structures quintessentially nineteenth century. So much of the city is characterized by historic architecture and neighborhoods of vernacular Victorians with wood-framed, elaborately ornamented front porches; especially noteworthy are those unique “shot-guns” with rear second floor “camelbacks.”

New Orleans's architectural history, it might be said, almost started afresh as the nineteenth century opened, setting the stage for an essentially nineteenth-century place. Two extensive fires, one in 1788, and the other in 1794, devastated the city, destroying hundreds of 18th century buildings, both businesses and residences. New Orleans, and Louisiana, were under Spanish rule at the time, although the city, as it then existed, was a relatively crudely built French port and trading post. Nevertheless, it was ennobled by its open [Jackson] square dominated by St. Louis Cathedral (facade 1789-94, by G. Guillemard), and the Cabildo and Presbytery (both 1794-1813). The Presbytery was undergoing a \$2 million renovation this past summer. The further development of the cathedral architecture by J. N. B. de Pouilly in 1850, and the building of the Pontalba Apartments (1850s) on the sides of the square brought even this French Quarter focal urban space out of the colonial era and into the urbane nineteenth century.

In general, the **French Quarter and Garden District** escaped the extent of flooding we saw televised in other sections of New Orleans. Canal Street flooded, but not nearly as deeply. Patricia Gay, executive director of the Preservation Resource Center in New Orleans reports: “Many of the oldest areas of New Orleans closest to the river — from Bywater down-river of the French Quarter to St. Charles Avenue in Uptown and Carrollton — are intact. Some historic areas north of the French Quarter are also on higher ground and have not incurred the severe and tragic flooding.” The **Delta Queen Steamboat** (a sternwheel passenger river boat and National Historic Landmark) suffered no damage, as it was cruising well upriver; it will operate out of Memphis for now. “Nonetheless,” Ms. Gay reports, “areas closer to the lake and down-river of the Industrial Canal, including Preservation Resource Center's target area in the historic Lower Ninth Ward neighborhood of Holy Cross, have not fared well in this disaster.”

Since Katrina, art historians internationally have been checking the city maps to remind themselves where important collections are housed, as they try to recall the topography of the sites, for instance, the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Virlane Collection, the Contemporary Arts Center, and the Historic New Orleans Collection. Some reports from cultural institutions and art museums are encouraging.

In New Orleans the **Ogden Museum of Southern Art** “came through the storm just fine.”

The **New Orleans Museum of Art** likewise survived the hurricane and immediate aftermath (at least as reported by the *Times-Picayune* on August 31st). John Bullard, executive director, says that the museum stayed dry. He has secured a generator to provide climate control, which means the collection will not need to be moved. A *New York Times* article subsequently reported the museum was “under lock and guard. It is a jarring sight—two burly men carrying M-16 assault rifles on the marble steps of the New Orleans Museum of Art. ...The museum withstood the fury of Hurricane Katrina, suffering little damage and no looting. Its well-regarded collections of French paintings, Japanese prints, African art, photographs and decorative objects survived. So did the artworks in a two-level underground storage area, despite flooding...” Staff removed some sculpture, from the sculpture garden before the storm, but a “towering modernist” sculpture, “Virlane Tower” (valued at half a million dollars), was “reduced to a twisted mess in the lagoon.” Its creator, sculptor Kenneth Snelson, earlier lost an eight-foot artwork on 9/11 when the World Trade Center was attacked.

Brian Kirby, a staff reporter for the Mobile Register, reported on September 29th that “the amusement area in sprawling **City Park** looks like a remnant of a long-forgotten era.” Noting that the park “draws tourists to the New Orleans Museum of Art and the New Orleans Botanical Garden — begun during the Great Depression as a project of the Works Progress Administration, Kirby wrote of the “utter emptiness of people” that now “gives the park an eerie appearance.” A recently renovated wooden **carousel** of 1906, considered “the crown jewel of the amusement area” and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, displayed buckling floorboards under the horses but appeared intact. The **Southern Yacht Club**, the second oldest continuously existing yacht club in the nation, younger only than one in New York City, was located at the Orleans Marina off of Lakeshore Drive and remain today as only charred ruins, because firefighters had no water pressure adequate to extinguish the fire.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Pyle with the Associated Press reported on Sept. 7 that the **National D-Day Museum** in New Orleans was OK. A report two days later indicated the museum store and café were broken into by looters, and some flooding occurred there but not in the exhibit area. The museum, which opened June 6, 2000 —the 56th anniversary of the Normandy Invasion —, lies at the edge of New Orleans’ Warehouse District.

Priscilla Lawrence, executive director of **The Historic New Orleans Collection**, reports: “Members of the staff of The Historic New Orleans Collection were able to enter the French Quarter [in early September] with a state police escort. Our buildings and collections are high and dry. Much of the material was moved to a generous and accommodating institution in another part of the state. Because the presence of armed forces is now pervasive, we feel that the museum is extremely secure.”

On Sept. 9, Irene Wainwright described the **New Orleans Public Library** and the **New Orleans City Archives** as relatively safe. “Although the majority of our records (as well as the 19th- and early 20th- century records of the Orleans Parish civil and criminal courts) are housed in the basement of the main library, some 18 feet below sea level, the basement remained essentially dry. ...The basement sustained NO FLOODING, although there is a very small amount of water in one area, possibly caused by sewer backup. This water caused no direct damage to records themselves.”

**New Orleans Notarial Archives** suffered extensive water damage and may be an institution unfamiliar to most of us, but is a repository of inestimable significance. The New Orleans Notarial Archives holds 40 million pages of signed acts compiled by the notaries of New Orleans over three centuries. In New Orleans, nearly every property transaction that has occurred since the founding of the city was recorded by, or found its way to, a notary’s office. They reside in the only archive dedicated to notarial records in the United States, founded in 1867 when it gathered in the records of colonial and ante bellum notaries. With many documents damaged by flood waters, Rainbow International, a restoration and cleaning company, has been hired to salvage historical documents more than 100 years old, including documents from the Civil War and blue-prints of the city. The

documents will then be sent outside the city to be freeze-dried and preserved by the Munters Corp.

The Association of Children's Museums reported on Sept 9 that the **Louisiana Children's Museum** in New Orleans appears to be in good order, according to director Julia Bland. Every building around it had damage, but there was "not a scratch" on the museum.

**Long Vue** suffered major tree damage; although the house is dry, and no collections were flooded. In the early fall, concerns existed there (as elsewhere throughout the region) about the high relative humidity and mold growth.

**Confederate Memorial Hall** (designed by Henry Hobson Richardson/Shepley Rutan and Coolidge) on Lee Circle in New Orleans reported no flooding as of Sept. 2.

At the **New Orleans Zoo** the good news is that most of the animals are safe. Sadly, the **Aquarium of the Americas** lost most (perhaps all) of its fresh-water and salt-water fish. Penguins, sea otters, rare Australian sea dragons, and a 250-pound sea turtle named Midas all survived, however, and were loaded into crates Friday on Sept. 9 to be airlifted out of New Orleans. It is estimated that it will take a year to reopen the aquarium.

I then turned my attention to the **River road and bayous**.

As of late September, I had no news about the status of the following five houses, merely reminding ourselves of their location in the path of Katrina helps to emphasize the cultural richness of this region: **Ormond Plantation**, which claims to be the oldest French West Indies- style plantation in the lower Mississippi valley; **Homeplace Plantation**, constructed between 1787 and 1791, and one of the finest and least-altered examples of a large French Colonial raised cottage (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970 and located on the west bank of the Mississippi River in St. Charles Parish); the recently refurbished **Houmas House**, the 1840 Greek Revival mansion that provided the setting for the Bette Davis/Joan Crawford film "Hush Hush, Sweet Charlotte"; **Greenwood Plantation**, an 1830 Greek Revival Mansion "amid moss-draped oaks more than 150 years old"; and **Parlange** (1750), in New Roads, which is the most widely published "textbook" example the French Colonial raised plantation house.

Specific information, however, was obtained by contacting the house or from newspaper reports regarding other landmark houses.

**Beauregard House**, the 1830 plantation at Chalmette battlegrounds 7 miles down river from New Orleans's French Quarter, experienced 45 inches of flood water, lost part of its roof, and has suffered water damage to sections of its walls.

**Fort Massachusetts (Gulf Islands National Sea Shore):** "Storm surge flooded and damaged fort: earthen berm damaged, large granite blocks dislodged and in moat, interior filled with mud and debris several inches thick...reconstructed lighthouse destroyed," according to the National Park Service.

**Laura Plantation** (1805) writes to the author: "LAURA: a Creole plantation survived Hurricane Katrina with no damage to any of the historic Creole buildings. All of the plantation staff is safe and accounted for."

**Destrehan Plantation** (built in 1787 originally of West Indies architecture, but later renovated to the then-popular Greek Revival Style), said to be the oldest documented plantation house left intact in the lower Mississippi Valley, appears to have survived the hurricane with little structural damage to the house and outbuildings. A few shingles blew off roofs, lots of trees are down, and there was still no electricity for weeks after the storm. But Destrehan remains.

**Shadows-on-the-Teche** in New Iberia, La (owned by the National Trust for Historic Preservation), suffered no damage, according to Pat Kahle, director.

**Nottoway**, in White Castle, La, is an Italianate 1859 mansion considered the largest antebellum residence in the South. It was built by John Hampton Randolph of Virginia and is sited long the Mississippi River. House

administrators tell me they are open for B&B business: "...Nottoway Plantation home escaped Hurricane Katrina with no damage at all! ...While we did not suffer any structural damage to any of our buildings, small limbs and leaves covered much of our grounds."

**Evergreen Plantation** describes itself as the most intact plantation complex in the South with 37 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, including 22 slave cabins. Evergreen's original French Creole farmhouse was completely remodeled in 1832 by Pierre C. Becnel. Evergreen joins Mount Vernon and Gettysburg in being granted landmark status for its agricultural acreage. Today, Evergreen Plantation remains a privately owned, working sugar cane plantation, although it is open to the public by appointment. In a letter to the author, Renee Natell writes, "I am pleased to tell you that Evergreen suffered no damage to any of its buildings. The only damage was broken tree limbs. We did lose a couple of trees on the grounds, however, none were lost in the allee."

From **San Francisco Plantation**, general manager Mira K. Fontenot writes, "I am ... happy to report that the Plantation has weathered the storm with only some minor cosmetic damage, along with some downed trees and garden destruction.... While we have a little to do to clean up our area, I am happy to say... we are ... open for regular business. We will not let this keep us down. As the saying goes, "The show must go on."

And, in a letter from **Madewood Plantation**, a similar good report: "Everyone at Madewood is OK. The home was not damaged." Madewood is a circa 1840-48 Greek Revival mansion and was part of a sugar plantation.

Throughout these inquiries, I continued to recollect a time from years ago, standing with my back to a high Mississippi River levee, looking down a long row of live oaks at a sight of memorable romance— **Oak Alley**. I especially wondered about those noble live oaks (planted before 1718!) that formed a vista and defined a place so romantically "southern" that Oak Alley provides the setting for some 200-to-250 weddings each year. I am happy that, according to the Sept.7 edition of *Houma Today*: "Oak Alley Plantation, Louisiana's most visited antebellum house museum, was spared from the wrath of Hurricane Katrina and is opening its doors to be fully operational today. Despite the wide-spread destruction in southeastern Louisiana, the mansion, buildings and famed oaks suffered no damage." All this is remarkably good news, but contrasts with stories emerging from other locations in the region.

## Non-coastal Mississippi

The state capital in Jackson, Miss.—certainly not a coastal site—sustained 90 miles per hour winds when the storm reached that far inland. A third of the copper roof blew off **The Old Capitol Museum of Mississippi History**, and water then poured into an exhibit area and a storage room. Staff worked to move artifacts from one side of the building to the other, but there are hundreds (if not more) wet artifacts and some that are completely ruined.

**Libraries in Mississippi:** According to Sharman Smith, state librarian of Mississippi, (as reported by Mary Wegner, State Library of Iowa): "The new State Library of Mississippi building in Jackson, which is scheduled to open this year, was undamaged by the storm. "The damage south of Jackson in Mississippi is terrible, almost incomprehensible, with the full extent of the destruction not yet known. The storm surge along the Mississippi coast was about 40 feet, and the destruction extends from the beach about 90 miles inland. At least 10 libraries are known to have been completely lost..." The library at Bayou La Bayre, Alabama, is reported completely destroyed".

Reports from the **Natchez, Miss. National Historical Park** indicate no known collections damage. At **Melrose**, a backup generator supplied continuous power to the furnished exhibits in the mansion— the separate collections storage facility lost power, but it was restored within 36 hours. William Johnson House lost

power only for two hours.

In southern Mississippi, **Rosemont Plantation** in Woodville, circa 1810 (the family and boyhood home of Jefferson Davis) lost power for three days and lost water for two, but reports no damage to the historic structure, and utilities were restored.

Americanists among us certainly link William Faulkner to Mississippi (although we may not know well the state's geography). This audience will be comforted to know that Oxford, Miss, (the Mecca for Faulkner scholars) is well inland in the northern part of the state: **Rowan Oak**, Faulkner's home, suffered no hurricane damage.

## Coastal Mississippi

Hurricane Katrina came ashore right on the Louisiana/Mississippi border. As most of you know, the bull's-eye landfall of a hurricane is bad enough, but because of the counter-clockwise circulation of a hurricane, it is the northeast quadrant that packs the strongest punch and this means winds and the storm surge slammed into the full Gulf coast shoreline of Mississippi. Everything, from east of New Orleans to Mobile, was in the path of this northeast quadrant onslaught—Waveland, Pass Christian, Gulf Port, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, Pascagoula, Dauphine Island, and to a lesser extent mobile itself. Our investigation of Katrina's impact, therefore, shifts to these towns and this coastline, where the devastation was almost incomprehensible.

The impact of the outermost reaches of this northeast quadrant was less severe. Along the causeway from Spanish Fort to Mobile, the battleship **USS Alabama** is now listing 8 degrees. **Bellingrath Gardens** was closed for a month but reopened September 17th following storm cleanup. In Mobile itself there was flooding and the most severe damage to historic landmarks, as reported in regional damage assessments, involved the Museum of Mobile, a National Historic Landmark housed in the Southern Market/Old City Hall. Water seeped into building at 111 S. Royal Street through ventilation ports, carrying mud and silt, and left several inches of contaminated water on the 34,000 square feet of the first floor of the building. The museum will be closed until December at least, according to the *Mobile Register*.<sup>2</sup> Outside Mobile, damage on Dauphine Island, as evidenced in aerial photos, suggest that narrow stretches of barrier island such as this may not be the best sites on which to build.

Just west of Mobile lies Pascagoula, Mississippi, a community of beachfront historic houses, and home of a major ship-building industry [Northrop Grumman Ship Systems]. Pascagoula is the site of the so-called Old Spanish Fort, recently renamed the Krebs-LaPointe Home. Built by the French in 1718 (although later captured by the Spanish), this is considered the oldest structure surviving in the Mississippi Valley. Although some of its museum artifacts (historic items and American Indian relics) were lost to Katrina, the building survives, relatively unharmed, perhaps more stable than nearby frame buildings thanks to its 18-inch thick walls framed in cypress timber and cemented with oyster shells, mud, and moss.

Georgia Tech graduate student Dana Habeeb is from Pascagoula, Mississippi, and told me her parents rode out the storm, experiencing rising floodwaters into their second floor; she also told me that her parents will not be permitted to make their own decisions in the future. In helping me with this section of my report, Dana showed me some extraordinary aerial photos of the Gulf front streetscapes of her hometown along Highway 90. Before Katrina, the entire north side of Highway 90 was lined with historic homes amidst lush green oak trees and pines. "After" aeriels show a brown swatch of barren and empty plots of ground, where whole houses once stood. Remarkably, live oaks remain, but streetscapes now give no indication that there was, a few days earlier, an enfilade of Gulf-front mansions and cottages. Historic Pascagoula, several blocks deep from the shore, was wiped clean of its rich, shoreline architecture. Its most famous contemporary citizen, Trent Lott, owned a house that is now a vacant lot, with hardly a stick surviving.

From here, all the way to Waveland and Pass Christian, the scene was the same or worse. The city engineer of

**Pass Christian**, John Campton, said the town is “nothing but a mud flat”<sup>3</sup>

A local resident told the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) that the **Pass Christian Historical Society** building is “totally blown away.”

The September 3rd *Baltimore Sun* reported that in **Bay St. Louis, Miss.**, part of the **courthouse** collapsed.

In **Biloxi**, the Sept 15th *Sun Herald* reported [as republished in the *Mobile Register*] that Biloxi lost more than 5000 buildings, about 20% of its structures—with more to be condemned later.” Along the coast only lighthouses seem to be unscathed and remain standing as strange beacons in a sea of debris or empty sand flats. The Biloxi lighthouse in Mississippi, the Middle Bay and San Island lighthouses in the Mobile area have survived.

The town of Biloxi, before the storm, was a surreal juxtaposition of modern popular culture and historic buildings. The gambling casinos, those kitsch embodiments of popular culture with their Disneyesque stage prop superficiality, stood in clustered groups along the Gulf front (atop barges which made them legal) creating a shoreline of 20th c. pop architecture. Modern hotels and gambling casinos intruded visually on both the historic context of traditional neighborhoods as well as the environmental naturalism of the beach and coastal “edge.” Biloxi, like Myrtle Beach or even Las Vegas, had become its own main street of modern cement block motels, neon advertisements, concrete balconies, and non traditional scales, punctuated the landscape with shipwrecked or floating barges housing frame superstructures for gambling. Wrapped in paper- thin imagery, with skins of flimsy architectural dress, the coastal city had become a trumpet fanfare of artificial appliqué and stylish modern resort architecture. How different from Erich Mendelsohn’s De La Warr Seaside Pavilion at Bexhill-on-Sea, in England! But what Charles Jencks once called the carnivalesque branch of Postmodernism, had become in Biloxi its own uninhibited beach-front commercial display, up-town honky tonk without the redeeming context of a Coney Island or boardwalk. . Katrina blasted ashore and swept right through these blackjack sheds tearing away the lower half of the Treasure Bay Casino Resort [Fig. 3], for example, and peeling off other layers of its architectural costuming, leaving a shipwrecked ruin on an empty beach.

Some barges were picked up by the storm surge and redeposited virtually anywhere. The President Casino was moved four miles. Another landed on the historic Tullis Tolando house that may well have already blown completely away. Here’s the “before.” Now the “after.” The Tullis Tolando Manor was built in 1856 and is simply gone. The Tullis Slave Quarters of circa 1860 and the 1850 Crawford House were also both destroyed.

In Biloxi, architect Frank Gehry was within a year of completion of his addition to the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum of Art. Another dislodged casino barge bashed against his building crushing it. The Pleasant Reed House [a museum of African-American history and on the site of the Ohr Museum] was destroyed except for the chimney. By the way, despite devastation all around, the rest of the museum’s contents and collection is safe, including the Ohr pots that have been moved to the Mobile Museum of Art.<sup>4</sup>

A photo of the remains of the Hard Rock Café gives perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the power of the storm surge: the entire building simply folded over. Damage to other Biloxi landmarks and cultural resources, whether pop cultural or more traditionally “historic,” was widespread.

Ken P’Pool, historic preservation division director for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, reported “on Mississippi’s coast, it is estimated up to 300 historical buildings were lost and close to 900 were damaged.” The current question is whether overly zealous FEMA bulldozers operators will sweep away wholesale what Katrina damaged, including historic properties that are repairable.

Confederate President Jefferson Davis’s home in Biloxi, **Beauvoir** (1853), lost precious archived documents from its presidential library. The house itself is a good example of a “raised cottage” typical of early Gulf Coast architecture, and its design is credited with the survival of the house. Built on slightly elevated ground, the main structure of the house stands 12 feet off the ground on brick piers, allowing floodwaters to surge through. Indeed, floodwaters did push many of Beauvoir’s artifacts out into the mud, where some of them were stolen. Beauvoir’s front gallery was ripped off, and the first floor was badly damaged. “That’s where many of the valuable artifacts were secured prior to the storm.

"All is not lost there," said Ken P'Pool, but part of the roof is torn away, windows are smashed, and the back portion is crumbling. Elsewhere on the Beauvoir property there was worse destruction. The *Sun Herald* in south Mississippi reported: "...The library pavilion, where Jefferson Davis penned "The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," the Hayes Cottage, Soldier's Home Barracks replica, Confederate Soldier's Museum, gift shop and director's home were totally destroyed," and the Presidential Library lost its first floor. The good news is that the second-floor reference library of the Presidential Library survived, and two small cottages and a barn in the back of the property were untouched by flooding.

Nearby, the **Episcopal Church of the Redeemer**, built in 1860, and where Jefferson Davis was a member of the Vestry, was destroyed. Following Katrina, the congregation met on lawn chairs and stools.

The 1895 **Brielmaier House** in Biloxi, which had served as a visitors' center, was seen floating down the street during the storm.

With respect to other Biloxi museums and structures, I have obtained the following information:

The *Clarion-Ledger* reported that the **Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum** in Biloxi was gutted.

Regarding the **Marine Life Oceanarium** in nearby Gulfport, MS the *Baltimore Sun* reported on August 31st that there is an empty space where the aquarium used to be.

The **Dantzer House** in Biloxi, which had just been remodeled to house a Mardi Gras museum, was destroyed according to an August 31st report on TheDay.com. National Public Radio, broadcasting on September 7th, described the house as "pulvarized by the hurricane."

National Public Radio's Weekend Edition reported on September 18th on the loss of the **Walter Anderson artist colony, Shearwater**. "Since the 1920s, a family of artists have made their home at **Shearwater**, a complex overlooking Mississippi's Biloxi Bay. Perhaps most famous is the late Walter Inglis Anderson, known for vibrant watercolors of Gulf Coast landscapes. His two brothers were potters, and a fourth generation of the family carries on the Shearwater pottery tradition. Hurricane Katrina swept through Shearwater, taking out nine (out of eleven) family homes and six other buildings, and severely damaging [the *Mobile Register* said destroying] the pottery workshop that had been in operation since 1928. Paintings and murals were lost. Some of Walter Anderson's work is housed at an Ocean Springs, Miss. museum that survived the storm. But the family's treasured private collection -- full of writings, paintings, and linoleum blocks -- was kept at Shearwater in a special vault. And it didn't fare as well." The Mississippi Heritage Trust Web site shows the Walter Anderson House "washed off its piers, but still remains intact." And a report in early October sounded more hopeful when Robin Fitzhugh, director of the Eastern Shore Art Center, was quoted as saying, "We are excited that enough of the artwork survived 28 feet of water that took out many of the structures at Shearwater including the pottery buildings where generations of the Anderson family have created wonderful and imaginative clay pieces."<sup>5</sup>

In nearby **Ocean Springs**, Mississippi, at the **USM Gulf Coast Research Lab**, the Coast Guard permitted access to collections on September 15th when it was reported the collections including over 5000 specimens grown over a 30-year period had flooded, according to marine botanist Patrick Biber. At the **Gulf Islands National Seashore**, the storm surge flooded exhibits and museum collections at the Davis Bayou Visitor Center. The Museum Emergency Response Team is stabilizing collections that were moved to the National Park Service Southeast Archeological Center and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. Frozen archives will be shipped and treated off-site.

A notable modern landmark in Ocean Springs is Bruce Goff's 1960 house built for William Conneil Gryder, a chain store shoe salesman. I cannot resist reminding you of Charles Jencks's description of Goff as the "Michaelangelo of kitsch." The **Gryder house** is hardly orthodox Modern, but the Gryder House is a notable architectural site in the Gulf Coast region, and it appears to have come through OK. The house was not sited beach front and is located on slightly higher ground. Nevertheless, the winds must have whistled around the curved walls and roof of the Gryder House which still sits like a preying mantis surveying its private water

garden—Goff at his post-Wrightian geometric best, Modern at its most unorthodox. Reports from SECAC member Phil Oszuscik inform me that the house lost its high stove-pipe chimney, which rose like a flag pole over its sweeping roof, but the Gryder House appears relatively intact.

The same cannot be said about work by Goff's friend and paragon, Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright came to the Gulf Coast 70 years before Goff's Gryder House and built two houses there in 1890 during the period Wright worked for Adler and Sullivan. The **Ocean Springs vacation cottages**, one for **Louis Sullivan** himself, and the second next door for **James Charnley**, are about as "early Wright" as you can get—he had begun his architectural career only three years earlier. Sullivan fell in love with the Gulf Coast and the beauty of the natural landscape, and a 1905 *Architectural Record* description of the veranda of the Sullivan bungalow speaks of "great clusters of white wisteria hanging from the roof" and the view "across the stretch of water of the bay glittering with countless gems beyond the ransom of kings." When Katrina hit Ocean Springs, the Louis Sullivan House was "vaporized," according to its owner, and Louis's "paradise, the poem of spring, Louis' other self" [as he wrote in *An Autobiography of an Idea*] was simply gone.

Next door, the James Charnley House was severely damaged, with both house and guesthouse knocked off their piers; a tree fell on the guesthouse roof. This cypress shingle-clad house was something of a sister house to the more famous James Charnley House in Chicago: Wright designed the brick "palazzo" Chicago residence for Charnley the following year (1891), now the headquarters of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH). Some say the Charnley vacation cottage may be salvageable, but at considerable expense; the Sullivan House, however, is simply and completely gone. [Post-Katrina images may be viewed at <http://www.mississippiheritage.com/HurricaneKatrina> "Hurricane Katrina's Impact on Historic Structures in Mississippi:"]

Merely three years ago, accompanied by our colleague and Gulf Coast area scholar Phil Oszuscik and Louis Sullivan expert Paul Sprague (now retired in Florida), I visited both houses, and, for many years at Georgia Tech, I have included them in lectures on Frank Lloyd Wright. They are among Katrina's major nineteenth-century architectural losses, and were some of the earliest designs of America's most famous modern architect.

## Notes

1. Brendan Kirby, "An Eerie walk through City Park" *The Mobile Register*, September 29, 2005.
2. Thomas B. Harrison, Arts Editor, "Museum of Mobile still in limbo: damage review to begin Oct. 9," *Mobile Register*, Sunday, October 02, 2005.
3. *Mobile Register*, 9/21/05.
4. Thomas B. Harrison, "Mobile facility now repository for Ohr-O'Keefe works: Museum of Art will indefinitely house pottery collection of storm-damaged Biloxi gallery," *Mobile Register*, Thursday, September 15, 2005. See also, "Kudos for saving pottery," *Mobile Register*, Thursday, September 29, 2005.
5. "Birds of Walter Anderson' opens in Fairhope," *Mobile Register*, Sunday, October 02, 2005. [Staff report]