



WHAT  
HAPPENED

In 1988, Sylvester Francis began displaying his photographs in his garage in the “back streets” of Treme.

# For those who can't make it to every second-line parade or Mardi Gras Indians event, there's the **Backstreet Cultural Museum**.



The museum in the Treme, located in an unassuming former funeral home, offers a close look the bright colors and intricacies of Mardi Gras Indians costumes, as well as photographs and other mementos of jazz funerals, second lines and social aid and pleasure clubs.



Sylvester Francis opened the museum in 1999 to house his collection of photographs. Francis began photographing social aid and pleasure clubs after a photographer wanted Francis to pay \$35 for a copy of his own photograph. Francis bought a still camera and a Super 8 movie camera and began documenting

the clubs, parades and other Carnival celebrations.

On the museum's website, Francis says: “One of my main goals was ... that if I was to take anybody's picture, I'd give them a copy.”

In 1988, Francis began displaying his photographs in his two-car garage in the “back streets” of Treme. Soon, Mardi Gras Indians and social aid and pleasure clubs — many who once received photographs from Francis — began donating costumes, umbrellas and memorabilia to the museum.

The museum is now a nonprofit, and exhibits every year at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage and Essence festivals. It has become a center of the Treme community, and each year hosts an open house on Mardi Gras.