

From *Bienville* to *Bourbon Street* to *bounce*. 300 moments that make New Orleans unique.





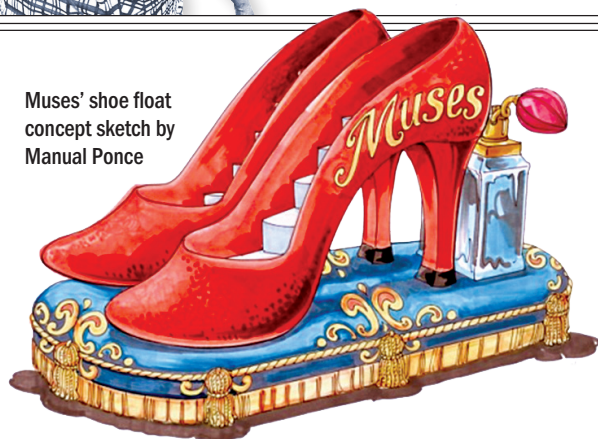


WHAT HAPPENED

The first female Mardi Gras ball was held Jan. 3, 1896.



Muses' shoe float concept sketch by Manual Ponce



The Krewe of Cleopatra, which started in 1972, parading in 1972



The Krewe of Nyx began parading in 2012.

# Muses, Cleopatra and other female Mardi Gras krewes owe much to Iris and the scores of female Carnival organizations that came before them.



A dance card for the 1900 Les Mysterieuses ball.



Arthemise Baldwin, the first queen of Les Mysterieuses, the first female Carnival ball

Today, Iris is the oldest female Mardi Gras krewe — it celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2017. But the very first female Carnival ball was held on Jan. 3, 1896, by Les Mysterieuses at the French Opera House. Other groups, including Pan, Les Marionettes, Aparomest, Noblads and Eurydice, followed with their own balls. It wasn't until 1941 that the Krewe of Venus, in floats rented from Babylon, held its own parade. In its Carnival bulletin, Venus explains the rationale for parading, saying the female clubs that hold balls "are products of a new, a more assertive generation. Perhaps it is a rebellion, a cry from the wilderness... In the last 20 years there has been an increasing number of female organizations. All bent on doing a little summoning themselves. The Venus parade is a natural offspring of this fervent desire for expression." Venus disbanded in 1992.

Iris started parading in 1959, and while 19 female parading clubs have formed and dissolved since 1959, only Iris remained, says Mardi Gras expert Arthur Hardy. "You wouldn't have a Muses without Iris," Hardy says.



Venus, parading here in 1963, stopped parading in 1992.



Francois Azelle 'Pat' Brown, queen of Iris in 1928



Janet Davis DellaCroce, queen of Iris in 2017.