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**TOMB OF MARIE LA**

**XXX**

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## DEDICATION OR DESECRATION CALLING ON THE QUEEN OF THE CITY OF THE DEAD

### THE FACTS ABOUT THE MARIE LAVEAU

The following is excerpted from the book *City of the Dead: A Cemetery #1*, New Orleans, Louisiana by Robert Florence © Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, @

“Marie Laveau (c. 1794-1881)

Marie Laveau was the reigning Voodoo priestess of the nineteenth century. Voodoo as a social phenomenon came into its heyday during her guidance. Voodoo thrived as a business, served as a social outlet, and provided a source of spectacle and entertainment, and was what Voodoo is in its pure form is religion: forms of worship that came to the American colonies through the slave trade.

Due to slavery, the entire life of the transplanted African was transformed. Naturally the religious beliefs and practices would change. The African religion under the strain of slavery ultimately gave rise to the phenomenon known as “voodoo.” More than any one person, Marie Laveau transformed the religious practices of African slaves into a new religion.



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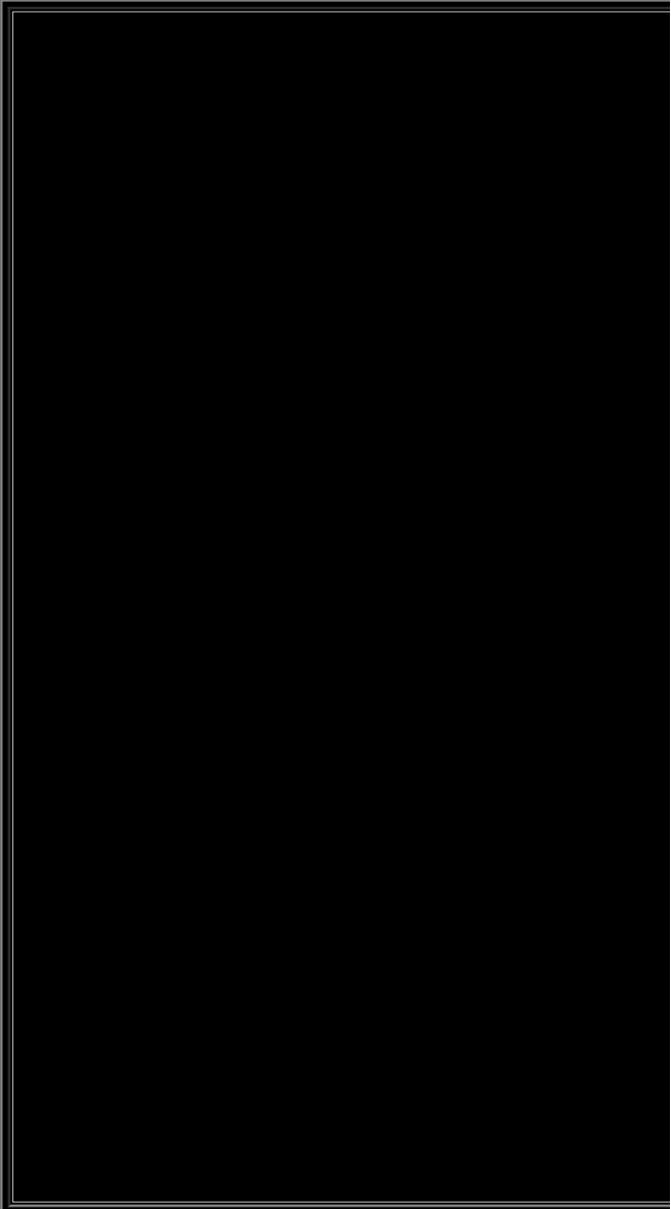
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institution of nineteenth-century New Orleans. On many levels, she is the embodiment of New Orleans Voodoo.

To begin with, New Orleans Voodoo is steeped in Catholicism. She is a renowned Voodoo figure in the history of North America, and her grave is in a cemetery which has a separate section for Protestants. She would have attended Mass at the St. Louis Cathedral nearly every day. For her, it appears at the Cathedral, where she was married to Jacques Laveau. To a greater extent than her predecessors, Marie Laveau would have incorporated prayers, incense, and saints into the African-based Voodoo practice.



New Orleans Voodoo, like New Orleans culture, is a mixture of influences. She was a free person of color, born to Charles Laveau, a planter, and a mother whose sources indicate could have been a Caribbean Voodoo practitioner, or a quadroon mistress. Marie Laveau was also Choctaw. The objects and actions employed in the practice of Voodoo are called “gris-gris.” “Gris” is the French word for grey, signifying white magic, magic which can be used for different purposes. In New Orleans Voodoo practice, a concept which is based upon the use of gris-gris.

Marie Laveau’s gender is indicative of New Orleans Voodoo. She was a woman, like the African religion upon which it is based. Marie Laveau was also New Orleans Voodoo as an impresario. Voodoo ceremonies in New Orleans were looked upon by some people as entertainment; she was the show-biz element. She understood theatrical staging, possessed a sense of drama, and was a natural performer.

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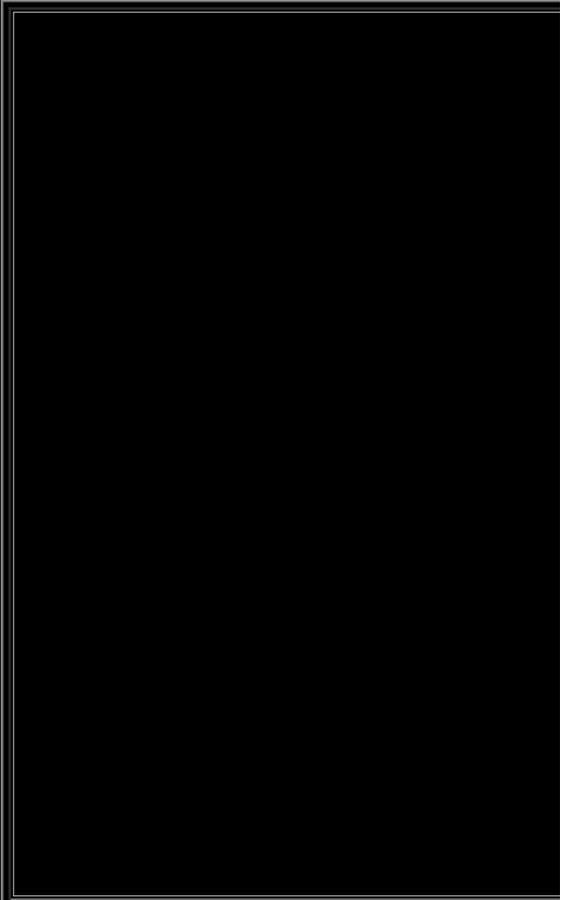
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people would line up and pay to see. These performances, and practice, were highly lucrative. Aspects of nineteenth-century were also business-oriented, and she was a consummate bus

Marie Laveau could very well be the person who eternally so between the City of New Orleans and the practice of Voodoo significance, much confusion surrounds her life, and this to commemorative plaque states that this is the "reputed" buri Some of the information on the headstone corresponds with Marie, nee 'Laveau', married carpenter Jacques Paris. He die has become the "Widow Paris." She thereafter became com captain Christopher Glapion, who had distinguished himse Orleans. The names Laveau, Paris and Glapion are all acco tomb.

Yet the date of death, 1897, is not hers, but closer to her dau the question is, which one of them is buried here? Some say this tomb; others believe neither are here. Many people thin switched between the St. Louis #1 and #2 cemeteries. The an unclear and perpetually debated, as there are endless disce information about her, much of it being legend. Yet even if M buried here, her remains would not necessarily be inside. Si most popular forms of gris-gris, it is likely that a Voodoo pra of the vault shortly after her entombment.



**TOMB REPORTED TO BE THAT OF MARIE**

In a sense, it does not really matter if Marie Laveau was bur has been accepted as her final resting place and for generati curious have been visiting this site, conducting all kinds of gris-gris. You never quite know what you will find upon visi from a statue of a monkey and a cock to a wedding cake cou cayenne, and honey, to a freshly dead rat wearing Mardi Gr

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But you will always find the innumerable "X's" blanketing the others. The origins of this proverbial New Orleans Voodoo practice, contrary to popular belief, it is not rooted in age-old local rituals. The amount of X's scrawled throughout the cemetery, it would appear, as practitioners make their way through the City of the Dead, more Voodoo is practiced at this one tomb than any single tomb. It is many people who worship through Voodoo and genuinely believe they have never left a mark on the structures of the City of the Dead.

The thousands of X's are largely the result of tour groups, who come to practice Voodoo. Their instructions always include breaking bricks on tombs (notice the neighboring tombs depleted of their bricks) and steps which involve spinning around three times, scratching the bricks, knocking on it, or rubbing a foot on it or hollering at it or kissing it slightly, if not very, differently from everyone else) and then making a wish granted.

So is this or is this not real New Orleans Voodoo? It is, in the reasonable dictionary definition of Voodoo. Practitioners credit the practice. However, the Glapion family who owns the tomb does not credit the practice as "vandalism," and have complained that they can no longer do so through what one family member considers "graffiti." There are travel books and hotel concierges instructing wish seekers to scratch the bricks, and travel books which recommend the practice. But one of the reasons for this practice appearing in a major supermarket tabloid, the fact that it cost two million dollars in the Missouri State Lottery after scratching a tomb."

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## The Wishing Voodoo T

Controversy persists over where Marie Laveau and her daughter are buried. Some say the latter reposes in the Louis No. 2 (Hauck 1996) in a "Marie Laveau Tomb" crypt most likely contains the remains of another voo Marie, Marie Comtesse. Numerous sites in as many c be the final resting place of one or the other Marie La 129), but the prima facie evidence favors the Laveau-Louis No. 1 (figure 1). It comprises three stacked crypt vault" below (that is, a repository of the remains of the new burial).

A contemporary of Marie II told Tallant (1946, 126) t present when she died of a heart attack at a ball in 18 "All them other stories ain't true. She was buried in t graveyard they call St. Louis No. I, and she was put in her mother and the rest of her family."

That tomb's carved inscription records the name, date (62) of Marie II: "Marie Philome Glapion, décédé le 18 Soixante-deux ans." A bronze tablet affixed to the top under the heading "Marie Laveau," that "This Greek Reputed Burial Place of This Notorious 'Voodoo Queen' a reference to the original Marie (see figure 2). Corrobor that she was interred here is found in her obituary (" notes that "Marie Laveau was buried in her family to Cemetery No. 1." Guiley (2000) asserts that, while Ma reportedly buried here, "The vault does not bear her name was struck by the fact that the initial two lines of the Laveau-Glapion tomb read, "Famille Vve. Paris / née "Vve." is an abbreviation for Veuve, "Widow"; therefore translates, "Family of the Widow Paris, born Laveau"

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Laveau I. I take this as evidence that here is indeed the  
Robert Tallant (1946, 127) suggests: "Probably there is  
inscription marking the vault in which the first Marie  
has been changed for one marking a later burial. The  
Paris must lie in the receiving vault below."

The Laveau-Glapion tomb is a focal point for commemo-  
Some visitors leave small gifts at the site-coins, Mardi  
candles, etc.-in the tradition of voodoo offerings. Many  
of making a wish at the tomb. The necessary ritual for  
variously described. The earliest version I have found  
says that people would "knock three times on the slab"  
noting: "There are always penciled crosses on the slab"  
the crosses away, but they always reappear." A more recent  
combining the ritual with an offering placed in the area  
the X, place your hand over it, rub your foot three times  
bottom, throw some silver coins into the cup, and mark  
(Haskins 1990). Yet again we are told that petitioners  
offerings of food, money and flowers, then ask for Marie  
turning around three times and marking a cross with  
stone" (Guiley 2000, 216).

*Editor's Note: In recent days a controversy has arisen regarding  
practice of marking the alleged final resting place of Voodoo Queen  
with X's in the infamous "wish spell" ritual popularized in the  
several decades by certain companies, groups and individuals in the  
Orleans tourism industry.*

*At the center of the controversy are attacks on this web site  
about the legacy of Marie Laveau and the enduring legend of the  
marking practice. We have been repeatedly accused of endorsing  
been designated a criminal activity. To clarify, the threat was  
one individual within the industry who is not a native of  
South, yet who, ironically, makes a living by the daily exploitation  
and folklore of this City.*

*The X practice is now so well-known, having been documented in  
books, newspaper reports, web sites, local histories and travel  
brochures over the years, that what began as well-intentioned  
what some see as desecration have been given more "teeth"  
arrest, prosecution and imprisonment.*

*Those caught in the act of marking on the Laveau tomb,  
within the historic New Orleans cemeteries, may be subject to*

*The markings are, understandably, frowned upon by the  
Glapiion family -- who have complained literally for years with  
authorities to put an end to the activity. Now that regulations  
been taken in response to the family's ongoing appeals, the  
seems to suddenly be singing a different tune.*

*At no time has this web site or any member of its editorial board  
endorsed the marking practice that is associated with the  
place of Voodoo Queen Marie Laveau. The goal of this web site is to  
record and preserve the colorful local legends and folkloric traditions  
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heartedly informative. This web site and our associated.*

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*supplemental "virtual tour" providing visitors with unique experiences on their schedule when they visit this City. With our many options, we appeal to many "locals in exile" who now live in other cities and enjoy "revisiting" their hometown whenever they get online.*

*Every great legend is based in fact and a responsible folklorist acknowledges this, even when the legend is more colorful than reality. It would be folly to many of the people whose stock and trade is the sake of tourism, but in the interest of true preservation, the legend forgotten and wherever possible should be provided so that the Traveler is able to better appreciate the merits of a real legend. We know when he or she is hearing just that.*

*Beginning with this page, and on other pages to come, we provide not only the legend and lore as it has been passed down through generations of Old New Orleans folk, but also the facts, the root of the legend to begin with. In this way we honor the legend, to inform and entertain but we also demonstrate a respect for the perhaps one day real-life visitors, and for the legends and lore of the City of New Orleans so beloved the world over.*

*We choose to inform rather than defend. You may be the judge of how well we have been successful.*

*Jane J. Wichers, Editorial Director*

*New Orleans, May 2005.*

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729 Bourbon Street - Marie Laveau's House of Voodoo

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