



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



WHAT HAPPENED

Louisiana voodoo has existed since the early 1700s.

Brought to a strange country and enslaved, many African-Americans held onto what they knew — including **the rituals, amulets, songs and beliefs of voodoo.**



An 1887 illustration from a newspaper depicts a voodoo ritual dance.



A cross made of wet salt on the floor is a charm, or 'gris-gris' meaning trouble.



A vintage voodoo doll.

Frank Schneider's portrait of Marie Laveau, based on a lost 1835 painting by George Catlin.



The slaves, including the Fon people from what is now Benin, as well as from other regions, danced, sang and played music to connect with the voodoo spirits — sometimes at Congo Square and more often outside of town. Gris-gris, an object with magical or supernatural powers, was and is used to charm or hex people in voodoo practice.

Until slave trade was ended in 1808, the newly enslaved helped keep voodoo in its more original form. But as the original slaves died, the language and the traditions did too, and French words and local practices took hold. French became the language of Louisiana voodoo, and the names of Catholic saints were used in place of the names of forgotten voodoo spirits. Voodoo's main spirit, Legba, is often represented by St. Peter.

Powerful voodoo kings and queens, including Marie Laveau and Doctor John in the late 1800s, are still revered today by those who practice voodoo.

As Voodoo became popularized, with movies like "The White Zombie," the practice receded from public site.



An illustration of a voodoo priestess from 1886



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On April 9, 1682, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, Robert de LaSalle claimed Louisiana for the French.

Robert de La Salle claimed Louisiana, and the entire river basin, for **France** in 1682.



A 'Marie Antoinette' and her companion during the Krewe of Barkus.



The original plan for the city of New Orleans named streets after French royalty.



New Orleans even has its own French pastry shop.

Seventeen years later, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville rediscovered the mouth of the river and dubbed the spot Pointe du Mardi Gras — establishing early the Catholic roots of the territory. The territory was named after France's King Louis to attract more French people to the region, and the streets of Nouvelle Orleans were named after French royalty. From the beginning, France's Catholicism and laissez faire attitude set New Orleans apart from New England cities being settled by Protestant puritans. Even a century later, the first American governor of the Louisiana territory, William C.C. Claiborne, called the French Creoles of the city "uninformed, indolent, luxurious."

By the time Spain took over the Louisiana territory in 1762, the French customs and language were firmly entrenched, and 40 years of Spanish rule did little to change that. Schools were taught in French, business was conducted in French, and residents followed French cultural traditions. The French influence was also present outside of New Orleans with the Acadians who moved to the territory from Canada in the mid-18th century. After the United States purchased Louisiana in 1803, France's influence was gradually diminished, but never erased. There are still some 500,000 people in Louisiana who speak French.



An illustration of Cavalier Robert de La Salle taking possession of Louisiana and the Mississippi River on April 9, 1682.



New Orleans' flag echoes the French flag in its colors and its fleur-de-lis.



France erected the statue of Joan of Arc in 1972 as a gift to New Orleans. Joan of Arc defended the city of Orléans during the Hundred Years War. The original is in Paris.