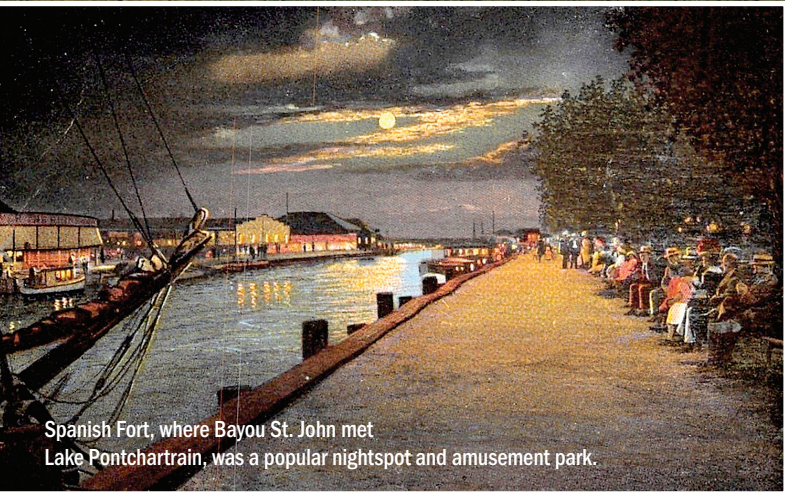


Bayou St. John could be considered the cradle of New Orleans.



The St. John's Rowing Club on Bayou St. John in-1903.



Spanish Fort, where Bayou St. John met Lake Pontchartrain, was a popular nightspot and amusement park.



The Spanish Custom House at 1300 Moss St., was an informal site where smugglers and confiscated goods were temporarily held. It was built by French immigrant Santiago Llorens, and purchased in 2009 by Lyndon Saia who renovated the home.

It's believed that Indian tribes, including the Chapitoulas and the Choctaw, lived along the bayou, or Bayouk Choupic, for centuries. In 1699, the Indians showed French explorer Pierre Le Moyne Sieur d'Iberville the portage route between the bayou and the Mississippi River, and as early as 1703, the French, who renamed the bayou Bayou St. Jean, were using it to move goods. French settlers lived along the bayou's edge.

For more than 100 years afterward, development along the bayou was limited, as the surrounding land was swampy. In 1784, a Spanish Custom House was built at the corner of what is now Moss and Grand Route St. John streets and is standing as the oldest home in the area. The Pitot House, built nearby, was completed in 1805 and today is the home of the Louisiana Landmarks Society.

In 1809, Barthelme Lafon designed a plan for the Faubourg St. John, centered around the focal point of Place Bretonne where Bayou Road and North Dorgenois Streets meet.

In 1855, Esplanade Avenue was built as a thoroughfare from the Vieux Carré, and soon after, the land around Bayou St. John was drained and more development occurred.

Rail lines began traveling to the area in 1857.

About this time, the use of steamboats along the river negated the need to use the bayou for commerce. Families began building and living in houseboats on the bayou. That ended in 1936 when Congress formally ended navigational use of the bayou. The Works Progress Administration drained and cleaned the bayou in the 1930s. For years the bayou was stagnant because it was largely cut off from Lake Pontchartrain by gates. In 2013, however, a project to help restore some of the bayou's natural flow was completed.



The Bayou Boogaloo music festival, which started in 2006, attracts more than 40,000 to the festival along the banks of the bayou.