

9 places to learn about Irish culture in New Orleans

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When Irish immigrants first arrived in New Orleans, they were fortunate to have landed in a predominately Catholic city. There was relief from the discrimination they faced in Ireland as a result of practicing Catholicism and the promise of better opportunities in North America.

“In an era when welfare did not exist, the Catholic Church provided a safety net in times of economic distress,” says Laura Kelley, an adjunct faculty member at Tulane University and author of [The Irish in New Orleans](#). “Parochial schools educated their children and administered health care.”

As Irish immigrants arrived in large numbers to New Orleans, they began building churches from which they could receive religious, emotional and educational support.

Using the list below, compiled by Kelley specifically for *The Insider*, local residents and visitors can visit a few of the landmarks that provide a glimpse into the earliest

years of Irish culture in New Orleans.

Learn more about Kelley's new book during two upcoming lectures and book signings. The first is on Thursday (March 12) at 6 p.m. at the [The Old U.S. Mint](#) followed by another on Wednesday (March 18) at 6:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Holy Cross College.

[St. Patrick's Catholic Church](#) ? Built for the growing Irish community, Irish priests served as its pastors throughout the 19th century into the 20th.

[St. Alphonsus Catholic Church](#) ? Located in the heart of the Irish Channel, this beautiful edifice is now an art and cultural center. It also serves as the starting point for a popular uptown [St. Patrick's Day parade](#).

[St. John the Baptist](#) ? The Irish religious order the Dominicans Sisters Cabra came from Ireland to teach the girls of this parish. They are still in New Orleans today.

[St. Theresa of Avila](#) and [Margaret Statue](#) ? To assuage the grief of losing her husband and infant daughter, Margaret Haughery donated her free time to an Irish-female orphanage where she spent lots of her time in its St. Theresa of Avila chapel. Today, a statue of Margaret stands in front of the chapel and was the first public monument erected to a woman in the U.S.

[St. Vincent's](#) ? Now a guest house, this building was originally an infant asylum operated by the Sisters of Charity and funded, in part, by Margaret Haughery.

[St. Elizabeth's](#) ? Now a condominium and restored to its former glory by author and Irish Channel native Anne Rice (nee O'Brien), this building served as a training grounds for girls between the ages of 12 and 17 to learn a useful trade such as sewing and domestic work.

[Gallier Hall](#) ? Completed in 1853, this building served as the City Hall of New Orleans for more than 100 years. It was designed by notable Irish-born architect James Gallier (Gallagher).

[Warehouse District](#) ? This area is a reminder that New Orleans was once a walking city. Your home, schools, church and markets were all within walking distance. At

one point this area was filled with primarily Irish immigrants.

St. Patrick's Cemeteries 1, 2 and 3 ? The cemeteries tell the story of a close-knit community with high rates of endogamous marriages and large families. Irish immigrants sometimes noted on the headstone where in Ireland they came from and military service when applicable.

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