



The Cultural Landscape Foundation celebrates New Orleans with **WHAT'S OUT THERE WEEKEND**

by Shaun S. Duncan

NEW ORLEANS will soon join Denver, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, and a host of cities that have celebrated their historic designed landscapes through week-ends of free, guided tours. On April 1 and 2, New Orleans' rich landscape legacy will be explored through the lens of the historic, social and cultural development of the city. To carry out this charge, expert guides will provide rich stories, personal anecdotes and keen observations about some two dozen familiar sites, within the context of design intent, city shaping and garden design.

The event takes The Cultural Landscape Foundation's (TCLF) *What's Out There*® database to the streets. New Orleans landscapes have been researched, photographed and incorporated into the database, which currently features more than 2,000 sites, 11,000 images and 900 designer profiles; the entries, which are GPS-enabled, are cross-referenced by locale, era, designer, style and typology. Additionally, the information has been published in a *What's Out There City Guide*, New Orleans thus among numerous cities featured in this ongoing series. The *What's Out There* project has been heralded by tourists, students, teachers and professionals seeking an enriched understanding of landscape history and a reference from which to inform stewardship decisions.

The New Orleans' cultural landscape legacy documented in the database includes everything from the Vieux Carré to the postmodernist Piazza d'Italia, the city squares, and the picturesque-style parks, gardens and cemeteries. The entry for Congo Square informs of the site's beginnings as a social and cultural meeting ground for the city's enslaved African American population, and of the dancing there legalized by the 1817 legislation that brought about the "Bamboula," "Congo," and "Flat-Footed Shuffle." One learns that Margaret Haughery's dedication to supporting the city's orphans was the impetus to create Margaret Place Park and the relation of its design to Creole surveyor Barthélémy Lafon's plan for the Lower Garden District. Noted also is the significance of Pontchartrain Park as a landmark in social progress. The golf course there was designed and built by Joseph M. Bartholomew, Sr., an African-American golf course designer who was also responsible for the Metairie Country Club course. And the Lake Vista subdivision is placed in context of the Garden City movement, a city planning concept that focused on self-sufficient communities with concentric site-planning and ample greenspace.

TCLF president Charles Birnbaum, who delivered the keynote address at the 2014 symposium presented by Tulane Architecture School and the PRC titled *Preservation Matters III, The Economics of Authenticity*, said: "We are proud to partner with the PRC, which wisely advocates for informed stewardship of New Orleans' unique cultural heritage, and look forward to a weekend of tours that will reveal the richness of the city's remarkable cultural landscape legacy."

As the PRC extends its umbrella, it harkens the words of *The New York Times* architecture critic Michael Kimmelman, who said, "Not just buildings but the spaces between those buildings should command our respect and shape policy toward development and preservation."

PICTURED ABOVE LEFT: What's Out There in April 2014 visited Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami. Photo by Suzanne Garza RIGHT: A May 2015 tour of Fort York National Historic Site in Toronto was held as part of the series. Photo by Matthew Traucht

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WHAT'S OUT THERE WEEKEND NEW ORLEANS TOURS are scheduled at specified times on April 1 and April 2. Visit <http://tclf.org/event/whats-out-there-weekend-new-orleans> for the schedule and to register. The PRC welcomes the opportunity to partner with The Cultural Landscape Foundation on the weekend, as well with associated groups, the Louisiana Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, NOLA Parks For All, and Parks and Parkways. By connecting people to places, TCLF, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., educates and engages the public on landscape — to make it visible, identify its value, and empower its stewards.