

NEW ORLEANS

# CONSTRUCTION

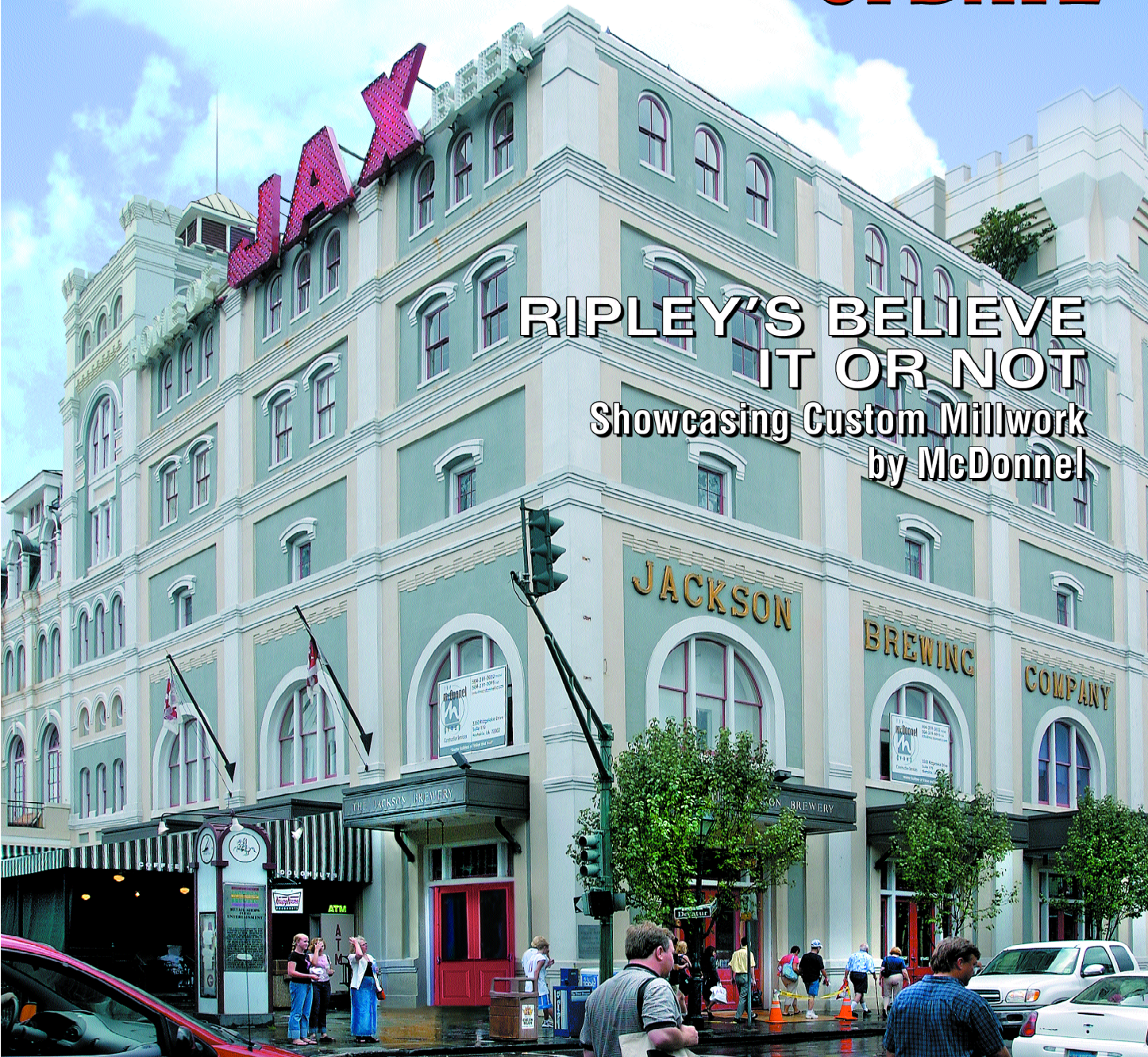
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UPDATE

**RIPLEY'S BELIEVE  
IT OR NOT**

**Showcasing Custom Millwork  
by McDonnell**



**Building New Orleans McDonnell Built On Experience**





# It's All In The Details

MCDONNEL CREATES CUSTOM MILLWORK FOR NEW RIPLEY'S MUSEUM

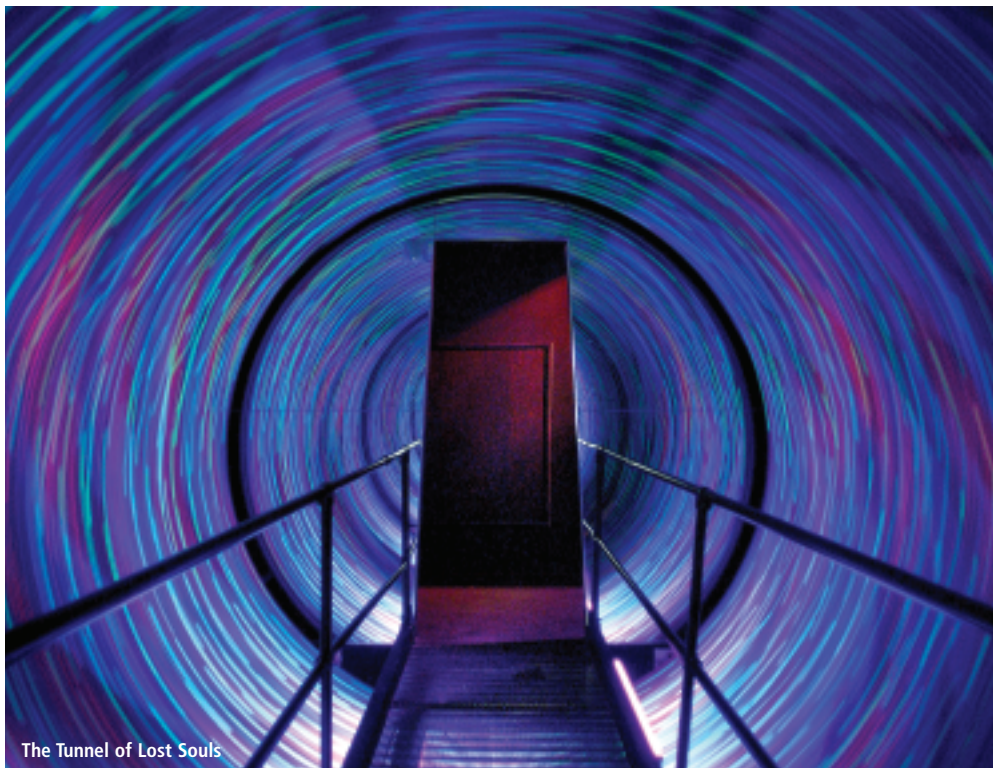


The entrance lobby features a mastodon skeleton.

Supporting structures like the cantilevers in the Greater New Orleans Bridge cannot be missed. Yet many construction elements, such as millwork, offer function without any fanfare.

Absorbed by a staggering array of exhibits, most visitors to the new Ripley's Believe It or Not at Jackson Square in the French Quarter overlook the millwork. Nevertheless, planed surfaces play a vital role at Ripley's.

"There was a great deal of custom millwork," says Troy Landry, Project Engineer with The McDonnell Group for the Ripley's project. This custom millwork can be seen from the ticket houses to the interactive exhibits to the cases for video monitors. Even a three-drawer morgue cabinet, which



The Tunnel of Lost Souls



includes a drawer with feet and a toe tag, depends on millwork.

Landry says there was so much millwork and the timeline for the Ripley's museum was so compressed, that The McDonnel Group subcontracted with Architectural Wood Products of Baton Rouge. In order to meet the time constraints, a reliable subcontractor was chosen.

The McDonnel Group was the local contractor for the conversion of the existing 11,000-square-foot space, a one-time brewery, to Ripley's. The owner of Ripley's Believe It or Not is Gumbo Development, LLC of Orlando, Florida. Gumbo hired International Theme Park Services, (ITPS) Inc., Cincinnati, Ohio as construction manager.

The Ripley's project, which was finished in mid-June, spanned only four months. Besides renovating the space, The McDonnel Group was responsible for the installation of all the exhibits.

"The task of coordinating 500 exhibits in 11,000 square feet of space" was a challenge, says Allan McDonnel, President of The McDonnel Group. Meeting the deadline called for special effort, of course. Besides that, there was the need to detail a lot of the exhibit spaces.

"It was up to us to make it work," says McDonnel. He explains that some of the effort was simple, but some required specialty fabrication.


The McDonnel Group was also involved in a bit of unusual assembly — a mastodon skeleton, which arrived in crates.

### "Kooky" Shapes

Timothy Terrell, Project Architect with Williams & Associates Architects, New Orleans, the firm that made the ITPS vision match the existing building, says The McDonnel Group demonstrated a real talent for understanding the importance of the millwork. He cites "the ability of McDonnel to execute many unusual and different designs" as significant.

"There were probably a hundred pieces of cabinetry — skewed and angular pieces, many of kooky, plastic cabinets," says Terrell.

In addition, says Terrell, The McDonnel Group had the ability "to complete the project as scheduled with all the associated trades, and millwork" that had all sorts of counterparts, including "speakers, video, and glass."

Just as the company's mission states, The McDonnel Group provides services that go beyond the mere construction of new projects. The ability to not only understand the construction process but the overall design, development, and usability of each project distinguishes The McDonnel Group from the rest. 

*Ripley's Believe It or Not is located at 620 Decatur St., New Orleans, La. (504) 586-1233, [www.ripleys.com](http://www.ripleys.com).*



Above and right: the millwork McDonnel created had all sorts of counterparts, including speakers, video, and glass.