The Old Arsenal Museum

... established 1962 in an 1835 powder magazine near the place where Iberville and Bienville first saw the Indians "Red Stick" (renamed by the French, Baton Rouge) and operated as an admission free museum of exhibits depicting "Louisiana Under Ten Flags."

Houma Indian Brave
The Old Arsenal Museum

Since its opening in 1962, the Old Arsenal Museum has attracted more than 500,000 visitors from every state in the Union and 53 foreign countries.

One of the most interesting exhibits is an architect’s model, made to scale, showing the number of buildings which composed the Garrison about 1840. Included in these are the Pentagon buildings, recently restored to their former glory by the State. Also is shown the location of the Commandant’s house and the site of Zachary Taylor’s humble home.

The theme “Louisiana Under Ten Flags” was especially appropriate because more flags have flown over Louisiana’s capital than any city in America. Each cabinet depicts a phase of the Pelican state’s colorful history. Most contain life-sized mannequins in authentic attire.

Visitors may also see Hernando De Soto, handsome Spanish explorer who discovered the Father of Waters which flows nearby. Another cabinet contains a life-sized Houma Indian brave holding a bow from which he has apparently just released an arrow and brought down a young deer. The many tribes of Indians occupying Louisiana are shown on a large relief map on the cabinet wall.

The Louisiana Purchase exhibit shows three full sized mannequins representing the signers of the purchase agreement with France. On the wall visitors will see a map of the United States showing the 17 states which were later carved from the territory included in the Louisiana purchase which ended France’s dream of controlling the Mississippi Valley, and began America’s program of expansion to the Pacific.

The reception desk is an original from the House of Representatives in the Old State Capitol. A large century old painting of Louisiana’s only President, Zachary Taylor astride his beloved horse ‘Whitey’ is among the attractions of the Museum. There is also a collection of valuable, ancient firearms, heirloom quilts, household appliances of a century ago, miniature furniture from drummers samples of a hundred years past, letters written by Louisiana’s civil war governor, Confederate general Henry Watkins Allen; a prisoner of War’s oath of allegiance; an appeal for furlough from a Confederate private in return for information he had overheard from the enemy. Each month new additions are made and the exhibits continue to grow in interest for the visitors.

Galvez who played an important role in early Louisiana and Philemon Thomas who led the rebellion to wrest this state from Spain are given prominence in the displays.
A lovely Casket girl in the attire of her native France and an equally charming young Ursuline nun are seen in a recently completed exhibit which also holds a replica of the famed ‘trousseau’ box, containing the maiden’s wardrobe, each piece of which is made by hand.

The Confederate case depicts a general in gray, apparently with thoughts of home. Other Confederates relics are shown in a center case. These include a gold locket with a lock of General Robert E. Lee’s hair and his autograph; also one of Jefferson Davis, as well as his written ‘calling’ card. There are many other precious momentoes, gifts from families which have treasured them.

Gifts and loans are accepted by the Commission. Receipts are given and insurance placed on all valuable items.
Speaking of the Museum, Governor John J. McKeithen said: "Here is a wedge of that heritage we call Louisian History, protected and preserved from the ravages of time for the benefit of all citizens."

There is no admission fee! The Arsenal is open daily, except on Mondays. A gracious, competent hostess and guard are on hand to smile, welcome and give guided tours.

A special invitation is extended school children and their teachers to partake of this opportunity to turn back history's pages and see "Louisiana Under Ten Flags."

Guided tours are available.

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