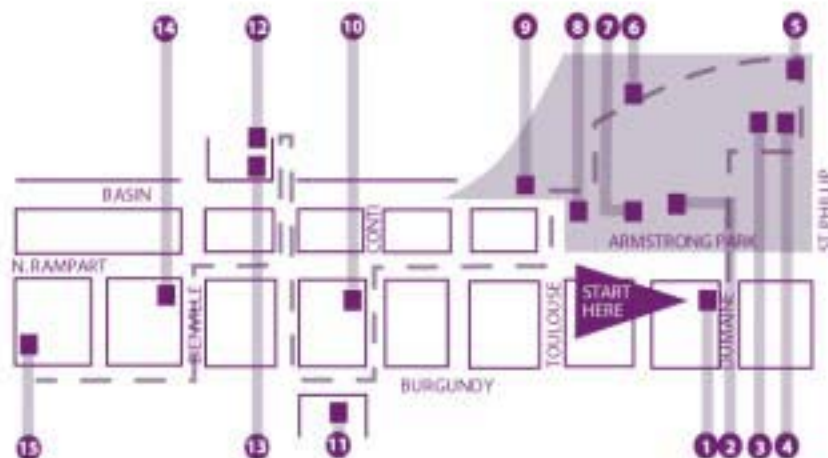


Treme Vieux Carre Storyville

tour map

HISTORY The area in this tour includes parts of Faubourg Treme, the Vieux Carre, and Storyville. Treme, a relatively low-density residential area with some commercial use dates from 1810, and is the third oldest faubourg (suburb), with Faubourg Ste. Marie (1788)—now the Central Business District—being the first, and Faubourg Marigny (1805)—below the Vieux Carre—being the second. The Vieux Carre, of course, is the original city founded by Bienville in 1718. Storyville, until it became the famous red-light district, was a small, relatively non-noteworthy residential area bordered by the Vieux Carre, Canal St. and St. Louis Cemeteries Nos. 1 and 2.

The parts of these three areas encompassed in this tour have all gone through great physical transformation, but retain just enough of their original elements to enable one to envision the way they looked at the beginning of the twentieth century.



1. CASIMO MATASSA'S RECORDING STUDIO. 840 N. Rampart St. This was the site of recording engineer Cosimo Matassa's first commercial studio. Aside from recording many of New Orleans most famous rhythm and blues artists, Cosimo also recorded many jazz greats such as Papa Celestin, Raymond Burke and the original Dukes of Dixieland.

2. ARMSTRONG PARK. 600, 700, & 800 blks N. Rampart St. Louis Armstrong Park occupies 31 acres, most of which were formerly historic structures in Faubourg Treme. Louis Armstrong's death on June 6, 1971, precipitated a plan by the City of New Orleans to develop a memorial to one of its favorite sons. A diverse community committee finally settled on a plan to turn the wasteland left over from a failed cultural center plan into a memorial park. In 1974, \$10 million was dedicated to the project. On April 15, 1980, the park opened, featuring a statue of Armstrong executed by noted sculptress Elizabeth Catlett.

3. PERSEVERANCE MASONIC LODGE. Armstrong Park. The Jazz Complex has many architectural elements that pre-date the park. The Perseverance Masonic Lodge No. 4 building, positioned at the former corner of St. Claude and Dumaine Sts., is arguably the oldest Masonic structure in the Mississippi Valley, and the existing hall seems to have incorporated large parts of buildings dated as early as 1810. It has a now-rare raised bandstand and was the site of much music.

4. LODGE KITCHEN BUILDING. Armstrong Park. The Lodge facility also contains a detached kitchen building to its immediate right, now housing local community music radio station WWOZ.

5. RABASSA HOUSE. Armstrong Park. The Rabassa House was moved hundreds of feet from a site on St. Ann Street to its new location adjacent to the kitchen building. This raised cottage was the residence of New Orleans architect and Treme resident J. N. B. de Pouilly. Along with many other notable structures, such as St. Louis Cathedral and St. Augustine Church, he designed the Girod Asylum, later the Colored Waifs' Home, where Louis Armstrong received his critical early musical training.

6. MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM. Armstrong Park. Designed in 1929 in the Italian Renaissance style by architects Favrot & Livaudais, it is a large arena-style facility that can be divided into two separate theaters. Innumerable events with jazz have taken place here over the years including about half of Louis Armstrong's return-trip performances.

7. SIDNEY BECHET MONUMENT. Armstrong Park. The Sidney Bechet monument was erected in 1997 during a celebration honoring the 100th anniversary of his birth. The larger-than-life head is a copy of one in Juan Les Pins, France, his adopted home.

8. CONGO SQUARE. *Armstrong Park.* Congo Square is one of many names used over the years for the once-much-larger commons in front of the Municipal Auditorium. Its most legendary use was as a recreational area where slaves were allowed to perform African and Caribbean dances. It was also an area where Choctaw Indians played a Lacrosse-like game, military troops drilled, and circuses performed. When the original city was surrounded by fortifications, it was the site of Fort St. Ferdinand. Its other names over time were Place D'Arms, Place Publique, Circus Square, and Beauregard Square.

9. THE COMMEMORATIVE TREE GROVE. *Armstrong Park.* This was planted as a memorial to twelve jazz musicians including Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and Leon Roppolo. This grove is tucked away in a seldom-visited quiet corner of the park near the former site of the turning basin for the old Carondelet Canal which connected the city to Bayou St. John and Lake Pontchartrain.

10. NORMA WALLACE'S HOUSE. *1026 Conti St.* This brick structure was the site of the last operating house-of-prostitution in the once-thriving Tango Belt. The Tango Belt was the corner of the Vieux Carre bounded by and including Iberville, Dauphine, St. Louis, and Rampart Sts. Once an area of respectable theaters and cabarets, it quickly supported of the milder side of the "sporting life:" prize fighting, proto-jazz music, alcohol, and dance halls. When Storyville's future became uncertain, sub-rosa drugs and prostitution completed the picture here.

11. PETE HERMAN'S CLUB. *942 Conti St.* Here was another Tango Belt fixture. It's many names over the years included the Ringside Cafe, the Plantation Club, and possibly the Orchard, and the Black Orchid. Herman, whose real name was Peter Gulotta, was twice the world bantamweight boxing champion, and for a time was married to Norma Wallace. For a while she operated her business in the rooms above the nightclub.

12. LULU WHITE'S SALOON. *237 Basin St.* This is one of three remaining structures from Storyville, the legendary, legalized red-light district. Storyville was, much to his chagrin, "named" after Alderman Sidney Story, a straight-laced Victorian who devised the plan in order to restrict vice to one specified and regulated area. The legalized district lasted from 1897 to 1917, when Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels ordered it closed, claiming it posed a hazard to servicemen stationed in New Orleans. Lulu White was Storyville's most famous madame, and her elaborate Mahogany Hall stood to the immediate left of her corner saloon building, which lost its second floor during Hurricane Betsy in the 1960's.

13. "MY PLACE" SALOON. *1214 Bienville St.* Frank Early's "My Place" Saloon is another of the three remaining Storyville structures (the third is Joe Victor's Saloon at St. Louis and Villere Sts.). The famous entertainer, composer, and pianist Tony Jackson lived above the saloon and composed his hit song Pretty Baby, while residing on the premises.

14. NEW ORLEANS ATHLETIC CLUB. *222 N. Rampart St.* Originally the Young Men's Gymnastic Club, this has been a mainstay in athletic and musical circles for over a century. The members of both Tom Brown's Band From Dixie and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band played here before heading north. The Boswell Sisters were "discovered" while singing here and immediately signed to a tour on the Orpheum Circuit. The current imposing structure on N. Rampart St. with its stunning ballroom, is the newest of four structures in the complex. Designed by Diboll & Owen in 1929, it replaced a earlier mansion on the same site.

15. ALAMO DANCE HALL. *113 Burgundy St.* The Alamo Dance Hall was a second-floor dance emporium which was entered from a side staircase on Burgundy St. on the edge of the Tango Belt. The dancehall space overlooked Canal St., and featured bands with many New Orleans musicians including guitarist and banjoist Danny Barker.



Statue in Armstrong Park



Lulu White's saloon.
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