

Alumni bring New Orleans history to life

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They say history repeats itself. For the group [Louisiana History Alive](#), history recreates itself, again and again. Since 1997, LHA's group of award-winning actors has brought local history to life, embodying notable New Orleans figures from all aspects of its culture. They provide not only insight into the personal lives of some of the city's most fascinating characters, but an interactive historical experience to locals and tourists alike.



Tulane alumni Claudia Baumgarten and Chris Lane portray notable figures from the Crescent City's past as members of Louisiana History Alive, a group that educates tourists and locals on the rich cultural heritage of Louisiana. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Once in character, the actors never reveal their true identities, but two Tulane University alumni came forward for *New Wave*.

Claudia Baumgarten, who graduated from Newcomb College in 1975, owns Miss Claudia's Vintage Clothing & Costumes on Magazine Street. She portrays Margaret Gaffney Haughery, "the Bread Woman of New Orleans," a 19th-century Irish immigrant who, after losing her husband and child to disease, devoted her life to assisting orphans. Baumgarten enjoys connecting with people and clarifying truth from legend.

“History buffs,” Baumgarten says, “are delighted to meet the 'real people' they have read about.”

Chris Lane, a 1995 Tulane grad who works in film and theater, evokes the majesty of Jean Baptiste le Moyne de Bienville, the French colonial governor of Louisiana and founder of New Orleans.

Lane is not intimidated by these achievements: “I respect the tenacity and street-smarts of Bienville. At the age of 18, he traveled to Louisiana, negotiated with Indian tribes, and fought alongside his native allies. He walked the walk.” And so does Lane, who finds that the city's architecture serves as touchstones for all of the LHA company members.

On Monday (Sept. 23) from 7 until 10 p.m., LHA will present [“Manifest Destiny”](#) at the Paris Room, 720 St. Louis St. Guests can socialize with Haughery and Bienville as well as dozens of other notables like Baroness de Pontalba, Storyville madam Josie Arlington and voodoo queen Marie Laveau.

LHA also will present a New Orleans [history brunch](#) during the Tulane University Homecoming on Oct. 6.