

About Lyle Saxon

A Lyle Saxon Reader: Lost Stories of the French Quarter and Buried Treasure (Cultured Oak Press, 2018) is a selection of Saxon's writings from the *Times-Picayune* between 1919 and 1923. Almost all of these stories have been out of print since their original publication, making this book the first appearance of fresh works by the author since the middle of the twentieth century.

Popularly known as the historian laureate of New Orleans, Lyle Chambers Saxon built his reputation while reporting for the *Times-Picayune* newspaper between 1918 and 1926.

Born on September 4, 1891, Saxon was raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana by his mother, Kitty, after his father abandoned them both. Saxon was a precocious and intelligent boy, and enrolled at Louisiana State University at the age of sixteen. But he left the school before graduation, and began a writing career.

Saxon worked as an itinerant journalist throughout the South and Midwest for a few years and eventually settled in New Orleans where he reported for the *Times-Picayune*. He quickly fell in love with the city and wrote passionately about its history, people and architecture.

His writings cast a national spotlight on the city's tourist industry and preservationist movement, and were credited with saving the French Quarter from the wrecking ball.

In 1926, Saxon moved to Greenwich Village in New York, believing his success as an author would be more easily realized if he lived near the heart of the publishing industry. After a few months, the Century Company publishing house hired him to report on devastating floods of the Mississippi River. The result, *Father Mississippi*, Saxon's first book, came out in 1927. It was well received and established his national reputation.

Saxon continued to publish books, and each is now a classic of Louisiana literature: *Fabulous New Orleans* (1928), *Old Louisiana* (1929) and *Lafitte the Pirate* (1930).

During the Great Depression, Saxon produced his only novel, *Children of Strangers* (1937), a book that closely examined racial barriers in rural Louisiana.

Saxon returned to his beloved city of New Orleans, but failing health eventually overcame him. He passed away on April 9, 1946, just weeks after he narrated the Krewe of Rex parade on a national radio broadcast for the first post-war Mardi Gras.