**PIE'S A LA MODE**

Feb 23, 1969

**Study of Vieux Carre Architecture Cited**

By PIE DUFOUR

If you are among the lucky few to get a copy of Samuel Wilson Jr.'s "The Vieux Carre of New Orleans: Its Plan, Its Growth, Its Architecture," hang on to it. It is not only the best and most authoritative work written about the architectural history of the Vieux Carre, but it is sure to be a collector's item, for only 2000 copies were printed.

The Wilson opus, with 147 illustrations of maps, plans, drawings and photographs included in its 126 pages, is part of the Vieux Carre Historical District Demonstration Study conducted by the Bureau of Governmental Research for the city of New Orleans, under a federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The complete study covers chapters as follows:

- Chapter I: The French Colonial Period, 1718-1769 (40 pages).
- Chapter II: The Spanish Period, 1769-1803 (16 pages).
- Chapter III: The Territorial Period, 1803-1812 (8 pages).
- Chapter IV: The Growing American City, 1812-1830 (32 pages).
- Chapter V: Architecture of the Vieux Carre (28 pages).

The documentation for each of the five chapters is provided in notes at the end of the book.

So that is how Sam Wilson's fascinating and expert account on the plan, growth and architecture of the Vieux Carre came into being. It is so fine, so interesting, so factually sound that it stands by itself in the whole literature of New Orleans and it deserves a wide distribution. It is to be hoped that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Renewal will publish a second edition or that permission will be granted for its reprinting commercially so that it may be obtained in bookstores.

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The documentation for each of the five chapters is provided in notes at the end of the book.

Many early maps from French Archives appear in the book, some of which were exhibited at the Presbytère by courtesy of the French government during the 250th anniversary of the founding of New Orleans last year.

There is shown De l'Isle's "Carte of the Mississippi River," drawn in 1702, just three years after Iberville entered the Mississippi and 16 years before Bienville founded New Orleans. It shows the Indian portage between the river and Lake Pontchartrain which Bienville chose as the place to locate New Orleans. Also on the De l'Isle map appears "Pointe de Mardy Gras" (Mardi Gras Point) which is, along with Bayou de Mardi Gras, the first place name on the map of Louisiana.

Of particular interest is a sketch by an Englishman, Jonathan Darby, who came to Louisiana in 1719. This sketch showed New Orleans as it existed at that date with only eight wooden buildings. This is the earliest known representation of Bienville's city. Darby, who was a member of the concession given to an Irish financier, Bernard Cantillon, described the establishment of New Orleans in a manuscript to which the sketch was appended: 

"... In 1718, Monsieur de Bienville, General Commandant of Louisiana, arrived with six vessels, loaded with provisions and men. These were 30 workmen, all convicts; six carpenters and four Canadians. There were also Monsieur Pradel (he probably meant Pailloux) appointed Commander of the future city; Monsieur Chassin, intendant of Commerce; and Monsieur Dreaux (Dreux) ... M. de Bienville cut the first cane ... Pradel and Dreaux the second, and tried to open a passage through the dense canebrake from the river to the place where the barracks were to be ... The whole locality was a dense canebrake with only a small pathway leadging from the Mississippi to the bayou (now Bayou St. John) communicating with Lake Pontchartrain."

This is just a sampling of one of the most important studies of New Orleans ever made and by an architectural historian who stands at the top of his field. 

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