

The home of world-famous TABASCO® Sauce, Avery Island lies about 140 miles west of New Orleans. It's one of five salt dome islands rising above the flat Louisiana Gulf coast. Geologists believe these mysterious elevations were created when a saltwater ocean covering what is now Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi evaporated—leaving behind a vast sheet of salt.

Over eons this salt layer was covered by thousands of feet of alluvial sediment, the pressure of which pushed numerous salt domes straight up. In five places these domes actually pushed up the topography. Today, these five coastal islands sit above and are surrounded by the swamps and marshes of south Louisiana. Avery Island stands the highest at 163 feet above mean sea level.

"Mr. Ned's" Legacy

Under the Avery/McIlhenny family's careful management, Avery Island has remained a natural paradise, inhabited by exotic plant and animal species from throughout the world.

The wildlife population expands each spring when thousands of snowy white egrets and other migratory water birds return to Bird City. This vast, protected rookery owes its existence to Edward Avery McIlhenny, second son of Edmund McIlhenny who invented TABASCO® Sauce.

E.A. McIlhenny, or "Mr. Ned" as he was affectionately known, founded this bird colony — later called Bird City — in 1892 after plume hunters had slaughtered egrets by the thousands to provide feathers for fashionable ladies' hats. Mr. Ned gathered up eight young egrets, raised them in captivity on the Island, and released them in the fall to migrate across the Gulf of Mexico. The following spring the birds returned to the Island with others of their species, a migration that continues today.

Mr. Ned also prized rare plants, and he enhanced the Island's natural landscape with numerous varieties of azaleas, Japanese camellias, Egyptian papyrus and other botanical treasures. When oil was discovered on the Island in 1942, he saw to it that production crews bypassed live oak trees, buried pipelines (or painted them green) and took whatever additional steps were necessary to preserve the Island's pristine beauty and ensure its continuing role as a wildlife refuge.

Today his famed Jungle Gardens with its Bird City still hosts visitors from all over the world. His many drawings and writings about the plant and animal life of Avery Island lure many researchers to the significant McIlhenny Collection at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.