

Local Color

The traveler to New Orleans may be startled by the local belief in Voudoun--the Negro belief which came to America by way of the Caribbean. One of the most noted practitioners of this black art, Madame Celestine LaVeau, performs an annual ritual at Bayou St. John every June 23 (St. John's Eve).

Even members of "polite society" are invited to this spectacular gathering, including reporters, prominent citizens, and the police. It is also the day that some believers claim that Madame LaVeau can raise the dead.

The multitudes assemble at night at a place called "the Wishing Spot." Here there is the sacrifice of a rooster, and the displaying and worshiping of Celestine's giant snake named Zombi. The African drums beat while dancers twirled around and around. The scene is shocking to polite society, but also irresistible. It is said that sometimes Celestine LaVeau herself will dance with a large snake wrapped around her, or holding a large redfish.

After the ceremony, locals consult with Madame LaVeau about charms for true love or curses for their enemies.

For the adventuresome traveler in Louisiana, this ceremony is not to be missed.



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