



# River Road Rambler: A Curious Traveler along Louisiana's Historic Byway

*Mary Ann Sternberg*

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The River Road between New Orleans and Baton Rouge hosts a fascinating mix of people, traditions, and stories. Author Mary Ann Sternberg has spent over two decades exploring this historic corridor, uncovering its intriguing and often-underappreciated places. In *River Road Rambler*, she presents fifteen sketches about sites along this scenic route. From familiar stops, such as the National Hansen's Disease Center Museum at Carville and the perique tobacco area of St. James Parish to lesser-known attractions such as Our Lady of Lourdes grotto in the town of Convent and the Colonial Sugars Historic District, Sternberg provides a new perspective on some of the region's most colorful places.

While many of these locales remain easily accessible to any River Road rambler, Sternberg also depicts others closed to the public, giving armchair travelers an introduction to these otherwise unreachable attractions. Throughout, Sternberg captures the ambiance of her surroundings with a clear, engaging, and personal examination of the relationships between past and present. In a poignant piece on the garden of "Valcour" Aime, for example, she delves into the history of this lavish, nationally acclaimed planter's garden, established and abandoned in the mid-nineteenth century. Her visit to the now-private and protected site, which has never been altered or replanted, uncovers an extraordinary landscape -- the relic of what Aime created, slowly overwhelmed by nature.

These sketches brim with insights and observations about everything from the fire that razed The Cottage plantation to the failed attempts to salvage the reproduction of the seventeenth-century French warship *Le Pelican* from the bottom of the Mississippi. *River Road Rambler* links us to both past and present while revealing delightful and unexpected surprises only found along this storied byway.

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