

# Savoring Slidell

ITS SAUCY PEOPLE, SPICY RECIPES & SOUTHERN SCENERY

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD . . . . .	5	The Human Touch . . . . .	44	Gardner and Ronnie Kole . . . . .	83
WELCOME TO SLIDELL . . . . .	6	Junior Auxilliary . . . . .	45	Camp Salmen . . . . .	84
Growing Up in the Big House . . . . .	6	Lions Club . . . . .	45	Pirogue Races . . . . .	86
John Besh: Slidell Son Talks of Home and Food . . . . .	8	Slidell Women’s Civic Club . . . . .	46	All Saints Day . . . . .	88
Slidell, The Man . . . . .	10	Rotary Club . . . . .	46	First you make a roux.... . . . .	92
Slidell, The Town . . . . .	11	Honoring our Service Heroes . . . . .	47	Two Grand Ladies of Bayou Liberty . . . . .	95
Early Industry . . . . .	12	Celebrating Families . . . . .	48	George B. Dunbar . . . . .	96
Early Families . . . . .	14	Celebrating Traditions . . . . .	49	LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN . . . . .	98
Early Churches . . . . .	16	Mardi Gras . . . . .	50	Pontchartrain’s Pride . . . . .	100
GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN . . . . .	17	Christmas . . . . .	51	Northshore Harbor Center . . . . .	102
St. Christopher’s Curve Inn . . . . .	17	Destruction . . . . .	54	Tammany Holding Company, llc . . . . .	104
The Streets of Slidell . . . . .	18	Reconstruction . . . . .	55	Lishman City Market . . . . .	106
Politics As Unusual . . . . .	20	BAYOU BONFOUCA . . . . .	56	Shrimp Boats is a’ Comin’... . . . .	110
The “Sleepy” Village . . . . .	20	Bayou Bonfouca . . . . .	58	Banks of Pontchartrain . . . . .	114
Early Schools . . . . .	22	Langiappe . . . . .	65	Preservation and Restoration . . . . .	116
Historic Landmarks . . . . .	23	Antique Alley . . . . .	67	THE WEST PEARL . . . . .	118
Living The American Dream . . . . .	24	Community Parks . . . . .	68	Entering the West Pearl . . . . .	120
Footprints on our hearts . . . . .	26	Sports and Community . . . . .	69	Cajun Encounters . . . . .	122
SLIDELL, THE CAMELLIA CITY . . . . .	28	The Slidell Garden Club . . . . .	70	Ochsner Medical Center – North Shore . . . . .	124
Mayor Freddy Drennan . . . . .	29	Garden Spot Nursery . . . . .	71	Backyard Living at its Best . . . . .	126
NASA . . . . .	30	Slidell Memorial Hospital . . . . .	72	Fish Fry Festivities . . . . .	128
The Reine Family . . . . .	32	BAYOU LIBERTY . . . . .	74	Indian Village . . . . .	135
Langiappe . . . . .	37	Rooted In Liberté . . . . .	76	The Front Porch Swing . . . . .	140
Dynamic Duo . . . . .	38	Shell Midden . . . . .	77	Larger than Life . . . . .	141
JOY Bible Study . . . . .	39	St. Genevieve’s Church . . . . .	78	Leaving the West Pearl . . . . .	142
Northlake Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery . . . . .	40	Doucette Family . . . . .	79	SPECIAL THANKS . . . . .	144
Le Cotillion . . . . .	41	A Creole Cottage . . . . .	80		
Slidell Little Theatre . . . . .	42	Francois Cousin Home . . . . .	81		
Ozone Camellia Club . . . . .	43	Tranquility Plantation . . . . .	82		

# FOREWORD

With their saucy charm and spicy food, the people of Slidell, Louisiana, cordially welcome you to their city and its natural beauty, rich history, and southern ambience. This book celebrates the lifestyle its residents cherish. They invite you to travel the bayous and back roads. You'll glimpse its past, visit its present and glance at what the future may hold.

Settle down with a café au lait and take a tour of this scenic city, via its waterways: Bayou Bonfouca, Bayou Liberty, West Pearl River,

and Lake Pontchartrain. Seen from its waters, you'll visit places tucked away from the highways and the three interstates which intersect there. These waterways, the wildlife, and the nature preserves, set the scene for a peaceful lifestyle many only dream of living.

The area is dotted with majestic old homes, impressive new ones and magnificent gardens.

The people of Slidell enjoy the big city excitement of New Orleans, only 30 miles south, and the gentle leisure of the Gulf Coast, only 30 miles east. They, and their city, embrace the best of both worlds.

The women of the Slidell Garden Club, who created this book, have worked for more than 50 years to enhance the beauty of this, the Camellia City. Many of them represent families who have been here for generations, laying the foundation from which Slidell has flourished with Southern charm and dignity.

From these pages you'll get a taste of the city, seasoned by its gracious past and flavored by its businesses, craftsmen, and community leaders. There are recipes for your kitchen, hints for your garden, and art for your mind and soul to savor.

Welcome home. Sit and stay awhile.



CAMELLIA  
OIL BY MARY CHRISTOPHER

# WELCOME TO SLIDELL

## GROWING UP IN THE BIG HOUSE AT 127 CLEVELAND AVENUE

One of the most beautiful landmarks in Slidell is the Salmen-Fritchie House. Built in 1895 for the Fritz Salmen family, it stands proudly on three acres on the corner of Front Street and Cleveland Avenue.

Homer G. Fritchie, Sr., moved his family into the 6500 square foot grand home in 1939. The family included his wife, Nellie Bousquet Fritchie; their children, Nelouise "Suzy" Fritchie Williams (named for her mother and grandmother Louise), Barbara Fritchie Ware, Beth Fritchie Dendinger, Homer, Jr., and Grace Fritchie Burkes.

Grace Burkes, smiles as she recalls wonderful memories of her childhood in the Fritchie home, which also included three grandparents (Momie, Mamaw and PaPa Bousquet) and Cousin Grace.

"Thank goodness the house had nine bedrooms and five baths!" she laughed. Six bedrooms and four baths were on the ground floor off the great hall with its 12-foot ceilings and running 70 feet from the front porch to the formal dining room. At the rear of the house was the oversized kitchen, large breakfast room and a back porch.

"The sun parlor, where we all had many parties, was between one bedroom and the "porte-cachere," the carport. "We'd sunbathe on the roof of the porte-cachere and play ping pong on the front porch with its hammock and wicker rocking chairs."

The great hall's impressive staircase leads to a mezzanine floor, then up a few steps to the massive pool room, "We all loved playing pool and balls occasionally jumped the table and landed on the floor." Upstairs there were three bedrooms and one bath.

"The attic space was intriguing and we spent many hours investigating the place. Of course when we came back down the grand staircase, some of us attempted to slide down the banister until Mother

made it off limits." The main floor had steam heat radiators. "At five o'clock in the morning, Dad would go down to the boiler room, near the wine cellar, and bang on a pipe to fire up the heat. Then the clanging began and soon the home was warm as toast."

The home's rose garden eventually became a camellia garden. "There were massive oak trees and 17 pecan trees. We helped pick up the pecans so my father could crack and peel them. My mother would make pralines at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"The front yard had yellow day lilies and palm trees. (We used the palms on Palm Sunday.) The tandem garage was next to an artesian well that filled a shallow pool and a gold fish pond (great places to swim!). A wash shed (between the garage and the barn) was close to a magnificent oak with a huge wisteria vine (large enough to swing on --- which of course, we did). Jane and Tarzan would have been envious."

Grace continued, "Behind the barn was an old chicken coop. We loved to jump from the loft of the barn to the top of the coop. There was also a playhouse near the barn. My father had a Victory Garden with vegetables and fig trees in abundance. Mother was a great cook; so, we all enjoyed the harvest."

It's obvious; the "Big House" was a great place to grow up. "When each of his four daughters was to be married, my father offered the wedding or money.

"Poor Mother and Dad --- we all took the wedding and had the receptions at the house! When I look back on our early years, I realize Mother and Dad were saints and they made the Big House a wonderful family home."

