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Louisiana Anthology: Avery Island

One of the neatest and most history filled places in Louisiana is Avery Island. Avery Island, of course, is best known to be the source of Tabasco Sauce. Not only is that true, but it is so much more than that. Avery Island is one of the five salt dome islands that rise above the flat Louisiana Gulf Coast. The island formed over time when alluvial sediment covered the vast plains of salt left behind by the ancient saltwater ocean. Avery Island is a mysteriously beautiful place where the pepper fields grow, the factor hums, and where many exotic plants and animals call home.

First, I want to share a little history. The island was named after the Avery family who settled there in the 1830s. During the civil war, a mine of pure rock salt was founded in May 1862. It produced more than 22 million pounds of salt for the confederacy. Today, the Mcllhenny family and their employees work and live on the island as they have for generations. Edmond Mcllhenny joined the Avery family by marriage when he married Mary Eliza Avery some time before the civil war. In 1868 Mcllhenny founded Mcllhenny Company and began making Tabasco brand pepper sauce. In 1870, he received a patent for his formula, and that process is still used today.

Other than the hot sauce, Avery Island is a bird sanctuary of sorts, and under the Avery/ Mcllhenny family influence, it has remained a natural paradise. Edward Avery Mcllhenny founded this “bird colony”, which has become to be known as bird city, around 1895 after some plume hunters slaughtered thousands of egrets to use the feathers for their ladies’ hats. He was able to gather eight egrets and raise them himself. He then released them into the Gulf of Mexico during the fall. That next spring, the birds returned to the island with others of their species. This same migratory pattern still goes on today.

The bird sanctuary isn’t the only other the island boasts. It also is home to many exotic plant species. Edward also introduced different varieties of azaleas, Japanese Camellias, Egyptian papyrus, and other rare plants to the island. In 1942 oil was discovered on the island, and he ensured that production crews bypassed oak trees and either buried pipelines or painted them green in order to preserve the island’s natural beauty and keep it a wildlife refuge. Today, Jungle Gardens as well as Bird city can be visited by the public.

As you can see, touring the Island and seeing how Tabasco sauce is made from the ground up and shipped out to places all over is just one of the attractions for tourists visiting the island. Jungle Gardens is 170 acres and tourists can see all the many plants I mentioned earlier as well as bamboo. While you’re visiting don’t be surprised if you see alligators, deer, raccoons, or any of the other animals that live in the hills and marshes that surround the garden. So next time you visit, and take the factory tour, make sure it’s the spring time. That way you can stroll through the live oak tree path and visit the pond called bird city and see the thousands of Egrets that migrate to that very spot. Avery Island provides tourists a great place to go as well as produces a product millions around the world enjoy. The island truly is important for Louisiana and is a must see for anyone interested in a magical and beautiful place.

Works Cited Page

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