

Would you take advice from this woman?



bestofneworleans.com™

HOME · GAMBIT WEEKLY · FEATURES

MUSIC

CUISINE

EVENTS & FESTIVALS

MOVIES

CLASSIFIEDS

SHOP ONLINE

GAMBIT WEEKLY

best of new orleans
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR VISITORS

GAMBIT WEEKLY

COVER STORY

FEATURES

NEWS & VIEWS

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Story

About Us

Distribution

Advertise

Related Stories

BLAKE PONTCHARTRAIN™

06 11 02

[Ask Blake](#)



New Orleans Know-It-All



The Belfort Mansion -- now under renovation by a new owner -- has been a private residence to wealthy philanthropists, an apartment building, and home to the cast of MTV's *The Real World*.

Photo by Eileen Loh Harrist

Hey Blake,

I know the *Real World* cast is long gone, but what about the house -- Belfort Mansion -- they occupied on St. Charles Avenue? Somebody told me it used to be a boarding house among other things. It seems MTV came through and really did a number on the place. Do you know anything about the history of this mansion and what are the current plans for it?

Danny Pitre

Dear Danny,

I'd like to tell you that the Greek revival mansion at 2618 St. Charles Ave. comes with a fantastic story and maybe a ghost or two, but I'm afraid its history is rather unexceptional. The first record of its existence is in the J. F. Braun Plan Book Map of 1874 for the Fourth District. The house was built for Mr. and Mrs. Alexander C. Hutchinson, who purchased the property, which occupied one-half of the block and all the frontage on St. Charles Avenue, in 1867. They lived there until Mr. Hutchinson died in 1902.

The Hutchinsons had no children, so Mr. Hutchinson bequeathed most of his estate to Tulane University, which later constructed a medical school building in its benefactor's name. Lucky for us, Mr. Hutchinson was not only wealthy, but also generous, leaving money to the Home of the Good Shepherd, St. Anne's Asylum, and the Ear, Eye, Nose, and Throat Hospital.

In the 1930s, the mansion was divided into apartments, and for years it was "home" to many New Orleanians who remember it fondly. Most recently, Jim Perrier and James Ashbee purchased the property in 1995 from the estate of Edward Bilgrad.

When the mansion became home to the *Real World* kids, the interior was gutted, and then, as you put it so well, "MTV came through and really did a number on the place." Two of the gentlemen responsible for the transformation were art director Monroe Kelly and architect Lee Ledbetter. As co-production designers, these guys had just 10 weeks to transform the

Compare Hotel Rates for New Orleans and Save!
Date of Arrival

11/26/2004

Nights

1

Rooms

1

Adults

1

SEARCH

Other Cities

mansion into living quarters for the young folks.

The cast moved out on May 23, 2000, and the current owner, Jim Perrier, is renovating the mansion so that "real folks" can live in it. The word is that he plans to be in before the year is up.

I hope he doesn't mind a bunch of tourists walking and driving by and generally pointing and gawking. It's a very popular place.

Hey Blake,

How come Algiers is called Algiers? And since when? So far, I have three theories. The French in New Orleans might have taken to calling the land on the other side of the river Algiers, just like the Algerian Algiers is located on the other side of the Mediterranean from France. Or, maybe there was a ferry called Algiers on that particular route, which later lent its name to the place. Or, slaves might have been brought into New Orleans through Algiers and the French might have associated all colored people they had ever seen in France with Algeria, which they colonized from 1830.

Elsa Hahne

Dear Elsa,

Since no one can agree on how Algiers got its name, your versions -- also suggested by others -- are as good as anyone else's. But there are other popular explanations as well.

Another accepted version is that the name came from one of Gen. Don Alexander O'Reilly's soldiers. O'Reilly was the man sent in 1769 to take over Louisiana for Spain. The soldier had been away fighting a particularly bloody battle for Spain against Algeria. So when he arrived in New Orleans and saw what was going on, he suggested the name for the community.

And there are those who claim that the name came from the fact that our Algiers was frequented by Jean Lafitte and the Barataria pirates just as the Barbary Coast in North Africa was known for its pirates who terrorized ships on the Mediterranean for 300 years.

At first one of the King's Plantations, the land has had many names including Duverjeburg, Point Antoine, Point Marigny, and Slaughter House Point. But the name "Algiers" began to make its appearance in legal documents and maps around 1830 and by 1840 was used by most people.



Other Stories This Week in Features:

Cover Story

[Why Doesn't She Leave?](#)

Shoptalk

[Keeping Up With the Jones](#)

Recently in Blake Pontchartrain:

[New Orleans Know-It-All](#) 06 04 02