



Newsletter No. 2, November 1991

National Park Service

The New Orleans Jazz Study—Progress to Date

This is the second in a series of newsletters about the study being conducted by the National Park Service (NPS) for preserving and interpreting the origins of jazz in New Orleans. If you received the first newsletter or have attended one or more meetings about the study, you already know that the National Park Service is carrying out this study in response to Public Law 101-499, which was passed by Congress in 1990 for the purpose of recognizing the cultural and historical significance of jazz and its New Orleans origins. According to the legislation, the study will

- identify and assess sites and structures associated with the origins and early history of jazz in New Orleans,
- explore new programs for public outreach, jazz education, supporting second line bands and the efforts of established jazz archives in the city, and preserving the contributions of social and pleasure clubs,
- consider establishing a new national park system unit, or adding to Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, to interpret and preserve the origins of jazz in New Orleans, and
- consider alternatives for providing technical assistance to others involved in the preservation and interpretation of jazz.

The NPS interdisciplinary team conducting the study is following a four-phase process including (1) gathering information, (2) analyzing sites and structures related to the origins and early history of jazz, (3) developing alternatives, and (4) preparing a report to Congress. Throughout the process the NPS team will be advised by the 15-member Preservation of Jazz Advisory Commission, which was established by Congress and appointed by the secretary of the interior.

The advisory commission and NPS team have been gathering information for the project. As part of this phase, the advisory commission hosted three public hearings in the New Orleans area in late August to listen to ideas and concerns about the study. A workshop was also held to gather information and ideas about jazz history in New Orleans. The results of these meetings are summarized in this newsletter.

To assist the NPS team with information gathering, the advisory commission has organized three subcommittees. One subcommittee will focus on information related to jazz history and historical sites and structures that may be nationally important; the second subcommittee will help identify effective ways to contact interested groups and individuals; and the third subcommittee will gather information on the status and needs of current archival and educational programs in New Orleans.

Those of us on the Preservation of Jazz Advisory Commission thank all of you who participated in the August public hearings for the New Orleans jazz study. The passion for New Orleans jazz came through so strongly in so much of what you said, and virtually every speaker supported commemorating in some way New Orleans' unique role in the birth of jazz. We heard a range of exciting ideas, which are briefly described in this newsletter.

With your good ideas and the commission's advice, the National Park Service is preparing a study to explore the feasibility of preserving and sharing this magnificent cultural gem we call New Orleans jazz. The jazz study is still in its early stages, and we urge you to stay involved.

If you missed the August hearings, we are holding another public hearing on Saturday, December 7, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon at the Superdome, Room 12. We hope to see you there.

Lindy Boggs

Lindy Boggs

Ellis Marsalis

Ellis Marsalis

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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Cochairs, Preservation of Jazz Advisory Commission

CALLING ALL SOCIAL AID AND PLEASURE CLUBS AND SECOND LINE BANDS!

The National Park Service and the advisory council would especially like to hear from representatives of second line bands and social aid and pleasure clubs. Congress requested that the study explore ways of "supporting second line bands" and "preserving the unique contributions to the development of jazz made by neighborhood social and pleasure clubs." We would like you to tell us about your group and its involvement in the second line tradition and in jazz in general, and to give us your ideas about how such contributions could be preserved.

Summary of August Public Meetings

Treme

The first of the public hearings was held at the Treme Community Center on Saturday, August 24, 1991, from 2:00 to 6:00 p.m.



Approximately 140 people attended the meeting, and 33 presented oral or written statements.

Most of the speakers at Treme supported the idea of some kind of jazz-related park development and urged that, if development takes place, it should be in the Treme neighborhood. Many speakers specified Louis Armstrong Park and Congo Square as the only appropriate locations for the commemoration of jazz to occur.

The park belongs in New Orleans; it belongs in Treme. Congo Square . . . is the only natural site for preserving and interpreting the origins of jazz in New Orleans, and the only place that meets the criteria for national significance.

Other suggested locations included the area on the north side of Basin Street between Bienville and Conti, and a linear park that would use the grassy median on Basin, Loyola, and Canal streets between Armstrong Park and Poydras Street.

Much concern was expressed that any project should provide economic, employment, and educational benefits to the neighborhood in which it is located. The idea of hiring local African-American managers and administrators was raised, as was the importance of historic preservation and inner city development.

Many speakers addressed the issue of local, African-American input and participation if new facilities or programs are eventually planned and implemented. Speakers emphasized that Treme community residents, business leaders, and civic and community leaders should have an active role in planning, interpreting, implementing, and

administering any commemorative park or other related projects.

Along with "the site," we demand "say."

Put it in the hands of the people whose history it represents, and let the people whose history and culture it represents reap the benefits.

Several speakers said that not only jazz but the larger perspective of African-American culture should be commemorated and interpreted. One speaker proposed an African-American museum and cultural center.

Jazz education was also an area of keen interest. Several speakers emphasized the importance of keeping jazz alive by ensuring that youth are involved in playing jazz. One suggestion was a touring program that could be brought to the New Orleans metro area as well as areas throughout the state. Other programs of interest were those that would prepare young people to manage or administer a jazz park and related enterprises.

I'm a very young musician, and they are always talking about how nice it is to have me and the guys that play in my band to keep the music alive and all that kind of stuff. I have no problem with keeping the music alive, but how can I build on something if there is nothing there to build on. If the foundation is not there what can you do? Not a thing!

The general context of a potential jazz park was also addressed. Some people expressed concern that jazz would be treated in an amusement park atmosphere rather than more respectfully such as a symphony would be treated. At least one speaker questioned whether the National Park Service was the best entity to take on this project or whether it would be better done by a local university or other institute of higher education.

Immediate steps were suggested, including obtaining national historic landmark status for Congo Square, taking action to better preserve the Louis Armstrong statue, and removing the unpopular fence around Armstrong Park.

Xavier

Twenty eight people attended and five people spoke at the second public hearing at Xavier University on Monday, August 26, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. A partnership was proposed between a local public television station and a future jazz park to share facilities and interpretive programs. Other speakers favored using Armstrong Park and Congo Square as the centerpiece for a jazz park: another speaker cautioned that, if Armstrong Park was used, any new design should retain plenty of open space. Another speaker emphasized that the African-American community should benefit economically from any proposal.



Algiers

Ten people attended and four spoke to the commission at the hearing at the Algiers Regional Library on Tuesday, August 27, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. One speaker recommended a major jazz center, including a tourist information hub, jazz education facilities, and archives, in the old First District police station on Chartres Street in the French Quarter. The archival collections and computerized indexing capabilities of the New Orleans public library system was described, and a partnership was suggested for archival services. Another speaker emphasized the need for music education programs for youngsters and also urged that the study consider facilities in Algiers in future plans. Councilwoman Clarkson recommended that Treme be the focus for a new jazz park and that Esplanade Avenue be recognized as a "national trace."

Summary of Jazz History Workshop

Loyola University

The advisory commission and the National Park Service arranged an informal workshop to hear from some musicians involved with jazz and jazz history. The workshop was held at Loyola University on August 28, 1991, with a panel consisting of Danny Barker, Joe Gordin, Harold Batistte, and Placide Adams, all well-known figures in New Orleans jazz.



The musicians were interviewed by advisory commission members and the public about their lives in jazz, their ideas about the music, and their thoughts about the study. They provided vivid descriptions of their early days in jazz, which were not only informative but entertaining.



Jazz is a great music. It uplifts the soul; it does everything for you if you just learn how to understand it. . . . I just think it belongs here. We should invite the world to listen to jazz.

In open discussion, a member of the audience recommended a definition for jazz, which led to a spirited discussion about whether or not jazz is even definable. Many felt jazz could be described but not constrained by a definition.

What's Next

Based on what has been learned so far, the NPS team and the advisory commission will analyze historic sites and structures and develop alternatives for interpreting and preserving the early history of jazz. Findings about historic resources and preliminary concepts and ideas will be shared with you in future newsletters and public meetings and at advisory commission meetings.

You may wish to attend the upcoming meetings described below:

Public Hearing

As part of a continuing effort to hear the public's thoughts and ideas, the advisory commission will hold an additional hearing while the study is still being developed. The hearing is open to everyone, but especially those who were unable to attend the earlier hearings are encouraged to participate.

Saturday, December 7, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon
The Superdome, Room 12
Enter the building through Gate G from the southwest parking garage at Claiborne and Girod Streets

Preservation of Jazz Advisory Commission Meetings

The advisory commission will hold two administrative meetings, which are open to the public.

Friday, December 6, 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm
U.S. Customs House, Room 223
423 Canal Street, New Orleans

Saturday, December 7, 12:15 pm to 1:00 pm,
following the public hearing
The Superdome, Room 12

Staying Involved

Your comments are important to the study and can make a difference. Comments on any or all of the following topics would be appreciated:

- sites and structures associated with the origins and early history of jazz in New Orleans
- interpreting the origins of jazz in New Orleans
- providing interpretive performances
- providing for public outreach
- developing a jazz education center
- providing support for second line bands, contributions of social and pleasure clubs, and public and private jazz archives

If you have ideas or concerns or if you are not yet on the mailing list to receive newsletters and other information, send your name, address, and comments to:

New Orleans Jazz Study Team
National Park Service
Denver Service Center - TCE
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

or contact locally:

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park
and Preserve
423 Canal Street, Room 210
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130-2341
(504) 589-3882



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Study Process

PHASE 1 Summer-Fall 1991
 Gather information with initial public input

- Jazz historians, archivists, and educators contacted.
- Published materials on jazz and jazz history reviewed.
- Advisory commission subcommittees on jazz archives and education programs and public outreach established.
- Three public hearings and jazz history workshop held in August.
- An additional public hearing to be held December 7.

PHASE 2 Fall-Winter 1991
 Assess sites and structures associated with the origins and early history of jazz

- Jazz historians contacted.
- Published materials on historical sites and structures reviewed.
- Advisory commission subcommittee on historical sites and structures established.
- Determine nationally important historical sites and structures.

PHASE 3 Winter-Spring 1991
 Analyze management alternatives

- Develop preliminary management alternatives.
- Publish draft alternative concepts for public review and comment.
- Assess potential impacts of the alternatives.

PHASE 4 Spring-Summer 1992
 Report to Congress

- Prepare the report on the study.
- Review by the advisory commission.
- Transmit report to Congress by the secretary of the interior

FUTURE

- Once the report is transmitted to Congress, Congress may
- hold further public hearings,
 - implement one or more of the alternatives,
 - enact a different proposal, or
 - take no action.