



Investigation Summary Report

Ormond Plantation Destrehan, LA



HISTORY

Built before 1790 on a tract of land granted by the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, the Ormond Plantation has survived into the late 20th Century with its unique character and sometimes tragic history. In the early 1780's, Pierre d'Trepagnier was awarded a tract of land by the Spanish Governor Don Bernardo deGalvez, in recognition of Trepagnier's service in subduing the British at Natchez during the American Revolution. The main building was completed shortly before 1790 and occied by Mr. and Mrs. d'Trepagnier and their children. d'Trepagnier began growing indigo, and then sugar cane, and the Plantation began to prosper.

The house is built in the "Louisiana Colonial" style for plantations, which is modeled after the great sugar plantations of the West Indies. The house was constructed using bricks between

cypress studs ("Briquettes Entre Poteaux" -Brick Between Posts) on the front and rear walls and a type of adobe filling on the sidewalls. Round cemented brick columns sported the front porch, or gallery, with wood columns on the second floor sporting the roof.

The home was often the scene for entertaining officials of the Louisiana and Spanish Governments. In 1798, the first of the mysteries occurred. Pierre d'Trepagnier was summoned from a family meal by a servant to meet a gentlemen, supposedly dressed in clothes signifying a Spanish official. After a word to his wife, Pierre d'Trepagnier left with the man and never returned. No trace of d'Trepagnier was ever found.

On June 25, 1805, Col. Richard Butler, son and nephew of American Revolutionary war heroes bought the plantation home and land from Mrs. d'Trepagnier. Butler had served in the U.S. Army and had fallen in love with the South. He named his new home "Ormond", after his ancestral home, the Castle Ormonde in Ireland. On August 7, 1809, Butler became a business partner with Captain Samuel McCutchon, a merchant and sailor, originally from Pennsylvania, when he sold to McCutchon, one-third share in Ormond Plantation. On June 29, 1819, in a private pact signed at the Plantation, Richard Butler turned over all of his holdings to Samuel McCutchon, and moved to Bay St. Louis. Some say that Butler moved to escape the Yellow Fever epidemic, but no true reason has been documented. If he did move to escape the fever, he did not move far enough away. The Yellow Fever hit Bay St. Louis and both Mr. and Mrs. Butler died from the disease in 1820. Richard Butler was forty-three.

There is some disagreement as to when the two existing wings, or garconnières, were built. Some say that they were built around 1811 by Richard Butler. An equal number believe that they were built in 1830 by Capt. McCutchon. It is these garconnières that give Ormond its distinctive look. The garconnières are taller than the main building, and of a design possibly from an Atlantic Seaboard influence. Capt. McCutchon prospered both as a planter and merchantman and Ormond was one of the beneficiaries of that prosperity. McCutchon filled his home with furnishings from Great Britain, France and the Orient. During this time, Capt. McCutchon's eldest son, Samuel B., married Adele d'Estrehan, the daughter of the owner of neighboring Destrehan Plantation. Samuel B. and his brother James William took over the Plantation on the death of Capt. McCutchon, and continued its prosperity.

Like many other plantations of the South, Ormond fell on hard times following the War Between the States. She changed hands twice before being sold at public auction in 1874, and again in 1875.

Ormond was bought on December 1, 1898, by State Senator Basile LaPlace, Jr., son of the famous New Orleans pharmacist and land owner after whom the town of LaPlace is named. LaPlace's stay was short and tragic. He had earned a name for himself as a Justice of the Peace and then as a State Senator, and also by successfully managing the LaPlace Station, the land that his father left him. He used his wealth to buy Ormond, with hopes of profiting from its rice production. But, as is typical in politics, LaPlace also made a few enemies. On October 11, 1899, Basile LaPlace, Jr., met an ugly death.

Local legend has it that LaPlace had made enemies with the Ku Klux Klan, also known as the "White Caps". Spousedly he was called out into the night, and the members set on him, riddling his body with bullets, and then hanging him in the large oak tree which stands on River Road in front of the plantation home.

Ormond passed from LaPlace's widow to his mother and then to the Schexnayder family, all during the year 1900. The five Schexnaydre brothers (Joseph, Emilien, Barthelemy, Albert, and Norbet) each held an undivided one-fifth share of the property. The brothers drew straws to determine who would live in the House. Emilien drew the lucky straw, and moved his family into Ormond. Emilien died in 1910, but his children continued to live and raise their families in the house. At one time there were five families living under the roof of Ormond. The Schexnaydre's held the property until 1926 when they turned it over to the Inter-Credit Corporation.

The story of Ormond becomes hazy in the late 1920's and through the 30's. It seems that a number of tenants occied the house and land. Reports tell of the crumbling walls and ceilings, the sagging porch, and the general deterioration of the house.

Fortunately for us, it was not too late to salvage Ormond. Thanks to its great original construction, it was able to be restored and renovated by Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Brown, owners of the Brown's Velvet Dairy in New Orleans. Beginning in late 1943, the Browns undertook major restoration, and renovations, which included enclosing the carriage ways and making the garconnières an integral part of the building. The Browns' family added modern conveniences, such as indoor plumbing, gas and electricity.

After the death of Mrs. Brown, Mr. Brown sold Ormond to a real estate developer, and moved back to New Orleans. Original plans of the developer, Johnson and Loggins, included using the Manor house as the club house for a golf course. The developer began making changes in the Manor house but stopped in 1971.

In 1974, Johnson and Loggins sold the Manor and 17 acres of land to Mrs. Betty R. LeBlanc, then executive vice-president of Barq's Beverages, Inc., in New Orleans. Through the late 1970's and early 1980's, Mrs. LeBlanc began restoring the Manor house, which began suffering from the changes made by the developer. She had hoped to finish restoring the home, but unfortunately cancer struck and quickly took Mrs. LeBlanc in June, 1986, her dream unfinished.

Ormond is presently under the ownership and care of Irvin J. Carmouche who continues the work of restoring Ormond today. Ormond is open to the public for tours, weddings and various other festivities year-round, as well as a quiet bed and breakfast stay.

ACTIVITY

Most common reported activity has been the observance of an unknown young girl, approximately 11-12 years of age. She has most often been seen on or nearthe staircase.

INVESTIGATION

Being quite a large house, we decided to go with 2 DVR setups, for a total of 8 IRcameras, covering mostly the entire home. Our focus was, of course, the stairswhere the apparition of the young girl had been reported.

Throughout the night, no significant temperature or EMF changes were reported, nor were any unusual audio captured. However, on several occasions, some of our members heard strange noises throughout the house, unable to find their source.

After a review of the video was complete, we notice a very interesting anomaly on the staircase. As you will see in the video below, you can definitely see some sort of light formation take place on the stairs, appearing as if something may be descending from the staircase. We attempted to re-create this effect by walking back and forth with flashlights, hoping to get the same light on camera. However, all attempts yielded no duplication of what was initially captured.

In a separate incident, a few seconds after Raymond passed in front of the camera that faced the stairs, it briefly shook the shifted to the right. Raymond was no where directly near the camera, nor did he snag the video line. We also attempted to recreate this by even jumping and stomping around the camera, trying to shake/move it. However the floor was very stable and the camera never moved. Also, as you will see below, right after the camera shifts, a strange light anomaly is observed.

Overall, the investigation was quite an interesting one, possibly producing some legitimate evidence of activity! Special thanks to Mr. Carmouche for allowing us in the home and we have already been invited to conduct a follow up investigation. Stay tuned as we make our return trip to the Ormond Plantation in the near future!