Down the river a piece, but within the boundaries of Orleans Parish, is a facet of the Crescent City seldom seen by tourists—even by most Orleanians.

It's the Lower Coast of Algiers: just a few miles over the fields and through the woods from downtown New Orleans, but so far from the madding crowds that only an echo remains.

It all begins at the Louisiana Highway 407 bridge which spans the Algiers Cutoff Canal. Just over the bridge, turn to your left and you find yourself, like Dorothy in Oz, standing in green, green fields dotted with bright yellow wildflowers. Along the road are mobile homes, shacks and cottages; each with its small garden, each with its country mailbox, flag at attention.

A little girl, her long white apron trailing to the ground, feeds her chickens, while worker bees fill the air with the sound of their labor. Their hives stand like tombstones in the open fields.

From across the river comes the muted sound of
man-made industry, and you can just see smoke billowing from the tip of a smokestack; but here—Down the Coast—the air is filled with the fine scent of grass.

Horses graze in the fields, their tails flapping in the soft breeze. Cows crop grass absent-mindedly under laden clotheslines behind the cottages. Here and there a goose waddles pompously about its business.

Walking through the deep grass, you startle a rabbit—you can almost hear him muttering, “I'm late! I'm late!” as he hops away.

You climb up the levee and find, on the batture, the ruins of an old house covered with vines; and ruins, too, of not-so-old cars—they, apparently, come to Lower Coast to die.

A log glides down the river, seeming to undulate in the current like a languid sea serpent.

Too soon, the city calls, and you must turn your back on the Lower Coast—but, like the poet, you wish you could stay, “and live alone in the bee-loud glade.”

More ghosts: Spanish moss frames new antebellum-style mansion... inhabitants are yet to come.

Gutted automobiles lie on the ground, mutely tell sad stories of the deaths of men we never know.

Left, a falling fence is one picturesque view of the Lower Coast; right, function is lost, form endures.