HIGHWAY DIRECTIONS: From Chamber of Commerce Office, return to St. Peter Street (U. S. 90 East) to Center Street. Center Street runs into the Abbeville Highway for about two miles, then turns left on the Avery Island Road. Large road marker will be noticed at fork in road at this point. Continue on Avery Island Road about 3 1/2 miles to reach Toll Gate at Avery Island. Charges are $1.50 per person, 25¢ per vehicle or groups of 25 or more a reduced rate of 65¢ per person and 25¢ per vehicle. Revenues from toll gate go to maintenance of roads on the Island.

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS: See "BIRD CITY", "JUNGLE GARDENS", BAMBOO FOREST, STATUE OF BUDDHA, rare Camellias, salt mine shaft (non visitors allowed) and take the Lake Drive. Also visit TABASCO PEPPER PLANT.

BIRD CITY: Bird City was established by E. A. McIlhenny, who died in 1949. Mr. McIlhenny knew the birds were migratory birds, so he captured several pairs and built a cage. The egrets built their nests on the bamboo twigs in the cage and hatched their young. They were fed daily and cared for, and when they were released, there was much anxiety that they might not return, but after more than fifty years, thousands of the birds still return...blue herons, ibis, tanagers, and snowy white egrets. It is estimated that 400,000 to 500,000 birds are in the rookery at the end of the nesting season. Each pair hatches two eggs. In the pond below their watery sanctuary alligators watch and wait to feed on snakes or coons that might swim to the nests to get the bird's eggs or young birds. Occasionally, the alligators knowing that the young birds are in the nests will thrash their tails on the supporting beams to try to shake the young birds out of the nest. The lily plants in the pond are pink Chinese Lotus. The white blossoms are an Egyptian variety, and the yellow are native lotus. The trees along the road are Sweet Gum, Hackberry, Live Oaks and Thorn Trees. The Island consists of 5,000 acres. The highest point is 180 feet.

JUNGLE GARDENS: Jungle Gardens is an appropriate name because of the dense growth of the fig vine, wisteria vines and other trees. There are sunken gardens with pools mirroring the beauty of the fragrant blossoms and an archway of moss-laden oak trees. There are roses, cultivated and wild iris of every color, and acres and acres of flowers whose seeds were scattered at random over the land. There are cactus gardens planted with Yucca, Mesquite and Cactus Pear, and unusual sights everywhere, such as the series of Kettle pools, which are great iron kettles in which the juice of sugar cane was boiled to make sugar before the vaccum pan was invented. There are lovely oriental holly trees on all sides. Azaleas and camellias abound in 1000 varieties, importations from France, China, Japan, besides new varieties produced on the Island itself by skilled hybridizing.

BAMBOO FOREST: The giant bamboo has been put to some industrial use in that the stadium at Clemson, South Carolina used bamboo as a reinforcing medium in construction. Bamboo is not affected by acids, and experiments are being conducted which indicate bamboo may have possibilities as a pipe medium in construction work. The Temple of Buddha is supported by tall bamboo poles.

BUDDHA: The Buddha Statue is wooden, covered with three layers of lacquer, one of gold, one of red and a layer of blown gold dust. The stones on the head are carved in the shape of snails and are rare lapis lazuli. The opening in the back of the statue was made as a receptacle for gifts from the people, such as rice, etc. In return for their gifts, they were given the prayer of the day at pieces of paper.

The legend of the Buddha is that he did his meditating by the side of a lake. When the sun was extremely hot, the snails would crawl on his head to protect him from the sun. As he reached enlightenment there would arise a blue hue and the snails turned to stone.
There are two inscriptions at the foot of the statue explaining the Buddha's presence on Avery Island. The first one, the right, reads:

"This Buddha was built for the Shonfa Temple, located Northwest of Peking by the order of Emperor Hue-Tsung, 1101-1125.

Its builder was Chon-Ha-Chin, most noted and ancient of Buddha makers.

The Temple was looted by a Rebel General, who took the statue as part of his loot and sent it to New York to be sold. The statue came to the notice of two friends of E. A. McIlhenny, who purchased it and sent it to him as a gift in 1936.

The second inscription by Fr. E. A. McIlhenny reads:

"Peacefully I rest upon this Lagoon's bank
As pale green bamboos sway above my throne.
Clouds of blossoms soften the sifted light
 Falling golden and misty through the boughs above.
Long days of travel brought me from my home
Yet I have known no hour of calmer rest.
My thoughts are like the swaying-bamboo crest
Waving to and fro above the rippling stream
Clear and blue, as from a glorious dream."

The Jungle Gardens and Bird City are the tangible expressions of a man whose life was dedicated to preserving the beauties of nature. The loving care with which the present owners are tending the gardens and bird sanctuary are a fitting tribute to the memory of a great man who was an explorer, writer, business executive, naturalist, conservationist, and a good and kind man to all people.

THE STORY OF TABASCO: In 1848, at the conclusion of the Mexican War, Mr. Edmund McIlhenny, a banker, met a trooper from Mexico who had sailed to New Orleans, and who gave him some pepper seeds from Southern Mexico. The seeds were planted in the rich soil of Avery Island and experiments began at making Tabasco Sauce. Tabasco is manufactured only by the McIlhenny Company under a registered patent, and no other product has the right to use the name "TABASCO".

Peppers are picked about September and brought into the plant and run through a machine which macerates them. They are put in 50-gallon oak casks with five holes and a seal of salt. About 400 pounds of mash begins to ferment immediately. The salt seal prevents outside air from getting into the casks, but allows gases formed during the curing process to escape. These casks are allowed to age through fine mesh sieves to assure a smooth, liquid texture. Stainless steel mechanical equipment was installed and tried, but the aeration and churning process discolored the pepper sauce and was not satisfactory. The pepper sauce is then ready for mechanical bottling, labeling and shipping to points all over the world.

SALT: The salt deposit of the International Salt Mine is said to be inexhaustible. The salt deposit commences within 12 to 14 feet of the surface. At a point two miles from the present shaft, oil field operators drilled over 10,000 feet without piercing through the salt. The salt is quarried out of the mine by blasting in a fashion not unlike that used in getting marble or granite. The ceilings in the mine are 100 feet high, with pillars of salt being left to support the roof. VISITORS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO GO BELOW THE SURFACE AT THIS TIME.