

NEW ORLEANS

300
1718 - 2018

TRICENTENNIAL

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



WHAT HAPPENED

Gatherings of slaves were restricted to Congo Square in 1817.



An 1891 photo of a woman in Congo Square.

Congo Square is viewed today as an important historical and even spiritual spot where the foundations of jazz were laid.

But for the slaves that lived in antebellum Louisiana, Congo Square was a lifeline to their past, their people and their freedom. After the Code Noir became law in 1724, slaves had Sundays off and many met at a grassy area back of town, in Place Publique, also known as Place des Nègres.

In 1817, slave gatherings were restricted by law to the site, also known as Congo Square. There, slaves spoke and sang in their own languages and danced African and West Indies dances from their homes, including the Bamboula, a syncopated dance performed to the rhythm of the drums. Hundreds, if not thousands, gathered in circles to dance and sing, led by drums and other instruments. Place Congo was also where slaves could hire themselves out for work on Sundays, hoping to earn money to buy their freedom. Free people of color also sold goods in the market held there.

Officials, concerned about the threat of revolt, shut down the square before the Civil War. The area was officially renamed Beaugard Square in 1893 in honor of Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, but was still commonly referred to as Congo Square. The area was incorporated into Louis Armstrong Park in the 1960s and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.



'Spirit of Congo Square', a sculptural relief by Nigerian-born artist Adéwálé Adénílé, located at the edge of the square.



Congo Square is still used as a place for performances. Here, Liethis Hechavarria of the La Mora & Oyu Oro Experimental Dance Ensemble from Santiago, Cuba, performs during the 17th annual Maafa Commemoration in 2017.



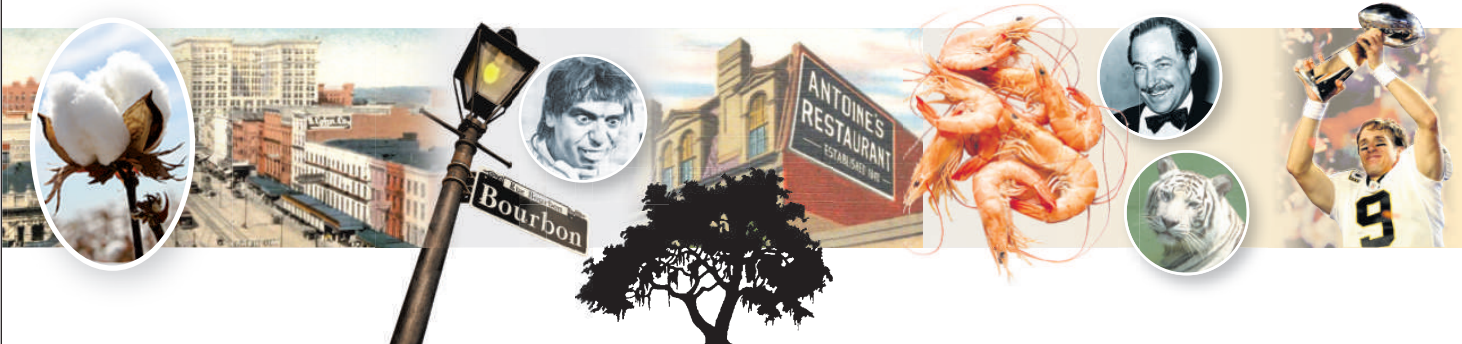
To Be Continued Brass Band performs at 10th Annual 2017 Congo Square Festival. Brennan Adams, 3, (above) of the To Be Continued Brass Band.

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Etienne de Bore produced 100,000 pounds of granulated sugar in 1795, setting off a sugar rush in the territory.



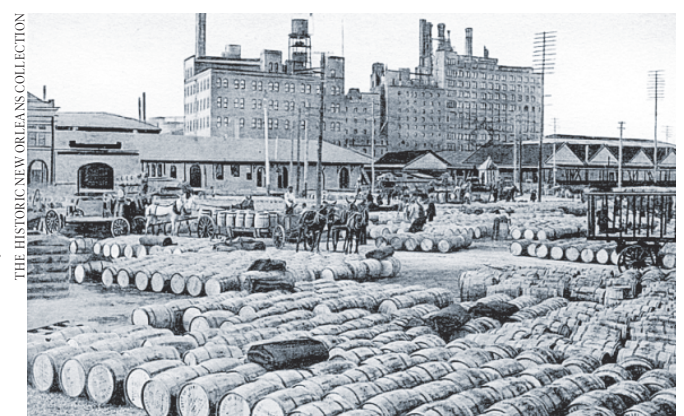
Hand-cutting sugar cane in the fields in 1887.

Louisiana's ample rainfall and sun make it ideal for growing **sugar cane**.

Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville successfully grew cane in his New Orleans garden and Jesuit priests grew sugar cane in large quantities on their plantation in what is now the Central Business District. But sugar cane didn't take off until Étienne de Boré hired two Haitian sugarmakers at his plantation, located at the present-day Audubon Park. With their help, Boré produced the first granulated sugar in the colony. In 1795, Boré's plantation produced 100,000 pounds of sugar. Other plantation owners followed suit. Within two years, about 550,000 pounds of sugar were being shipped from New Orleans, and by 1801, there were 75 sugar mills in the state.

Louisiana pioneered new techniques that helped make sugar production more efficient. Sugar production grew by more than 150-fold between 1823 and 1854, benefiting from slave labor. The U.S. Department of Agriculture located an experiment station in Kenner, which in 1891 was moved to Audubon Park. The Audubon Sugar School was opened, offering a two-year curriculum. The school was soon incorporated into a program at Louisiana State University.

Though it has been in decline because of competition from sugar beets and cheaper cane from Brazil and elsewhere, sugar producers in the state still produce about 13 million tons and generate an overall economic value of about \$3 billion each year.



A photo from a souvenir booklet depicting a sugar refinery around New Orleans in 1908.



A view of the railroad yard at Godchaux Sugar Mill in Reserve in about 1935.



Students of the Audubon Sugar School, located in present-day Audubon Park, taking a break from work and eating sugar cane in 1902.