

HISTORY

Named after the Lotos Club of New York City, Lotus Club of Monroe, Louisiana, is patterned after one of the oldest literary clubs in the United States. The ancient Greek spelling *Lōtos* (λωτός) is used by the New York social club. Our founders decided to adopt the common English translation, Lotus, for *Lōtos*, most likely for legal purposes; c'est la vie.

Lotos Club was founded in 1870 by a group of young writers, journalists, and critics. Lotus Club of Monroe, Louisiana, was founded in 1920 by local lawyers, doctors, dentists, and accountants. It is the second-oldest private social club in Louisiana; only the Boston Club of New Orleans is older, having been formed in 1841. The Boston Club was shut down during a brief period of martial law following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The Lotus Club holds the distinction of being the oldest club in the state to continuously operate in one location without interruption.

In 1921, Fred Hudson, a Princeton graduate and one-time member of the Lotos Club of New York City, designed the Monroe club's foyer as a replica of the Lotos Club of New York. The new foyer incorporated wood paneling and an ornate stained-glass door handcrafted by Tiffany Studios of New York gracing the front entrance to this day. The mosaic of colorful glass depicts a ship at sea with a banner that reads: "There is no joy but calm." This line, taken from "The Lotos-Eaters," penned by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, British Poet Laureate, is our club's motto. Tennyson's words describing a sailor's joy derived from a calm sea and a satisfying meal, serve as a reminder to enjoy this retreat from the busy world outside, a safe harbor filled with good food and good company.

By 1929, Lotus Club was known as one of the finest gambling clubs in the South and had a large membership. During World War II, the club opened its doors to all officers of the Selman Field Navigational Base. In 1951, house-sponsored gambling ended, but the club's fine wining and dining still drew its members up to the 9th floor of the Ouachita National Bank Building.

Steeped in tradition and slow to change, the Lotus Club was a "men-only" domain in its first sixty-plus years of existence. Women only became provisional or "widow members" upon the death of their husbands and were only allowed inside the club if accompanied by a male family member. When Ouachita National Bank, led by President Lee Vanderpool, promoted its first women to officer status, a dilemma arose. The bank had always provided its officers with membership in the Lotus Club as a benefit of employment. In 1986, at Vanderpool's urging, the club's Board of Governors voted to allow female members.

The Lotus Club welcomes new candidates for membership who are actively involved in or enjoy pursuing cultural and intellectual activities.