

# It's too bad New Orleans isn't celebrating its 600th anniversary this year,

because it would



have been easier to construct our list of the moments that make our city unique.

Today, we wrap up our 300 moments, which stretched from Bienville to bounce.

There have been heroes (LIKE DREW BREES) and villains (LIKE LEE HARVEY OSWALD).

There have been real estate bargains (LIKE THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE) and blunders (LIKE THE 1984 WORLD'S FAIR). There have been days we'll always remember (LIKE THE PAPAL VISIT) and times we would rather forget (LIKE THE DUKE-EDWARDS RUNOFF).

There was so much to tell, we wish we could have done 300 more.

When he founded New Orleans in 1718, Bienville believed he had discovered a location for his new city that would not be vulnerable to hurricanes. That was a little too optimistic, and it's a small miracle that New Orleans has lasted this long.

Maybe there are doubters who don't believe the city will still be around in 2318, or that there won't be a daily newspaper around to chronicle the celebration. But people have been betting against New Orleans for 300 years now. And they haven't been right yet!



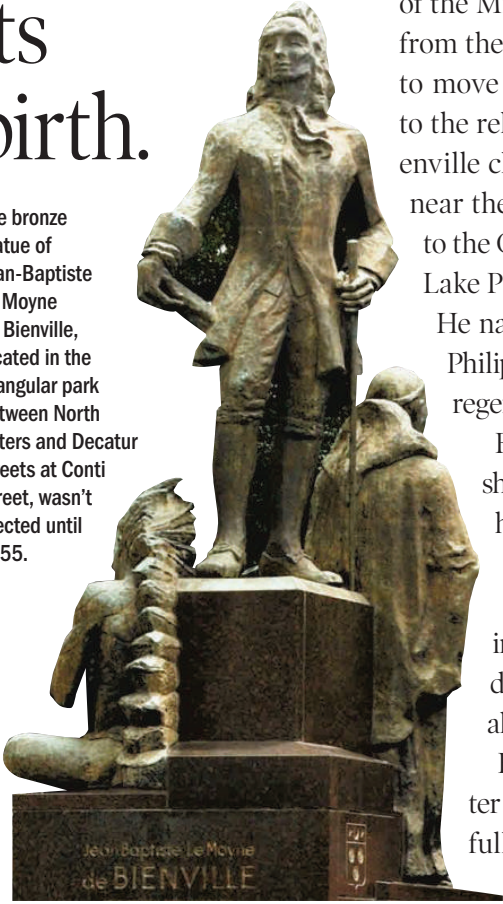
From *Bienville* to *Bourbon Street* to *bounce*. 300 moments that make New Orleans unique.



**WHAT HAPPENED**  
The city was founded May 7, 1718 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville.

# 1718 is the year New Orleans celebrates its birth.

The bronze statue of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville, located in the triangular park between North Peters and Decatur streets at Conti Street, wasn't erected until 1955.



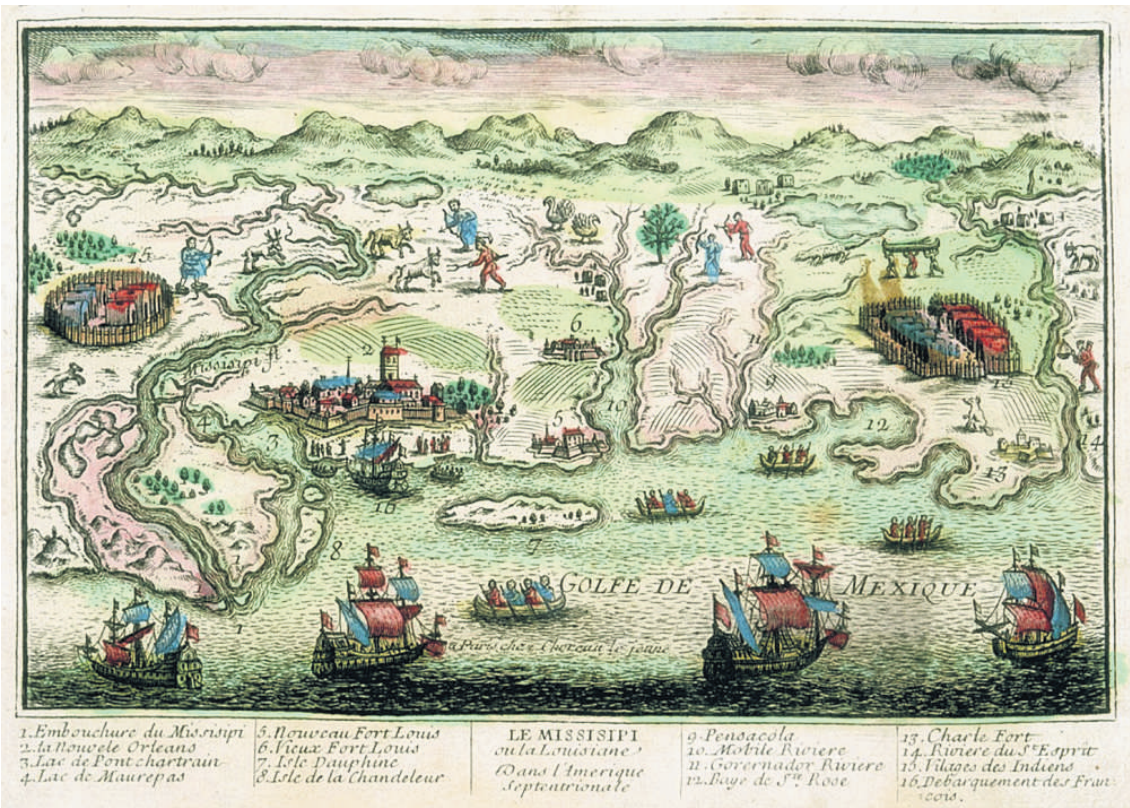
But the date could have been earlier — perhaps in 1699 when Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville reportedly first laid eyes on what he described as “the most beautiful crescent in all of the Mississippi River Valley.” Its founding could be tied to the first dated archaeological evidence in 400 A.D. of the Chitimacha Indians who lived in the area. Or it could be said the city wasn't established until 1723, when it became the capital of the colony.

But it is 1718, when Bienville, then governor of Louisiana, founded the city on the banks of the Mississippi after receiving permission from the Company of the West. He intended to move the colony's capital, then in Biloxi, to the relatively high ground on the river. Bienville chose the spot because of its location near the mouth of the river and easy access to the Gulf of Mexico via Bayou St. John and Lake Pontchartrain.

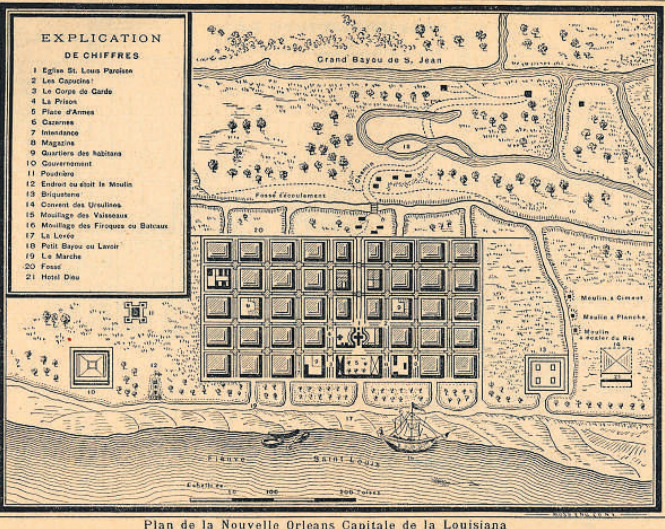
He named the city Nouvelle Orleans after Philippe II, Duke of Orleans, who reigned as regent for Louis XV at the time.

Frequent storms, flooding and disease showed it wasn't perhaps the best place for humans to inhabit. Priest Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix described it in 1721 as “a place of a hundred wretched hovels in a malarious wet thicket of willows and dwarf palmettos, infested by serpents and alligators.”

But like New Orleanians who came after and steadfastly remain, Bienville willfully insisted that the bend in the river was the best spot in the colony.



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A stylized map from about 1720 by François Chereau shows New Orleans likely much bigger than it was at the time, and on the wrong side of Lake Pontchartrain.

The original Plan de la Nouvelle Orleans, which remains in place today, was drafted by Le Blond de la Tour in 1722.