



WHAT HAPPENED

The Dew Drop Inn opened across from the Magnolia housing projects in April 1939.

A couple dances the Jitterbug in 1939, soon after the The Dew Drop Inn opened.



THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



The Inn reached the height of its popularity in the 1950s, when nationally-known musicians frequented the club.



TULANE DIGITAL LIBRARY PHOTOS

The Dew Drop was where it was at. For 25 years, local musicians were either at the Dew Drop or on their way to its “Groove Room.”

Frank Painia opened a barber shop on LaSalle Street and later expanded with a grocery store. In 1939, Painia opened a hotel across from the Magnolia housing projects and called it the Dew Drop Inn. Six years later, Painia started featuring music in the complex.

The music club was a success, in part, because in an era of segregation, Painia allowed white fans of rhythm and blues into the club, even though Painia was arrested for breaking segregation laws. Musicians including Ray Charles, James Brown, Sam Cooke, Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown and Allen Toussaint played at the club. After Little Richard performed “Tutti Frutti” at the club, his producer Bumps Blackwell insisted that Richard record the song.

The club was known as the “swankiest night club” in New Orleans and the South.

The club’s emcees included drag queen Patsy Vlderer who organized and hosted the annual New Orleans Gay Ball held at the Dew Drop every Halloween.

The popularity of the club began declining in the 1960s after segregation laws were repealed and other clubs could cater to all. Painia died in 1972, the same year the club closed.

Painia’s grandson Kenneth Jackson tried to resurrect the club after Hurricane Katrina but was unsuccessful in raising the necessary money.



RAY CHARLES



JAMES BROWN



SAM COOKE



CLARENCE “GATEMOUTH” BROWN



ALLEN TOUSSAINT



LITTLE RICHARD