



New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation
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HOUSE OF DANCE AND FEATHERS

A Grassroots Museum Showcasing Mardi Gras Indian and Ninth Ward Culture

New Orleans, LA – Celebrating the cultural history of the Lower Ninth Ward, the House of Dance and Feathers features a personal collection of social aid and pleasure club and Mardi Gras Indian memorabilia and artifacts.

Built in the backyard of former streetcar repairman Ronald Lewis, the House of Dance and Feathers slowly developed from a personal collection that grew over the years. In the '70s, Lewis had been a community organizer and founded the neighborhood's first social aid and pleasure club and the Choctaw Hunters, its first Indian tribe. Collecting mountains of costumes, beadwork, headdresses, instruments, photos and newspaper clippings, his wife finally convinced him to move the artifacts into the backyard and create a museum.

Lewis had just registered the museum as a non-profit organization when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005 and submerged hundreds of Lower Ninth Ward homes and businesses in more than ten feet of water. He escaped with two suitcases of photos, newspaper articles and memorabilia but was one of the first to rebuild, due to the help and generosity of students and Patrick Rhodes, Assistant Professor of Architecture at Kansas State University.

Rebuilt and redesigned in Lewis' backyard, the House of Dance and Feathers lets visitors learn not only about Indians and Ninth Ward culture but about the devastation and rebirth that the neighborhood has experienced. With the help of donations from other Indians, musicians and social aid and pleasure clubs, Lewis has been able to bring the museum back to the Lower Ninth Ward.

"It's just a melting pot of artifacts. Because I am a mainstay in our culture, a lot of people donated stuff to me after the storm to rebuild the collection. It's about educating and preserving our unique culture," said Lewis.

The Ninth Ward is the easternmost downriver part of the city and has historically been a working class neighborhood. It is home to Jackson Barracks, Holy Cross High School and a number of famous residents such as Fats Domino and the Lastie Family. The Upper Ninth Ward is also home to Musician's Village project which, through donations and the help of Habitat for Humanity, Harry Connick, Jr. and Ellis Marsalis, is building homes for displaced musicians.

The House of Dance and Feathers is located at 1317 Tupelo St. in the Lower Ninth Ward and is open from Mon.-Sat. from 10 a.m. to 6p.m. For more information, call (504) 957-2678.

The New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation promotes the city as a leisure tourism destination throughout the year. Annually, NOTMC's marketing campaigns include strategic print, broadcast, and Internet advertising and public relations. Web sites: www.NewOrleansOnline.com; www.NewOrleansMuseums.com; www.HearNewOrleansMusic.com.