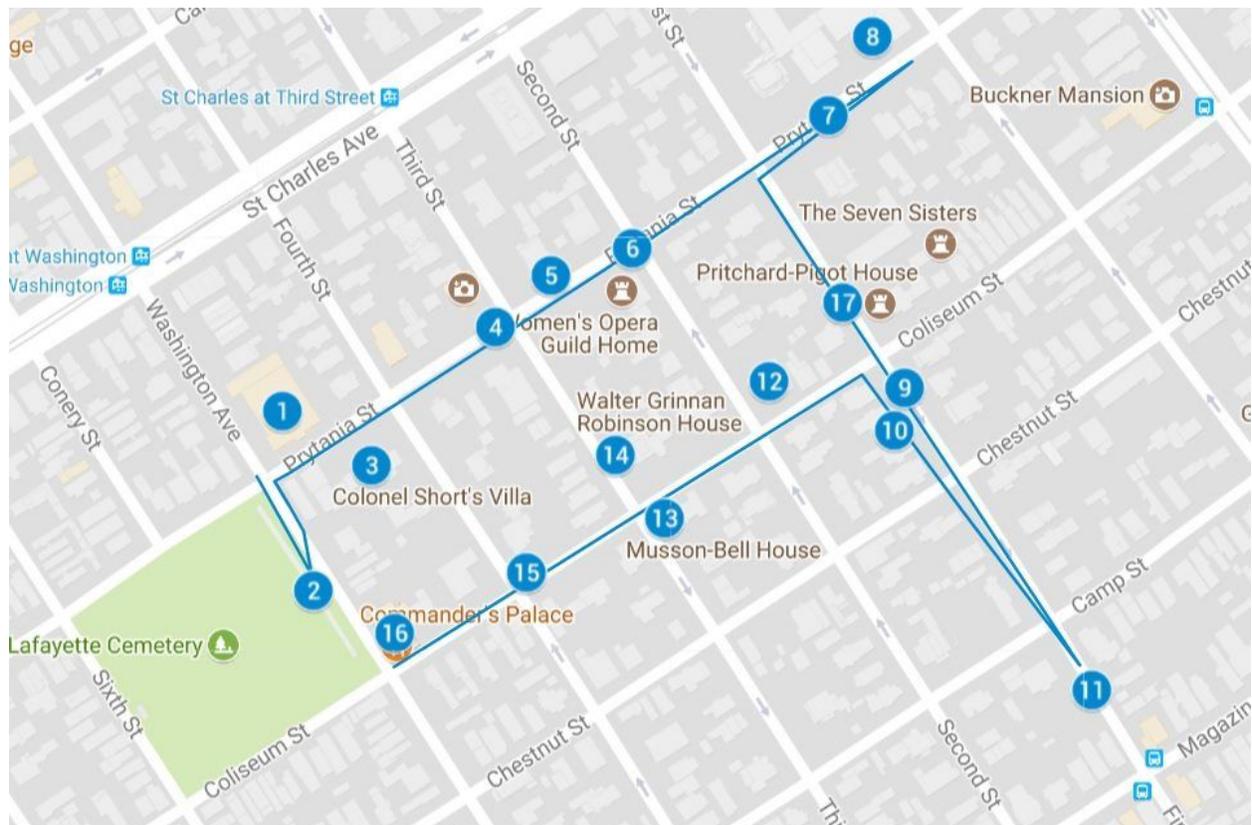


## THINGS TO SEE IN THE GARDEN DISTRICT

You could also [view this tour on a smartphone](#) on Google maps and you can use it offline. You have a choice as to how you begin your tour. If you would like to begin with lunch and then walk it off, get off the car and walk two small blocks south to the corner of 6th and St. Charles Ave. You could also view this tour as a [PDF](#) to download to your smartphone.

[Click here for a larger interactive map.](#)



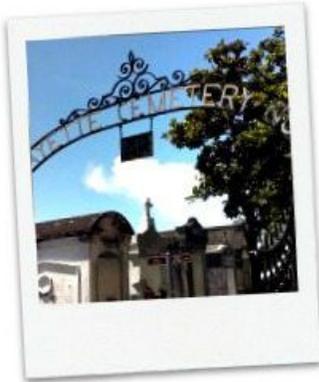
### 1. The Rink/Still Perkin 2727 Prytania St.

The mustard-brown building we call the Rink today was built in 1884, the year New Orleans hosted the World Cotton Centennial Exposition – that year's name for the World's Fair. The whole city prepared to entertain huge crowds of visitors, and on this site, that meant building an ice skating rink. Today it contains the Still Perkin' Café, where you can get a quick pastry or sandwich or a café au lait or chicory coffee to carry with you. Upstairs is the Garden District Bookstore, which has hosted many book signings for the neighborhood's



famous novelist, Anne Rice. You can see photos in the shop window of a theatrical mock funeral staged during one of her book promotions, and inside you'll find a barrister bookcase filled with signed copies of her works.

*Diagonally across the intersection from the Rink, you'll see the white-painted brick wall of Lafayette Cemetery #1. Halfway along it on Washington Avenue, you'll find the cemetery gate.*



## 2. Lafayette Cemetery #1

Lafayette Cemetery #1 was established in 1833 and was named for Lafayette, the autonomous city where it was located and which would eventually be incorporated into New Orleans. Lafayette Cemetery #1 is a municipal cemetery, owned and operated by the city rather than by a church, and is the third oldest cemetery still standing in New Orleans today. 27 or more nationalities are represented in its interments.

For a more thorough exploration, read our [self-guided tour and guide to Lafayette Cemetery #1](#).

As you walk down the center aisle, take a look at the fourth tomb on the right, where the Sercy family buried three children in two days. Yellow fever epidemics caused many such tragedies in 19th-century New Orleans, particularly among newcomers to the area who lacked immunities. Other standout tombs include the Jefferson Fire Company Tomb, further down the middle-walk on the right side, and a tomb dedicated for orphans along the walk that goes left from the center of the cemetery.

You'll notice the above-ground tombs that are so popular in New Orleans. Built both for practicality and to keep up the French and Spanish traditions, you can find them in abundance all across the city. Initially, the inhabitants of the Garden District, mostly born outside Louisiana, brought with them the tradition of in-ground burial, but gradually switched to the local practice of above-ground burial over a few decades. Embalming was not used predominantly in North America until after the American Civil War. When the deceased was placed inside of the tombs without embalming, the great heat inside of these brick oven-like tombs caused the process of disintegration to accelerate. For that reason, you can find tombs with up to 35 family members inside.

Movies and television shows are often being filmed inside. Past glimpses of the cemetery can be found in *Double Jeopardy* with Ashley Judd, *American Horror Story: Coven*, and *NCIS New Orleans*. Fans of *The Originals* will recognize the gate of the cemetery, but like most of the show, scenes ostensibly set inside the cemetery are shot on sets in Atlanta.

The cemetery is open Mon-Fri 7:00 am - 2:30 pm, Saturdays 7:00 am - 12:00 pm and it's closed on Sundays.

*Exit the cemetery where you came in, on Washington Avenue, and walk left to Prytania Street. Turn right on Prytania and proceed one block, where you'll see a fence with a cornstalk design on the right.*

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### **3. Colonel Short's Villa 1448 Fourth St.**

This house, at 1448 Fourth St, was built by architect Henry Howard for Kentucky-born Colonel Robert Short in 1859. Local lore says that Short's wife complained of missing the cornfields in her native Iowa and that he bought the cornstalk fence as a gift for her. An alternative explanation, suggested by the current owners, is that the wife saw that it was the most expensive fence available in the building catalog and requested it on that basis. If you look closely, the corn plants are wrapped in bean vines – a common strategy for efficient cultivation of land, used by the region's native population.



During the American Civil War, New Orleans was taken and occupied early as a strategic move to cut off Confederate supply lines; Colonel Short's Villa was commandeered in September of 1862, and Governor Nathaniel Banks lived inside with Major General Benjamin Butler. As a result of the early occupation, New Orleans, unlike many southern cities, evaded destruction from Sherman's March.

*Continue in the same direction along Prytania Street until the next intersection, where you'll find the Briggs-Staub house on the left side.*

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### **4. Briggs-Staub House 2605 Prytania St.**

The Briggs home, built in 1854, is the only true example of Gothic Revival architecture in the Garden District. Because this style reminded the Protestant Americans of the Catholicism of their Creole antagonists, it was not popular. Original owner Charles Briggs did not hold African slaves but did acquire Irish indentured servants. The large servant quarters can be seen to the left of the home.

*Continue along Prytania to the next house on the same side of the street.*

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### 5. Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel 2523 Prytania St.



The beautiful Madonna and canopy in the yard denote a small Catholic chapel, which used to stand here until Anne Rice, author of *Interview with a Vampire*, purchased the property. It became the setting for *Violin*, another of her novels. The home was designed by architect Henry Howard in 1857. Most of his works, including this house, were in the Italianate style. Italianate homes in the Garden District, on average, have ceilings that are seventeen feet high.

You'll also notice the exquisite metalwork along the galleries. At the tops of the metal columns, you'll notice what we call "Romeo spikes" – installed, according to local lore, to keep young men from climbing into young women's rooms. The more likely intent of most owners was robbery prevention. You'll also notice gas lights on the porch that burn all day and night. Lights like these, found on many historic New Orleans buildings, uphold a tradition that dates to the 1833 arrival of J.H. Caldwell, a theater manager and gasworks industrialist, who added gas lighting to much of the city. Since the Garden District was founded just as his enterprise began, the neighborhood would have never been without light.

*Continue along Prytania to this block's last building on the right.*

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### 6. The Women's Opera Guild House 2504 Prytania St.

The standout homes in the Garden District often include more than one style. Designed by William Freret in 1859, this building combines a Greek Revival structure and Italianate metalwork with a Queen Anne extension. Now owned by the Women's Opera Guild, the home can be toured on Mondays from 1 to 4 pm. Recent filming in the house includes the motion pictures *Elsa and Peter* with Shirley MacLaine and Christopher Plummer and the Quentin Tarantino film *Django Unchained*.



*Continue down Prytania for another block; cross First Street and find the first house on the right.*

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### 7. Toby's Corner 2340 Prytania St.



The Garden District's oldest still-standing residence was built in 1838. You can note the basic Doric columns, which speaks to the home's age. Although built for an American owner, the house displays Creole building techniques that are practical for the region. The house has a raised

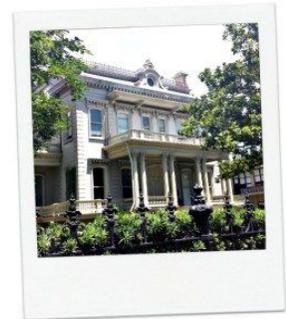
basement for flooding as well as ventilation. The ceiling height is 15 feet. Floor-length windows surrounding the structure could be opened to take advantage of cross-breezes coming from the nearby Mississippi. From the front gate, you can see a sugar kettle being used as a fountain in the front yard, paying homage to southeast Louisiana's biggest crop. If you're here during the Carnival season, you'll likely see three flags with the insignia of Rex, King of Mardi Gras, one of New Orleans' many parading organizations.

*Next, look across Prytania Street.*

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### **8. Bradish Johnson House and Louise S. McGehee School 2343 Prytania St.**

Architect James Freret designed this mansion in the Second Empire style for sugar baron Bradish Johnson in 1872. It is quintessential Reconstruction-era architecture. You can also find this style further uptown along St. Charles Avenue in neighborhoods like Audubon Place, which were developed during that era. Today, the property is the private Louise S. McGehee School for girls. They celebrated their centennial in 2012.



*From here, turn back along Prytania to the intersection with First Street, then turn left. Continue along First Street until you find a tan house on the right.*

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### **9. Archie Manning House 1420 First St.**



This is the home of former New Orleans Saints quarterback Archie Manning, as well as the childhood home of his sons Peyton, Eli, and Cooper Manning. The family are full-time residents and are a common sight in the neighborhood. A lot of footage from the documentary of the family called the [Book of Manning](#) (2013) was shot at the home.

*Continue along First Street. Look for the first house on the left after you cross Coliseum Street.*

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### **10. Morris Israel House 1331 First St.**

By the 1860s, the Italianate style was the most popular style of architecture in the Garden District. Like many New Orleans homes, this one is narrow along the street but extends far back on the lot. Large square lots that failed to sell were often split lengthwise, sometimes more than

once, to form multiple lots, leaving owners with no choice but to build long, rectangular homes. Past visitors to Disneyland in Anaheim, California might recognize this house, as it was the basis for the design of the Haunted Mansion – and the house appropriately has rumored ghosts of its own.

*Continue along First Street until you cross Chestnut, then find the first house on the left.*

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### 11. Brevard Mahat/Anne Rice House 1239 First St.

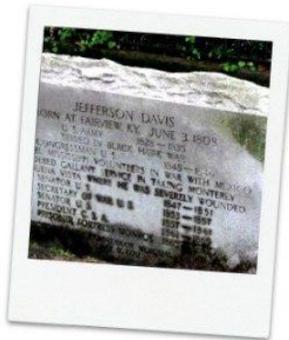
Originally designed in 1857 as a Greek Revival home, this house has noticeable modern additions, like an Italianate bay and a skylight. Notice the Rosegate fence, believed to be one of the first chain link fence designs in the world. Viewers today, especially those familiar with the works of former owner Anne Rice, often see skulls rather than rosebuds. Rice, best known for her novels about vampires in New Orleans, renovated and used the home as her primary residence for many years, besides setting her *Witching Hour* trilogy inside. She sold the home in 2003 after the death of her husband, Stan Rice.



*Continue along First Street, stopping at the first house on the right after the intersection with Camp Street.*

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### 12. Payne Strachan House 1134 First St.



The first and only President of the short-lived Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, died here in December 1889. He had been traveling to New Orleans to give a lecture, became ill, and spent his last hours here in the home of Judge Charles Fenner, where he was brought to receive care. A small monument in front of the house bears the date of Davis' death: December 6, 1889.

Notice the sky blue color of the ceiling on the front porch. The color is believed to keep winged insects from nesting there and to ward off evil spirits. Many Garden District homes adhere to this tradition, along with many other homes throughout the Gulf South region. The color is called "haint blue."

*From here, turn back along First Street and proceed until you reach the intersection with Coliseum Street. Turn left and continue until this block's last house on the right.*

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### 13. Joseph Merrick Jones House 2425 Coliseum St.

This home currently belongs to the actor John Goodman, known locally for his role on the post-Katrina HBO drama *Treme* by David Simon, creator of *The Wire*, and more broadly for his film career and long-running role as Dan Conner on the hit TV show, *Roseanne*. He moved to New Orleans over thirty years ago after making the film *The Big Easy* with Dennis Quaid and Ellen Barkin. Thanks to his depiction of a staunch defender of New Orleans culture in *Treme* and his real-life advocacy, New Orleanians take him as an honorary native son.



Before Goodman owned the home, it belonged to Trent Reznor, the lead singer of Nine Inch Nails. Some would speculate he was not a good fit as he had quite a few unconventional guests and a recording studio installed inside.

*Continue along Coliseum Street and pause at the next block's last house on the left.*

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### 14. Musson Bell House 1331 Third St.



This home was built in 1853 for Michel Musson, one of the few Creoles living in the Garden District before the Civil War. He was the uncle of French artist Edgar Degas. Degas briefly lived with Musson in another home on Esplanade Avenue during a visit to New Orleans. You can tour that home, now called the Degas House. The backyard of this building, visible along Coliseum Street, contains several detached buildings typical of 19th-century homes, including a slave quarters and kitchen, a stables and carriage house, and a cistern for water storage. Mark Twain, on visiting the neighborhood and seeing all the cisterns, once commented that it looked as if everybody in the neighborhood had a private brewery.

*Now, look at the house on the opposite side of Coliseum Street.*

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### 15. Robinson House 1415 Third St.

Building on this property began in 1859 and did not end until 1865. It was designed by architect Henry Howard for tobacco merchant Walter Robinson. The property is one of the largest in the Garden District at 12,000 square feet. The roof is flat and once gathered rainwater for the home's indoor plumbing and drinking water. The house went up for sale in 2010 and the listing price was \$12.5 million. As of 2017, the home is still for sale.

*Continue along Coliseum until you reach the next block's last building on the right.*

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**16. Eustis/ Sandra Bullock Residence 2627 Coliseum St.**

This Swiss Germanic Chalet, built in 1867, is one of only three homes of this style in the entirety of New Orleans. It is not a practical style of architecture in a part of the country that gets as warm as New Orleans does. It was designed by Architect William Freret for James Eustis, a onetime U.S. Senator. Today, it is the home of the Oscar-winning actress Sandra Bullock. She bought the home in late 2009, shortly before her adopted son Louis was born in New Orleans. People flock to the home hoping for a sighting, but she's rarely here. She does allow other celebrities to stay inside, though, so you never know who might come out the front gate.



*Continue along Coliseum to the corner with Washington Ave.*

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**17. Commander's Palace Restaurant 1403 Washington Ave.**



The bright turquoise-and-white building on the corner was erected in 1883 for Emil Commander to be run as a restaurant. It is now considered to be one of the best restaurants in the United States and has been owned by the Brennan family, some of New Orleans' foremost restaurateurs, since 1974. Locals attend the weekday martini lunches – twenty-five cents for a martini with an entrée! – but the weekend jazz brunch is also a nice option. Reservations are required and there is a strict dress code.