

Travel

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0212 Thursday, July 10, 1934

Memphis on the Mississippi River is a stopping place on the way to the World's Fair in New Orleans. City fathers are reviving Beale Street — the birthplace of the blues — with new restaurants, shops, clubs, theaters and music.

Born again Memphis pumps life into downtown area

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Old Man River is rolling along on its way downstream to the World's Fair site at New Orleans. As it curves past Chickasaw Bluff in Memphis it washes the new Mud Island complex, detours under the monorail that connects Mud Island to downtown, makes a scenic backdrop for a paddlewheel tour boat and washes the foot of Beale Street.

Listen and you will hear music from Beale Street, although it's not necessarily the blues. Memphis has been trying to renovate the birthplace of the blues, the street that changed the direction of American music, for 15 years. Last fall it opened two blocks of a three-block renovation project on Beale Street; next year it will open the third block.

At the moment, the setting sun highlights the restaurants and cafes, the break dancers twirling to their own music, the guitar player in W.C. Handy Park, and all those locals and tourists pouring down the rebuilt brick street looking for music.

What they hear may be blues, swing, country, rock, pop. It's all music to the ears of city fathers who have worked hard to lure tourists back to this historic city on the Mississippi. This year Memphis is a popular stopping place on the way to the World's Fair.

IT WAS Old Man River that brought explorers, settlers and merchants to this cotton center of the south, and it

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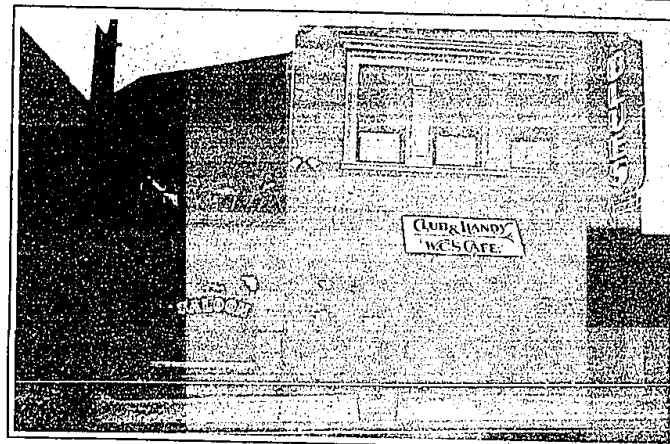
was old Miss that made a mud island out of a gunshot stuck off the Memphis shore during the Civil War.

Take a moonrall to Mud Island now and you can waste down a scale model of the Mississippi, or check out the history of the society and its music in the Mud Island museum.

You'll see another aspect of Memphis history in brick, stone and polished wood if you tour the city's restored Victorian district. If you prefer the flesh and blood version talk to May Landstreet, a volunteer whose smiling presence can often be found in the Fontaine House.

May's father was a carriage builder from Kentucky who came to Memphis about 1880 because he was sure that Tennessee would never outlaw slavery. Within a decade he lost everything.

MAY CAN also tell you about her husband's grandparents who were met with shotguns when they tried to get off the boat during the Yellow Fever epi-



The new Beale Street features music and entertainment in a number of new places. One is the Club Handy & W.C.'s Cafe named after W.C. Handy who wrote the Beale Street Blues and the St. Louis Blues. The second story balcony area allows listening to music from inside or from other clubs in the area. Down the street, the Fred Ford-Honeyman Garner Trio (below) performs jazz at the Old Daisy Theatre. The new renovated Beale Street is a few blocks from the river, within a few minutes' walk of any of the downtown business and shopping streets.

demie of the 1870s. That epidemic killed 5,000 Memphians, wiping out it charter as a city.

May's ancestors would be amazed to know that Memphis' most popular tourist attractions nowadays are Graceland, home of the late Elvis Presley, and Beale Street, where a trained black musician called W.C. Handy gave birth to the blues early in the 20th century.

The new renovated Beale Street is a few blocks from the river, within a few minutes' walk of any of the downtown business and shopping streets. From the top of the historic Peabody Hotel two blocks away on Union Avenue, you can see the new section of Beale Street between the downtown parking lots and the historic Old Beale Street Baptist Church.

The not-yet-renovated third block shows you what the street looked like a year or two ago, crumbling old buildings sagging over the street.

THE RENOVATED area has a new

polished look, from the restaurants, shops and music clubs past the Old Daisy and New Daisy theaters to the lighted benches of W.C. Handy Park.

The street is closed off to cars so there are always a lot of people, young and old, strolling and strumming down the brick road. Elkington and Kellner, the developers who finally succeeded in finishing this project, did so for two important reasons.

They did not try to restore it to the old days, so they could renovate old buildings and add new ones. They gave the street musical rather than a shopping theme, so music comes out of every doorway and arcade as the night progresses.

The best way to get a feel for the old days is to watch the impressive multimedia show at the Old Daisy Theatre, where the Center for Southern Folklore is dedicated to preserving the cultural life of earlier times.

HERE YOU will see that black mu-

sic began in the fields of the cotton plantations, where spirituals, work songs and field hollers began to blend into a uniquely American music late in the 19th century.

W.C. Handy spent only 10 years here, but he managed to forge a new musical style out of that early folk sound. He was known at the time as the man who wrote a campaign song for a local

The Memphis skyline is in the background as passengers embark for a ride on the Island Queen paddlewheel tour boat which travels between the city and Mud Island. On the island, young ladies wade down a scale model of the Mississippi.



white politician, but he is known now as the composer of the Beale Street Blues and the St. Louis Blues.

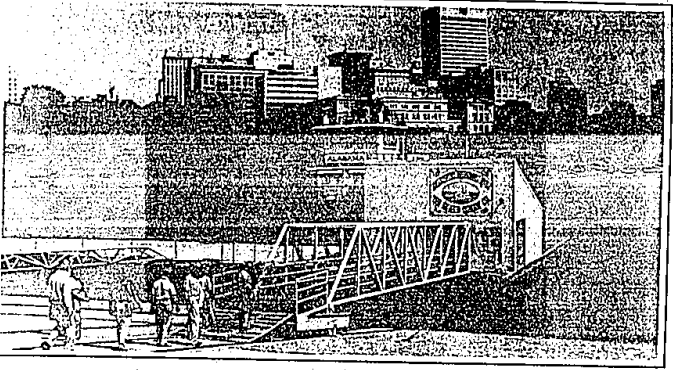
The pictures in the Old Daisy show you the marketplace that dominated Beale Street by day, and the night-time world of gaming tables, smoky clubs and street life early in this century.

It was a carnival starring Little Oran, the best pickpocket between Memphis and New Orleans; Machine Gun Kelly, who peddled bottles of whiskey from a basket; jug bands in the park; a music club show on the street; a wandering musician playing for pennies.

On any weekend this summer you'll find the crowds beginning to gather in late afternoon. A blues band might be playing in the park. The break dancers are out early. Diners sit on the second-floor balcony of the W.C. Handy Cafe or listen to the pianist or the singing waiters at Memories.

By 8 p.m. the nightly stage presentation has started at the Old Daisy. Charlie Rich might be on stage at the New Daisy. Sandy Carroll will be playing at Lafayette's Corner. The quiet pianist will be playing the blues in the back room of Kubal Kahn's Oriental Restaurant. Somebody is sure to be blowing a horn in one of the little arcades.

Some people in Memphis call all this the rebirth of the blues, but that's not really what it is. It's the rebirth of an historic downtown area that has been through a lot of American history born by the Mississippi River.



travel notes

Fort Wayne Flyer ready to roll

The largest and most powerful steam locomotive in the eastern United States, Norfolk & Western Railroad's No. 611, will make its first visit to Detroit on Saturday, July 28, and Sunday, July 29.

The streamlined, gleaming black, maroon and gold Class J 4-8-4 Northern type will power the Fort Wayne Flyer on two day-long train excursions between Detroit and Fort Wayne, Ind., sponsored by the Bluewater Michigan Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society.

No. 611 is one of fewer than 10 such restored steam locomotives in high-speed service today. It is the most modern steamer in operation having been built by Norfolk & Western's Roanoke, Va., shops in 1950. It develops 5,000 horsepower while capable of speeds up to 110 mph.

THE FORT WAYNE Flyer will start each day in Allen Park and travel 90 miles to Montpelier, Ohio, where passengers may detain to enjoy six hours of small-town hospitality in the farming and railroad center situated among the rich farmlands of northwestern Ohio.

Passengers staying aboard the Fort Wayne Flyer and those getting on at Montpelier will travel another 50 miles to Fort Wayne, where No. 611 will be turned for the trip back to Montpelier and Detroit. There will be about one hour to detain in Fort Wayne.

The train will consist of both air-conditioned and open-window coaches. The latter are for passengers preferring the smell of steam locomotive coal smoke.

There will be first class luxury lounge cars where passengers may indulge themselves. A roast beef supper will be served aboard the Bluewater Michigan Chapter's dining car, the "Lake Michigan."

THE SCHEDULE, which is the same both Saturday and Sunday, calls for departure from Allen Park at 8 a.m., returning at 8 p.m. The Ft. Wayne Flyer arrives in Montpelier at 11:15 a.m. and Ft. Wayne at 12:45 p.m. The return to Montpelier is 3:45 p.m., departing there at 5:45 p.m.

On Saturday only, there is a stop in Milan at 9 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. on the return. On Sunday only, the Flyer stops in Adrian at 9:30 a.m. and returns at 6:45 p.m.

Round-trip coach fares from Detroit to Montpelier are \$39 for adults and \$22 for children ages 6 through 12. The Detroit to Ft. Wayne round trip coach fares are \$59 for adults and \$39 for children. All first-class fares are \$79 regardless of boarding point or destination. The Saturday-only Detroit-to-Milan round trip is \$17 for adults and \$14 for children. On Sunday, the adult and children fares between Detroit and Adrian are \$25 and \$21, respectively.

For more information or to order tickets, send a stamped self-addressed return envelope to the Bluewater Michigan Chapter, P.O. Box 2467, Royal Oak 48068, or telephone 678-1610 or 254-3111. Tickets are also being sold at the Train Center of Birmingham, 1840 E. Woodward, and the Plymouth Yard Hobbes & Giff, 904 Starkweather in Plymouth.

The City of Southfield Tours will sponsor a three-day trip to Toronto, Ontario, Sept. 14-16 to coincide with the visit of Pope John Paul II. Participants will have the opportunity to see the pope and to witness a papal mass. The price of \$249 includes two nights at the "Plaza II Hotel," three dinners, two breakfasts, transportation by deluxe motorcoach and an arrival cocktail party. Six cash prizes will be awarded on route.

For information or reservations, call the Southfield Cultural Arts Division of the parks and recreation department at 354-4717, or write Southfield Tours, Harriet Sigel, 26000 Evergreen, Southfield MI 48075.

Monroe, Michigan in Monroe County will be the site of the Sixth Annual Old Frenchtown Days July 21-22 featuring demonstrations of life as it was some 200 years ago. There will be twice daily re-enactments of a

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