

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

March 26, 1956

Old New Orleans

Of course we had dinner at Antoine's and visited the Cabildo, one of the most notable museums of the United States, were welcomed in a number of the antique shops which line Bourbon, Royal and Pirate's Alley in the French quarter, in New Orleans, ate oysters a la Rockefeller, Gumbo Creole and Pompano en Papillote and thoroughly enjoyed all the experiences of our first visit in the city in the South.

It one goes to Antoine's expecting to dine in a place gorgeously decorated, with a select band playing, popular music, with footmen in princely livery opening the carriage doors, and grooms to take care of the cloaks, then this is not the place, Antoine's is today what it was at its Inception, we were told - an immaculately clean place of home-like atmosphere and attentive, noiseless waiters. There is no band to detract from the enjoyment of your food.'

The founder of Antoine's came to New Orleans in 1840 from his native France and his grandson is now the proprietor.

After our dinner we were taken on a tour of the various 15 private and banquet rooms and to view the narrow wine cellar numbering well over 5,000 bottles, the oldest dating to 1884. When Antoine's was established there were no electric lights, no automobiles, no moving pictures, no radio, no telephones and no elevators. The customer's orders are taken without the aid of paper and pencil, and entirely by memory, and it is the claim that seldom is an error made or that omissions occur.

The Oysters a La Rockefeller at Antoine's were so named because of the extreme richness of the sauce, and because at that time the elder Rockefeller was the richest man in the world. Pompano en Papillote was especially created in honor of the distinguished French balloonist who was entertained at Antoine's, the paper bag being fashioned to resemble the inflated gas bag of the balloon. Its main purpose, of course, is to preserve the flavor.

The building which houses the Louisiana State Museum, known as the Cabildo, has a history even more interesting than many of the exhibits it houses. It was built in 1795 by Don Andres Almonaster y Roxas as a

meeting place for the Spanish Legislature of the province. The first Protestant religious services ever held in Louisiana were conducted in a room on the second floor, which information brought back to us memories of Colton Hall in Monterey. It was in this same building that the formal transfer of Louisiana to the United States consummated the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Later it was used as a city hall and court building. The building was made a state museum in 1910.

We observed that our California Division of Beaches and Parks, who have our state monuments under their care, do a much better job at keeping them in an excellent state of preservation and cleanliness, than does the State of Louisiana.

Tonight, we are in Natchez, a city of 27,948 population, in one of the oldest cities in the South. Natchez was once the center of a vast and rich plantation country, and many of the magnificent town and plantation homes of that day remain and are open to the public at all times: others may be seen only during the Garden Pilgrimage Weeks, usually held during March. It is for this annual pilgrimage that we are guests here tonight. Tomorrow we will spend the day touring a number of the historic antebellum homes. In our next issue of the Peninsula Diary, we will tell you of our adventures - a privilege which we have been looking forward to for many a day gone by.