

THIS BROCHURE IS A PROJECT OF THE
MORGAN CITY MAIN STREET PROGRAM



...making waves downtown

HISTORIC
Morgan City
LOUISIANA
A WALKING TOUR

TWO HOURS SOUTHWEST OF NEW ORLEANS
ONE HOUR SOUTH OF BATON ROUGE
ONE HOUR EAST OF LAFAYETTE

Other Tourist Attractions in the Morgan City Area:

- Morgan City Tourism Center (Myrtle Street)
- Lake End Park & Campground
- Brownell Memorial Park & Carillon Tower
- Everett S. Berry Lighthouse Park
- Wedell-Williams Memorial Aviation Museum
- International Petroleum Museum
- Kemper-Williams Park & Campground

Please inquire at our City & Parish Tourism Centers
for other area attractions:
City: (985) 384-3343
Parish: (985) 395-4905
or 1 (800) 256-2931

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TOP
100
EVENTS
ASSOCIATION

Home of Louisiana's Oldest
Chartered Harvest Festival
Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival

The assistance of the St. Mary Parish and City of Morgan City Tourist Commission, the Morgan City Archives, Delta Printing and others are gratefully acknowledged.

circa 1950
Celebrating the "Blessing of the Fleet" on the
Atchafalaya River front in downtown Morgan City

The Attakapas Indians called it Atchafalaya or long river. Stretching over 135 miles, it has brought us happiness and it has brought us pain. From the Attakapas Indians to the present day shrimping and oil trade, the Atchafalaya has shaped Morgan City's history. Just as the tide experiences ebbs and flows, so has Morgan City. Its resiliency can best be explained by its people, a "gumbo" or ethnicity... French, Spanish, Indian, German, and Dutch, a people whose strong belief in faith, tradition and family define today's Morgan City.

Originally known as Tigre Island after a group of United States surveyors spotted an unknown cat, the area attracted Walter Brashear. Brashear, a

famed Kentucky surgeon and planter purchased large tracts of land. Brashear's subsequent subdividing of his sugar can plantation was the beginning of the first permanent settlement known as the town of Brashear.

Because of Morgan City's strategic marine location, the town of Brashear played a prominent role in the war between the states. Brashear was occupied by Federal troops for over three years. It was in Morgan City that the Union troops planned the destruction of the Avery Island salt mines, the cutting off of Rebel supply lines from Texas, the capture of Texas to restore her to the Union, and the annihilation of all Confederate resistance in southwest Louisiana. The



circa 1938 - Front and Railroad looking north

trade center for animal fur, cypress timber, and seafood. In 1876, the town was renamed Morgan City in his honor.

The late 1800s and early 1900s was an era of growth and development. Many of the historic buildings such as Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Pharr Chapel United Methodist as well as distinctive homes including Cotten Top, the Norman-Schreier House, and Cypress Manor were constructed. Boat building, moss picking, and a shell crushing plant broadened Morgan City's economic base.

Substituting the jungles of Africa with the swamps of Morean City. Hollywood made its mark in 1917

"jumbo" shrimp capitol of the world. A community strongly rooted in Catholicism and tradition, a religious aspect, the Blessing of the Fleet, was introduced by the Louisiana Shrimp Festival's founder and first president, Mr. Paul Acklen LeBlanc, who suggested that this ancient old-world custom be incorporated into the celebration to insure a safe return of fishermen and a bountiful harvest. Following the blessing, the celebration traveled to Egle's Place for a fais-do-do, a Cajun dance. This was the inception of the Louisiana Shrimp Festival, the state's oldest chartered harvest festival.

A decade later, Morgan City made national headlines when Kerr-McGee Industries drilled the first successful offshore oil

well out of sight of land. According to *The Times Picayune*, it was the most significant discovery to date. The "black gold rush" marked a new era in the city's prosperity. Because of its considerable importance to the economy, "petroleum" was added to the name of Louisiana Shrimp Festival. The present day Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival is held every Labor Day weekend in the historic district.

Morgan City's Main Street Program designation was officially recognized in 1997, and combined with the nine-block historic district, it now encompasses a 19-block area.



A

THE GREAT WALL - built after 1973 when flood waters nearly topped the former 13' seawall, the present structure stands 21' tall and offers a panoramic view of the Atchafalaya River from its promenade. Be sure to visit the original floodwall monument and the nearby Front Street area shops. *Graphics by Adam J. Prejean*



F

LAWRENCE PARK GAZEBO - built in 1913, this structure is located on property donated to the town of Brashear (Morgan City) in 1876 by Mrs. Emily Brashear Lawrence, daughter of founding father, Dr. Walter Brashear. The park is the site of the Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival, a top 20 Southeast Tourism Society event. *Graphics by Bob Greenwood*



H

NORMAN-SCHREIER HOUSE - built by M.E. Norman, co-founder of Norman-Breaux Lumber Company, in 1908. Its architecture is of the Mediterranean-Spanish style. It is the home of the Morgan City Archives. Corner of Federal Avenue and Duke Street. *Graphics by Jim Firmin*



B

WILMORE HOUSE - circa 1820, the oldest residence in Morgan City. It is a fine example of the early Acadian cottage. 703 First Street. *Graphics by A. Smith*

Morgan City Historic District and Surrounding Main Street Program Area

Other Points of Interest in the Main Street Area & Perimeter:

1. Fisherman's Wharf
2. Prohaska Home (706 First Street)
3. Soumeillan Home (619 Second Street)
4. Morgan City Public Library (Corner of Second & Everett)
5. Berry Hotel (300 Everett Street)
6. Lawrence Park Marker
7. J.Y. Sanders Monument
8. Hazel Smyly School of Dance (604 Third Street)
9. Albert Cotten Home (Corner of Federal Avenue & Everett)
10. DiMaggio Building (207 Railroad Avenue)
11. Gathright Building (201 Railroad Avenue)
12. Bank Building (201 Everett Street)
13. Shannon Hardware (606 Front Street)
14. Temple Shaare Zedek (710 Third Street)
15. Shannon Elementary School (Corner of Federal & Brashear)
16. Spirit of Morgan City / Eternal Flame (Brashear Avenue)



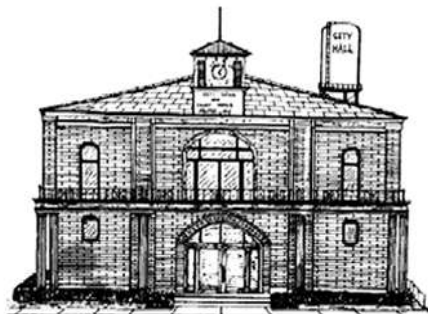
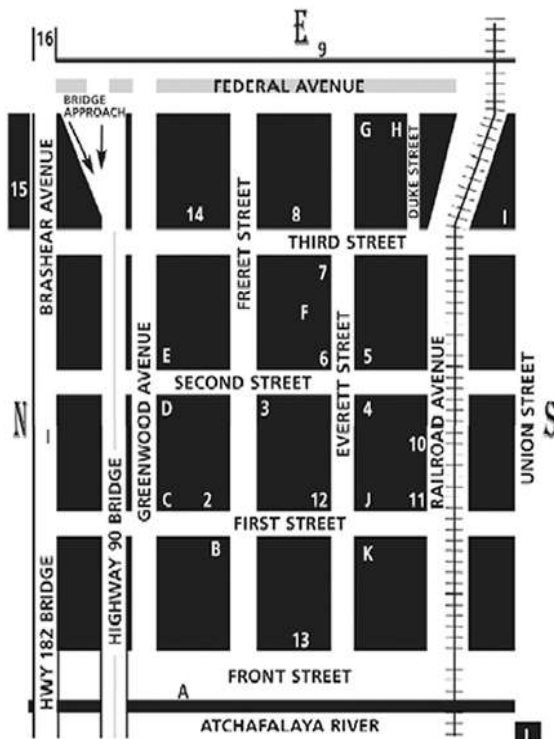
I

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH - built on the site of the first Catholic mission in 1859 and later renamed in 1885. This Gothic Revival style church and separate baptistry (one of only a few in this country) reflects an Italian renaissance custom of detaching the church building from the baptistry. Its bell tower still dominates the downtown skyline. Corner of Union and Third. *Graphics by Jim Firmin*



C

COTTENTOP - a Victorian era Greek Revival home featuring a distinctive circular portico with six columns. Built in 1905 by W.M. Cotten, a local lumber magnate. 716 First Street. *Graphics by Bob Greenwood*



J

CITY HALL / COURT HOUSE - currently housing our city's government and built in 1905, it is an excellent example of Victorian era architecture. It is truly an outstanding old building still functioning today. Corner of First & Everett. *Graphics by Clint M. Ratcliff*



D

CYPRESS MANOR - another Acadian style home built in 1908. It houses the office of the Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival. Corner of Greenwood & Second. *Graphics by Erin Shirley*



K

DOWNTOWN POST OFFICE - downtown's most classical building and a superb example of American Neoclassic influence, one of the few post office buildings actually owned by the Federal government. Corner of First & Everett. *Graphics by Leonard Price*



E

TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - designed by a former mayor, circa 1877, this "beautiful little green church" reflects the American Cottage-type architecture in the shingle style. Corner of Greenwood & Second. *Graphics by Jim Firmin*



G

PHARR CHAPEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - this church, built circa 1878, reflects a New England "Georgian Revival" motif was built on land donated by Captain John Newton Pharr. Its copper steeple is an architectural delight. Corner of Federal Avenue & Everett Street. *Graphics courtesy of Ila Hardee*



L

MR. CHARLIE RIG MUSEUM - built in 1952, it is the first submersible drilling rig used in offshore production. Mr. Charlie is an authentic work setting and is the only place in the world where the general public can walk on an authentic drilling rig. Admission charged. *Graphics by Bob Greenwood*