



THIS BROCHURE IS A PROJECT OF THE
MORGAN CITY MAIN STREET PROGRAM



...making waves downtown

HISTORIC
Morgan City
LOUISIANA
A WALKING TOUR

TWO HOURS SOUTHWEST OF NEW ORLEANS
ONE HOUR SOUTH OF BATON ROUGE
ONE HOUR EAST OF LAFAYETTE

Other Tourist Attractions in the Morgan City Area:

- Morgan City Tourism Center (Myrtle Street)
- Lake End Park & Campground
- Brownell Memorial Park & Carillon Tower
- Everett S. Berry Lighthouse Park
- Wedell-Williams Memorial Aviation Museum
- International Petroleum Museum
- Kemper-Williams Park & Campground

Please inquire at our City & Parish Tourism Centers
for other area attractions:
City: (985) 384-3343
Parish: (985) 395-4905
or 1 (800) 256-2931

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TOP
100
EVENTS
ASSOCIATION

Home of Louisiana's Oldest
Chartered Harvest Festival
Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival

The assistance of the St. Mary Parish and City of Morgan City Tourist Commission, the Morgan City Archives, Delta Printing and others are gratefully acknowledged.

circa 1950
Celebrating the "Blessing of the Fleet" on the
Atchafalaya River front in downtown Morgan City

The Attakapas Indians called it Atchafalaya or long river. Stretching over 135 miles, it has brought us happiness and it has brought us pain. From the Attakapas Indians to the present day shrimping and oil trade, the Atchafalaya has shaped Morgan City's history. Just as the tide experiences ebbs and flows, so has Morgan City. Its resiliency can best be explained by its people, a "gumbo" or ethnicity... French, Spanish, Indian, German, and Dutch, a people whose strong belief in faith, tradition and family define today's Morgan City.

Originally known as Tigre Island after a group of United States surveyors spotted an unknown cat, the area attracted Walter Brashear. Brashear, a

famed Kentucky surgeon and planter purchased large tracts of land. Brashear's subsequent subdividing of his sugar can plantation was the beginning of the first permanent settlement known as the town of Brashear.

Because of Morgan City's strategic marine location, the town of Brashear played a prominent role in the war between the states. Brashear was occupied by Federal troops for over three years. It was in Morgan City that the Union troops planned the destruction of the Avery Island salt mines, the cutting off of Rebel supply lines from Texas, the capture of Texas to restore her to the Union, and the annihilation of all Confederate resistance in southwest Louisiana. The



circa 1938 - Front and Railroad looking north

trade center for animal fur, cypress timber, and seafood. In 1876, the town was renamed Morgan City in his honor.

The late 1800s and early 1900s was an era of growth and development. Many of the historic buildings such as Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Pharr Chapel United Methodist as well as distinctive homes including Cotten Top, the Norman-Schreier House, and Cypress Manor were constructed. Boat building, moss picking, and a shell crushing plant broadened Morgan City's economic base.

Substituting the jungles of Africa with the swamps of Morean City. Hollywood made its mark in 1917

"jumbo" shrimp capitol of the world. A community strongly rooted in Catholicism and tradition, a religious aspect, the Blessing of the Fleet, was introduced by the Louisiana Shrimp Festival's founder and first president, Mr. Paul Acklen LeBlanc, who suggested that this ancient old-world custom be incorporated into the celebration to insure a safe return of fishermen and a bountiful harvest. Following the blessing, the celebration traveled to Egle's Place for a fais-do-do, a Cajun dance. This was the inception of the Louisiana Shrimp Festival, the state's oldest chartered harvest festival.

A decade later, Morgan City made national headlines when Kerr-McGee Industries drilled the first successful offshore oil

well out of sight of land. According to *The Times Picayune*, it was the most significant discovery to date. The "black gold rush" marked a new era in the city's prosperity. Because of its considerable importance to the economy, "petroleum" was added to the name of Louisiana Shrimp Festival. The present day Louisiana Shrimp & Petroleum Festival is held every Labor Day weekend in the historic district.

Morgan City's Main Street Program designation was officially recognized in 1997, and combined with the nine-block historic district, it now encompasses a 19-block area.