

history

Canal Street is reputedly the widest main street in the US. It gets its width and name from a proposed, but never constructed, canal that was to extend from the turning basin of the Carondelet Canal and follow a path around the Vieux Carre on a right-of-way that now includes Canal and Basin Streets. It eventually became the physical and symbolic divider between the old Creole 1st Municipality (Vieux Carre) and the new American 2nd Municipality (Faubourg Ste. Marie), now the business district. The large median—even larger then—was called the neutral ground, a name that is now used for medians throughout the city. This area was a grassy promenade and later a right-of-way for street railways, with as many as five tracks at their peak. The street use went from residential to commercial in the middle nineteenth century. The commercial usage has gone through many phases and continues to change.



Pickwick Club
Photo by Charles L. Franck. Provided Courtesy of the Historic New Orleans Collection

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, retail spaces including music houses, dominated the street. Then small “nickelodeon” theaters became popular. Soon larger theaters, department stores, and hotels began opening. Also included were some dance halls and radio station studios on upper floors. Some of these locations were the site of temporary or “field recording” studios for various record labels.

Many of these uses had one thing in common—music. It permeated Canal St. then, and is still around today as the street becomes a boulevard of restaurants and hotels.

WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO USE GOOD JUDGEMENT AND COMMON SENSE IN TAKING THIS TOUR AS IT IS IN AN URBAN AREA.

In 1987 the United States Congress, through Concurrent Resolution 57, designated Jazz "a rare and valuable national American treasure to which we should devote our attention, support and resources to make certain it is preserved, understood and promulgated."

This historic site tour is a program of the New Orleans Jazz Commission, a 17 member National Park Service public commission appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. The Commission was authorized on October 31, 1994 through Public Law 103-433 which established the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park - a new National Park focused on the early culture of traditional jazz.



The New Orleans Jazz Commission's concurrent mission with New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park includes the evaluation of historic sites associated with the origins and early history of jazz, as well as preservation and interpretation of jazz history.

Further information on the historic jazz sites contained in this tour can be accessed at:

New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park.
916 N. Peters. 589-4841 www.nps.gov/jazz



Hogan Jazz Archives at Tulane University.
6801 Freret St. Jones Hall. 865-5688

Special Collections - Tulane University. Jones Hall. 6801 Freret St. 865-5685

New Orleans Jazz Museum Collection, LA State Museum.
The Mint. 400 Esplanade 568-8215

Historic New Orleans Collection. 533 Royal St. 523-4662 *Williams Research Center.* 598-7171

New Orleans Public Library - Louisiana Division.
219 Loyola. 596-2610

Preservation Resource Center.
923 Tchoupitoulas. 581-7032

Visit our website www.nojazzcommission.com

New Orleans Jazz history

WALKING TOURS

CANAL STREET



Canal St. early 1920s

1

NUMBER ONE OF THE JAZZ HISTORY WALKING AND MOTOR TOUR SERIES

Sponsored by the New Orleans Jazz Commission

tour map

1. THE JUNG HOTEL. 1500 Canal St. This hotel was designed by Weiss and Dreyfous in 1924 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Its Tulane Room was the site of jazz dances and its Jung Hotel Roof Garden featured the hot music of the Ellis Stratakos Orchestra in the late 1920s and early 1930s. It is now the Radisson Hotel.

2. LOEW'S STATE THEATER. 1108 Canal St. Now the State Palace, this theater opened in 1925 and was designed by Thomas W. Lamb, the world's most prolific theater architect. The pit orchestra featured clarinetist Charlie Scaglioni and trumpeters Leo and Lucian Broekhoven.

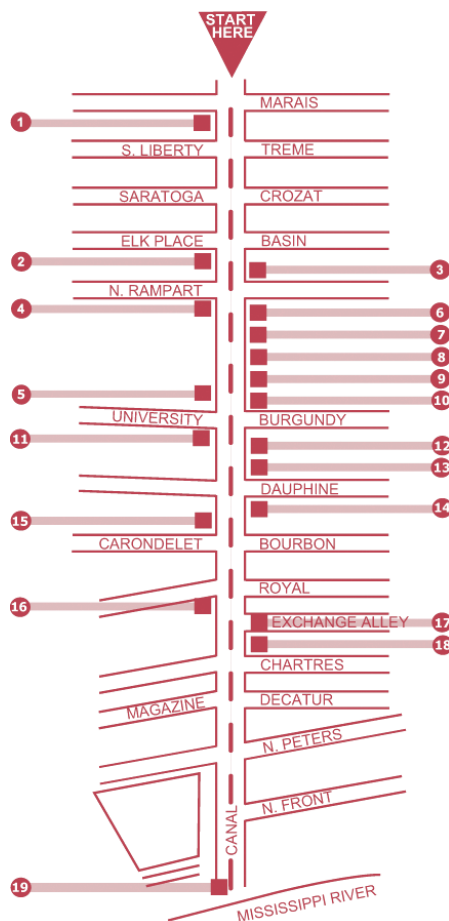
3. THE SAENGER THEATER. 1111 Canal St. The Saenger was designed as an "atmospheric" theater (with stars and clouds) by architect Emile Weil and opened in 1927. It still has its Robert-Morton organ and a rising orchestra pit for fifty musicians. Included in its various musical groups were trumpeters Johnny Dedroit, Mike Caplan and Louis Prima, banjoist, Steve Loyacano and clarinetist, Tony Parenti. Castro Carazo, who led the orchestra, later collaborated with Governor Huey P. Long on several compositions.

4. THE PICKWICK CLUB. 1030 Canal St. This club's design was based on a Venetian Palazzo prototype by Shepley, Routan and Coolidge in 1896. It had a Turkish lounge and a roof garden. Its three-term president, music store impresario Philip Werlein, III, undoubtedly made sure that the latest in New Orleans music was played on the premises. The building has now been heavily modified.

5. THE EMPIRE THEATER. 1010 Canal St. This medium-sized theater in an attractive early twentieth-century eclectic-style building, was operated by Jake Miller and his wife between 1917 and 1919. Music was provided by the Empire Jazz Band.

6. THE ALAMO THEATER. 1027 Canal St. This small movie theater was designed by Emile Weil and was long associated with the Fichtenburg chain. Numerous musicians played in its small pit including Indianapolis born composer and pianist J. Russel Robinson, who later played in the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. The building now has a metal Art Deco facade which was added at a later date.

7. THE NO-NAME THEATER. 1025 Canal St. Here was another small movie theater that featured New Orleans musicians in its pit. Its interesting name was the brainchild of Vic Perez, who opened the theater with a contest to name it. Perez, who was too cheap to award the cash prize, said none of the entries were acceptable and the theater would forever have "no name".



8. BLACKMAR MUSIC PUBLISHERS. 1023 Canal St. One of New Orleans' leading publishers during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Blackmar Brothers, Armand and Henry, worked from this location c.1860-1880s. The facade of this building has been modified from its original construction.

9. JUNIUS HART MUSIC CO. 1001 Canal St. The music company occupied the ground floor of this building while Hart and his family lived on the upper floors. A great music merchandiser of the late nineteenth century, he published a Mexican Music series including all things "latin" and promoted it by touring the Eighth Cavalry Mexican Band around the US.

10. THE ALAMO DANCE HALL. 1001 Canal St. When Junius' music store relocated, the Alamo Dance Hall moved into the second floor of this location. While the entrance was on Burgundy St., the dancehall overlooked Canal St. Many musicians and bands played here including banjoist and guitarist Danny Barker.

11. HACKENJOS MUSIC. 930 Canal St. In 1905 this was a small New Orleans publishing company for local compositions, some of which captured the essence of New Orleans music at the time. Composers Al Verges and F.C. Schmitt were associated with the company and were sheetmusic demonstrators in the music store.

12. WSMB RADIO. 921 Canal St. WSMB's studio was on the top floor of the Maison Blanche Building (now the Ritz-Carlton) for several decades. The station was a joint venture of the Saenger Amusement Co. and the Maison Blanche department store. The station had a long-time preference for jazz, initially as live music, and later as recorded music.

13. MEDINE MUSIC HOUSE (1900), THE CABLE CO. (1905) AND DUGAN MUSIC (1915). 914 Canal St. Home to these New Orleans music houses through the early 1900s. Cable published the ragtime of noted organist and composer Robert Hoffman.

14. THE PLAZA THEATER. 841 Canal St. Another local theater featuring movies and local music. Mary Nadal, later the wife of Robert Hoffman, accompanied silent pictures here with a piano equipped with an "Orgatron" device that converted its sound to an organ.

15. THE TRIANON THEATER. 814 Canal St. This was a medium-sized house again featuring movies and music. Pianists such as Irwin Leclere possibly played here from 1918 into the 1920s.

16. THE DREAM WORLD THEATER. 632 Canal St. Dating from around 1908, this was another Canal St. nickelodeon theater featuring New Orleans music. Composers and pianists Tom Zimmerman and Irwin Leclere were employed as house musicians.

17. "THE ALLEY". 100 Exchange Pl. The first block of Exchange Place known as "the alley" was a musicians' hangout. American Federation of Musicians Local No. 174 was on the second floor near Iberville St. Non-union musicians gathered on the block waiting for jobs from Jack Laine and other leaders.

18. WERLEIN'S MUSIC. 605 Canal St. Located in this building for over 75 years (now the Palace Cafe), this was one of New Orleans leading music houses and is still in business at other locations. Werlein's published music and sold instruments and supplies. Jazz bands often played outside the store on sidewalks and bandwagons.

19. MISSISSIPPI RIVER LANDING. Foot of Canal St. The river landing at Canal St. has traditionally been the docking point for river cruises with music. In the past the famed steamers Capital, J.S., Sidney, President and Admiral all docked at this point. River cruises with jazz still depart from this location.