



Creole West Productions

... Living together as one race with many faces

# *Observations From a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Traveler*

## *Les Observations d'une Voyageuse du Vingt et Unième Siècle*

**JULIE ESHELMAN-LEE**

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## *Observations of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Traveler*

### *Les Observations d'une Voyageuse du Vingt et Unième Siècle*

Feeling what the great travel journalists of yore must have felt, like Gissing in Calabria, Olmsted in the American South, Tocqueville in America, or Twain on the Mississippi, I have the urge to chronicle my thoughts of my recent trip "home."

Recently returned from Louisiana, I find myself embracing an early Colorado morning as the spring season welcomes us in its typical fashion. A front moves in bringing cold weather and spring snow showers. The quiet the low clouds bring envelopes all of us, allowing space for contemplative thought. The snowflakes glisten as the sun makes an appearance through the low cloud cover above.

Colorado offers much refuge for a writer or artist working away from his or her canvas or subject. It offers the space to gather one's thoughts or images, constantly fueled by the reminder of our humility in the larger scheme of life, as the grand Rocky Mountains avail themselves outside my office window. My soul is in deep melancholy as it realizes it has been separated from its roots and sense of place. My intellect works overtime to keep that sense of place alive: my senses yearn to return and be replenished very soon.

The inner struggle of where one's soul should exist and continue life's journey becomes a daily battle for those of use situated in a place far from our foundation, our sense of place. Words alone cannot describe the experience of that true soulful connection, purely expressed by the inner joy and light from within, exuded by a unique smile.



Travels offer perspective and enlightenment for the world around me. At the same time, the experience of those travels immediately draws the heart closer and closer to the place known as “home.” Louisiana is my place, my home. More recently, my soul has discovered Pointe Coupée, discovered in the magnificent sense in finding that which already exists.

### *GARDEN OF EDEN IN THE COUNTRY...*

Pointe Coupée is situated in the country, two hours away from the hub of Louisiana – New Orleans. In the grand city of New Orleans, she welcomes us with her abundance of culture, diversity, cosmopolitan aspects and history – that history which connects the past and present, and bridges its future.

From New Orleans, the drive upriver to the “country” offers a warm sense of comfort anticipating the destination. When arriving near Baton Rouge an indescribable sense is apparent as you are reminded you are getting closer. Once crossing the Mississippi River Bridge your heart sings as each mile driven draws you nearer. All of a sudden, your stomach jumps like a child approaching the old amusement park at Lake Ponchartrain, as the sign directs the traveler to “False River.” Turning right, the final destination awaits. Quipped “My Garden of Eden” by a lifelong resident, the traveler soon knows why!

Within this Garden of Eden lay all the pieces to the paradise puzzle. The beauty of the parish is “bar none,” absolutely magical. The paved road divides the landscape, guiding the traveler through this paradise. Ancient fields welcome the visitor like a resplendent carpet fit for royalty. Centuries-old tree lines, dividing properties from the lake frontage to the Mississippi River, remind us of the vastness of the lands of our ancestors. The magnificent oak trees offer strength and solace, comfort and humility, so gently, almost imperceptibly. The bayous and canals, as they crisscross this great place, convey their elixir for all life. The glorious planter estates that once were beacons of human activity, now long dimmed by the march of war and time, today are subdivided providing the womb of home for numerous families. Many of these families are long-time residents and descendants of the founding families of the early Franco-European settlement. The profound presence of the great estates



remaining reminds us of our insignificance, at the same time, reminds us there are things, we, too, contribute to the annals of time: contributions worthy of all of our future generations.

### *PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE – FAUSSE RIVIÈRE & THE CHENAL...*

The *pièce de résistance* is False River. This oxbow lake, a natural cutoff from the mighty Mississippi River, glistens under a sunny sky and ripples on a breezy cloud-covered day. The water's edge gently meets the rich alluvial soil originally tilled centuries before by the hands of our native, African and Franco-European ancestors. A clear night sky is illuminated on the water as the rising moon reveals our ultimate place, the universe, in all its Godly and celestial grandeur.

Traveling further, in the lower end of False River, crossing the Chenal Bridge, the urge to stop immediately to absorb the beauty is overwhelming! The immediate sense of silence is absolutely melodic accompanied by the gently flowing water from the Chenal, a channel of False River. This silence, accompanied by birds conversing in the trees and the occasional flutter of the leaves from the warm gentle wind, exudes a purely peaceful and comforting aura. The overpowering sense of appreciation for all before you is beyond profound!

### *IT'S PEOPLE & CULTURE...*

Once in the community, diverse people warmly welcome you. United by many common ancestors, they offer hospitality and kindness to all. Their gentility and grace is extraordinary and so welcoming in a fast-moving world that seems to be losing itself at times. Contagiously, that kindness is easily returned and appreciated, and immediately rewarded by indelible Pointe Coupée friendships. The everlasting memory of Pointe Coupéeans is their dedication to their families, past, present and future, as they contribute and work to maintain the past for its future. Many human dramas have occurred over the centuries, and the tradition of tenacity perseveres. Out of respect for what they have, they collectively dedicate themselves to this Garden of Eden.



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First and foremost, to a true Louisianan, we can't ignore the fabulous food. In this community of 22,500 people, the quality of the food found in the public dining establishments matches and surpasses that of New Orleans, let alone the age-old culinary traditions perfected in the local home kitchens. A place where you can say to one another, "Isn't it great to be Créole!" when sharing meals, laughter and stories of our common families and the history we share.

## *COMING HOME...*

The term "country" has a newfound appreciation for me. One must witness it personally to experience the essence of this place – Pointe Coupée Parish, Louisiana – *lieu extraordinaire!*

## *Merci Beaucoup Pointe Coupée!*

Julie Eshelman-Lee  
Fort Collins, CO  
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## *ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

Julie Eshelman-Lee, a native New Orleanian, currently residing in Colorado, is a descendant of early Louisiana and Pointe Coupée founding families. She is presently dedicated to developing and authoring a Web interactive enhanced local history curriculum for the parish schools in Pointe Coupée along with other parishes in Louisiana and nationwide, so history will be told like it never has been before.