Building Birds and Beasts

Architectural animals are among the commonest things of the life of New Orleans which everybody sees and nobody really sees. A very simple test last week revealed that not one of a dozen persons questioned could name anything as vivid as one of the birds and beasts on the buildings of the city.

This page presents more than a score of creatures, many of which you will recognize and identify before you read the description under them.

The pelican appears in the varying styles of the past and in the modernistic designs of today. It is very natural that this bird should be used widely here, for it appears upon the state seal and in the emblem of the Louisiana.

Lions of many shapes and designs are scattered over New Orleans. The king of beasts was used early here and is still in popular favor.

The eagle has stamped itself upon many things associated with the federal government here. One of the most interesting eagles is the one in the medallion of the Cabildo. General Allison Owen, architect, suggests a theory about this bird. He says he believes it although he can't prove it. The implement of war in the centers of the pelicans were part of the original design and grew up in a seal of the Spanish crown, his theory holds. What central portion, he thinks, was torn out after the United States acquired the city and an American eagle was placed there where Spain's crown once was.

One of the most delightful animal groups is the pair of pugs reaching around the market at Magazine and St. Mary streets. Elisabethan England might have called the place "the Market of Kissing Pugs."

The birds and beasts are made of many materials of stone and metal, plaster and concrete, brick and even iron, and locks down in Lafeyette Square.

A dolphin is in the patio at St. Louis hospital.

The griffin is the gargoyle, a tiny animal that appears frequently on public and church buildings here. This example is over the main entrance of the second court building, Royal and St. Louis streets.

Another member of the eagle family is the pelican which appears in droves on the St. Charles medical building, the latter east.

The eagle is on the building at Audubon Park.

A griffin and another on a column are part of the grill door at Tulane's Hertzian Memorial building.

A finial adorns the entrance of the ornate court building, Magazine and St. Louis streets.

A dog is based on Cowper's college buildings.

The griffin used is the gargoyle, a tiny animal that appears frequently on public and church buildings here. This example is over the main entrance of the second court building, Royal and St. Louis streets.


Mosaic work at the corner of the ornate court building, Magazine and St. Louis streets.

The eagle is on the building at Audubon Park.

A griffin and another on a column are part of the grill door at Tulane's Hertzian Memorial building.

A finial adorns the entrance of the ornate court building, Magazine and St. Louis streets.

A dog is based on Cowper's college buildings.

The griffin used is the gargoyle, a tiny animal that appears frequently on public and church buildings here. This example is over the main entrance of the second court building, Royal and St. Louis streets.

The eagle is on the building at Audubon Park.