

## [A NOLA unsung legacy](#)

November 03, 2014 11:00 AM Benton Oliver  
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Nestled between the intersection of Lafayette and Commerce streets on one side and Poydras Street on the other, the Piazza D'Italia is a cool pocket park that was commissioned by city officials as a long-overdue commemoration of contributions Italian immigrants have made to New Orleans culture. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

**NEW WAVE NOTEBOOK** ? New Orleans may be the City That Care Forgot. Unfortunately, many of its residents and visitors have also forgotten to care about some of its most precious and offbeat gems.

I'm referring to a Central Business District public square known as the Piazza D'Italia, one of the Crescent City's most neglected landmarks.

I was introduced to the Piazza in 2011, right before my freshman year started, as part of the Tulane University [NOLA Experience](#), a weeklong crash course in the sights, smells, sounds and tastes of New Orleans.

Between a meal at the Gumbo Shop and a French Quarter walking tour, our NOLA track leader led us down the Piazza's unassuming Poydras Street entrance with the promise that, "Y'all will love this!"

She was right. The centerpiece of the piazza is a highly unique and artistic, interactively designed fountain shaped like the Italian peninsula. As we waded barefoot through the fountain's terraced pools, we marveled at the piazza's beauty, personality and relative obscurity in the New Orleans landscape.

When I asked my track leader what the place was, she replied, "I don't know, but it's cool, huh?"

Completed in 1978, the Piazza D'Italia was commissioned by city officials as a long-overdue commemoration of contributions Italian immigrants have made to New Orleans and NOLA culture. The late Tulane alumnus Joe Maselli was a driving force behind its construction.

It was built in the middle of a city block with the plan to develop surrounding areas with shops and restaurants. Unfortunately the shops and restaurants were never built and the Piazza has been all but forgotten.

I've gone back many times and shown it to several friends. When you experience something special, you want to share it.

It's common knowledge that quirky culture is the lifeblood of New Orleans, but Bourbon and Frenchman Streets are just the beginning. Continue to explore and discover ? compile New Orleans memories that are all your own.

*Benton Oliver is a senior at Tulane University majoring in music, communication and German.*



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