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## Playing With Jim Crow: African American Private Parks in Early Twentieth Century New Orleans

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Playing With Jim Crow: African American Private Parks in Early Twentieth Century  
New Orleans

Submitted to the Department of History  
University of New Orleans  
In partial fulfillment of the  
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By

Kevin McQueeney  
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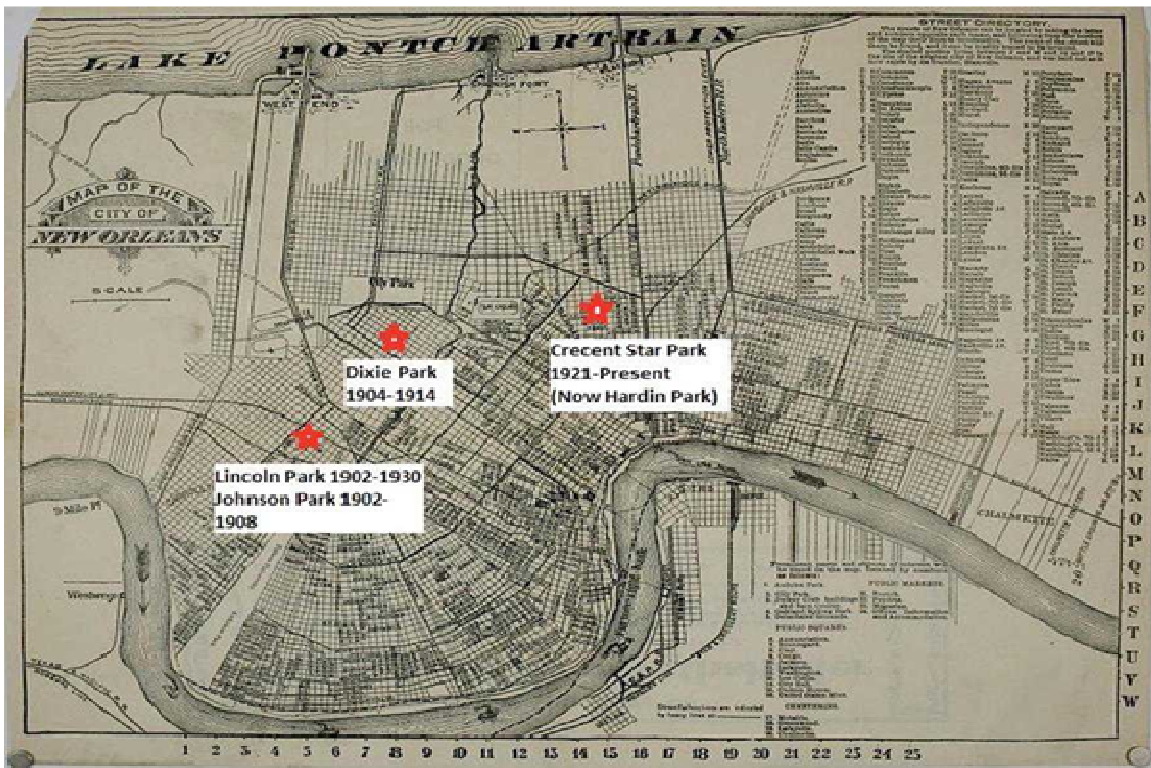
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*Abstract:* Public space in New Orleans became increasingly segregated following the 1896 U. S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. This trend applied to sites of recreation, as nearly all public parks in the city became segregated. African Americans turned, instead, to private parks. This work examines four private parks open to African Americans in order to understand the external forces that affected these spaces, leading to their success or closure, and their significance for black city residents. While scholars have argued public space in New Orleans was segregated during Jim Crow, little attention has been paid to African American parks as alternative spaces for black New Orleanians. Whites were able to control the location of the parks and the parks' reliance on profit to survive resulted in short spans of existence for most. However, this thesis argues that these parks were crucial sites of identity and community formation and of resistance to segregation.

*Keywords*

Urban Parks, Racial Segregation, New Orleans, Public Space, Black Recreation, Jim Crow, Crescent Star Park, Hardin Park, Shakspeare Park, Negro League, Buddy Bolden, "Kid" Ory

Dixie Park, a small space bounded by Bienville Avenue, Conti, North Olympia, and North Murat streets in the Mid-City neighborhood of New Orleans, celebrated its opening in July 1904 with a picnic hosted by the McDonough Pleasure Club; The *Times Picayune* noted: “dancing and refreshments were the order of the day and all had a jolly good time.” The true “pleasure,” though, argued the article, was not over the festivities but “consisted mostly of adoration” of the park itself. This “adoration” did not last long. Indeed, within weeks of the opening, nearby residents were petitioning the mayor and the city council to close the park down.<sup>1</sup>



1910 Map of New Orleans reprinted in *The Creole - Tourist's Guide and Sketch Book to the City of New Orleans*. New Orleans: Creole Publishing Company, 1910. The locations and dates of the four parks are marked by the stars.

White residents who lived near the park, including “prominent citizens” like City Councilman R. J. Goebel, complained to the city of an “unbearable nuisance,” explained

<sup>1</sup> “A New Picnic Park,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), July 18, 1904.



the *Times Picayune*. The “nuisance” was the use of the park by African Americans. The unnamed white residents “protested against the granting of any more permits for colored people’s picnics...The negroes give all day and all night picnics and their conduct is anything but orderly.” This conduct included “disgraceful language” and noise so loud that the “white people living two or three squares away are unable to get a wink of sleep.”<sup>2</sup>

These complaints, which resulted in a struggle over the space that lasted ten years and went all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court, reveal the complicated issue of race and public space in New Orleans. Due to *de jure* and *de facto* segregation, African Americans were almost completely excluded from public parks and places of recreation in the first half of the twentieth century in New Orleans. Indeed, African American recreation was controlled and limited because white officials influenced where private parks were located and which activities were allowed. Nevertheless, as alternative spaces private parks provided a place of refuge from Jim Crow: a place for recreation, socializing, identity formation, community building, and even demands for equality.

This paper examines four private parks open to African Americans: Dixie Park in Mid-City, Lincoln and Johnson Parks in Carrollton, and Crescent Star Park in the Seventh Ward. The work seeks to understand the conditions that led to the exclusion of African Americans from the public parks of New Orleans, the factors that led to the creation of private parks that allowed African Americans, the activities that occurred in these spaces, the way these spaces were controlled or closed, and the role of parks in resisting segregation. Like Blair Kelley’s work on African American access to

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<sup>2</sup> Negro Picnics Nuisance Fought, Citizens Complaining of Ragtime Revelry at Dixie Park,” *Times Picayune* August 25, 1904.

streetcars in the Jim Crow era, this work looks at the way that everyday citizens challenged racial boundaries in the Jim Crow South.<sup>3</sup> Black residents were able to claim access to what was supposed to be the whites-only space of parks, in some cases creating what Michael Crutcher has termed “counterspaces,” exemplified by the African American owned and operated Crescent Star Park.<sup>4</sup> Crescent Star, Lincoln, and Johnson parks were also sites of racial integration, including mixed-race union activities, and white attendance for black sporting events and musical performances. This interaction across the color line, too, represented a challenge to the segregation of space.

Spaces like private Crescent Star Park present an opportunity to study what Earl Lewis has called “congregation in a segregated setting.”<sup>5</sup> The counter to Jim Crow was the creation of black institutions like churches, schools, and businesses. Parks were in some ways different from other spaces such as churches and schools in which few whites

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<sup>3</sup> Blair Kelly, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Crutcher’s work showed how public spaces can be better understood through the study of those who are not included, and how these groups form their own spaces. These spaces are further important, he argued, because, through a post-structural approach, we can see groups resist marginalization, and how the spaces themselves affect the way people think of themselves and form their identities. Michael Crutcher, *Treme: Race and Place in a New Orleans Neighborhood* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010). See also Robert Cassanello, *To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2013), which explores the segregation of public space in Jacksonville from Reconstruction through 1920 and the formation of African American “counterpublics.” Thomas Buchanan’s *Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) is another work that examined how a marginalized group, black steamboat workers, were able to carve out their own space, create a culture, and offer resistance in a highly segregated space.

<sup>5</sup> Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 95.

entered. However, similar to these other spaces, parks were sites of community and identity building, not primarily aimed at affecting segregation policy but rather serving as locations for gathering and activities that strengthened a segment of the population which was largely excluded from other communal spots. Segregated spaces, argued Tera Hunter, allowed African Americans to "bolster their autonomy and collective power and to escape exploitation by whites."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps even more so than other institutions, parks served a primary role in communal activism, as the location for picnics, group meetings, sports, and other activities that brought together African Americans from throughout the city. Although excluded from traditional public spaces, African Americans gathered in these parks and, similar to what Hunter documented in Atlanta dance halls and clubs, resisted Jim Crow through leisure, retaking control of their body, their primary form of labor which "belonged" to someone else, and being able to wear themselves out for their own pleasure.<sup>7</sup>

Black resistance to the segregation of parks and other recreation spaces, similar to other places of public accommodation, is part of what Jacquelyn Dowd Hall calls the "long civil rights movement," an effort begun decades before the more familiar mobilizations in the 1950s and 1960s, and a part of the effort to desegregate urban spaces

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<sup>6</sup> Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 100.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

like schools and housing.<sup>8</sup> Almost no attention has been paid to parks, particularly in terms of their connection to race and segregation.<sup>9</sup>

The denial of entrance to public parks is significant for several reasons. Urban parks were considered important spaces in late nineteenth and twentieth century cities. The urban park movement, which gained increasing momentum following the creation of New York's Central Park in 1857, was pushed by the belief that parks served as a place of refuge from unhealthy elements of city life. Denied access, black urbanites turned in the early twentieth century to private parks.

However, this issue was larger than the denial of spaces for leisure or escape from the urban environment. Mary Ryan has argued that public spaces in nineteenth century America were sites where civic identity was enacted and battled over, revealing ethnic, class, and gender conflict.<sup>10</sup> This thesis contends that spaces like parks remained important through the Jim Crow era partially for this reason, serving as sites of civic culture. Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar described parks "as open, nonexclusive spaces, parks assume their character not through political powers of ownership or control but through patterns of use. The people who claim access to this public space constitute the cultural public."<sup>11</sup> African Americans were largely denied access to public parks, shut out of the public sphere, and removed from the "cultural public." African Americans did

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<sup>8</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* March (2005): 1233-1263.

<sup>9</sup> One notable exception is Andrew Kahrl "The Negro Park Question: Land, Labor, and Leisure in Pitt County, North Carolina, 1920-1930," *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (February 2013): 113-142.

<sup>10</sup> Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

not react passively, and as this work will illustrate, struggled for access, met with fierce resistance from whites, and created their own private parks.

Andrew Kahrl argues that private parks, in particular, complicate the traditional narrative of parks and the Civil Rights struggle, which has focused on efforts by whites to exclude black residents from public parks and the use of litigation and other methods by African Americans to force their integration.<sup>12</sup> The creation of these alternate spaces, especially those private parks bought and operated by African Americans, adds a new dimension to the struggle over segregated space in the Jim Crow South.

Private parks owned by African Americans flipped the script on Jim Crow. Forced out of the public space, some black citizens were able to create their own parks as venues of African American entrepreneurship. In fact, an important source of revenue for these parks came from whites who entered these spaces to listen to African American musicians or watch sporting events, and had to pay admission to black owners. In addition, as will be discussed in the section on Crescent Star Park, for some events in these African American parks, whites were forced to sit in separated sections. Although perhaps intended to alleviate white anxiety on racial mixing, this was nonetheless a segregation of whites created and enforced by blacks. There are few other black institutions or businesses to which whites paid for admission (the closest comparisons could be made to black music clubs or dance halls-and almost no other spaces in which blacks were the ones segregating whites, making private parks rather remarkable during the grips of Jim Crow, and worthy of scholarly attention.

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<sup>12</sup> Kahrl, "The Negro Park Question."

For the purpose of this paper, private parks will be defined as those parks that charged admission to enter. This entrance fee and the reliance on markets differentiate them from public parks. The survival of private parks depended on profit from admission to survive.

The purpose of private parks, argues landscape architect and historian Lake Douglas, was “to provide a venue for social activities and entertainment,” and typically seen as precursors to amusement parks.<sup>13</sup> In some ways this organization around activities differentiates these commercial spaces from public parks. However, it is important to note that the concept of parks as more open spaces designed for individual and unorganized activity is a more modern, and public parks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as will be discussed in the context of New Orleans, were also the sites of numerous organized activities like picnics, fundraisers, dances, and musical performances. Therefore, the main difference was the fact that individuals were free to enter public parks at leisure, with some restrictions like racial discrimination, whereas individuals had to pay to enter a private park and usually did so for the purpose of an organized event.

There were also some other unique attributes of private parks. The location of parks and the activities allowed in these spaces were affected by external forces, as they were subject to sale from the original property owners, a permitting process from the municipal or county government, and regulation by city ordinances on what is allowable inside the park. This control of space, the counter to the counter-spaces, is also an area

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<sup>13</sup> Lake Douglas, *Public Spaces, Private Gardens: A History of Designed Landscapes in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 64.

that needs to be examined in order to gain a fuller understanding of how whites not only segregated public space but also tried to control private spaces as well.

Dixie Park, shut down by the city several times during its ten-year existence, despite a Supreme Court ruling in 1912 that overturned its closure, and eventually sold in 1914, shows the vulnerability of private parks to these external forces. In contrast, Lincoln Park, created two years earlier than Dixie Park in 1902, remained open until approximately 1930, and Crescent Star Park, created in 1921, was never shut down and was turned into a city playground in 1941. The question to be asked is why was Dixie Park shut down after a short span while these other spaces survived until later or were never closed, and what can we learn from examining these parks?

The answers reveal the contested nature of space in the Jim Crow South, a process according to historian Andrew Kahrl “subject to the shifting winds of changing economies and demographics and tied to the complex set of social and economic relations that whites and blacks produced on the local level” as commercial leisure spaces spread in South, leading to conflict, segregation, and a push to “contain” African American recreation space.<sup>14</sup> The location of the parks, and the changing nature of the space, played a significant role in the survival and closure of the four New Orleans parks addressed in this nature. The shift of affluent whites to the neighborhood surrounding Dixie Park made it the target of efforts to close down the venue, while the placement of Crescent Star Park in a predominantly African American neighborhood resulted in an environment that was more supportive of keeping the space open.

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<sup>14</sup> Kahrl, “The Negro Park Question,” 114-115.

This work fits into a growing literature on the history of public spaces. Public parks, in particular, have begun to receive scholarly attention from the discipline in the past two decades, with a shift away from studying the design of these spaces to a focus on the social and cultural history of parks, exploring how they were used.<sup>15</sup> A recent trend has been a turn to studying the history of leisure spaces.<sup>16</sup>

Studying parks can also add to the historiography of Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement. This piece focuses on one city, New Orleans, to gain a deeper understanding of the issue in a single location in the South. Multiple scholars have argued that whites excluded African Americans from public spaces, including parks, during the Jim Crow period, from the 1890s through the 1960s, in New Orleans. According to Richard Campanella: “legally sanctioned racial segregation would affect real estate sales, deed overtures, access to public schools, jobs, public housing, and nearly every other

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<sup>15</sup> Two important early works are Galen Cranz *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982) and Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). A more recent example is Robert R. Weyeneth, *Kapi'olani Park: A History* (Honolulu: Kapionala Preservation Society, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> See Jeff Wiltse *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2007), which examined the evolution of municipal swimming pools as places of recreation, arguing changes in culture and society were reflected in the changing nature of this space, particularly seen with class and racial conflict and segregation; Virginia Wolcott *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters: The Struggle over Segregated Recreation in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), which focused on the use of violence by whites to keep African Americans out of amusement parks, pools, beaches, and roller rinks, as well as African Americans attempts to integrate these public spaces; and Andrew Kahrl *The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), which examined the efforts of African Americans, kept out of white coastal beaches, to create their own beaches as places to escape racism, and the counter-force of whites.



aspect of life.”<sup>17</sup> Kevin Fox Gotham similarly concluded: “from the early 20th century through the 1960s, an explicit endorsement of racial discrimination and exclusion defined the policies and everyday practices of all the public bodies, cultural institutions, and business firms. Black citizens were excluded from ‘white’ public spaces, including schools, parks, and museums.”<sup>18</sup>

This period marked a substantial difference from the decades following the Civil War. African Americans were allowed in most public spaces during federal occupation of the city, including the integrated public school system.<sup>19</sup> This was codified in the state’s new constitution, written in 1868, which included a provision of guaranteed “public rights” in the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights; these public rights included access to public transportation and other public spaces.<sup>20</sup> As such, African Americans were allowed in most parks, public and private, and other places of recreation.<sup>21</sup> City Park and

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Campanella, *Bienville’s Dilemma: A Historical Geography of New Orleans* (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2008), 182.

<sup>18</sup> Kevin Fox Gotham, *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>19</sup> The schools were integrated from 1870-1877. Dale A. Somers, “Black and White in New Orleans: A Study in Urban Race Relations, 1865-1900.” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (Feb., 1974), 24. See also Mary Niall Mitchell, *Raising Freedom’s Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future after Slavery* (New York City: New York University Press, 2008), Chapter 5. The city also had an integrated police until 1877 and at least some instances of racial equality in the legal system. See, Michael A. Ross, *The Great New Orleans Kidnapping Case: Race, Law, and Justice in the Reconstruction Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> See Rebecca Scott, “Public Rights and Private Commerce: A Nineteenth Century Atlantic Creole Itinerary,” *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (April 2007): 237-256. Scott argues the decision to include the language “public rights” was purposeful and intended to be distinct from “social equality” for African, which a majority of whites opposed.

<sup>21</sup> New Orleans was one of the first American cities to have private parks, found for the first time in the early nineteenth century. These spaces, according to landscape architect Lake Douglas, responded to market demands and proliferated throughout the

Audubon Park, the largest municipal parks in the city, were frequent sites for African American celebrations of holidays, baseball games, dances, meetings of social organizations, and picnics by churches, schools, and fraternal organizations. African Americans also took advantage of some Lake Pontchartrain resorts and many private parks in the time period.<sup>22</sup>

**CITY PARK AND POLICE.—We heard a good suggestion to one of our Police Commissioners a day or two ago. It was to the effect that at this season of the year when the City Park is so extensively and so constantly visited by the picnic loving community, it would be well to place one or two extra policemen out there, whose mere presence would serve as a warning to a stray rough who might be spirited enough to render his conduct or language offensive. We think the intimation a timely one, and therefore pass it over to the police authorities with the recommendation that it be adopted.**

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city in the nineteenth century, fading away in the later decades as larger commercial recreation spaces and urban parks became more popular allures. Lake Douglas, *Public Spaces, Private Gardens: A History of Designed Landscapes in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011).

Commercial recreation space like private parks and amusement parks became popular throughout the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Americans increasingly had more wealth and time to spend on recreation activities. Virginia Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Newspapers like the *Times Picayune*, *Weekly Pelican*, *Weekly Louisianian*, and *New Orleans Item* featured articles through the 1880s of African American gatherings in these parks.

Few formal parks existed in the South during the Antebellum time period. Howard N. Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation: Southern Race Relations, 1865-1890" *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Sep., 1976): 337. The movement for urban landscape parks, formally designed spaces intended to offer escapes to the more natural world and often large-scale, began in the 1840s in the Northeast. Setha Low, Dana Taplin, and Suzanne Scheld, *Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2005). New Orleans, an exception in the South, was one of the first cities to have a large-scale urban landscape park, City Park, founded in 1854. Many of the first parks elsewhere in the South were built after the end of Reconstruction and excluded African Americans from their origins.

The *Weekly Louisianian*, an African American newspaper, noted in May 1871 that City Park was a popular location for black residents and called for more police officers to patrol the space as a “warning to a stray tough”; in an ironic twist, police would later be used to patrol the park in an effort to keep out African Americans. “City Park And Police” *Weekly Louisianian* May 21, 1871.

Parks were also the sites of protest and demands for equality. Congo Square, the former market and gathering space for enslaved people beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, served as meeting place for the African American “Radical Club” during the October 1868 race riots.<sup>23</sup> It was also the location for the meeting of the Reform Party in May 1872, in which the governor was criticized for his “systematic attack upon the liberties” of African Americans, which had made the state a “picture of desolation, moral and physical, more heartrending to her children than the most gloomy imagination could have conjured up from the realms of fancy”;<sup>24</sup> and a congregating point for the integrated Cigar Makers Union during their November 1873 strike for higher wages.<sup>25</sup>

Gradually, however, the city became more segregated towards the end of the nineteenth century. Although Reconstruction officially ended in 1877, city leaders were at first reluctant to pass large-scale segregation laws for fear of further federal intervention.<sup>26</sup> The Supreme Court’s endorsement of segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and other case decisions in the 1890s resulted in expanded efforts to close public spaces to African Americans or to segregate them.<sup>27</sup> Recreation spaces followed this

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<sup>23</sup> “A Riot On Canal Street, Six Negroes Killed,” *Times Picayune* October 26, 1868.

<sup>24</sup> “Meeting of Reform Party,” *Times Picayune* May 8, 1872.

<sup>25</sup> “The Cigar Maker’s Union,” *Times Picayune* November 7, 1873.

<sup>26</sup> One space city leaders quickly segregated was the public school system in 1877. See Mitchell, *Raising Freedom’s Child*, Chapter 5.

<sup>27</sup> Somers, “Black and White in New Orleans,” 36. Interracial marriages were prohibited in 1894, blacks were disenfranchised in 1898, and streetcars segregated in 1902.

trend. Baseball games, for example, became segregated in 1890 and so did boxing matches, in 1892.<sup>28</sup>

Parks in New Orleans also became whites-only spaces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>29</sup> The segregation of these spaces was both official (*de jure*) through city ordinances enforced by police officers, and unofficial (*de facto*) through custom and practice enforced by ordinary white citizens.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 40. New Orleans was an outlier in the area of sports in allowing inter-racial contests as sporting events in almost all areas in the South were segregated during and after Reconstruction. Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation," 337.

<sup>29</sup> The segregation of many recreational spaces predated Jim Crow in many places in the South as African Americans migrated to cities. This segregation, argued Wolcott, was often driven by a fear of miscegenation. Virginia Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters*. The creation of separate white and black parks in the South outside of New Orleans also largely occurred in the period after the *Plessy* decision. North Carolina, for example, passed a law in 1905 that required separate parks for the races. "Chips," *Newport News Star* January 21, 1905. Prior, many parks had created separate spaces for blacks within existing parks. Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation," 338.

The 1875 Civil Rights Act, passed to enforce the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, imposed punishment upon places of public accommodation that denied access to African Americans, including privately-owned enterprises. However, the Supreme Court struck down the law in 1883, concluding that denial to access to these places had nothing to do with slavery, and thus Congress had no basis in passing the act; problems with access to places of public accommodation, argued the court, should instead be handled by the states. *United States v. Stanley*; *United States v. Ryan*; *United States v. Nichols*; *United States v. Singleton*; *Robinson et ux. v. Memphis & Charleston R.R. Co.* 109 U.S. 3, 3 S. Ct. 18, 27 L. Ed. 835 (1883). Many restaurants, theaters, hotels throughout the South excluded blacks even while the 1875 Civil Rights Act was in effect, as local and state governments did not enforce the law. Separate spaces for blacks including skating rinks, fairgrounds, bars, billiard rooms were created in response. Rabinowitz, "From Exclusion to Segregation."

<sup>30</sup> For an in-depth examination of the different methods of segregation, what Robert Weyenth calls the "architecture of segregation," see Robert Weyenth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *The Public Historian*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 2005): 1-44. See also Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

For a comparison of the way that official segregation was carried out by ordinary citizens on streetcars see Michael Mizell-Nelson, "Challenging and Reinforcing White

A. P. Tureaud, a civil rights leader and attorney for the New Orleans chapter of the NAACP, recalled his experience with the segregation of parks in early twentieth century New Orleans:

We knew there were restrictions and areas which we could not go into. The public parks had signs on them at one time or another. They didn't always have the signs but there were signs for "whites only." The benches in the park were marked "for whites only," even in Congo Square, which was originally the place where Negro slaves used to congregate on Saturdays to dance and to enjoy the social life such as it was among them. That became a public park where only whites were allowed to congregate or to sit on the benches. The most we could do was pass through that park going to and from our points of destination.<sup>31</sup>

Writer Tom Dent also described his experiences as a child learning about which spaces, including parks, were considered off-limits, although not officially segregated; Dent's story included his childhood friend Andrew Young, future U.S. Congressman and ambassador to the United Nations:

It's difficult to explain the adult world, the political situation or economic situation, to children who are not able to understand such foolishness or complexity, however you want to take it. You'd get general warnings--"Be careful, watch how you act, see how you behave" -- you know. "Be careful about how you behave on the streetcar or the bus," and, particularly, how you behave if police were approaching. Because too many blacks have been arrested, abused, beaten or worse just for no reason.

My closest friend, childhood friend, was Andrew Young. I remember once we were riding our bikes in City Park. Policeman came through and threw us out. We weren't even supposed to ride through the park. And I remember once I was driving by when I was young, and we were driving by City Park. My father was driving, and I asked him why we could not use the park. And he had a hard time trying to explain it. And in an interview in the daily paper--The *Item* or the *Picayune*—with him he mentioned that: "My son asked me, you know, why. I have a hard time trying to explain that." So, the little nuances of racial relations, where you had freedom to maneuver and where you didn't, were things you had to pick up from your friends and from your own experiences.<sup>32</sup>

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Control of Public Space: Race Relations on New Orleans Streetcars, 1861-1965,"  
Dissertation (New Orleans: Tulane University, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Interview of A.P. Tureaud by Joseph Logsdon Novemeber, 1969-1970. A. P. Tureaud Interview, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Mizell-Nelson interview with Tom Dent May 1, 1995.

City Park, New Orleans's largest municipal park, was segregated and remained as such until a federal court ordered integration in 1958.<sup>33</sup>



African Americans were barred from entrance to City Park, the city's largest municipal park. However, black WPA workers were used in the 1930's to build the park's stadium-top left-and expand the lagoons- top right. African Americans were not allowed to use the newly constructed golf course, but were used as caddies-below. Courtesy of the WPA Photograph Collection, Louisiana Division New Orleans Public Library.



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<sup>33</sup> *New Orleans City Park Improvement Association v. Mandeville Detiege, Individually and on Behalf of Others Similarly Situated*, 252 F.2d 122 5th Cir (1958).

Audubon Park, the second largest park, was never officially segregated; however, park leaders instituted a policy in which African Americans were not permitted to sit on benches and employees were told to keep black patrons “moving all the time,” all in an effort to make African Americans uncomfortable and thus less likely to go the park.<sup>34</sup> A women’s business organization wrote a letter to the mayor threatening to contact local newspapers and that they “might even force you to resign” unless African Americans were denied access to the park.<sup>35</sup> Another wrote the superintendent stating “Audubon Park is a recreation for the white man-not the Negro.”<sup>36</sup> The New Orleans Branch of the NAACP protested the park’s treatment of African Americans, arguing there was “no place to which colored New Orleans may now go unhampered or free from liabilities that they are not able to protect.”<sup>37</sup> This protest went unheeded.

Some of the segregation policy in Audubon Park was more explicit. Walter Isaacson, a noted author born in New Orleans, recalled first becoming aware of the issue of race when he approached the merry-go-round in the park with his friend, his friend’s African American housekeeper, and her son, in 1958.<sup>38</sup> The housekeeper and her son were not allowed on the merry-go-round as “whites only” sign was posted. Yet, much of the effort to keep the space segregated was unwritten, designed by park leaders, carried out by employees, and enforced by both the police and ordinary citizens. In order to get to the school he attended, Gilbert Academy, in 1961, for instance, Lolis Elie had to cross

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<sup>34</sup> Jess C. Donahue and Erik K. Trump, *American Zoos During the Depression: A New Deal for Animals* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 93.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Isaacson, *American Sketches: Great Leaders, Creative Thinkers, and Heroes of a Hurricane* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009).

through the Audubon to get to school and recalled a white police officer making sure he did not stop in the park on his way.<sup>39</sup> As late as 1963, two members of the New Orleans chapter of the Congress for Racial Equality were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing for using facilities in the park<sup>40</sup>



The above wading pool, pictured above in 1924, was located in Audubon Park and only allowed white children, although black caretakers can be seen in the photograph looking over the swimmers. The pool, and a sister pool in City Park, both created with built with money bequeathed by Sara Lavinia Hyams in 1914, are inscribed with the quote “Given to the Little Children of New Orleans.” This phrase perhaps best captures the bitter irony of public parks which did not allow all residents to use the space or all of “the little children of New Orleans” to swim, and the implied message where “public space” and “all children” meant white space and white children. Mayor Victor Shiro ordered the swimming pools in Audubon Park and City Park closed in 1962 rather than integrate. Schiro, in a blatantly racist move, ordered that the swimming

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<sup>39</sup> Plater Robinson, “A House Divided Teaching Guide” (New Orleans: The Southern Institute for Education and Research, 1995).

The use of police to enforce unofficial segregation policy was a common practice. In Atlanta, several African Americans wrote a letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* in 1887 complaining that upon trying to enter the Ponce de Leon Springs they were “politely” told that were not allowed in despite no existing laws barring the use of the city’s parks. “Letter to the Editor,” *Atlanta Constitution* July 19, 1887.

<sup>40</sup> “Neither Negroes Nor Animals.” *CORE-LATOR* No. 99 (February 1963).



pool in City Park be converted to a seal pool and monkey house.<sup>41</sup> Photograph courtesy of the Historic New Orleans Collection.

The lack of access to recreation space was documented by local government officials. In the 1920's, Harland Bartholomew & Associates were hired by the municipal government of New Orleans to create a master plan for the city. The plan, published in 1929, also included a study entitled "Preliminary Reports on a System of Recreation Facilities and Civic Art, New Orleans, Louisiana." The study noted the exclusion of African Americans from municipal parks including City Park, Audubon Park, and West End Park (the resort and recreation area by Lake Pontchartrain), resulting in almost no recreation opportunities for African Americans in the city.<sup>42</sup> The authors of the report argued that the lack of access to parks and other recreational facilities led to black residents instead being forced to use alternative, and often time dangerous, locations for recreations: swimming in the canals or polluted sections of Lake Pontchartrain, neither of which were manned by lifeguards, resulting in many people drowning; and children playing in the streets, levees, and on train tracks.<sup>43</sup> The photograph below, included in the Bartholomew Report, shows African American youth playing baseball on the railroad tracks.

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<sup>41</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, "New Orleans: Sunbelt in the Swamp," in *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II*, ed. Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 128.

<sup>42</sup> Harland Bartholomew and Associates. "Preliminary Reports on a System of Recreation Facilities and Civic Art, New Orleans, Louisiana." New Orleans City Planning Commission Collection, Box 2 Item 11, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>43</sup> For an examination of the dangerous swimming conditions for African Americans in New Orleans during the first half of the twentieth century see Andrew W. Kahrl, "The Making, Unmaking, and Memory of White and Black Beaches in New Orleans," *Louisiana Cultural Vistas* Spring 2012, <http://www.louisianaculturalvistas.org/white-black-beaches-new-orleans/#sthash.Pto7t3au.dpuf>. See also Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours*.



Printed in "Preliminary Reports on a System of Recreation Facilities and Civic Art, New Orleans, Louisiana." New Orleans (La.) City Planning and Zoning Commission. City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

The study conducted by Bartholomew and Associates was perhaps the first to officially document the absence of recreational opportunities for African Americans in the city. Black residents were denied access to most public parks while only one playground, Thomy Lafon Playground in the Uptown neighborhood, was designated for African American children; no swimming pool for African Americans existed until 1938.<sup>44</sup> This one playground served a community of nearly 130,000 African Americans, 28% of the city's total population.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> City Ordinance 4263 1906, Synopsis of Ordinances 1841-1937, New Orleans Archives Department, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>45</sup> "City of New Orleans Annual Reports, Playgrounds Commission 1917-1945." New Orleans: City of New Orleans Archives Department. Louisiana Division, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

The segregation of parks and recreation facilities in New Orleans was similar to other Southern cities in the early twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> Many recreation spaces, including amusement parks, pools, and beaches, excluded black residents. African Americans objected and protested, often met by violence and intimidation by whites, allowed by police officers even in areas where discrimination was prohibited, and sometimes leading to what Virginia Wolcott calls “recreation riots.”<sup>47</sup> A 1927 study by Forest Washington of Atlanta concluded almost all recreation facilities in the seventeen Southern cities he examined—including Washington, D.C., Houston, Atlanta, and Memphis—were “whites only.” Conditions were only slightly better in the North for African Americans. Although some parks and playgrounds in the North were not officially segregated, problems with inferior equipment plagued African American facilities and racial tensions resulted in low attendance of African Americans at non-segregated spaces, concluded a 1928 study by Dr. Charles Johnson of Fisk University.<sup>48</sup>

The Bartholomew report recommended creating parks exclusively for African Americans: “it would be the best policy to provide them with their own parks in their

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<sup>46</sup> Many Southern cities had started to exclude blacks from parks beginning in the 1890s. In prior decades, many parks had enforced segregation within the parks, creating separate areas for blacks, similar to practices on steamboats and railcars. Rabinowitz, “From Exclusion to Segregation,” 338.

<sup>47</sup> One such example she argues is the 1919 Chicago race riot, which began when a black teenager was murdered after his raft drifted onto a whites-only beach. Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization: A Study of Negro Life and Race Relations in the Light of Social Research* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1930).

own districts.”<sup>49</sup> However, the first official African American park, Shakspeare Park in Central City, was not opened to black residents until 1947.

Instead, efforts were made to create private parks for African Americans, led by New Orleans community leaders and organizations. In March 1901 the Columbia Social Club, an African American social organization, passed a petition and formed a committee to create a black park.<sup>50</sup> In 1914, the Metropolitan Park Improvement Company was formed. The organization was comprised primarily of clergy leaders: Reverend J. L. Wilson as general manager; Reverend John Marks as first vice president and assistant general manager; and Reverends T.F. Jackson, H. B. F. Charlen, and S. Carroll also as directors. The group’s goal was to create a park for African Americans and also to form a coalition with congregations throughout the state.<sup>51</sup>

However, these plans would not come to fruition for many years. Instead, African Americans in the early twentieth century were left with limited options. Only four parks, all private, allowed African Americans: Dixie Park in Mid City, Lincoln and Johnson Parks in Carrollton, and Crescent Star Park in the Seventh Ward, the most successful of which, as we will see, was the Crescent Star, which still exists to this day.

### **Dixie Park**

Dixie Park, the first private park in the city during Jim Crow to allow African Americans, was opened in July 1904. The owner of the property was Jacob Israel, a white

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<sup>49</sup> Bartholomew & Associates, “Preliminary Reports on a System of Recreation Facilities and Civic Art, New Orleans, Louisiana,” 70.

<sup>50</sup> “A Colored Park.” *The Times Picayune* March 19, 1901.

<sup>51</sup> “Meeting of Negro Park Promoters,” *The Times Picayune* March 1, 1914.

local business owner who had recently begun buying property throughout the city.<sup>52</sup>

Israel had originally purchased the property from Carl C. Friedrichs in 1890 for \$3,410 dollars.<sup>53</sup>



Drawing of Jacob Israel that appeared in the *Times Picayune* September 17, 1898.

The complaints, described in the introduction to this work, by white neighbors of African Americans in the park were heard by the mayor and city council shortly after its opening. The mayor noted he had police investigating complaints for several days. He told the *New Orleans Daily States*: “If the thing is a nuisance it will have to be abated”; he also stated that he would not issue any more permits for “night amusement.” The operators of the park received permission to keep the park open if they would provide

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<sup>52</sup> Isreal was mentioned repeatedly in the “Real Estate” section of the *Times Picayune* and in property sales records at the New Orleans Notarial Archives. Israel also had a rather colorful past. Newspaper accounts in the *Times Picayune* include an 1890 arrest for participation in a wheel of fortune scheme; several lawsuits for failure to pay and bankruptcies; an 1897 arrest for stabbing a business rival, featured in a story appropriately titled “Sharp Competition”; involvement in various civic organizations, including a stint as the president of the St. Charles Skating Rink Association in 1906; numerous business ventures, including a dry goods store, an attempt to buy the American Music Hall, the creation of an oil company in 1911, and a furniture business; and a couple of failed attempts to run for political office.

<sup>53</sup> Fred Zengel, “Sale of Property Carl. C. Friedrichs to Jacob Israel,” January 13, 1903. New Orleans Notarial Archives.

security to keep order in the park; the mayor threatened to close the park immediately if the owner did not “maintain order.”<sup>54</sup>

Within days of the decision, neighbors again lodged complaints with the city council “boisterous and obscene language” from the park.<sup>55</sup> Goebel again presented a signed petition from neighboring property owners. The *Daily States* reported the issue once again focused on the use of the space by African Americans: “The protestants do not object to the park being used by white people, but they object to the negro ‘sociables’ and have, therefore, petitioned the mayor for issuing any permits to negro clubs.”<sup>56</sup> The mayor complied and Dixie Park became a space exclusively for use by whites.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Dixie Park is a Nuisance,” *New Orleans Daily States* August 23, 1904. “Dixie Park May Operate,” *Times Picayune* August 30, 1904. “City Hall,” *New Orleans Daily States* August 30, 1904.

<sup>55</sup> “The Illinois Central Gets Favorable Report. *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), September 3, 1904.

<sup>56</sup> “Gossip of City Hall,” *New Orleans Daily States* September 2, 1904.

<sup>57</sup> “Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings,” *Times Picayune* (New Orleans, LA), September 8, 1904.

Similar occurrence happened elsewhere in the South. White homeowners of the “fashionable” North End residence district in Beaumont, Texas filed a writ with a district judge in September, 1905 to shut down a neighboring black. “Want Negro Park Close,” *Fort Worth Telegram* September 23, 1905. The case was heard by a jury in 1907 and the white neighbors stated, in similar language to the complaints filed against Dixie Park, that black park users were a “public nuisance.” “To Close Negro Park Suit Placed on Trial in Court at Beaumont” *Fort Worth Telegram* February 15, 1907. A new black park was planned in the North End section of the town four years later but three hundred and ten white citizens “from all walks of life and all sections of the city” submitted a petition to the developer of the park arguing it would be a “breeder of crime and source of annoyance and a menace to those living in that vicinity.” “Petition Mr. M’Faddin: Numerous Signed Protests Against Negro Park in North End” *Beaumont Enterprise* March 29, 1911.

Similarly, one of the conditions residents of Pineville, GA, demanded in order to assent to annexation to the city of Macon was “to abate the nuisance...of the negro park and dance hall and skating rink known as Ocmulgee Park, it being the opinion of the meeting that this has become a rendezvous for the worst criminal elements among the negro population of Macon, and a menace to the safety of our homes and a scene of



Map featuring Dixie Park, 1908. Sanborn Maps, New Orleans 1908-1909 vol. 2, 1908, Sheet 204. Courtesy of the New Orleans Public Library.

The issue resurfaced again five years later. The park was “opened for colored people” in April 1909, but only on certain days. African Americans were allowed use the parks on Sundays and Wednesdays and picnics permitted on Saturdays from 9 am to 6 pm.<sup>58</sup> Dancing, vaudeville shows, and “moving pictures” were the main attractions. Despite the attempt to make the park “a resort for the better element of colored people,”<sup>59</sup> whites again petitioned the city to close the area, claiming the “heaven for dusky society” was a loud “nuisance” and stating their anger over black residents drinking in the park;

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immoral practices and debauchery of the worst character.” “First Actual Step for a Greater Macon,” *Macon Telegraph* May 27, 1907.

Black park patrons were often portrayed as immoral and criminal in white newspaper and court accounts. The *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, in an April 1908 article entitled “Money Cannot Overcome Racial Characteristics,” describing the closing of a black park, argued the reason the park failed because “the beneficiaries...are not capable of receiving the luxuries of a park.” The park was argued to be the site of constant crime, and its demise “underscores the truth of the oft-stated assertion that any negro institution, solely for negroes without the aid and influence of white people, is among the things that are impossible” “Money Cannot Overcome Racial Characteristics” *Columbus Daily Enquirer* April 3, 1908.

<sup>58</sup> “Dixie Park Open,” *Times Picayune* April 19, 1909.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

the group again included a city councilman.<sup>60</sup> Jacob Israel, the owner of the park, defended the activity in the park as “highly respectable” and argued some of his neighbors “would not be satisfied in the company of an angel.”<sup>61</sup> The mayor ordered the police to close the park after the city attorney ruled the space was operating as a dance hall, which required both the permission of the majority of property owners within three hundred feet and a permit from the Council-although the City Council could still deny the permit, even with the permission of neighbors, “when deemed advisable.”<sup>62</sup> Israel filed an injunction in Civil Court to prevent the closure of the park, claiming the action was unconstitutional as it deprived him of his property without the due process of the law. He further claimed the city’s designation of the park as a dance hall was unfair and discriminatory, as other spaces for whites were allowed to operate.<sup>63</sup> The injunction was denied and First City Court Judge E. K. Skinner upheld the closure of the park, citing the dance hall law, which he argued should be “liberally applied” to the space, despite the lack of a physical building.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Dixie Park Heaven For Dusky Society, But Neighbors Say Protracted Picnics Are a Nuisance,” *Times Picayune* July 21, 1910.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> “Dixie Park to be Closed: No Negro Saloon Near Kingsley House,” *The Times Picayune* August 7, 1910.”

<sup>63</sup> “Dixie Park Fighting for Life,” *The Times Picayune* August 16, 1910.

<sup>64</sup> “Guide to the News: City and Suburban,” *The Times Picayune* May 23, 1911. “Dixie Park Decided Against,” *The Times Picayune* May 23, 1911.



# **DIXIE PARK.**

**Bienville, Between Murat and  
Olympia Streets.**

**FOR COLORED PEOPLE ONLY.**

**DANCING AT 5 P.M. AND 10:30 P.M.  
VAUDEVILLE AND MOVING PICTURES  
START AT 8:30 P.M.**

**A Souvenir for Every Lady and Child.  
Take Canal or Esplanade Belt Car.**

**ADMISSION - - 15c**

Advertisement Times Picayune April 1909. The phrase "For Colored People Only" indicates the park was for African American use and excluded white patrons by April 1909. Note also the mention of souvenirs for "Every Lady and Child," suggesting the courting of the black middle class.

This was not the end of the matter. Israel appealed the district court ruling to the Louisiana Supreme Court, which heard the case in May 1912.<sup>65</sup> The Supreme Court ruled against the city and ordered the park to be opened; they did so because they concluded the open-air dance pavilion was not the equivalent of a dance hall, and thus the city's legal basis for shutting down the park was not valid.<sup>66</sup> The reopened space was included in the *Woods Directory* of 1913 and 1914, a local guide to African American businesses, institutions, and organizations in New Orleans, and listed as a

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<sup>65</sup> Israel was not opposed to using the courts to accomplish his business goals, as evidenced by several lawsuits he brought involving business disputes, reported in the *Times Picayune* in the 1890s, 1900s, and 1910s.

<sup>66</sup> *ISRAEL v. CITY OF NEW ORLEANS et al.* No. 18,598 Supreme Court of Louisiana 130 La. 980; 58 So. 850; 1912 La. Official court records for the case involving Dixie Park, located at the Historical Archives of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans are missing. However, the court's ruling can be accessed through a LexisNexis Federal and State Court case search.

“colored” park.<sup>67</sup> However, the park did not last. Israel sold the park in November 1914 to Felix J. Dreyfous and the property was divided again into lots for homes and businesses.<sup>68</sup>

It is unclear why Israel sold the park in 1914. He may have concluded the park was no longer profitable given the hostility of the neighbors and the city.<sup>69</sup> It may have been part of a larger overall plan, as he sold a number of other lots to Dreyfous in the same transaction. Either way, the end result was that Dixie Park ceased to exist by the end of 1914 and African Americans were forced to turn elsewhere for recreation.<sup>70</sup>

The experience also reveals the effect of the changing neighborhoods. Mid City, like other less-developed areas of the city, was primarily occupied by the poor.<sup>71</sup> The development of technology to drain the city’s backswamps and the rise in popularity of City Park, opened in 1854, resulted in a demographics shift as the white “gentry” moved

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<sup>67</sup> Allen T. Woods, *Woods Directory: Being a Colored Business, Professional, and Trades Directory of New Orleans, Louisiana* (New Orleans, Allen T. Woods, 1914). City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>68</sup> Alfred D. Danzinger Book 305 f. o. 208, No. 114 “Sale of Property Felix J. Dreyfous to Mrs. Henry Meyer,” November 23, 1918. New Orleans Notarial Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Private parks were always precarious because they could be closed or sold at any point by their owner. The Booker T. Washington Park in Kansas City, Kansas, the only black park in the area, was sold by its owner in January 1910 and ironically converted to a public park-in which African Americans were not permitted. “To Buy a Negro Park” *Kansas City Star* January 19, 1910.

<sup>70</sup> This was not the only action involving black parks in Mid City. The *Times Picayune* noted in August 1908 the opposition of white landowners to the potential conversion of a baseball park near City Park to a black park. The owner instead sold it to developers who planned to use it for residential lots, which pleased white neighbors: “As fine residences are building all over the region in front of the City Park property owners were anxious that the ball park be gotten rid of, and especially that it should not be used for negro games, so that the transaction is an important one for that part of the city.” “Commercial Ball Grounds Bought For Residence Park” *Times-Picayune* August 28, 1908.

<sup>71</sup> Israel, when asked by the Louisiana Supreme Court of the property when he purchased it responded: “It was uninhabitable, and nothing but snakes, frogs, and everything of that kind infested the neighborhood. It was a swamp and wilderness.”

to the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>72</sup> Members of the white gentry precipitated the closing of Dixie Park with the repeated complaints to the mayor and city council, demonstrating the power they had to control the space and the general location of African American recreation.<sup>73</sup>

### **Lincoln and Johnson Parks**

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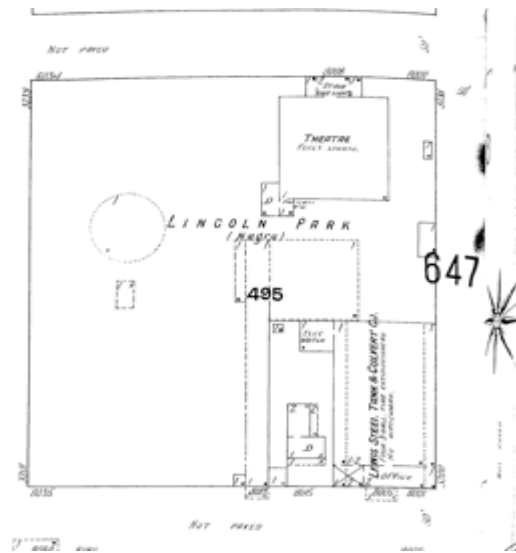
<sup>72</sup> Campanella, *Bienville's Dilemma*, 175.

<sup>73</sup> Kahrl (2013) argued that whites viewed attempts by African Americans to buy property for seaside parks and resorts in the South as a challenge to their system of domination. Their efforts to control these spaces, including closing them down, demonstrated their top place in the racial hierarchy. Kahrl, "The Negro Park Question," 141-142.

This control over land by white property owners was a significant power and precursor to contemporary NIMBY (not in my backyard) campaigns. Memphis experienced an episode like the one previously described in Beaumont, Texas, as the city's park commissioners in trying to find a location for a separate black found that "every location suggested is opposed by property owners." "Afro-American Cullings," *Cleveland Gazette* April 8, 1911. Opposition to selling property for black parks meant that cities with segregated parks often could not uphold even the basic tenets of "separate but equal" as black parks could not even be built.

The effort to shut down Dixie Park foreshadowed later attempts to keep the city's neighborhoods segregated. In 1921 New Orleans became the first Southern city with an official city planning commission. The commission established a zoning ordinance that prohibited blacks from living in a white neighborhood unless they received written permission from a majority of the white residents. This was later struck down by the Louisiana Supreme Court, a decision upheld by the United States Supreme Court in 1927. See Christopher Silver, "The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities," in June Thomas Manning and Marsha Ritzdorf, eds., *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1927). See also Daphne Spain, "Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 441, Race and Residence in American Cities (Jan., 1979): 82-96. For an examination of the use of real estate development to continue segregation and white resistance to integration of neighborhoods in other areas see Nathan Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Two other private parks operating during the same time period as Dixie Park also allowed African Americans. Lincoln and Johnson Parks were both located in the Carrollton neighborhood of New Orleans, and were situated across the street from each other. Lincoln Park was created in May 1902 when the Yazoo and Mississippi River Railroad Company sold the property to the Standard Brewing Company; the city had already given permission to the brewing company to make a private park on the property if they purchased the land.<sup>74</sup>



Map of Lincoln Park, 1909. Sanborn Maps, New Orleans 1908-1909 vol. 6, 1909, Sheet 641. Courtesy of the New Orleans Public Library.

The Standard Brewing Company built a wooden fence around the park, a large pavilion and dance hall, a skating rink, and charged fifteen cents for admission.<sup>75</sup> The park was a popular location for boxing matches, vaudeville shows, balloon ascensions,<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> City Ordinance No. 1260, New Council Series, establishing Lincoln Park, May 30, 1902, in Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>75</sup> Donald Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 60.

<sup>76</sup> Balloon ascensions were a popular spectacle in the city's parks in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Operators like "Professor Codaz" reached the "dizzy height" of 2000 feet and then parachuted to the ground. "Lincoln Park," *New Orleans Item* July 11,

picnics, music, dances, movies, fireworks and social and charity events. Music in particular was a driving force in leading to the park's high attendance rates, as many came to listen to John Rochibau's Orchestra and other groups, and the space was also popular for events held by fraternal and benevolent organizations.<sup>77</sup> Fundraisers were held in the park: one event, held in November 1905, featured a baseball game between the Stegomylas and the Whites (as well as a rendition of "Dixie," perhaps due to the popularity of Vaudeville performances during the time period) and all the proceeds went to a yellow fever fund.<sup>78</sup> In June 1916 a charity picnic "for the benefit of the tubercular sufferers at Charity Hospital" was conducted in the park.<sup>79</sup>

Many events in this space and the other parks in this work were functions of black benevolent societies, popular institutions in New Orleans and elsewhere in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was estimated that nearly eighty percent of African Americans in the city belonged to one in the late nineteenth century.<sup>80</sup> These groups organized social events for members as well as providing money for medical care and funerals. Hundreds of these organizations existed in the city and many held events in City Park and Audubon Park prior to segregation, and in the private parks that allowed African Americans during Jim Crow.<sup>81</sup>

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1905. In another ascension, Codaz's wife, known as the "electric lady," was "suspended by her teeth 500 feet in the air, completely covered by electric lights." "Something Doing Every Sunday," *New Orleans Item* August 20, 1905.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> "Stegomylas Play Ball," *New Orleans Item*, November 10, 1905.



<sup>79</sup> "Charity Picnic at Lincoln Park," *New Orleans States* June 18, 1916.

<sup>80</sup> "Society Practice," *New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal*, (June, 1888), 988.

<sup>81</sup> It is notable that membership was often determined by class as well as lineage; societies were often exclusively for descendants of free Creoles or slaves, with few allowing for mixed membership. For an examination of the role played by African

Boxing, in particular, was a well-attended event. The “negro lightweight championship” was held in Lincoln Park in March 1906 and described by the *New Orleans Item* as “one of the biggest fights in the South.”<sup>82</sup> Both boxing matches and musical performances were attended by whites; the 1905 “colored championship” had “many whites attending”<sup>83</sup> and a 1906 match was attended by 1,000 people, a crowd estimated by the *Times Picayune* to be three-fourths white.<sup>84</sup>

**SPARRING EXHIBITION AND STAG**

	<p>Under the auspices of the <b>ORLEANS ATHLETIC CLUB,</b> (Incorporated.) MONDAY, NOV. 13, 1905, 9 P. M. In their Gymnasium at <b>LINCOLN PARK</b> Oleander and Carrollton Ave.</p> <p><b>JOHNNY THOLMAN</b> vs. <b>ADAM ZENO.</b></p> <p>PRELIMINARY, <b>TWO OTHER BOUTS</b> To Be Announced Later.</p> <p>Take Tulane and St. Charles Belt Cars. Accommodation for White and Colored.</p>	
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Advertisement in the *New Orleans Item* October 19, 1905.

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American benevolent societies, especially the part they played in providing healthcare, see Claude F. Jacobs, “Benevolent Societies of New Orleans Blacks During the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Louisiana History* No. 1 Winter (1988): 21-33.

<sup>82</sup> “Negro Lightweight Champ,” *New Orleans Item*, March 30, 1905.

<sup>83</sup> “Guide to the News,” *Times Picayune* May 1, 1905.

<sup>84</sup> “Black Battles,” *Times Picayune* June 1, 1906.



Edward “Kid” Ory, playing trombone, led a popular band that played in Lincoln Park from 1908-1916. Louisiana State Museum Jazz Collection.<sup>85</sup>

Whites also attended baseball games and musical performances at both Lincoln and Johnson Parks. Although the segregation of parks, part of the larger overall pattern of segregation of public space, was designed to prevent the mixing of races, some whites not only went to parks that allowed African Americans, they also paid for admission to these spaces for the purposes of entertainment.<sup>86</sup> These spaces, therefore, are examples of what Kevin Mumford (1997) calls “interzones,” areas where racial mixing could occur.<sup>87</sup> These parks, like the brothels and dance halls that Mumford focused on in New York

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<sup>85</sup> Information on Ory found in John McCusker, *Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz* (Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012).

<sup>86</sup> This practice of whites visiting black parks may have been met with some understandable resistance from African Americans. The *Newport News Star*, an African American newspaper, noted when the North Carolina State Legislature passed a law requiring separate park for whites and blacks: “we would respectfully ask them to be as strict in keeping the whites out of the Negro parks as they will be in keeping the Negroes out of the white people’s parks.” “Chips,” *Newport News Star* January 21, 1905.

<sup>87</sup> Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1997).

City and Chicago, were located in African American neighborhoods; this differentiates them from Dixie Park. Heap (2009) calls this practice of whites visiting black spaces “slumming” in a similar work.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, whites went to black musical performances and brothels in Storyville, the New Orleans red light district, during the same time period.<sup>89</sup>

**COLORED SOCIETY TO SKATE.**



Drawing of the skating rink at Lincoln Park. *Times Picayune*, July 16, 1906.

The park was also a site for labor union activities. The Longshoremen’s Protective Union Benevolent, “the best known colored labor organization in the South,” held a “grand picnic” in the space in 1903 including a band and dancing, reported the *Times Picayune*. Other happenings were more concerned with union demands.<sup>90</sup> The

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<sup>88</sup> Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>89</sup> See Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2004) and Emily Epstein Landau, *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2013).

<sup>90</sup> “Colored Longshoremen,” *Times Picayune* July 30, 1905.



Lumber Handlers Union, Local 509, International Association of Longshoremen, a mixed-race organization, held meetings in the park in which they discussed organizing strategies and a strike for a ten-hour workday in 1903.<sup>91</sup> In 1930, the Marine Workers Industrial Union conducted meetings and demonstrations in the park as part of a strike marked with confrontations and violence, in support of a pay raise to 65 cents and the desire to be, in the words of union secretary Frank Allison, “granted full social and racial equalities.” Allison also noted the union was “opposed to any racial segregation laws.”<sup>92</sup>

Lincoln Park, similar to parks in the nineteenth century previously discussed, thus served as a space for African Americans to congregate and advocate for more equal treatment. Parks would later serve as venues for rallies and marches during the Civil Rights era in New Orleans, but their significance for African American identity formation can be seen in this time period, and date back to enslaved gatherings in Congo Square.<sup>93</sup>

The Standard Brewing Company nearly sold the park in 1921 to the Liberty Manufacturing Company; Liberty sued Standard in an effort to compel them to give up the property as part of the agreed upon 30,000 dollars contract.<sup>94</sup> Standard did later sell the park in 1925 to Jerreau Motors.<sup>95</sup> The park existed until approximately 1930, but its role had changed; during the latter half of its existence it was used primarily as a location for African American baseball league games.

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<sup>91</sup> “Lumber Handlers’ Union,” *Times Picayune* May 1, 1903. Other bi-racial union coalitions could also be found in the city during the time period, notably the dock workers. See Eric Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans: Race, Class, and Politics, 1863-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>92</sup> “Near-Riot Marks Strike of Negro Cargo Handlers,” *Times Picayune* July 30, 1930.

<sup>93</sup> See the discussion of Lincoln Park in the conclusion.

<sup>94</sup> “Brewing Company Sued” *Times Picayune* August 1, 1921.

<sup>95</sup> Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 62.

This mirrored changes in the space across the street, Johnson Park. Johnson Park was opened in April 1902. The property's owner, George W. Johnson, a former waiter at a nearby saloon, successfully petitioned the city to use the space as a baseball park, an activity with widespread popularity, attested to by the large number of teams located in the city.<sup>96</sup> African American baseball teams were started in the city only years after the creation of the game itself in the mid-nineteenth century. New Orleans, despite its large African American population, only briefly served as the home for team in the professional Negro Leagues, when the St. Louis Star split their home games in between St. Louis and New Orleans from 1940-1941, before folding the following year. Instead, numerous semi-professional teams were found throughout the city, playing games in public parks against whites up until the 1880s, and turning to private parks during segregation<sup>97</sup>

The space, used primarily for baseball games, also featured music during its brief existence. Notably, Buddy Bolden, an early and influential pioneer of jazz, played in the park, often competing with John Rochibaux's band across the street at Lincoln Park for an audience.<sup>98</sup> The popularity of music at both parks, attested to by large multi-racial audiences, was kept in check though by external actors; the city, for example, placed

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<sup>96</sup> "Petition for permission to create Johnson Park, submitted by George W. Johnson and approved April 14, 1902, and permission to open the saloon granted by City Ordinance No. 1579, New Council Series, January 2, 1903, Calendar No. 2089 in Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 62.

Richard Worth, *Baseball Team Names: A Worldwide Dictionary, 1869-2011* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2013).

<sup>97</sup> Ryan Whirty, "Negro Leagues of Louisiana," *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*, edited by David Johnson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 2014). See also Leslie Heapy, *The Negro Leagues, 1869-1960* (New York: McFarland & Company Publishers, 2002).

<sup>98</sup> Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 62.

restrictions on musical performances, dances, and balls by requiring a paid permit, issued through a request to the police commissioner, and assigned police officers, also paid for by the event coordinators.<sup>99</sup>

Johnson Park went out of existence by 1908, a short time period that demonstrated the precarious nature of private parks. The closure may have been facilitated by two factors: the death of Buddy Bolden and also the changing neighborhood.<sup>100</sup> Carrollton, similar to Mid City, developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and saw a large influx of affluent white families following the spread of the streetcar line an increase in building after the 1884 World Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in the space that later became Audubon Park.<sup>101</sup>



A Picture of Buddy Bolden's band from the early 1900's. Bolden is standing third from the left with the trumpet. This is the only know photograph of Bolden. Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University.

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<sup>99</sup> Marquis, *In Search of Buddy Bolden*, 35.

The denial of permits was often used to close down unwanted black parks nationwide. A judge in Kansas City ruled that the location of Booker Washington Park was “not a proper place for a negro park” and fined and imprisoned an individual for holding a dance in the space. The city’s public dance inspector, an actual official title, refused to issue any more permits for the park, effectively shutting it down. “A Negro Park Not for Dancing” *Kansas City Star* June 17, 1911.

<sup>100</sup> Bolden suffered a mental breakdown in 1906 and was committed to a psychiatric hospital in 1907, where he would live until his death in 1931.

<sup>101</sup> Campanella, *Bienville's Dilemma*, 186.

## CRESCENT STAR PARK

Crescent Star Park, started nearly two decades after the openings of the three previously discussed parks, shared some similarities with the previously described parks, primarily, serving as the location of activities and community-building events for African Americans denied access to public parks. However, the space was also notably different in its nature: the space, owned and operated by African Americans, was in a predominantly black neighborhood, created to serve the recreation needs for African Americans rather than focused on making a profit, and survives to this day.<sup>102</sup> The historical context of Crescent Star Park is important to understand. The 1920s marked an increased attention to playgrounds, represented by a seventy four percent increase in public playgrounds in the decade, and the growth of the recreation movement; few were open to African Americans.<sup>103</sup> Community recreation centers proliferated throughout the country, yet only twenty-four year-round spaces nationwide existed for African

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<sup>102</sup> There were two common locations for black parks. Many of the parks previously described that existed elsewhere were located outside of the main city area, often connected to the extension of rail or streetcar lines. Others were located in the city in predominantly African American neighborhoods as a way to circumvent the power of white property owners to prevent black parks by opposing the sale of property. Dallas, Texas, for example, acquired the site for its first black park in 1912 when it selected a site, described the *Dallas Morning News*, “in a territory thickly populated by negroes,” which meant there would be “no objections from whites against the city establishing the park in the neighborhood. “For Negro Park in East Dallas,” *Dallas Morning News* June 23, 1912. However, the paper noted a week later that a week later there were still “protests” by whites against the creation of the park. “Protests Against Negro Park,” *Dallas Morning News* June 30, 1912.

Shreveport, Louisiana’s first black park was built on property originally bought by the city twenty years prior that was intended for a white recreational center but was never developed , according to the *State Times Advocate*, “on account of the section being in a negro district.” “Board Recommends Negro Park in Shreveport,” *State Times Advocate* February 2, 1925.

<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Hunnicutt, *Work Without End: Abandoning Short Hours for the Right to Work* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988): 114-115.

Americans; the first recreation center for African Americans in New Orleans, the Rosenwald Center, was not opened until 1950.<sup>104</sup> The afore-mentioned study of public recreation facilities in the South, including New Orleans, conducted by Forest Washington in 1927, found that nearly all of the spaces were for whites only.<sup>105</sup>

One response to the trend from African Americans in the South was the opening of alternate recreation spaces. In addition to private parks, these spaces included skating rinks, swimming pools, and amusement parks.<sup>106</sup> These spaces, while providing recreation opportunities previously denied, also offered economic opportunities for African American entrepreneurs, as well as black workers, musicians, and performers. They were both spaces for cultural activities and a challenge to the Jim Crow segregation of space.

The National Association for the Advancement of Color People's newsletter *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, reported in 1921 of a park for African Americans in New Orleans.<sup>107</sup> The newsletter related the events that led to the creation of this space, Crescent Stars' Amusement Baseball Park: African Americans had been allowed to rent the fairgrounds from its white owners for use for picnics, fairs, and baseball games. The owners, however, charged "enormous prices" and would not allow the space to be rented

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<sup>104</sup> Johnson, *The Negro in American Civilization*, 304.

<sup>105</sup> Forest B. Washington, "Recreational Facilities for the Negro," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 140 (November 1928): 273.

The mayor of Lexington, Kentucky, told the local newspaper after several years of struggling to find a site for a black public park they had passed a bond ordinance to build he believed to be the first such park in the South. "Election of Building Inspector Postponed," *Lexington Herald* April 3, 1915. The park finally opened the following summer.

<sup>106</sup> Wolcott, *Race, Riots, and Roller Coasters*, 18. Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours*.

<sup>107</sup> "A New Orleans Baseball Park," *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* Vol 22. No. 1 May (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1921): 20.

on holidays or most Sundays. A group of African Americans did rent out the space for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July; the owners, realizing they had given out the space on the holiday, cancelled the reservation, despite a deposit, resulting in a lawsuit. Wallace C. Marine led an effort to find a space for a private black park and found suitable property in the Seventh Ward of the city, known as the “Creole district,” in a space bounded by Allen, Law, New Orleans, and Hope streets. The latter was later renamed North Dorgenois. Marine approached Walter Cohen, the comptroller of customs for the city and one of the highest-ranking African American politicians in the country, for his help. Cohen led a group that met with Mayor Andrew McShane about buying the tract of land for a black park. The mayor did not object and stated it would be a “benefit to the negro population.”<sup>108</sup>



Map featuring Crescent Star Park, here identified as Crescent Park, Sanborn Maps New Orleans 1929-1940 vol. 1, 1937, Sheet 67. Courtesy of the New Orleans Public Library.

The model of this space differentiated it from the parks previously addressed in this work. The push to create the park was community based, comprised of residents of

<sup>108</sup> “Mayor Favors Negro Park” *Times Picayune* February 1, 1921.

the Seventh Ward. A Board of Directors was formed to fund the project, with Marine serving as president, and each member buying at least \$1,000 dollars' worth of stock, about \$12,000 dollars today, for a total of \$25,000.

The Board of Directors was populated by local business and civic leaders, including: Marine, an owner of a cigar factory, served as president;<sup>109</sup> Constance C. and Peter J. Dejoie, owners of the Unity Life Insurance Company, the first black owned and largest insurance company, black or white, in the state;<sup>110</sup> the afore-mentioned Walter Cohen; Albert Workman, president of the International Longshoremen's Association

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<sup>109</sup> Marine was a resident of the Seventh Ward-he lived on North Robertson Street. He was an investor in one cigar company and Lillian Gilbert Simonet recalled him being one of the most successful mixed-raced Creoles, owning his own cigar factory. "Charter of Belkoma Cigar Co., Inc.," *The Herald* August 22, 1918. Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2000), 299. Marine was also active in social clubs like the Autocrat Club, formed in 1909, which made its profits through gambling and gaming, safe from police harassment in club headquarters, and used proceeds to build its own library as well as supporting social and sporting activities in the community. "Attacking Jim Crow: Black Activism in New Orleans, 1925-1941. A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The Department of History, May 2009.

<sup>110</sup> Constance, previously the business manager, became president of Unity in 1921 after his brother Peter died. Constance expanded the business, opening a branch in Chicago; housing and supporting the Child Welfare Association, a clinic for pregnant women and babies; supporting the Flint-Goodridge Hospital, the city's black hospital; helping fund the building of the first YMCA for blacks in the city, of which he was president for twenty years; supporting the Urban League; and founding the *Louisiana Weekly*, the largest circulating black newspaper in the state, in 1925. The company declined rapidly during the Great Depression, culminating in a scandal in which the general manager of the company shot C.C.'s nephew, P. J. E. Dejoie, after the latter refused to allow C.C.'s son to sit on the board of directors. Constance, tired of the family dispute, sold controlling interest of the company to a group of white investors in 1939, for which he was viciously attacked by some as a "traitor to his race." Constance remained publisher of the *Louisiana Weekly* until 1969 and died the year after. His son became editor and used the newspaper to advocate for African American voting and ending police brutality in the city. John N. Ingham and Lynne B. Feldman, *African-American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 175-178. "Obituary," *Orlando Sentinel* August 22, 1993.

local black chapter; <sup>111</sup> Arthur P. Bedou, the leading black photographer in the city; <sup>112</sup> musician Alex Bigard; business and real estate owner Edwin Fauria; <sup>113</sup> Reverend Walter Bemiss of the Fifth African Baptist Church; and surgeon Dr. F. T. Jones.

Stocks were also sold to the public, at \$50 per share, and an additional \$45,000 was raised, the equivalent today of over half a million dollars. Crescent Star Park was not a profit venture by an entrepreneur like Jacob Israel's ownership of Dixie Park, one of several business and real estate investments; nor was it a means to raise additional revenue for an existing business, like Standard Brewing's operation of Lincoln Park. Instead, Crescent Star Park was a space owned and operated by members of the community, who were stockholders in the park, and designed to meet recreation needs. The Crescent Stars Amusement Company, Inc., built a four thousand-seat baseball field,

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<sup>111</sup> Workman served as leader of both white and black factions of the union and representative to the press during their 1923 strike. Arnesen, *Waterfront Workers of New Orleans*, 251-253. Workman was also the representative for black labor organization that supported the building of the Dryades Street Library and spoke at the dedication in 1915. *The Times Picayune* 25 October 1915 p. 16-B; *New Orleans Public Library/ Annual Report (1914-1915)*; *Footprints of Black LA*, Norman R. Smith; *New Orleans States* 9 February 1945 p.13 c.1; *The Louisiana Weekly* 8 May 1954 p.1

<sup>112</sup> Bedou, among many jobs, was the official photographer for Xavier University and hired by Booker T. Washington to take photographs during his last major tour of the South. His photographs can be found at Xavier University. "Arthur P. Bedou, Photographs 1900-1988," University Archives and Special Collections Division, Xavier University Library.

<sup>113</sup> Fauria at various times owned his own saloon; the Astoria Hotel on Rampart street; the Astoria Restaurant; bars; night clubs; taxis; and ran a gambling operation. He was known as the "Number King of the South." He also listed his race at various times as white or black. Paige Van Vorst, "The San Jacinto Mystique by Paige Van Vorst," *Jazz Beat Magazine* November 18, 2004.

<http://bayoubohemia.net/genealogy/histories/1436.01-hist.pdf>



dancing pavilion, and refreshment stands, and was available to be rented for a “nominal fee.”<sup>114</sup> The park opened in April 1921.<sup>115</sup>



WALLACE C. MARINE

Picture of Wallace C. Marine, President of the Crescent Star Amusement Park Co, Inc. *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* Vol. 23, No. 1. New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1921.

The space was used primarily, similar to Johnson Park, for baseball games. Semi-professional African American baseball teams like the Crescent Stars, New Orleans Pelicans, and Algiers Giants played “irregularly” in the park, as described by the *New Orleans City Guide*, compiled by the Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Project Administration in 1938.<sup>116</sup> The Stars, operated by Marine, played in various leagues over its existence until 1937, competing with teams from across the country and even the

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<sup>114</sup> “A New Orleans Baseball Park,” *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* Vol. 22 No. 1 May (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1921), 20.

<sup>115</sup> “Colored Park Near Completion,” *The New Orleans Item* April 23, 1921.

<sup>116</sup> Federal Writers’ Project of the Works Progress Administration, *New Orleans City Guide* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), XXXIX.

Cuban Star from Havana.<sup>117</sup> The team played the Chicago American Giants for the 1933 “Negro World Series,” building an additional 4,000 seats for the event, which they lost, making it the largest attendance for black sporting event in city’s history according to the *Louisiana Weekly*.<sup>118</sup> A truck was sent to other black neighborhoods in the city to transport fans to games.<sup>119</sup>



Picture of Baseball Game at Crescent Star Park, 1921. *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races* Vol. 23, No. 1. New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1921.

Several points should be made about baseball at Crescent Star Park. First, games were regularly covered by the *Times Picayune*, a white-owned and operated newspaper, and stories appeared on the regular sports page, alongside stories on white baseball games. The language should also be noted: “real good ball game,” “crack ball players,”

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<sup>117</sup> “Plan Big Season in Negro League at Crescent Park, February 19, 1922.”

<sup>118</sup> *Louisiana Weekly* September 30, 1933. The Chicago American Stars, who the Crescent Stars played regularly, were managed by Rube Foster, the founder of the National Negro League, future Baseball Hall of Fame member, and considered by many to be the “father of black baseball.” Foster managed the team until he was institutionalized in 1926 for mental illness.

<sup>119</sup> “Crescents Beat Knoxville 2 to 0,” *Times Picayune* June 11, 1922.

“masterful hurler,” “exciting game,” “masterly pitching,” and “team fielded brilliantly.”

<sup>120</sup> The language is almost all positive and avoids the use of racial stereotypes; the use of the word “master,” found in multiple articles to describe the performances of pitchers, while often commonplace for describing ballplayers, is striking in the context of describing a black athlete. The newspaper also closely followed the Stars run-up to the Negro World Series, including their defeat of the Nashville Elite Giants in the negro Dixie Series, noting it was the “first time a team from New Orleans has won the right to play” in that event, with the winner advancing to the Negro World Series, as well as highlighting the fact that more seats had been built to accommodate the expected “large crowd,” including reserve seats for white fans at all games.” <sup>121</sup> The World Series itself was described as the “Big Game” and commentators speculated on the lineups and pitching match-ups. <sup>122</sup>

Second, the mention of “reserve seats for white fans” deserves further analysis. White fans in significant numbers attended black baseball games at Crescent Star Park and paid admission prices to do so. An advertisement in October 1934 stated the price of admission for a doubleheader was 45 cents, the equivalent of nearly \$8 dollars today, and not an insignificant amount of money during the depth of the Great Depression. Whites, upon admission, were sent to separate sections to watch the baseball game. This was a

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<sup>120</sup> “Ball Game at Crescent Park,” *Times Picayune* June 10, 1921

“Crescent Star Baseball Team to Make Debut,” *Times Picayune* March 3, 1922

“Crescent Stars Win,” *Times Picayune* July 11 1921

“Beaumont Beats Crescent Stars,” *Times Picayune* March 5, 1922

<sup>121</sup> “Negro Dixie Series to Open at Crescent Ball Park,” *Times Picayune* September 6, 1933.

<sup>122</sup> “Chicago Negro Team Arrives for Big Game,” *Times Picayune* November 22, 1933.

common practice during Jim Crow, although usually it was whites segregating African Americans. For example, see the article below:

**Crescents Meet  
Jax on Sunday**

The game between the Crescent City team of St. Bernard and the Loyacano Jaxs scheduled for last Sunday and called off on account of rain will be played at the **Crescent Park** Sunday evening. Umpire Jorda will start the game at 2:45 o'clock sharp.

The Jax will have Bordes, their hurling ace on the mound opposing either "Whip" Miller or "Lefty" Hebert of the Crescents. Churchill will catch for the Crescent City team while Barker or Cohn will receive for the Jax. The clubs will line up as follows:

Crescent City—Miller or Hebert, p; Churchill c, Fish 1b, McGovern 2b, Gandolfi ss, Untz 3b, Lodato, Rauch, Schorling and Bremmerhoff outfield.

Loyacano Jax—Bordes p, Barker c, Comiskey 1b, Furer 2b, Lawrence ss, Fisse 3b, Eppling, Cohn, Saulon, Wetdel outfield.

A section will be reserved for colored patrons in the grandstand.

"Crescents Meet Jax on Sunday," *Times Picayune* November 18, 1921.

This article from the *Times Picayune* in November 1921 described a baseball game at a white park, confusingly also named Crescent Park, located in Gretna, across the river from downtown New Orleans.<sup>123</sup> The last section noted that a section was "reserved for colored patrons"; the physical separation of the races by creating a set-apart area for African Americans was a common model for the segregation of leisure spaces for places in the Jim Crow South that did not altogether ban black residents from entering.

The articles below describe baseball games at the black Crescent Star Park:

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<sup>123</sup> The official name of the black park was Crescent Star Amusement Park. However, it was frequently referred to in the newspaper as Crescent Star Park or Crescent Park. "Alexandria Giants Beat Crescent Stars 5 to 3," *Times Picayune* July 17, 1933

## Crescent Stars Winners Over Chicago Negro Nine

The Crescent Stars, city negro champions of 1932 and members of the new Southern League, defeated the Chicago American Giants of the negro National League 4 to 2 Saturday at the **Crescent Park** in a well-played game.

Red Broguille of the Stars was in fine form and had the Chicago nine shut out until the eighth inning. Radcliffe was the only Giant to get more than one hit. The teams will play again today at 3 p. m. with special accommodations for white persons.

## Alexandria Giants Beat Crescent Stars 5 to 3

The Alexandria Giants defeated the Crescent Stars Sunday at Crescent Park 5-3. Iron Man Moseley was on the mound for the visitors and was master all the way through the game. The second game was called in the third on account of rain. The final game will be played today at **Crescent Park** starting at 4 o'clock.

The Alexandria team has given warning that they will give all teams plenty of trouble in the second half race of the Negro Southern League. A reserved section of the grandstand is available for white fans.

“Crescent Stars Winners Over Chicago Negro Nine,” *Times Picayune* April 2, 1933.

Note again the final section in which it is mentioned that there were “special accommodations for white persons” or a “reserved section of the grandstand...for white fans.” This language is nearly identical to the previous article describing segregation in the white Crescent Park. The significance here is that African Americans were the ones who were segregating whites. As speculated in the introduction to this work, this may have been done to attract whites by reducing fears of racial mingling. Nonetheless, this reversal of segregation is rather remarkable.

Other teams played baseball in Crescent Star Park as well. Semi-professional teams like the New Orleans Eagles used the space when the Stars were traveling and the Peter Robertson Negro City Baseball League held games there featuring teams representing different sections of the city, like the Rhythm Giants from uptown.<sup>124</sup> Early

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<sup>124</sup> “Contest Scheduled for Crescent Park,” *Times Picayune* August 25, 1922.  
“Large Crows are Expected at Negro Tilts,” *Times Picayune* July 2, 1937.

in its existence Crescent Star Park hosted the 1921 city championship in baseball in which V. C. Jones School, the local team from the Seventh Ward, defeated Thomy Lafon school.<sup>125</sup> Although denied access to the Orleans Parish public school system, Crescent did create a space for teams from black schools to play against each other. Seventh Ward neighborhood teams also used the space. Pleasant Joseph, a resident of the Seventh Ward, recalled that each row of homes in his neighborhood had their own baseball team and would rent out the space for games; when he was a student in the 1920s, his school, Valena C. Jones, also rented the park for football games.<sup>126</sup> Businesses like Crossett's Shoe Company and the Pullman Stars also competed against in the space.<sup>127</sup>

The park was also used for other activities. Boxing matches, billed as picnics, featuring pugilists like Marvelous Kid Jamaica and Joe Fortune, music by the Peerless Band and other groups, and the showing of movies, were held with admission at 40 cents as well as an additional 15 cents for ringside seats, and advertised in local newspapers like the *New Orleans Item*.<sup>128</sup> *The New Orleans State* reported the St. John Berchman Willing Workers, Inc., held a "day and night picnic" in September 1921 to raise money for a "negro female orphan asylum building fund."<sup>129</sup> The event featured baseball and boxing matches, music by the Blue Ribbon Jazz Band, and dancing from 3pm-3am; over

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<sup>125</sup> "Jones School Wins," *Times Picayune* May 28, 1921.

<sup>126</sup> Joseph Pleasant and Harriet J. Ottenheimer, *Cousin Joe: Blues from New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>127</sup> "Menendez vss Crossetts," July 15, 1921. *Times Picayune* July 15, 1921. "T. P. Porters and Autocrats," *Louisiana Weekly* September 14, 1928

<sup>128</sup> Advertisement, *The New Orleans Item*, July 25, 1921. Advertisement, *The New Orleans Item* August 16, 1921.

<sup>129</sup> "Will Give Benefit for Negro Orphan Asylum," *New Orleans States* September 4, 1921.

1,500 people attended the picnic.<sup>130</sup> It is worth noting the *Times Picayune* in their story on the preparation for the event included the following description: “the general public without regard to color is invited to make the festival a success by attendance and cooperation.”<sup>131</sup> A second benefit picnic was held the following June in an effort to raise an additional \$35,000 for the project, and the organizing group announced the approval of Archbishop Shaw and Mayor McShane.<sup>132</sup>

Other groups like the churches held picnics there as well.<sup>133</sup> The American Legion used the space for dances.<sup>134</sup> The Louisiana chapter of the Knights of Pythias, a large nation-wide fraternal organization, held events in the park.<sup>135</sup> And the Valena C. Jones Elementary School held an annual pageant in the park, with children as kings, queens, maids, and dukes, and over 3,000 parents in attendance.<sup>136</sup> These events, especially the boxing and baseball matches, noted the *Christian Advocate* in 1922, drew “thousands” to the city.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> “Colored Female Orphan Asylum Aided By Picnic,” *New Orleans State*, October 2, 1921.

<sup>131</sup> “Festival Planned for Negro Orphans,” *Times Picayune* November 25, 1921.

<sup>132</sup> “Negroes to Build Asylum,” *Times Picayune* June 4, 1922.

<sup>133</sup> “Church to Give Picnic,” *Times Picayune* July 17, 1922.

<sup>134</sup> “Program Drawn Up for Colored Legion Members,” *New Orleans States*, October 8, 1922.

<sup>135</sup> “Negro Orders to Convene,” *Times Picayune* April 15, 1923.

<sup>136</sup> Jones Hosts Annual Pageant,” *Pittsburgh Courier* May 28, 1938. For further information on African American children and childhood during this period see Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>137</sup> James R. Joy, *The Christian Advocate* Vol XCVII January 5, 1922 (New York: The Methodist Book Concern Publishers).



Advertisement for Crescent Star Park, *New Orleans Item*, July 25, 1921.

Crescent Star Park, similar to the role of Lincoln Park for African Americans in the Carrollton neighborhood of New Orleans, was therefore much more than a recreation space for residents of the Seventh Ward. The park served as a space for community events that helped raise funds for healthcare, education, and other social services not adequately provided by the city. The major difference between Crescent and the other parks previously discussed was the purpose of the space. Dixie, Lincoln, and Johnson parks were all created by individuals in order to make a profit. Crescent Star Park, however, was created to serve as a recreation space for the community and profit was not the main goal (although admission and rent were charged for many events in order to support the upkeep of the park). In addition, the park was the only large open-space venue for cultural activities for African Americans after Lincoln Park closed in 1930. Black residents from throughout the city, not just the Seventh Ward, gathered in the park,



as could be seen in an August 1921 picnic that brought together all fourteen black Episcopal churches in New Orleans.<sup>138</sup>

The space was taken over by the city in 1939, after a campaign led by Dr. Joseph A. Hardin and others active in the Seventh Ward Civic League to open an African American playground in the neighborhood; the effort, began in 1928, involved the signing of numerous petitions and the writing of over three hundred letters, most by Hardin himself, to newspapers and city officials.<sup>139</sup> Lawrence di Benedetto, director of playgrounds for the city, told an assembled audience at a ceremony for the space featuring music by a WPA band and speeches by Hardin and master of ceremonies A. P. Tureaud, that the city planned to develop the playground and that there was a need for at least eight other playgrounds for African American children; however, the park was not opened until 1941 and money for playground equipment came from not from the city but rather from donors like Hardin, for whom the space was named.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> “Bishop to Address United Methodists’ Picnic,” *Times Picayune* August 21, 1921.

<sup>139</sup> Hardin, a leading physician and Civil Rights leader in New Orleans, was a prominent player in the struggle for more recreation for African Americans. Hardin was responsible for pressuring the city to open the city’s first YMCA for blacks as well as campaigning for other parks, playgrounds, swimming grounds, and an African American beach on Lake Pontchartrain. Thomas J. Ward, *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 20.

<sup>140</sup> “Playground Director Addresses Citizens,” *The Pittsburgh Courier* April 29, 1939. “City of New Orleans Annual Reports, Playgrounds Commission 1917-1945.” New Orleans: City of New Orleans Archives Department. Louisiana Division, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

Baton Rouge’s first black park, Richmond Park, faced a similar issue over playground equipment. A local black organization, the East End Community Club, sponsored the building of a playground in the park and solicited donations from community members, including some white residents. “More Donations are Received for the Negro Park,” *State Times Advocate* May 26, 1926.

Funding for African Americans parks was a continuous problem. The *Fort Worth Telegram* noted in May 1910 the Fort Worth Parks had finally found a site to build a



Photograph of Dr. Joseph Hardin circa 1930. Courtesy of the Amistad Research Center.

## CONCLUSION

At the time of the dedication of the property for what would become Hardin Playground in 1939, African Americans had little options for recreation in the city of New Orleans. Only one playground served the nearly 150,000 African Americans in the city, or roughly thirty percent of the total population.<sup>141</sup> Over thirty existed for White children.<sup>142</sup> Dixie, Lincoln, and Johnson Parks had all been closed by that time, leaving Hardin as one of the only spaces that could be used by African Americans for recreation. The afore-mentioned Bartholomew Study, published in 1929 and noting that African Americans were shut out of nearly every park, argued that the lack of access to parks and other recreational facilities led to black residents instead being forced to use alternative-

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separate black park but was “without the financial qualifications to buy it.” “Pastors In Favor of a Negro Park” The Fort Worth Telegram May 4, 1910.

<sup>141</sup> Campanella, *Bienville’s Dilemma*.

<sup>142</sup> “City of New Orleans 28th Annual Report (1939), Playgrounds Commission.” New Orleans: City of New Orleans Archives Department. Louisiana Division, City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

and often time dangerous-locations for recreation, including swimming in the canals and playing in the streets, levees, and on train tracks.<sup>143</sup>

Some changes did occur under the administration of Mayor DeLesseps S. Morrison. Pressure from political and financial supporters, as well as the recognition of the need for the electoral support of the growing African American population, led Morrison to expand recreation opportunities. Morrison appointed an advisory commission of African American community leaders to work with the newly created New Orleans Recreation Department (NORD) in 1947, and the following year Shakspeare Park and Julius Rosenwald Center were opened for black residents.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Bartholomew, Harland and Associates. "Preliminary Reports on a System of Recreation Facilities and Civic Art, New Orleans, Louisiana."

<sup>144</sup> New Orleans, despite being one of the first cities to have a large-scale urban park and private parks, was far behind others in the creation of municipal black parks. Lexington, Kentucky opened their first such park in 1916 and approved a second in 1919; Dallas/ Fort Worth, Texas, in 1916; Miami in 1917; Mobile, Alabama, in 1921; Shreveport, Louisiana in 1925; Memphis in 1938. These parks, however, were rare and few public parks for blacks existed in the South. Arkansas became the first state to establish a state park for African Americans in 1937; Louisiana never established a separate state park for blacks, despite a law denying their admittance to other state parks in which only whites were allowed. "Negro Park Will Be Open This Summer" *Lexington Herald* January 26, 1916. "Dunlap Denies Friction Exists Commissioner and Chairman of Park Board Say Rumor of Resignation Without," *Lexington Herald* July 22, 1919. "Negroes to Give Entertainment," *Dallas Morning News* August 17, 1916. "Brutality Costs Guard His Position Mobile County Engineer Acts Following Conviction of James Taylor," *Times Picayune* March 23, 1921. "Board Recommends Negro Park in Shreveport" *State Times Advocate* February 2, 1925. "Memphis to Get 500 Acre Negro Park," *Negro Star* April 22, 1938. *Morning Advocate* June 20, 1937.

The park in Dallas, Texas was the site one of the first black golf courses in the country, constructed unknowingly by park patrons and discovered by officials visiting the park in 1921, much to their surprise. "Dusky Golfers Construct Own Nine-Hole Course," *Dallas Morning News* January 29, 1921.

The few public parks that did exist for African Americans were still precarious. The Pine Bluff, Arkansas Park Commission, for example, took over Townsend Park, the city's only black public park, in order to expand an existing white park in 1941. "Council Requested to Turn Over Negro Park for White's Use Only," *Arkansas State Press* September 19, 1941. Private parks for African Americans faced similar issues with local

Shakspeare Park further demonstrated the issue of race and space in the city. The park, created in 1859 as Douglas Square, was renamed for Mayor Joseph A. Shakspeare in 1900.<sup>145</sup> It was made a whites only space following complaints of black youth harassing white girls in the park and in the wake of the 1900 Robert Charles Race Riot.<sup>146</sup> A letter to the editor of *The New Orleans States* in May 1916, asking for equality and for white people to “put yourself in the negro’s place,” noted “denying to colored people the use of Shakspeare Park as a resort” as an example of injustice in the city.<sup>147</sup> The space was kept segregated through at least the early 1930s. The *Times Picayune* noted in June 1934 that the Parkway Commission had received several petitions to have a black park built and the chairman of the organization had suggested Shakspeare Park be used for this purpose.<sup>148</sup>

The park became an unofficial space for African Americans as the predominantly black neighborhood surrounding the park, part of the “backswamps” of the city settled by freed slaves and other poor minorities in the late nineteenth century and known as Central City, expanded.<sup>149</sup> The park was the site of gatherings for the city’s African American community: an October 1931 five thousand-person parade to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone of the African American Flint-Goodridge Hospital originated in the park; the space was used for a closing program for the summer 1934 “vacation play program” for

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governments. Klondyke Park in Jonesboro Arkansas was ruined when the city decided to build a drainage ditch through the park. “Snap Shots at Home News,” *Jonesboro Evening Sun* Jonesboro, Arkansas September 16, 1918.

<sup>145</sup> City Ordinance 4568 OS May 15, 1859, and City Ordinance 16225 OS May 1, 1900 City Archives, New Orleans City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.

<sup>146</sup> William Ivy Hair, *Carnival of Fury: Robert Charles and the New Orleans Race Riot of 1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

<sup>147</sup> “Put Yourself in the Negro’s Place,” *New Orleans State* May 30, 1916.

<sup>148</sup> “Park for Negroes,” *Times Picayune* June 15, 1934.

<sup>149</sup> Campanella, *Bienville’s Dilemma*, 186.

African American children run by the Council of Social Agencies; a parade to mark the celebration of Emancipation Day in 1935 also started in the park; African Americans held an event in the park in 1935 to commemorate African American veterans of World War I; and Ernest Wright, a Civil Rights activist known for his leadership in the Southern Negro Youth Congress's voter registration campaign and 1940 insurance company worker strike, spoke every Sunday in the park on various social to hundreds and often thousands of African Americans in the early 1940s.<sup>150</sup> The park was later an important space for Civil Rights activities in the city, including serving as the gathering point for over 10,000 residents that participated in the September 30th, 1963 march on City Hall, the largest Civil Rights event in the city's history.<sup>151</sup> The space was renamed A. L. Davis Park in 1979 after the local Civil Rights leader and continues to serve as a site for community events like the Super Sunday Mardi Gras Indian procession.

Other playgrounds and recreation programs followed Shakspeare Park and the Rosenwald Center, although Morrison faced considerable backlash from many whites. Morrison was responsive to this criticism, as well as an ardent supporter of segregation, and the NORD programs, parks, and facilities were under-funded and kept in poor states;

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<sup>150</sup> "Parade to Feature Hospital Exercises," *Times Picayune* October 23, 1931. "Vacation Program Closing Arranged," *Times Picayune* August 24, 1934. "Emancipation is Marked in City," *Times Picayune* January 2, 1935. ("Tribute is Paid Soldier Dead in Exercises Here," *Times Picayune* November 12, 1935. Keith Weldon Medley, "Ernest Wright: People's Champion," *Southern Exposure* May/June (1984): 52-55.

<sup>151</sup> Marion James Port Collection, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

white NORD workers also often marked spaces intended for African Americans as “whites only.”<sup>152</sup>



Sunday school parade in Shakspeare Park, 1950. Courtesy of the Ralston Crawford Collection, William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana

Other African American recreation spaces were also created. Lawsuits by the NAACP to integrate the golf course at City Park and Audubon Park in 1950 forced Morrison to create Pontchartrain Park, an African American park in the Lakefront area opened in 1956; Morrison had to convince many nearby white residents to end their opposition because preventing the building of the space would lead to further pressure to integrate the other parks in the city, which he and most whites were against.<sup>153</sup> Similarly, in an effort to isolate and remove African Americans from the newly developed beachfront areas along Lake Pontchartrain, the city’s levee board had built Lincoln Beach in 1939, an area distant from the city’s center and most black neighborhoods, nearly

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<sup>152</sup> Edward F. Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform: New Orleans Politics, 1946-1961* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 69-73.

<sup>153</sup> Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform*, 77.

unreachable by public transportation, and highly polluted by fishing camps moved by the levee board close to the space.<sup>154</sup>

However, the majority of recreation space remained segregated until the late 1950s and 1960s. City Park was forced to integrate by federal courts in 1958 after Mandeville Detiege, a returning World War II veteran, was arrested for seeking shade in the park while waiting for a bus; his lawsuit, filed by A.P. Tureaud, led to a federal court-order to desegregate the space, appealed by the city but upheld by the United States Supreme Court.<sup>155</sup> In 1963, federal courts ordered all parks and recreation facilities operated by the New Orleans Recreation Department to be desegregated, following another lawsuit. The decision, again appealed by the city, was also upheld by the Supreme Court the following year.<sup>156</sup> The ensuing years saw parks in the city become primarily used by African Americans as whites left the inner city and moved to surrounding suburbs, part of the South's white flight, and contributed to by the integration of parks.<sup>157</sup>

Today, there is little physical evidence that African Americans were barred from public parks in New Orleans, forced to use private parks and other alternative spaces, and subject to the control of external forces.

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<sup>154</sup> For an examination of Lincoln Beach and other African American beaches in the Jim Crow South, see Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours*. Pontchartrain Beach, the whites-only amusement park and beach, was ordered to be desegregated in 1964 and Lincoln Beach closed shortly after. Pontchartrain Beach's white attendance rate dropped dramatically in the years after integration and it too was closed down in 1984.

<sup>155</sup> *New Orleans City Park Improvement Association v. Mandeville Detiege, Individually and on Behalf of Others Similarly Situated*, 252 F.2d 122 5th Cir. (1958).

<sup>156</sup> *City of New Orleans et al. v Barthe et al.*, 376 U.S. 189 (1964).

<sup>157</sup> New Orleans Public Library. "A Place to Play: The First Years of the NORD, 1947-1948." <http://nutrias.org/~nopl/exhibits/nord/nordintro.htm>.



The property that was once Dixie Park is now a block of residences and a dry cleaning service (pictured above). Lincoln Park is now the location of a non-profit organization, a fast-food restaurant, and a dance studio (below left); and Johnson Park has been subdivided into residential lots (below right).



Crescent Star Park is now Hardin Park, a small neighborhood park with a baseball field, playground, and basketball court.





Patrons of the space and parks throughout the city, including City Park, are predominantly African American, and little exists to indicate the struggle to control black recreation space in the early twentieth century.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Former federal judge James Comiskey, a New Orleans native, did campaign shortly before his death in 2005 to have a plaque placed in City Park at the spot where Mandeville Detiege was arrested, but no marker was ever placed. “District Judge James August Comiskey,” *Tracking Louisiana’s Legal Heritage: Celebrating 200 Years of the Federal Courts in Louisiana*, <http://www.laed.uscourts.gov/200th/about.php>.

Although not formally addressed by this work, further research should be done to examine the role of class and gender on African American patrons of these private parks. Private parks, focused on making a profit, charged admission to use the space, which may have resulted in some African Americans being unable to afford to use the space. Benevolent societies, for example, charged membership fees and thus their activities in parks were restricted to those that could afford the cost. For an examination of the impact of class on resistance to segregation and discrimination, see Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Earl Lewis *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); and Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement: The Changing Political Economy of Southern Racism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

Similarly, the gendering of these spaces should be studied. Ryan (1990) argued 19<sup>th</sup> century public spaces were socially constructed and there were gendered expectations on how women were supposed to behave in these spaces. Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century challenged and resisted these expectations, and entered into the public space. See also Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim*

Examining these spaces allows an analysis of larger cultural trends for African Americans in New Orleans and the Jim Crow South. These parks served as venues for the functions of black benevolent societies and unions; sporting events, particularly baseball; and outdoor music, reflecting the popularity of jazz and brass bands. Parks offer a way to not only see the external forces that affected the presence and survival of these spaces, but also as a way to explore and trace the cultural activities of African Americans during

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*Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University Press of North Carolina, 1996); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn of the Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Sarah Deutsch *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Jessica Ellen Sewell's *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (2011) and Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). Peiss's work in particular may provide a similar comparison as she examined how working class women in New York City were able to enter previously gender-segregated places of leisure like movie theaters, dance halls, and amusement parks, shaping the development of the consumer culture and the working-class culture as whole, as well as leading to more women from all classes entering the public space. Stott's work provides a model for exploring male spaces, which would be a useful lens for understanding the activities at the private parks, activities predominantly focused on male behavior.

Other works have also focused on gender and public space in New Orleans. See Emily Clark, "By All the Conduct of Their Lives: A Laywomen's Confraternity in New Orleans, 1730-1744," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series, Vol. 54, No. 4 (October 1997), 769-794; Alecia P. Long, "(Mis)Remembering General Order: No. 28: Benjamin Butler, the Woman Order, and Historical Memory," in Alecia P. Long and LeeAnn Whites, eds., *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Jennifer Spear, *Race Sex and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Kimberley Hanger, "Desiring Total Tranquility and Not Getting It: Conflict Involving Free Black Women in Spanish New Orleans," *The Americas* (April 1988), 547-552; and Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

See also Douglas, *Public Spaces, Private Gardens: A History of Designed Landscapes in New Orleans*, 71-75, for a look at gender and early 19<sup>th</sup> century pleasure gardens in the city, including the practice of placage.

this period. Shut out of the public space, African Americans turned to private parks to form group and cultural identities, an act of resistance in and of itself during a time period of repression.

Parks served as “counterspaces” for the African Americans of New Orleans, places to both gather and fundraise for the support of institutions like schools, churches, and hospitals, as well as institutions themselves. Denied access to public parks, and lacking almost any other recreation spaces, African Americans worked together to create and run Crescent Star Park, a private venture designed to meet the needs of a community ignored by the city’s government.<sup>159</sup> This space, remarkably enough, also owed its survival to white patrons who paid the price of admission, and were often forced to sit in segregated seating. Thus the story of private parks in Jim Crow New Orleans is one of both segregation and resistance. It is a story of attempts to curtail and of efforts to create opportunities for a marginalized segment of the population. And it is one that must be understood to gain a fuller understanding of the time period.

Most of these parks have been erased from the landscape.<sup>160</sup> This physical absence has largely led to their absence from the narrative on Jim Crow and Civil Rights. The story of exclusion from private parks and the creation of alternative private parks open to African Americans, as well as the gatherings, joy, and leisure that occurred in them during a time period of discrimination and segregation, is necessary to understand

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<sup>159</sup> This effort foreshadowed a later effort by the Target Areas Recreation Committee to form their own recreation program in 1966 after efforts to fully integrate the New Orleans’ Recreation Department’s programs were stymied. See Kent Germany, *New Orleans After the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2007).

<sup>160</sup> See Weyenth, “The Architecture of Segregation,” for a discussion of the historic preservation of the buildings and landscapes associated with segregation, including the “heroic architecture” of Jim Crow, African-American alternative spaces.

how whites attempted to exclude black residents from the public space, and how African Americans used alternative spaces to congregate and build community.

The continued presence of Crescent Star/ Hardin Park in the Seventh Ward is a testament to the individuals who resisted segregation in Jim Crow New Orleans. They worked together to form a group to win approval by the city, purchase the property, raise funds for the park, and use the space for both leisure and communal activism. Crescent Star Park endured while the other parks in this work did not because of community-based mission and support. Its survival, and the role it played in the African American community and continues to play today, is a physical reminder of the struggle of recreation space in the segregated South.

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## VITA

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