

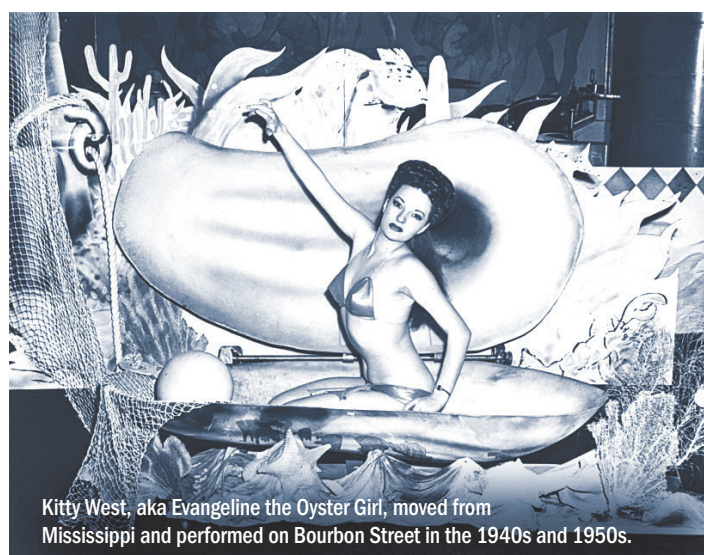


WHAT  
HAPPENED

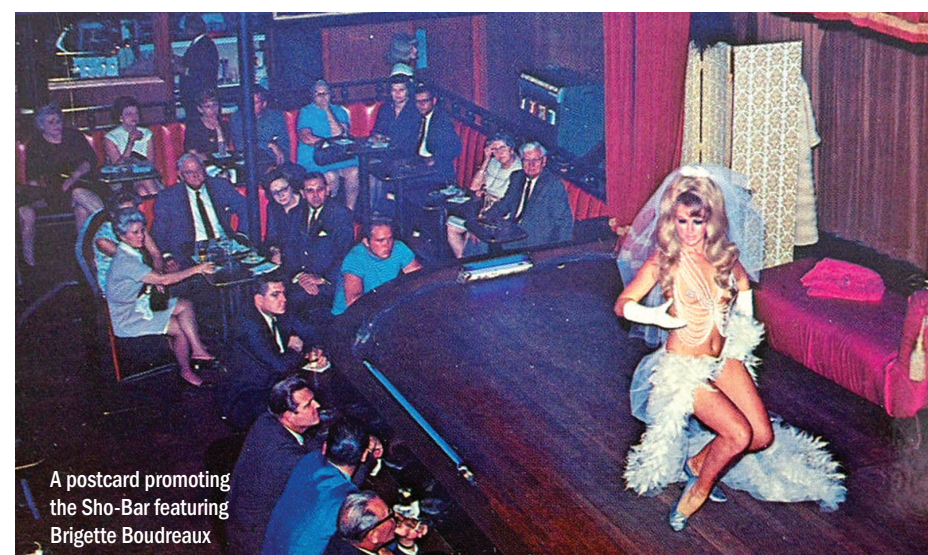
In 1949  
Evangeline the  
Oyster Girl  
made the pages  
of *Life* magazine  
for a fight  
with a rival.



THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE



Kitty West, aka Evangeline the Oyster Girl, moved from Mississippi and performed on Bourbon Street in the 1940s and 1950s.



A postcard promoting the Sho-Bar featuring Brigitte Boudreaux

## There was a time when New Orleans was more famous for **burlesque** on Bourbon Street than for its music or food.

From the late 1930s until the early 1960s, as many as 50 burlesque shows could be seen on a single night at Bourbon Street clubs including Leon Prima's 500 Club, the Sho-Bar and the Casino Royale.

In the early years, shows featured not only the artful removal of clothing, but also comedians, music and other vaudeville-type entertainment.

Performers such as Evangeline the Oyster Girl, Wild Cherry and Blaze Starr drew attention to New Orleans with their suggestive strip-tease acts on stage, and their drama off stage.

Blaze Starr, who started working on Bourbon in the 1940s, infamously had an affair with Louisiana Gov. Earl Long. Other entertainers were often in the newspaper for their fights — staged or real — that brought them even more customers. Evangeline the Oyster Girl took an ax to a water tank where rival Divena, the Aqua Tease performed. A photographer from

*Life* magazine captured the act on film and photos were published in the magazine.

The clubs also gained attention as tolerance for the acts, which became increasingly more risqué over the years, waned.

The push to clean up Bourbon came to a head under District Attorney Jim Garrison who staged several raids and inspections on the clubs beginning in 1960.

Burlesque acts largely disappeared in the 1960s — more from the onset of the sexual freedoms than Garrison's efforts. Chris Owens was the lone holdout on the street and still performs today.

Burlesque made a comeback in the late 1990s as more of an art form than a club act. There is a burlesque show almost every night in the city, and the city hosts an annual burlesque festival.



Earl Long  
with  
Blaze Starr  
at the  
Sho-Bar



Evangeline the Oyster Girl took an ax to Divena's tank at Casino Royale because she considered her competition.