



The snake sculpture at Breaux Bridge is said to have been made in the exact shape of the Bayou Teche, which

stretches from Port Barre (St. Landry Parish) to near Morgan City (St. Mary Parish).

## ***Bayou Teche snake sculpture inspired by Chitimacha legend***

The unique granite sculpture in Breaux Bridge mirrors the course of historic Bayou Teche.

*By Trent Angers*

It is common knowledge among people who live along the Bayou Teche that “Teche” is an Indian word meaning “snake.”

The bayou twists and turns and winds its way from Port Barre to near Morgan City, passing towns like Breaux Bridge, St. Martinville, New Iberia, Jeanerette, Franklin and Patterson. The bayou has played an important part in the history of south Louisiana, and for a while was the main artery of transportation and commerce for the region.

The old, brown bayou has inspired an imaginative piece of art, which takes the form of a granite sculpture of a huge snake; the body of the snake was designed to follow the exact shape and route of the bayou as it winds its way through the Teche Country. It is said to be “geographically correct.”

It is located in the *Parc des Ponts de Pont Breaux* (Park of the Bridges of Breaux Bridge), on the bank of the bayou, just across the street from the Bayou Teche Visitor Center.

The snake was designed by USL architecture students under the direction of Architecture Department head Ed Cazayoux in 1994. Produced by Pellerin Marble and Granite (PMG) of Breaux Bridge, it was a joint project of the City of Breaux Bridge, the local Kiwanis Club and PMG. Funding came from these three sources, as well as from a grant from the Acadiana Arts Council.

On the body of the snake are stars which represent

the communities along the bayou. The snake itself, which is 20 feet long, is made of violetta granite from Saudi Arabia, while the base to which it is affixed is made of absolute black granite from South Africa.

Near the sculpture is a kiosk which tells the Chitimacha Indians’ “Legend of Bayou Teche” in both English and French. Also on the kiosk is statistical data about the bayou, including its length, the number of gallons per minute that flow through it, and the like.

Ray Pellerin, one of the owners of PMG, says he got the idea to build the sculpture while doing work at the Chitimacha-owned Cypress Bayou Casino in Charenton. (His company was doing the marble bathroom vanities, countertops and cashier cages in the casino.) The idea grew out of a conversation he had with the late tribal chairman, Ralph Darden.

“The Chitimacha cooperated fully with our project. They gave us permission to use the snake legend and they sent their people to the dedication back in 1996,” Pellerin reports.

The Chitimacha feel a certain sense of pride in the sculpture since it reflects the legend which has been a part of their culture for many generations, Pellerin explains.

He quotes Darden as having said, “This is the first time in the history of the tribe that anyone outside of the reservation has honored the tribe.” ■

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