



WHAT HAPPENED

In 1967
Lee Friedlander
found and
printed
E.J. Bellocq's
glass negatives



Until **E.J. Bellocq's photos of Storyville prostitutes** surfaced in 1970, the hundreds of prostitutes who worked the district were just part of its legend.

But here, in black and white, were photos of these women. Some were nude; others were dressed, in artistic or casual poses. The women appeared relaxed, even happy in the images. To some, the photos were proof of the women's blasé attitude toward their profession; to others they were just evidence the women were relaxed with Bellocq.

Bellocq was a French Creole photographer of no acclaim who took commercial photos and portraits in the 1910s. But apparently not widely known were his frequent trips to Storyville where he photographed prostitutes. After Bellocq died in 1949 his brother, Leon Bellocq, a Jesuit priest, found glass negatives of the images in his brother's apartment. Eventually, 89 of the glass plates found their way to photographer Lee Friedlander, who made prints from the negatives. Some of the women's faces had been scratched off the negatives, adding to their mystery. The prints were shown at the Museum of Modern Art and were published in the book *Storyville Portraits*. Bellocq's work influenced other photographers. It was also the basis for the 1978 film, "Pretty Baby," with a then 12-year-old Brooke Shields, filmed in New Orleans.



Interior view of a room located at 341 Basin Street in the Storyville neighborhood.



"A GOOD PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT IS THE RESULT OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND THE SITTER. THE REMARKABLE INDIVIDUALITY OF BELLOCQ'S PORTRAITS IS THE INDIVIDUALITY OF HIS SUBJECTS. WITH BELLOCQ'S HELP, THE WOMEN HAVE REALIZED THEMSELVES IN PICTURES."

PHOTOGRAPHER AND HISTORIAN JOHN SZARKOWSKI IN "LOOKING AT PHOTOGRAPHS."