

Onion Tops

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Back in November 2016, three months before my decline into idleness, I took a trip to New Orleans to visit the Howard locations and see if I could uncover anything new on Dr. Howard's schooling. Let's see if I can finally do that trip some justice. Don't hold your breath.

Cruising Canal Street

A couple of years ago (or was it three? more?) I worked up the map below for Rusty's 'zine about the Howards' time in New Orleans. When it came time for me to visit NOLA myself, I used it as my starting point. I had already been to every other known Howardian location in the continental U.S., so I wanted to be sure to cover as much territory in New Orleans as I could. Turns out you can do all of the places Howard mentions in one day of walking (a long day).

There are several references to NOLA in Howard's correspondence, as well as a descriptive essay about his experience there known as "In His Own Image." Using these, and Rusty's research, I set out one morning to visit the places on the map, as well as a couple of other places mentioned by REH: the Dueling Oaks and the "Old Spanish Fort."



Of the four items listed on the map on page 1, only the library remains—luckily, that was the last spot on Canal Street that I visited. Item #1, the Tulane Medical School, was a leveled, fenced-in construction zone when I was there. The school had changed its location some time ago.

Items #2 and #3, the Durrel and Rizzo homes, have been eaten up by the University Medical Center and a storage yard, respectively. There was *one* old condemned house a block SE of where the Durrel's had been. There's a photo, *below*.

There's not much to evoke the early 1900s on the south side of Canal, but roaming around the side streets on the north side was like time traveling. Super cool.

Continuing up Canal, I eventually ran into the Good Karma Cafe, home of “plant-based cuisine and coffee.” This is the former public library wherein REH discovered the Picts. (See photo on page 4.) Its second floor is taken up by Swan River Yoga, which was in full session when I walked in to inquire if they had ever heard of Robert E. Howard.

I looked around in the cafe downstairs, but they were reluctant to let me climb the stairs into the yoga zone while class was in session. It was fine. I could see everything I wanted to see from below.

Having seen all there was to see on Canal Street, I hoofed it out of town to visit the Duelling Oaks and Old Spanish Fort. There are pictures on the next page.

The “Dueling Oaks” is a misnomer these days: one of the pair was destroyed in a storm some time ago. The remaining oak is still pretty impressive.

There isn't a lot to see at the Old Spanish Fort, nestled as it is amongst a suburban housing tract, but the crumbling walls and fortifications did evoke that old Howardian feeling. After taking a few photographs, I headed back. This turned into a little side adventure as I found a couple New Orleans cemeteries to explore along the way.

After walking all day, I was a bit tired, so I returned to my room in the French Quarter and went to sleep—after inspecting a couple of taverns and a fine cajun restaurant.





"I suppose you visited Pontchartrain, the dueling oaks, and the ruins of the old Spanish fort." REH to HPL, Sept. 22, 1932



"I'm not superstitious, but standing in the Alamo I have the same sensations I've had standing under the Dueling Oaks outside New Orleans – as if the place were haunted" (REH to HPL, ca. Sept. 1930). There's not much of a duel anymore; one of the trees was destroyed in a storm some time ago.



The Good Karma Cafe, the former library where Robert Howard discovered the Picts.

The next day I took a trip to Tulane University, pretty much the tallest building in the area, to try to get some new information about Dr. Howard's attendance there. I visited the Office of Admissions on the 24th floor, but hit the usual "privacy" wall when asking about student records. So . . . no new information. But the view was super cool.

And that about catches you up on my travels. I missed Howard Days last year, so nothing to report there, but I did take a trip to Houston over Presidents' Day weekend and visited the courthouse. Maybe I'll report my findings next time.



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