Historical Hike

A Walk Through The History Of Downtown Lake Charles

Updated June 12, 2020
The first settlers in the present day area known as Lake Charles were Mr. and Mrs. Lebleu who came to Louisiana from France. The area where they established their settlement later became known as the Lebleu Settlement. Shortly after the Lebleu’s voyage to the new world, other pioneers followed. Among these, was Charles Sallier. He fell in love with Mr. and Mrs. Lebleu’s daughter, Catherine. They were newly weds when Charles built their house on the lake. In the late 1800’s, the area where he built his house was formally being called “Charleston” or “Charles Town” or “Charles Lake”. The name of the area was eventually changed to Lake Charles.

Early settlers in the turn of the century acquired property near the Rio Hondo lands. The Rio Hondo was the Spanish name for the river that flowed through Lake Charles. The river was called Quelqueshue by the local Atakapas Indians which meant “Crying Eagle”. The name of the river was eventually changed to Calcasieu. Lake Charles is the parish seat of the parish that is also called Calcasieu.

The growth of Imperial Calcasieu depended mainly on the river and the early pioneers of the lumber industry. The forerunners of the lumber industry for example Jacob Ryan and Daniel Goos, became famous locally due to their success in the lumber business. The logs were cut north of Lake Charles and floated down the Calcasieu River where they were milled into lumber at lumber mills in the Lake Charles area. Since the Calcasieu River had a sand bar at its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico, special ships called schooners with low drafts were designed to carry the lumber across the sand bar to the Port of Galveston and other ports along the Gulf of Mexico.

In the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, irrigation canals were dug on the flat land, called prairies, in the surrounding area to grow rice and other agricultural crops. In the 1920’s, the Calcasieu River and sand bar were dredged to allow large ships to enter the Port of Lake Charles. The combination of the dredging of the river and the discovery of oil in the Lake Charles area in the early 1900’s allowed the oil and petrochemical to be developed. The oil and chemical industry is the cornerstone of the economy of Lake Charles in Southwest Louisiana.
Dedication

This hike was developed in 2007 as an Eagle Scout Service Project by Jonathan Vogel to fulfill one of the requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout. The organization that sponsored this project was the Southwest Louisiana Historical Association. In particular, the person who provided guidance and historical information for this hike was Mr. Robert C. Benoit. He was a longtime member and served as president of the Southwest Louisiana Historical Association. The symbols around the patch to represent the industries that were influential in the development and growth of Lake Charles and Southwest Louisiana were suggested by Mr. Benoit.

Mr. Robert Coulson Benoit, 74, died Monday, July 2, 2007. He was a lifelong resident of Lake Charles. He was a graduate of LaGrange High School and received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from McNeese State University. He did post graduate work at LSU, the University of Texas and Boston University. He served with the 19th Infantry Division in Korea after the Korean War.

Mr. Benoit retired from LaGrange High School in 1987 after teaching in the Calcasieu Parish school system for 30 years. He retired again in 1995 after serving as staff writer for the Lake Charles American Press for 33 years. While at the American Press, Mr. Benoit compiled and edited the “50 Years Ago” and the “In Service” columns.

Mr. Benoit edited and authored historical books on Southwest Louisiana. He was the editor of “Images of America: Imperial Calcasieu,” a picture history of Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jeff Davis parishes published by the Southwest Louisiana Historical Association. He was the author of “Gerstner Field, Then and Now” Gerstner was a WW I airfield south of Lake Charles in Holmwood, LA. He authored “The Murder Conviction and Execution of Toni Jo Henry”. Henry was put to death Nov. 8, 1942. Mr. Robert C. Benoit was a great citizen and helped preserve the history of Lake Charles.

This hike is dedicated to Mr. Robert C. Benoit.
Lake Charles Historical Hike

General Information

Location of Public Restrooms
1. Drew Park (Hike Stop # 1 and # 8)
2. Imperial Calcasieu Museum (If the Museum is Open); (Hike Stop # 9)
3. Lock Park (Hike Stop # 11)
4. Calcasieu Parish Courthouse (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 13)
5. Old City Hall (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 12)
6. Central School Arts and Humanities Center (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 15)
7. Carnegie Library (If the Library is Open); (Hike Stop #22)
8. New City Hall (if it is during normal business hours); (Hike Stop # 24)
9. Boardwalk on North Side of Civic Center; (Before Hike Stop #30 and Hike Stop # 32)
10. Lake Charles Civic Center (Hike Stop # 33)
11. Millennium Park (Hike Stop #37)
12. Drew Park (End of Hike)
13. Calcasieu Area Council Scout Service Center (if it is during normal business hours)

There are a few restaurants along the hike (121 Artisan Bistro, Pujo Street Café, Wendy’s) that also have restrooms. There are also vending machines along the trail in front of commercial buildings.

Location of Public Water Fountains
1. Drew Park (Hike Stop # 1 and # 8)
2. Across from Hike Stop # 4
3. Imperial Calcasieu Museum (If the Museum is Open); (Hike Stop # 9)
4. Lock Park (Hike Stop # 11)
5. Calcasieu Parish Courthouse (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 13)
6. Old City Hall (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 12)
7. Central School Arts and Humanities Center (If it is open); (Hike Stop # 15)
8. Carnegie Library (If the Library is Open); (Hike Stop #22)
9. New City Hall (if it is during normal business hours); (Hike Stop # 24)
10. Boardwalk on North Side of Civic Center; (Before Hike Stop #30 and Hike Stop # 32)
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Other Information
Within about 1 mile of the end of the hike is the PPG Fountain north of the Lake Charles Civic Center. If the hikers are hot, they can cool off in the fountain. If you plan to do this, you need to pack towels in your backpack and an extra change of clothes to change into at the Public Restroom near the PPG Fountain or Drew Park.

For the hike, you can bring a sack lunch or eat along the way at one of the restaurants. If you don’t bring a lunch, you can eat at Wendy’s across from the Civic Center at the corner of Broad Street and Lakeshore Drive. This would be right after Hike Stop #29.

If you had everyone bring $10/person for the hike, you could use $4/person to order the patch after the hike. Give them $5/person to eat at Wendy’s, and have $1/person to get a cold drink from the vending machine along the hike.

An alternate to this plan is to have each Scout bring $10/person for the hike. You could use $4/person to order the patch after the hike, have $1/person for a cold drink at a vending machine along the hike, and use $5/person to purchase food to have cook-out at Drew Park at the end of the hike.

Close to the end of the hike on Shell Beach Drive, you can go left down Shell Beach Drive and turn left on Wilson Street and walk down 121 Restaurant on Dr. Michael DeBakey or go to Drew Park and walk east down Dr. Michael DeBakey to 121 after the hike.
**Hike Information**

<table>
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<td>A</td>
<td>10 mi</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>Drew Park</td>
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**Plan A**, the 10 mile hike, will start and end at Drew Park and answer all 37 Questions. You are eligible to earn the medal if you complete Plan A.

**Plan B**, the 5 mile hike, will start at Drew Park and answer question 1. From Drew Park you will walk to the BSA office to answer Question 8. From the BSA office, continue hike to answer questions 9 - 29 and 32 - 37. You can skip Stops 30 and 31 and proceed to the Boardwalk north of the Civic Center to answer Question 32. If you choose to include Stops 30 and 31, this will add 1 mile to the hike. You are eligible to earn the patch if you complete Plan A or Plan B.

**Hike Rules/Instructions**

1. Do not throw any trash or unnatural items on the ground while hiking the historical hike. Carry an extra bag to pickup trash along the hike. “A Scout is Clean”

2. Always be vigilant for traffic by looking both ways while crossing an intersection.

3. Do not vandalize any historical monument or plaque.

4. Follow the trail as shown by the hike map. Walk on the sidewalks along the road. (When you head east on Sallier Road, walk on the grass strip between the road and the railroad tracks.

5. By answering a questionnaire on the historical places visited, the hiker becomes eligible to receive a patch and/or medal for their effort.

6. Most answers to questions will either be found on plaques, historical monuments, or on buildings.

7. There is no time-limit to finish the trail.

8. Hikers are requested to wear appropriate uniforms or civilian clothing.

9. There is no overnight camping on the trail.

10. Each group will assume full responsibility and full liability for the members of its party.

11. Please cross the streets only at the designated crosswalks and with the lights.

12. Cars should not follow hikers, but should meet them at the end of the Trail or at a designated point along the trail.

13. Hikers are reminded that many of the locations to be visited are on private property.
14. Your comments and suggestions are greatly requested and appreciated. If you would be interested in taking part in more local historical hikes or helping design a historical hike, let us know!

15. Have a fun and joyous time as you walk through Lake Charles’s early years and discover its history! “A Scout is Cheerful,” Scout Me In!

Historical Hike Questionnaire
The hike begins and ends at Drew Park located on South Ryan Street.

1. Drew Park (416 South Ryan St.)

As you walk into the park, take a right. You will come to a plaque dedicated to Harrison C. Drew. As you read it, think about all he did for the surrounding area. After all, he served twelve years as a state senator. This park is also of great importance because it was the first city park in Lake Charles. If you venture into the parking lot, you will see a plaque low to the ground located toward the right side of the parking lot.

QUESTION 1. : On what date (month, day, and year) was the park donated by Mrs. Harrison after her husband’s death?

Follow the walking trail around the east side of the park. You should end up on Shell Beach Drive. To the left of the Drew Park entrance is the Walter Goos Residence. This is the next stop along the way.

2 Walter Goos House (417 Shell Beach Drive)

The house you see right now was originally called “Sunset” by the owner/builders. The owner of the house happened to be descendants of the notorious Captain Goos who settled in the surrounding area just before the start of the Civil War. There are two other “Walter Goos Houses” similar to this one in the area. The house’s main distinctive feature is its Dutch colonial roof, due to Cpt. Goos Dutch ancestry.

QUESTION 2. : Why do you think the house was originally called “Sunset”?

Turn west on Shell Beach Drive and walk on the sidewalk. Cross Lake Street And continue west to 905 Shell Beach Drive. The large white house on the west is called the Barbe Estate.

The street you are walking on now is named “Shell Beach Drive.” The Atakapas tribes once lived along the edge of Lake Charles. In the early 1830’s archeologists began examining the huge Shell Mounds that once lined the shoreline. One of the largest shell mounds, close to where you are standing now, was around 400 feet long, 15 feet high, and 60 feet high. Over 30 Atakapas Native American skeletons were excavated from that mound alone. The map below shows the approximate location of that mound.
3 Barbe Estate (930 Shell Beach Drive)

Across from the Barbe Estate is a peninsula of land with the remnants of Pleasure Pier in Calcasieu Lake. Pleasure Pier was a large multi-purposed building that was used for theatrical purposes as well as dances, roller skating, and lectures in the early 1900’s.

The large Barbe antebellum home on Shell Beach was built around the Charles Sallier cabin, the person that “Lake Charles” was named after! The Sallier cabin’s boussilage walls and wooden nails were discovered within the walls of one room in the Barbe home, about 80 years ago when the house was being renovated. If the Sallier home is used as criteria, the Barbe house is the oldest house in Lake Charles! The privateer and national hero of the Battle of New Orleans Jean Lafitte used to anchor his ship right along where you are standing now on Shell Beach Drive right in front of his friends cabin. Sallier’s daughter would even recount later that Lafitte would joke with her, she had a gigantic bag of jewels, and if she could lift the entire bag, they were her’s to keep!

**QUESTION 3. : What is the fence around the Barbe Estate made of?**

Continue west on Shell Beach Drive. You will arrive at the former Burton residence at 1301 Shell Beach.
4  Burton-Krause House, (1301 Shell Beach Drive)

This house was built in 1925 and is truly one of the great estates along Shell Beach Drive. The architectural style of this house is Greek Revival. This was the home of Lake Charles businessman and philanthropist, W. T. Burton. Burton bought the struggling Calcasieu National Bank during the Great Depression, restructured it, paid its debts and formed the Calcasieu Marine National Bank.

QUESTION 4. : Across from this house is a water fountain. What is written on the plaque next to the water fountain?

Continue walking down Shell Beach Drive to the intersection of Shell Beach Dr. and Riverside Dr.

If you look toward the right where the Calcasieu River is, you will see the western end of the old bridge that once connected Shell Beach Drive and Lake Charles with Westlake.

5  All Southern Transcontinental Highway Bridge Ramp

Ahead are the city docks of the Port of Lake Charles. Across from the Port of Lake Charles is the Bridge Point Marina. In the middle of the marina is the ramp to the first bridge across the Calcasieu River in Lake Charles built in the 1920s. The road across this bridge was originally called the “All Southern Transcontinental Highway.” The name of this road was later changed to HWY 90. This bridge was the only way across the Calcasieu River until the IH 10 bridge was completed in 1952.

QUESTION 5. : What kind of mechanical equipment was used to allow cargo ships to pass through the old Highway 90 Bridge?

Take a left onto Riverside Dr. and proceed to the intersection of Riverside Dr. and Sallier Street.

Turn left onto Sallier Street and walk to the intersection of Sallier Street and Barbe Street. (This intersection is on the north side of the road where the rail road tracks begin to go down the middle of the road.)

At the intersection of W. Sallier and Barbe Street, turn left onto Barbe Street., the first road to your right will be St. Anthony St.

Take a right onto St. Anthony St. and follow it until you end up on Lake Street. Cross Lake Street at the intersection of Dr. Michael DeBakey Drive and Lake Street. You will head north for a short distance to the intersection of Lake Street and Dr. Michael DeBakey Drive.

Turn right on Dr. Michael DeBakey Drive, and walk on the sidewalk on the left side of the road. You will come to Sallier Cemetery on your left.
6. Sallier Cemetery

The cemetery you see was built in 1844. It contains descendants of Charles Sallier, the original European settler of Lake Charles. There are numerous gravesites that are unmarked because of deterioration and the loss of head markers over time.

**QUESTION 6a:** Who is the cemetery named for?

**QUESTION 6b:** Where was this person born?

The street we are on now is named after Dr. Michael DeBakey. On September 7, 1908, Michel Dabaghi (later anglicized to Michael DeBakey) was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana. DeBakey’s parents were Lebanese Christian immigrants who fled oppression and persecution from the Ottomans. The DeBakey family lived mainly on fish they caught, and fruit and vegetables they grew themselves - a recipe for a healthy heart. As a child, Michael learned to speak French and German, played the saxophone, and loved to go to the library on a weekly basis. DeBakey was an active member of Troop 2 with the Boy Scouts here in Lake Charles. Using the skills learned in Scouting and from his mother, DeBakey expertly learned to sew, a skill that he would use later as one of history’s most renowned surgeons! A University of Tulane graduate, he came up with the idea of Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (M*A*S*H units.) He performed over 60,000 operations over 75 years in his career, operating on three presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon; as well as world leaders including Boris Yeltsin, The Duke of Windsor, King Hussein of Jordan, the Shah of Iran and stars such as Marlene Dietrich. We was awarded the Lasker Award (1963), Presidential Medal of Freedom (1969), National Medal of Science (1987), Lomonosov Gold Medal (2003), and Congressional Gold Medal (2008).

(Statue of Dr. Michael DeBakey at Lake Charles Regional Airport.)

7. St. Patrick Hospital (524 Dr Michael DeBakey Dr.)

St. Patrick Hospital was the first hospital in Lake Charles and was founded in 1908. It was known as a sanitarium back then and contained 50 beds, an operating room, and a sterilizing room. As you can see, there have been many improvements made to the hospital in the last hundred years.

Walk in front of the hospital and cross Foster Street. Take a left on Foster Street and head north on Foster Street. You should be on the right side of the road on the sidewalk. After walking for approximately 50 yards, you will see the oldest part of the hospital still in existence, the St. Patrick Convent.

**QUESTION 7:** On the right side of the entrance to the convent there is a plaque describing its founders. Who founded St. Patrick Hospital?

Retrace your steps back to Foster Street and Dr. Micheal DeBakey. Turn left on Dr. Micheal DeBakey and walk by Drew Park. Next to Drew Park is the Calcasieu Area Council Boy Scout Offices and Service Center.
8. Calcasieu Area Council Boy Scout Office
(Dr Michael DeBakey Dr.)

The Calcasieu Area Council serves the 4,500+ members of Scouting in Southwest Louisiana. The council serves the parishes of Vernon, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, and Jefferson Davis.

**QUESTION 7.: Who donated the land to the Boy Scouts of America organization?**

At the intersection of Ethel and Dr. Micheal DeBakey turn right onto Ethel St. Proceed down Ethel St. At the intersection of Ethel and 12th St. is the Imperial Calcasieu Museum.

9. Imperial Calcasieu Museum (204 West Sallier Street)

This museum contains photographs and other artifacts and memoirs of the early history of Lake Charles. It contains the steering wheel of the famed steamboat known as the **Borealis Rex**. The museum also includes an old kitchen, early 1900’s shop, a turn of the century store, and a Victorian parlor. [For a small fee, you can tour the Imperial Calcasieu Museum.]

Located in the back of the museum is a 300 year old oak. There is a marker on the ground in front of the oak tree.

**QUESTION 9a. What is the name of the oak tree?**

**QUESTION 9b. Who placed the marker?**

Retrace your steps up Ethel Street to the intersection of Ethel Street and Dr. Micheal DeBakey. Walk on the north side of Dr. Micheal DeBakey, and proceed east down Dr. Micheal DeBakey to the intersection of Ryan Street.

At the intersection of Dr. Micheal DeBakey and Ryan Street there is a school. This school was originally called the old St. Charles Academy and if you look toward the left you will see Lock Park.

10. Old St. Charles Academy (1536 Ryan St)

The school you see there is not the original school. The original school was built in 1887. The present day building built there was constructed in 1949. In the early fifties, the school provided educational services for one through eighth grade for girls and one through fourth grade for boys. Back then, it was solely run by nuns. The school now offers pre-K through 8th grade for both girls and boys.

**QUESTION 10: What is the name of the school today?**

Walk across Ryan Street to Lock Park when it is safe with the traffic lights. Proceed to the pavilion in the center of the park.
11. Lock Park
This city park is probably the smallest endowed park with its own caretaker cottage and pleasure pavilion in America. It was given to the city of Lake Charles in memory of Captain George Lock. The pavilion located at Lock Park is a copy of the garden feature at the Versailles palace in France.

QUESTION 11a.: On what date was the land given to Lake Charles?

QUESTION 11b.: What school has a memorial there?
Continue walking down Ryan St. on the sidewalk on the right side of the road until you reach Old City Hall and the Courthouse.

From 1894 to 1926, as many as four steel-rail streetcar lines served Lake Charles, providing, at one time, 24-hour transit service to residents. The longest line continued south on Ryan then turned west at Miller Avenue (now 7th St) to run along South Ryan Street ending at the Lake Street edge of what would become Shell Beach road. This was the historic South Ryan Streetcar line.

12. Old Lake Charles City Hall
This building you see is not the original City Hall. The first city hall (Seen in the picture) was built in 1903 only to be burned down seven years later. The main feature of City Hall is its four sided clock which was restored to working order as part of the 2000 renovation. Another important feature of the courthouse is its bell tower that contains an 800 pound bell.

QUESTION 12.: What year was the Old City Hall building that is standing today constructed?

Cross Ryan Street safely to reach the Courthouse on the opposite side of the road.

13. Calcasieu Parish Courthouse(1000 Ryan St.)
Like City Hall, this is not the original building. This building was also built after the Great Fire of 1910. It is an exquisite piece of architecture which includes its copper dome. This building has been the focal point of governmental, political, and judicial history throughout the history of the parish.

QUESTION 13a.: What military equipment is located on the grounds?
QUESTION 13b.: How many steps are there on the front entrance of the Courthouse?
From the Courthouse, cross Ryan Street again and head east down Kirby Street. At the intersection of Kirby Street and Bilbo Street, cross Kirby Street to reach Immaculate Conception Cathedral.

14. Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

The Cathedral was established in 1869. In 1879, the hurricane severely damaged the day chapel. The church’s bell located in the bell tower is named Mary. The organ was built in 1957 by the Wicks Organ Company.

QUESTION 14a.: When was the present-day cathedral built?
QUESTION 14b.: Located near the day chapel, is a memorial in honor of a person. Who is this person and what is he famous for?

Continue down Kirby Street where you will see the new Post Office at the intersection of Kirby and Moss. Continue down Kirby Street until you come to the beautiful Central School at the intersection of Kirby Street and Kirkman Street on your left hand side.

15. Central School (809 Kirby)

Central School was built in 1912 by noted New Orleans architects Favrot & Livaudais. Central School is now a cornerstone in the Historic Charpentier District of downtown Lake Charles. The school has been remodeled and is known as the Central School Arts and Humanities Center.

QUESTION 15.: What museum located in Central School features the largest display of Mardi Gras costumes in Louisiana?

[For a small fee, you can tour the Mardi Gras Museum located in Central School]

Continue walking on Kirby St. until you arrive at the intersection of Kirby and Louisiana Avenue. Take a left onto Louisiana Avenue for one block to Pujo Street. The Lake Charles Police Station is located to your right.

Proceed left on Pujo Street for three blocks to the intersection of Pujo and Kirkman Street. For the last half mile you have been walking in the Historic District of Lake Charles. This district is also known as the Charpentier District which you can see is written right below the street sign. Charpentier means Carpenter in French.

At the intersection of Pujo and Kirkman Street, cross Kirkman Street and take a right on Kirkman Street for one block to Broad Street.

16. First United Methodist Church.

This historic church has undergone many changes throughout its history. The present day building you see was originally built in 1928. The original chapel is still in existence today. Notice its dazzling stained glass and beautiful stone work.

QUESTION 16a.: When was the church organized in Lake Charles?
QUESTION 16b.: When was the first church built?

At the intersection of Kirkman and Broad Street, turn left on Broad Street and walk west for one block.
At the intersection of Broad Street and Ford Street is the Ramsey Mansion. This is a unique house because it shows proof of Lake Charles's colonial revival style. This style is a slightly, tapered square column.

17. Ramsey Mansion (626 Broad St.)

This was house was built in the late 1800’s by a lumber baron who had a large lumber mill in the Lake Charles area. This beautifully designed house is a true example of how the lumber industry impacted southwest Louisiana’s residents. For example, its exquisite stained-glass windows, the Juliet balcony, and the original servants’ quarters in the rear are all true signs of wealth. Also, on this house are Lake Charles style columns.

QUESTION 17a.: What year was the house built?
QUESTION 17b.: What is the house registered under?

Proceed west down Broad Street for two Blocks until you arrive at the intersection of Broad Street and Hodges Street. Cross Broad Street and head north on Hodges Street. On the northeast corner of the intersection of Hodges and Broad Street is the old US Post Office.

18. Old U.S. Post Office (Broad and Hodges)

This building you see has recently undergone an authentic renovation. This structure is yet another amazing piece of architecture. With its original tile roof and ornate bracketing under the eaves, this building has true authenticity. If you look closely under the eaves, you may notice beautifully laid flowers. These flowers are Magnolias- Louisiana’s Official State Flower.

QUESTION 18.: When was the old US Post Office building constructed?

Continue north on Hodges Street, the next building is the Masonic Lodge.

19. Masonic Temple (717 Hodges St.)

The building you see is not the original building. The original one was blown down in the Hurricane of 1918. Some distinctive features are its Corinthian caps on square pilasters and its original brass door and balcony.

QUESTION 19.: Briefly sketch the Masonic symbol depicted on the cornerstone of the building.
20. Temple Sinai (713 Hodges St.)

This structure is one of the oldest meetinghouses in the state. Its onion domes were destroyed in the Hurricane of 1918 and were never replaced. It was specifically designed as a Russian Byzantine edifice.

**QUESTION 20a. What is written above the front entrance of the church?**

**QUESTION 20b. What language is it written in?**

At Temple Sinai cross Hodges Street, and retrace your route back to the intersection of Hodges and Broad Street. Cross Broad Street and continue down Hodges Street to the intersection of Hodges and Pujo Street.

At the intersection of Hodges Street and Pujo Street is the entrance to the First Baptist Church.

21. First Baptist Church (830 Hodges St.)

On February 12, 1958, a historic moment was made when the cornerstone of the new church building on Pujo and Hodges was laid. The building architecture is modified gothic style and has a seating capacity of 700.

**QUESTION 21a. What is written above the front entrance of the church?**

**QUESTION 21b. What are the bible references?**

Continue west down Pujo Street. Next to the First Baptist Church is the Carnegie Library.

22. Carnegie Library (411 Pujo St.)

This is the Lake Charles Public Library. The library was not damaged in the Great Fire of 1910, partially due to the private water supply of the Majestic Hotel, which was then located across the street.

**QUESTION 23a. When was the first library built?**

**QUESTION 23b. Who donated the building?**

**QUESTION 23c. Who donated the land?**

Continue across Bilbo Street.
23. Majestic Hotel (corner of Bilbo and Pujo St.)
You will come to a Calcasieu Historical Society Sign

Some buildings personify the historic era in which they exist. Such was the case with the bigger and grander Majestic Hotel in Lake Charles. Built on this site 1906 on the corner of Bilbo and Pujo Street by a group of Lake Charles businessmen, the grand Majestic was a shining example of modern architecture and amenities. The $100,000 in funding was secured by the stockholders, most of whom were residents of Lake Charles. The Hotel had its own power plant, water system, and fire pump, which was used to saturate the building and protect it from the infamous fire that destroyed much of downtown Lake Charles in 1910. Every president from Teddy Roosevelt to JFK stayed here at some point in their life.

QUESTION 23a: General Omar Bradley stayed here, what other famous General who was the supreme Allied commander stayed here during WWII Louisiana Maneuvers?

QUESTION 23b: One of the Greatest Escape Artists and Magicians of all-time, super spy for Scotland Yard and the U.S. Secret Service stayed here before one of his performances, what was his name? (Hint: his first and last name starts with the same letter.)

At the intersection of Pujo and Bilbo Street is the new City Hall. There you will find a bronze plaque near a doorway facing north.

24. New City Hall (326 Pujo St.)

New City Hall building was the original Pioneer Building. Built in 1949, the Pioneer Building, became the tallest building in the city, and the “Pioneer Club” was organized. This men’s club became a mecca for dances, cocktail parties, dinner parties, and social affairs of all types.

QUESTION 24a: Which City Hall architecture do you like best: the Old City Hall or the New City Hall?

QUESTION 24b: On this sight, which future 35th President spoke at a banquet on the 10th floor, spoke about the Cold War on October 16, 1959? *HINT: He was the first President to be a Boy Scout.*
Continue down Pujo Street. As you approach the southeast corner of Ryan and Pujo, you will see a red brick building.

Before this building was built, this was a site of a Civil War Headquarters for Army Intelligence. Originally the structure was built as Gordon’s Drugstore in 1898. In 1902 they clad the building in brick, and it became one of only three brick buildings in Lake Charles. Quite unique in its day since Lake Charles was a lumber town. Although the Great Fire of 1910 destroyed most of the downtown, this building was spared thus making it one of the few surviving structures to date from before 1910. Up until the 1950’s, Gordon’s Drugstore was the place to shop and socialize. Above the drug store were doctor’s offices, which now have been converted to apartments.

QUESTION 24c.: What is the name of this restaurant?

To your right, safely cross Pujo Street, you will see a Bronze Statue.


He is no individual man, but he is every man. Tired, yet content from a long day’s work. The hard-hat, lunch-box toting bronze statue was unveiled Tuesday, January 14, 2020. Rick and Donna Richard commissioned artist and sculptor Janie Stine LaCroix to do this statue. “It’s not just capital, but muscle and sinew that helped build this city and the cities across the bridge.” -Rick Richard, Eagle Scout

QUESTION 24a. This statue was dedicated to the hard working men and women who built, operate, and maintain what specific industry in Southwest Louisiana?

Turn left and go to the intersection of Pujo Street and Ryan Street. Continue across Ryan Street. At the corner of Ryan Street and Pujo Street is Charleston Hotel.
26. Charleston Hotel

Opened in 1929, the Charleston was the first official skyscraper in Lake Charles with 10 floors! U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Designed by prolific Houston architect Joseph Finger and Livesay Williams. Finger is most noted for his art-deco buildings, but this building is traditional Beaux Arts. The lower two stories are faced with cement molded to resemble rusticated stone. The upper eight stories are faced with brick. The city’s only paper, *The Lake Charles American Press*, put out a special edition commemorating the opening of the Charleston. The formal opening was the most important social event of the year. The hotel served as the social nexus for Lake Charles during the next several decades, with weekly dances held on the open roof garden, and social events, both large and small, taking place within the walls of the hotel.

**QUESTION 26.: Draw the symbol of the Charleston Hotel located above the door.**

If you look west down Pujo, right at where Lakeshore Drive begins, that was really the edge of the lake before the 1970’s. The city then landfilled the edge of the lake and built the Civic Center complex.

**Cross Pujo Street and head north on Ryan Street.**
**Across from the Charleston Hotel and at the northwest intersection of Pujo and Ryan Street is the Old Calcasieu Marine National Bank.**

27. Old Calcasieu Marine National Bank

“Beauty, magnificence, but with it all extreme simplicity—those are the characteristics that first impress the visitor when they view the new Calcasieu Bank Building or when they first step inside.” – *Excerpt from the American Press*

The Calcasieu Marine National Bank is a three-story limestone-faced building designed in the neo-classical style. It operated as a bank until 1996, and is now a top notch, event venue.

At the top of the building is a statue of a crying eagle. After all, “Calcasieu” in the Atakapas Language means “Crying Eagle.” Also, just below the statue are four faces carved in stone. They represent a Conquistador, member of the Atakapas Tribe, Businessman, and a Pioneer. Think abut why these carvings are so important.

**QUESTION 27.: What year was the building built?**

**Continue north on Ryan Street to the intersection of Ryan Street and Broad Street. As you near the end of the Old Calcasieu Marine National Bank, on the fence there is a Calcasieu Historical Preservation Society Plaque.**
QUESTION 28.: Which two historic theaters once stood near this site?

At the intersection of the Ryan and Broad Street is the old First National Bank building.
29. First National Bank (800 Ryan St.)

**QUESTION 29.: What year was this building built?**

At the intersection of Ryan and Broad Street, turn left and continue down Broad Street until you get to the intersection of Broad Street and Lakeshore Drive. Cross Lakeshore Drive to the entrance of the road around the Lake Charles Civic Center, Bord Du Lac Drive.

If you are hiking the 5 mile hike, proceed to the pier on the boardwalk located just west of the PPG fountain to answer question 30.

If you are hiking the 10 mile hike, follow the boardwalk north for about a ¼ mile until you come to the Veterans Memorial Park. This park has a very large American Flag flying above it.

30. Veterans Memorial Park

This park was built to honor the men and women who have served the United States in the Armed Services. At the park, there is a WWII tank along with monuments for the people who died in the line of duty. There are also six individual flags representing the branches of the Armed Services that protect our country.

**QUESTION 30.: What does the fountain located on the west side of the park commemorate? How many Louisiana residents are credited with receiving this honor?**

Continue north past Veterans Memorial Park on the Boardwalk. You will arrive at Bilbo Cemetery.

31. Bilbo Cemetery

This is the oldest Cemetery in Lake Charles and once the site of Camp Atkinson, or “Cantonment Atkinson” (named after Brigadier General Henry Atkinson.) The history of the camp reaches far into the past, to the time, when the western boundaries of Colonial Louisiana were by no means well defined. Spain claimed almost to the middle of what is now Louisiana, while France claimed to the Brazos and Trinity Rivers. The was wilderness of Calcasieu Parish, claimed by both France and Spain, became a “No-Man’s-Land” inhabited by the Attakapas, Caronsheqay, Caushatta, Alabama, and Choctaw native tribes, as well as outlaws and frontiersmen. While there was no open conflict, there was constant threat of danger. Company E, of the Seventh U. S. Infantry, setup the fort here in January 1830 with Captain George Birch commanding.

This cemetery’s significance is that it contains the gravesite of Jacob Ryan, the founder of Lake Charles. Also, there is a twenty-three-foot statue of Jesus.

**QUESTION 31.: What does this statue honor?**
32. Lake Charles Boardwalk

The Lake Charles Boardwalk was built in 1997 under the leadership of Lake Charles Mayor Willie Mount. Along the Boardwalk are historical signs about the history of Lake Charles. On one of these plaques, there is information on the first European settlers.

**QUESTION 32:** *In 1802, when the first European settler arrived, who did they find?*

Follow Bord Du Lac Drive around the Civic Center.

33. Lake Charles Civic Center

This building was built in the 1970’s on 64 acres of landfill beginning in 1960’s. It plays host to various entertainments such as Mardi Gras Balls, Monster Truck rallies, the Harlem Globetrotters, at one point minor league hockey & arena football, and the Nutcracker ballet. Elvis, ZZ Top, Willie Nelson, and NBA Top 50 All-Time player David Dumars have played here.

**QUESTION 33.:** *On the sign for the Civic Center is the motto of the Port of Lake Charles. What is the motto of the Port of Lake Charles?*

Proceed to the South East Corner of the Civic Center in front of the Rose Hart Theater. There is a bronze plaque.

**QUESTION 34.:** *What is the name of this Steamboat?*

Go southwest from here towards the open air amphitheater.
In the Summer of 1996, the Olympic Flame made a stop at this amphitheater before heading to Atlanta for the XXVI Olympic Games.

Across the road from the open air amphitheater, toward the lake is the 911 Memorial.

35. 911 Memorial (Bord Du Lac Drive)

Displayed here is a slab of limestone from the Pentagon and two beams from the World Trade Center. This monument is for the clear purpose of honoring the people who died on September 11.

**QUESTION 35.:** *What were the names of the people on this monument killed from Southwest Louisiana on September 11, 2001?*
Turn left and go south. You will see a Statue of a sea captain. Head to the Captain.

This Danish Freemason captain built a steam sawmill on Prion Lake in 1869 that later became the Calcasieu Lumber Company. He was a founder of the Masonic Temple we visited earlier in the hike. He and his wife took care of injured Union and Confederate Troops

**QUESTION 36.: What is this captain’s name?** Continue around the civic center and around open air amphitheater to Millenium Park. Enter the park.

37. Millenium Park (Bord Du Lac Drive)

Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach re-opened the newly renovated the park on March 23, 2013 commemorating the amazing history of Lake Charles.

**QUESTION 37a.: The hero of the Battle of New Orleans Privateer Jean Lafitte once sailed these waters of Southwest Louisiana! Legend has it he may have buried some of his treasure along the banks of the bayou. What logo that is famous around Lake Charles decorates the Pirate Ship?**

*HINT: The I-10 Bridge started out with 10,572 of these!*

**QUESTION 37b.: Find the WWII Fighter Planes in the park, what were the nickname of the fighter squadron?**

**QUESTION 37c.: We have already located one steamboat this Hike, what is the name of the other steamer in Millennium Park?**

**QUESTION 37d.: What is the large shape decorating the center of the cement of the water park splash pad?**

Cross Lakeshore Drive at the intersection of Bord Du Lac Drive and Lakeshore Drive.
Walk on the left side of Lakeshore Drive.
At this point, Lakeshore Drive becomes Shell Beach Drive. Continue down Shell Beach Drive to entrance of Drew Park located on Shell Beach Drive.

**Proceed back to where you started at Drew Park.**

Congratulations Scout! You have successfully completed the Lake Charles Historical Hike and hopefully have learned a little history about Lake Charles. You are now eligible to receive a patch for completing the hike and a medal if you completed the 10 mile hike. At the Calcasieu Area Council Service Center, ask the staff about how you can purchase the Historical Hike Medal and Patch!
Hiking Record

Unit/Group __________________________________________________________

Date Hike Taken ____________________________________________________

Hiker Registration

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I certify that the above named persons have successfully completed the Lake Charles Historical Hike and that they have answered all of the questions pertaining to the hike.

Trail Leader Signature ____________________________________________

__________________________  4” Trail Patches @ $ 4.00 each $__________

__________________________  4” Patch Holders @ $ 1.00 each $__________

Shipping Fee

$ 5.00

Total Amount

$__________

Upon completion of the hike and the questionnaire, mail the questionnaire and the application complete with a money order to the following address:

Calcasieu Area Council
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
304 Dr. Michael DeBakey Drive
Lake Charles, Louisiana 70601

Please include the mailing address that you want the patches mailed.

If you have any questions, please call the Scout Service Center at (337) 436-3376 or email us at jacob.fontenot@scouting.org.
Hike Medal (Proposed)  
(Sponsorship Required)

Hike Patch

Thanks to CITGO Petroleum Corporation for the initial order and sponsorship of the patches