

Letter from the president

Welcome to the Mobile Area Convention & Visitor's Bureau Web Site. Although Mobile is one of the first port cities in America and steeped in three centuries of history, new sights and experiences are awaiting around every corner.

Mobile's inviting climate and ideal geographic location allow visitors to enjoy a wide spectrum of activities. We offer nearby white-sandy beaches, great golf venues, historic homes and museums from our South's rich heritage and attractions for the entire family.

We hope that when you do visit, you will discover in Mobile, "Southern Hospitality" is not just a word, it's a way of life.

Sincerely
Leon Maisel
President/ CEO
Mobile Area CVB

History

Diversity Influences Mobile's History.

Mobile has always prospered because of its strategic location. A deep bay and harbor area offered a perfect shipping port. The barrier islands of Gulf Shores and Dauphin Island were ideal for military strategists. There they built strong forts to assure that only welcome guests ventured into the bay. Today these many historic forts offer visitors a glimpse into the past.

The international trade sustained by Mobile throughout her 300-year history has provided even the earliest settlers with the finer things from Europe, England, the Mediterranean, and the Orient. Mobile's five historic house-museums, which are open to the public year-round and display artifacts native to this land, and treasures brought from far away.

Grand houses and public buildings, each with its own distinctive charm reflect the builders' and owners' taste and heritage. Festivals and the observance of religious holidays were not forgotten by early settlers; thus, from its founding in 1702, Mobile has celebrated Christmas, "Boef Gras" (now called Mardi Gras), Lent, Easter and more.

A.D. 1500-1516

According to some authorities the northern Gulf Coast was discovered and explored on different occasions by Spanish

navigators during these years. There is no unequivocal evidence, however, of the discovery of Mobile Bay. Local Indians may have nevertheless begun receiving European goods through coastal aboriginal trade with south Florida.

1516

Diego Miruelo sails along a portion of the northern Gulf Coast, from Florida possibly as far westward as Mobile Bay.

1519

Alonso Alvarez de Pineda, with four ships, sails from Jamaica to explore the northern Gulf Coast. Among his discoveries are the River and Bay of Espiritu Santo, without much question identifiable as Mobile River and Mobile Bay. Pineda remains forty days in a large Indian village at the mouth of the river, trading with the natives while repairing his ships.

1528

Panfilo de Narvaez, in a fleet of makeshift boats, coasts by the mouth of Mobile Bay with the remnants of his colonial expedition. In that vicinity he contacts, trades with, and fights the local Indians, who are mainly fishermen. Cabeza de Vaca, a member of the expedition, mentions seeing numerous dugout canoes used by the Indians in navigating the rivers, bays, and sounds.

1540

Francisco Maldonado, in command of several brigantines, arrives at the bay of Ochuse in relief of the expedition of Hernando de Soto. Ochuse was more probably Pensacola Bay than Mobile Bay, but the latter was perhaps also visited on this occasion.

1558

In advance of the colonial expedition of Tristan de Luna, Guido de las Bazares explores the northern Gulf Coast. He reports favorably of "Bahia Filipina", which was probably Mobile Bay.

1559

The expedition of Tristan de Luna arrives at Bahia Filipina (Mobile Bay) but rejects the place as a suitable base of operations. Going thence to Ochuse (Pensacola Bay), a hurricane destroys his convoy. The expedition is then conveyed to Nanipacna on the Alabama River. The route taken is apparently through Mobile Bay, ascending the Tensaw River.

1560

After an unsuccessful year in the interior, the expedition of Luna encamps on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay before departing for Ochuse.

1685-1693

In response to the threat of French presence on the Gulf Coast, the Spanish, based in northern Florida, commission reconnaissances which result in the re-discovery and exploration of Pensacola Bay and Mobile Bay.

1699-1701

The French colony of Louisiana is established. The main settlement is first at Biloxi, later moved to 27-Mile Bluff on the Mobile River. The French explore Dauphin Island, Mobile Bay, and the Mobile River Delta, establishing friendly relations with the native inhabitants.

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1701-1711

Mobile at 27-Mile Bluff is the capital of French Louisiana. The principal harbor is established in Pelican Bay on the south side of Dauphin Island. Mobile experiences periodic famine because of the erratic arrival of supply ships. Deer hides are exported in small quantities.

1711

The Mobile settlement is moved to Choctaw Point at the head of Mobile Bay.

1712-1717

Mobile commerce is monopolized by a private merchant, Antoine Crozat.

1717

A major hurricane obstructs the main channel to the Pelican Bay harbor, henceforth preventing its use by large ships.

1717-1731

Mobile commerce is expanded under the trade monopoly of John Law's "Company of the West". Supplies to the colony become more dependable, slaves and colonists are imported, and agriculture is encouraged. Exports include pitch, tar, lumber, tobacco, rice, corn, beans, indigo, and cotton. The capital of Louisiana is transferred from Mobile to New Biloxi in 1720, thence to New Orleans in 1722, reducing Mobile's influence and importance.

1731-1763

Mobile commerce reverts to the control of the French crown.

Mobile suffers a decline as a political and trade center.

1763-1780

Mobile is transferred to British dominion at the Treaty of Paris. Mobile harbor is reopened to seagoing trade, employing the anchorage in the lower Bay. Major exports include indigo, hides, timber, lumber, naval stores, cattle, corn, tallow, bear's oil, rice, tobacco, myrtle wax, salted wild beef, salted fish, pecans, sassafras, and oranges. Trade is now largely in the hands of private businesses.

1780

Bernardo de Galvez besieges and captures Mobile. Four ships of his Spanish convoy are lost on Mobile Bar.

1781-1813

Foreign commerce languishes under mercantilist Spanish government. The Indian trade is reorganized, with trade concessions granted to private firms.

1781

A British squadron enters Mobile Bay to assist in an attack on the Spanish "Village" on the eastern shore. The ships did not participate, instead attacking Dauphin Island.

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1814

Mobile is captured by the American General Wilkinson.

1814-1815

Fort Bowyer at Mobile Point is defended by American forces in two British naval and infantry attacks. During the first battle the H.M.S. HERMES is sunk off Mobile Point. Fort Bowyer is surrendered to the British following the second attack.

1815-1861

Mobile enjoys a half-century of prosperity as the second largest international seaport on the Gulf Coast. Progress is based upon the ascendancy of cotton as an export commodity, shipped downriver by flatboat or steamboat from cotton growing centers in Mississippi and Alabama. Sawed lumber also increases in importance. Federal funds are expended in improving the Bay approach to Mobile by dredging. The port's deep anchorage continues to be the lower part of Mobile Bay, with lightering services between the city and the "lower fleet" anchorage. The number of wharves at the city increases to more than forty. The

Mobile and Ohio railroad is completed.

1861-1865

The city, fortified by the Confederates, is blockaded during the Civil War by Farragut's "West Gulf Blockading Squadron". The Battle of Mobile Bay, fought in August 1864, results in the loss of four ships, and several more are sunk by Confederate mines in the following months.

1865-1875

Reconstruction witnesses lagging commerce and the physical degradation of the harbor. The City of Mobile acquires title to a segment of riverfront and begins to set wharf charges. The Mobile Board of Trade is organized. The Alabama Legislature establishes a commission for the improvement of Mobile Harbor. A Federal survey of the Bay is undertaken, and Civil War obstructions are removed.

1876-1934

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in a series of dredging projects, creates, deepens, and widens a 32 foot ship channel from the Mobile Bar entrance to the city. The opening of the channel greatly stimulates seagoing trade to the city. Grant's Pass is opened, allowing steamships access between Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound. Oystering and fishing fleets flourish at Bon Secour Bay and Heron Bay, the vessels largely constructed at Bay area boatyards. Major hurricanes occur in 1906 and 1916, resulting in substantial losses in merchant shipping.

1936

The Intracoastal Waterway channels between Oyster Bay and Bon Secour Bay, and through Pass Aux Herons, are opened to coastal merchant traffic.

Mobile Bay

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And so they set out for the great town, Tuskaloosa draped over a European horse with his long legs dragging the ground. They crossed the river at Piachi and Monday, October 18, 1540, St. Luke's Day, the curious caravan came to the ancient town of Mobila, somewhere near the Bay of Mobile.

Mobila was strongly fortified, surrounded by great walls and situated on a beautiful plain. Inside the walls were large, wooden cabins full of concealed Indians. Once inside the walls, Tuskaloosa retired to one of the buildings while DeSoto and his small band of men were left in the piazza to wonder as the army encamped outside of town.

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Gallegos advanced toward the cabin and DeSoto noticed the Indians standing guard over the entrance to the city. Gallegos was stopped at the door but then forced his way into the cabin. Another of DeSoto's officers, Luis de Moscoso, walked to the entrance of the cabin when Gallegos did not return. The tension was beginning to mount as Moscoso cried out, "Senor Gallegos, come out immediately for we can wait for you no longer!"

Presently, Gallegos returned. On the outside he was challenged by one of Tuskaloosa's sons, a tall, brazen savage. Gallegos drew his sword and disabled the arm of the savage with one fell swoop. The fateful blow had been struck! Surrounded from all sides, the Spaniards leaped for their horses and fought their way toward the gate. One of the Christians fell dead, an arrow piercing his spine. But DeSoto and the rest of his men bore down on the savages at the gate, slashing them with their long swords and trampling them with their horses. DeSoto took an arrow in his posterior, but the savages, terrified of the horses, abandoned the gate and the Spaniards escaped. Stragglers back to the Spanish camp, DeSoto now had to make a momentous decision. Should he take up his tents and press on to the Gulf or should he return to Mobila to give the wily savages a taste of Christian fortitude?

It took only a moment to decide. No Spaniard of Don Quixote's era would place wisdom above honor. Least of all, the great Castilian Hernando DeSoto. Back to the walls of Mobila rode the six hundred, their banners of the Lord waving in the wind. But the Mobilians were ready for them. They opened the gates and charged the horsemen, seeking to entice the Spaniards to enter the city. Now it was the Spaniards' turn to be cunning. Retreating just enough to lure the Mobilians into the open, they turned on their pursuers and slaughtered them like cattle. Then, taking the care, the full force of the Castilians charged past the main gate and into the heart of the city. Immediately they were attacked from all sides by more savages than they thought existed and a terrible hand to hand combat ensued. The savages, men, women, and children, attacked the Spaniards with spears, hatchets and rocks. And from the roof tops came flocks of fire-tipped arrows

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Two decades after DeSoto, another Spaniard set his sights on Mobile Bay. Don Tristan De Luna landed somewhere near the bay

with 1,500 colonists in 1559. After settling his colony on the coast,

De Luna sent an expedition of two hundred men to explore the interior. After a journey of forty leagues, they came to the Alabama River and founded a town called Nanipicana that the Indians told them had been burned by white men years earlier.

Once in Nanipicana, De Luna moved all the remaining colonists from the port to that village. When spring came, a scarcity of food forced De Luna to send a party to the Indian village of Coosa. After three months the party returned to Nanipicana and found in a pot buried under a tree a message saying that De Luna had abandoned Nanipicana for lack of food and resources. He had returned to the coast in the spring of 1561 and there the colonists disbanded and returned to Spain. Tristan de Luna had discovered first-hand what his other Spanish brethren had found before him, that the wilderness of Mobile Bay was a prize as elusive as it was beautiful.

In 1679, a French frigate was attacked and captured by Spanish warships on the Gulf of Mexico. Louis XIV, the grand Monarch of France, immediately ordered three ships to be built to protect French commerce. Informed by his commander in the West Indies of the vulnerability of Havana and Cartagena, King Louis' ambitions took on a new twist. If he could capture these cities, the remaining Spanish Colonies in the Gulf area would be forced to surrender to France, the ultimate result being the conquest of New Spain.

And so Robert de la Salle was sent down the Mississippi to find a port suitable for harboring ships. But La Salle had other ideas. He wanted to found a colony. After his initial adventure down the great river, La Salle hood winked the King into financing a new expedition to establish a fort on the Gulf. He was able to gain Louis' support by convincing him that the Rio Grande, where the King's eyes were set, and the Mississippi were one and the same river! But La Salle's dream was ended with his murder in 1687, after a fiasco which he, himself, promoted by a long chain of deceptions. Ten years later, the Peace of Ryswick ended the war of the Augsburg League. Spanish fears were thus aroused when it was realized that this treaty now gave Louis XIV some pretext for renewing his designs on the Gulf. Quickly, the Spanish ordered the Viceroy of Mexico to occupy Pensacola Bay. Almost as quickly, the French sent out an expedition under command of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville.

The race for the Gulf was on!

The news had long been out that the best harbor in all the world was Pensacola Bay, a deep, natural port where it was supposed a great river emptied into the Gulf. Accordingly, Iberville set his sights on Pensacola and after a stormy voyage across the Atlantic dropped his anchors in the outer harbor on January 26, 1699. To his dismay Iberville found himself staring at a Spanish flag waving arrogantly over a puny little fort. However, seeing

that no great river flowed into that bay, he pulled his anchors and sailed further west. After excursions on Dauphin and Horn Islands, he anchored his big vessels at Ship Island and switched to long boats and canoes in search of a suitable harbor. Rediscovering the Mississippi River, he ascended it for some distance but never found a site to build. He finally decided on the eastern shore of the Bay of Biloxi where he established Fort Maurepas, the first capital of the Louisiana Territory.

Fort Maurepas served as the capital for two years until Iberville could find a spot for a permanent colony. In the meantime, he sent Monsieur Sauvole, his second in command, and his brother, the young Bienville, on scouting expeditions to determine the most strategic location. Bienville found a site on the great river where New Orleans now stands but it was thought to be too marshy. He searched up and down the coast but the site he finally settled on was a long, high expanse of land on the Mobile River known today as Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff. It was a pleasing site, no doubt, and one which commanded a long view of the river in both directions. Back from the steep bluff was a rich, flat plain, ideal for cultivating, and a small creek that emptied into the river. Five leagues up-river lived the Mobile Indians, a pitiful remnant whose ancestors had almost been destroyed by DeSoto. They had been known to the French for some time. Ever since the first contact with the French, the Indians had been seeking to bring the colony to the Mobile River. For selfish reasons, they needed the colonists for protection against the encroachments of rival tribes such as the Creeks and the Alabamas. And they loved the trinkets that the French lavishly bestowed on them. But the Mobile Indians had something to offer the French. They could show them how to till the soil, how to make their way in the wilderness and more importantly they could aid the French in their plans to trade with the Indians of the interior. In the battle with England for control of North America, commerce with the Indians was to be the prized bone of contention. And the area where the competition would broil most heatedly was the valley of the Alabama Tombigbee River that emptied into the Mobile. Here the English and the French trader would vie for the good favor of the American savage.

It was a battle that Iberville could foresee with poignant clarity. What more strategic move could be made, then, than to found a colony near the mouth of this coveted river basin? Already, he had secured the port at Dauphin Island. Now that Sauvole and Bienville had given their recommendations, it only remained for Iberville to give the command and the axes would begin to chop.

Laying ill with fever at Pensacola, Iberville made his decision. He dispatched two vessels to Fort Maurepas, a ketch with supplies for the new fort and a launch with eighty workers. Two weeks later, on January 12, 1702, the ketch returned from Maurepas along with a traversier reporting that Bienville had arrived at Dauphin Island with forty men. A few months before, Sauvole had died at Maurepas and Bienville advanced to commandant. Now Iberville ordered his brother to commence operations and Bienville put his carpenters to work. They cleared the land in a matter of

days and began construction of the houses and buildings. Meanwhile, Iberville recovered from his fever and landed at Dauphin Island where he supervised the building of that port. For the next few weeks he was busy directing the transfer of supplies from Maurepas to the new site. Then Iberville arrived at the site himself, where he spent the month of March 1702, in directing the building of the fort. During that month, the fort called Fort Louis de la Louisiane was virtually completed and Iberville, on the last day of March, departed for France, relinquishing personal command of that vast enterprise in the new world that he had begun at Fort Maurepas. Now Fort Louis of the Mobile was the capital of the Louisiana Territory and was to remain such for the next eight years until the transfer down-river to the edge of Mobile Bay in 1710. The man Iberville left in charge was his twenty-two-year-old brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville.

Early Explorers

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Legend has it that Prince Madoc of Wales drifted into Mobile bay in 1170. He then sailed back to Wales and returned the following year with ten shiploads of colonists. After a year or so of living on the Gulf Coast, the colony moved North to Sand Island on the Ohio River. Some historians believe that his first Gulf Coast settlement was here at Mobile.

A few centuries later in 1497, Amerigo Vespucci was thought to have mapped Mobile Bay. If not true, somebody else must have charted it for the bay shows up very clearly on the Waldmueller Map of 1507.

In 1510, Alonzo Alvarez de Pineda coasted past Dauphin Island and up the Mobile River. Ascending the river six leagues, Pineda say Indian villages right and left. He was kindly received by savages and after trading a trinket or two, came back down the river to the present site of Mobile and stayed for forty days.

Not until 1528 were the sands of Dauphin Island disturbed again by European invasion. In that year Pandilo de Narvaez and his small fleet hit the Florida coast. Narvaez sighted an Indian village near Pensacola Bay. The savages attacked Narvaez and drove him toward the Bay of Mobile where, three days later, he was again confronted by Indians. At this point, Narvaez was running short of water. A Christian Greek named Doroteo Theodore and a Negro waded ashore and went to the Indians for something to drink. But they never came back and Narvaez sailed to the West where he was lost at the sea near Galveston Island.

Twelve years later Hernando de Soto learned upon arriving in the vicinity that Teodoro and his African companion had been killed at the Indian village of Piachi. As proof of this, DeSoto was shown the dagger that the Greek had brought with him.

In late August of 1540, the DeSoto expedition was resting at the village of Talisi when it received an invitation from Tuskaloosa, chief of the Mobile Indians, to visit him in the nearby town of Athahatchi. A short time later the Spaniards arrived to accept the invitation. Tuskaloosa received his visitors with all of the pomp and arrogance of a European king. He was seated in a wooden chair with several attendants surrounding him. One of them was fanning him with a large, fly fan made of palmetto. His head was covered with a magnificent headdress. But what had the Spaniards gaping was the tremendous size of the American king. He appeared to be a giant, and his limbs and face were in proportion to the height of his body. He wore a look of severity which well revealed his ferocity and grandeur of spirit.

When DeSoto charged into the plaza where Tuskaloosa sat, he had dismounted his horse and haughtily stepped up to face him. But Tuskaloosa eyed the Spaniard with some aloofness. He made no movement to rise. Then DeSoto, in a daring gesture, grabbed Tuskaloosa by the hand and they went together to seat themselves on a bench that was in the piazza. "Our men demand women for companionship," DeSoto told Tuskaloosa, "and servants for carrying burdens."

Tuskaloosa replied that he was not accustomed to serving others but rather that it was for others to serve him. But seeing himself surrounded by armed soldiers, Tuskaloosa suggested that DeSoto accompany him to the chief village of Mobila where all these requests would be supplied.

And so they set out for the great town, Tuskaloosa draped over a European horse with his long legs dragging the ground. They crossed the river at Piachi and Monday, October 18, 1540, St. Luke's Day, the curious caravan came to the ancient town of Mobila, somewhere near the Bay of Mobile.

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Fort Louis de la Louisiana

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In 1679, a French frigate was attacked and captured by Spanish warships on the Gulf of Mexico. Louis XIV, the grand Monarch of France, immediately ordered three ships to be built to protect French commerce. Informed by his commander in the West Indies of the vulnerability of Havana and Cartegena, King Louis' ambitions took on a new twist. If he could capture these cities, the remaining Spanish Colonies in the Gulf area would be forced to surrender to France, the ultimate result being the conquest of New Spain.

And so Robert de la Salle was sent down the Mississippi to find a port suitable for harboring ships. But La Salle had other ideas. He wanted to found a colony. After his initial adventure down the great river, La Salle hoodwinked the King into financing a new expedition to establish a fort on the Gulf. He was able to gain Louis' support by convincing him that the Rio Grande, where the King's eyes were set, and the Mississippi were one and the same river! But La Salle's dream was ended with his murder in 1687, after a fiasco which he, himself, promoted by a long chain of deceptions.

Ten years later, the Peace of Ryswick ended the war of the Augsburg League. Spanish fears were thus aroused when it was realized that this treaty now gave Louis XIV some pretext for renewing his designs on the Gulf. Quickly, the Spanish ordered the Viceroy of Mexico to occupy Pensacola Bay. Almost as quickly, the French sent out an expedition under command of Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville. The race for the Gulf was on!

The news had long been out that the best harbor in all the world was Pensacola Bay, a deep, natural port where it was supposed a great river emptied into the Gulf. Accordingly, Iberville set his sights on Pensacola and after a stormy voyage across the Atlantic dropped his anchors in the outer harbor on January 26, 1699. To his dismay Iberville found himself staring at a Spanish

flag waving arrogantly over a puny little fort. However, seeing that no great river flowed into that bay, he pulled his anchors and sailed further west. After excursions on Dauphin and Horn Islands, he anchored his big vessels at Ship Island and switched to long boats and canoes in search of a suitable harbor. Rediscovering the Mississippi River, he ascended it for some distance but never found a site to build. He finally decided on the eastern shore of the Bay of Biloxi where he established Fort Maurepas, the first capital of the Louisiana Territory.

Fort Maurepas served as the capital for two years until Iberville could find a spot for a permanent colony. In the meantime, he sent Monsieur Sauvole, his second in command, and his brother, the young Bienville, on scouting expeditions to determine the most strategic location. Bienville found a site on the great river where New Orleans now stands but it was thought to be too marshy. He searched up and down the coast but the site he finally settled on was a long, high expanse of land on the Mobile River known today as Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff. It was a pleasing site, no doubt, and one which commanded a long view of the river in both directions. Back from the steep bluff was a rich, flat plain, ideal for cultivating, and a small creek that emptied into the river. Five leagues up-river lived the Mobile Indians, a pitiful remnant whose ancestors had almost been destroyed by DeSoto. They had been known to the French for some time. Ever since the first contact with the French, the Indians had been seeking to bring the colony to the Mobile River. For selfish reasons, they needed the colonists for protection against the encroachments of rival tribes such as the Creeks and the Alabamas. And they loved the trinkets that the French lavishly bestowed on them.

But the Mobile Indians had something to offer the French. They could show them how to till the soil, how to make their way in the wilderness and more importantly they could aid the French in their plans to trade with the Indians of the interior. In the battle with England for control of North America, commerce with the Indians was to be the prized bone of contention. And the area where the competition would broil most heatedly was the valley of the Alabama-Tombigbee River that emptied into the Mobile. Here the English and the French trader would vie for the good favor of the American savage.

It was a battle that Iberville could foresee with poignant clarity. What more strategic move could be made, then, than to found a colony near the mouth of this coveted river basin? Already, he had secured the port at Dauphin Island. Now that Sauvole and Bienville had given their recommendations, it only remained for Iberville to give the command and the axes would begin to chop.

Laying ill with fever at Pensacola, Iberville made his decision. He dispatched two vessels to Fort Maurepas, a ketch with supplies for the new fort and a launch with eighty workers. Two weeks later, on January 12, 1702, the ketch returned from Maurepas along with a traversier reporting that Bienville had arrived at Dauphin Island with forty men. A few months before, Sauvole had died at Maurepas and Bienville advanced to commandant. Now Iberville ordered his brother to commence operations and Bienville put his carpenters to work. They cleared the land in a matter of days and began construction of the houses and buildings.

Meanwhile, Iberville recovered from his fever and landed at Dauphin Island where he supervised the building of that port. For the next few weeks he was busy directing the transfer of supplies from Maurepas to the new site. Then Iberville arrived at the site himself, where he spent the month of March 1702, in directing the building of the fort. During that month, the fort called Fort Louis de la Louisiane was virtually completed and Iberville, on the last day of March, departed for France, relinquishing personal command of that vast enterprise in the new world that he had begun at Fort Maurepas. Now Fort Louis of the Mobile was the capital of the Louisiana Territory and was to remain such for the next eight years until the transfer down-river to the edge of Mobile Bay in 1710. The man Iberville left in charge was his twenty-two-year-old brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville.

British Colonial Mobile

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The tide had turned too far, however, for France to save her mismanaged colony. The English captured Quebec, then blockaded Mobile Bay. In a secret treaty in 1762, France ceded Louisiana to Spain but the English, with a firm grip on Mobile, refused to give up that port. The next year, a doddering octogenarian named Bienville made a valiant effort to save Mobile from the English, but his cries fell on deaf ears as the French Government signed the Treaty of Paris by which Mobile was organized as a part of British West Florida. The commandant of Mobile, Pierre De Ville, delivered his city to an English major named Robert Farmer. A new era was dawning for the port city.

Major Farmer was a mere lad of twenty-eight when he waved the Union Jack over Mobile. He took one

look at Fort Conde and decided it needed overhauling. The glass windows were gone, the grounds grown up in weeds and the gun platforms had fallen down. After the major had repaired the Fort, he insulted the French inhabitants by changing its name to Fort Charlotte in honor of the young queen of George III. To add injury to insult he then held the first Protestant Church service inside the walls and nailed a proclamation to the main gate giving the French residents of Mobile three months in which to take the oath of allegiance to the English king.

Needless to say, Major Farmer was not an object of affection among the Creoles. Some of them went to New Orleans to escape him but most of them retired to homes on the bay and the river. They extracted a promise from Farmer that no private property would be confiscated, which was fine with the Major until he discovered that his own house was on a private tract. Furious but true to his word, Major Farmer was forced to rent a house until he could buy some land across the bay from the savages. He built a house on an Indian mound and lived out his life on that plantation near modern-day Stockton.

Major Farmer took a short leave of absence from his Mobile post and ascended the Mississippi River. He had a bit more success on that river and it wasn't long before he had taken possession of the whole Northwest. When he came back to Mobile, he found that he had Indian trouble. It seems that the Indians didn't care for the British. "The Englishmen were stingy and discriminating," the Indians claimed. Besides, they didn't have a sense of humor like the Frenchmen.

The Mobile Indians had turned up their noses at the new faces and went to Louisiana the same year that the English had taken possession. When several other tribes followed suit, Farmer decided that his trading business was in serious trouble. Reluctantly, he called upon a Frenchman. Chevalier Montaut de Monberaut was Commander at Fort Toulouse when the French surrendered Louisiana but unlike other French officials, he remained in British territory. Governor Johnstone at Pensacola requested that Farmer find an Indian agent and Monberaut was called upon to undertake the difficult task of reconciling the Indians and the British.

Being a Catholic, it was impossible for Monberaut to be employed, according to British law. Farmer suggested that Monberaut change his religion but the Frenchman only attempted to convert Farmer. It was finally decided that Monberaut should be only an advisor with unusual powers. After taking the King's oath, Monberaut warned his employers of the expense of seducing Indians, after which the Frenchman fixed up a large house in Mobile and made it a veritable casino. He entertained the Indians as if they had been the crowned heads of Europe. There was

feasting, wine and revelry every day at Monberaut's. Even John Stuart, the Governor's Indian agent, occasionally dropped in to witness the fanfare. Stuart had a bad case of the gout but, when he got his belly full of wine, he often-times danced all night. Monberaut once commented that Stuart behaved as if he had been bitten by a tarantula.

After the Indians had thus been feted and wined, Monberaut and Major Farmer called for a great Indian Congress. The Creeks and the Choctaws descended on Mobile in great numbers. Chieftains, squaws and papooses bulged the city's population to twice its size. Since the Creeks and the Choctaws were not on such friendly terms not many Mobilians were surprised when a band of Choctaw braves went on the warpath and chased three hundred Creeks down the main streets of Mobile and all the way into the river. At the end of Government Street, the Choctaws suddenly came to a screeching halt. The townsfolk soon perceived the reason. The Choctaws were great land-lubbers but they couldn't swim.

Despite the occasional outbreak of violence, the Congress was a success. The English gave up guns and the Indians gave up land. When the conference was over, Governor Johnstone was overjoyed until he discovered that Monberaut and Farmer had bled his finances dry in the process. The Governor gave Monberaut three days to get out of Mobile and Major Farmer was court-martialed. Monberaut went to New Orleans where he became known as "The Count," but the Major was made to suffer the indecencies of a trial. He was charged with embezzling ten thousand pounds, selling Fort Tombecbe to a charlatan, and stealing the king's flour. For some reason, Major Farmer was acquitted. But then he quit Mobile and went to live across the Bay for the rest of his life.

After Farmer and Monberaut left Mobile, the English had little trouble from the Indians. But they didn't have much cooperation, either. Especially in matters of the Protestant denomination. When the Anglican Reverend Hart came from Charleston to win the Indians over to the faith of the King, he found a vexing barrier between himself and his prey.

"Where does this God Almighty live?" asked an old Indian chief to whom the Reverend was pleading his case. "And is he a friend of Brother George?"

The Clergyman was in the midst of a windy explanation when the old Indian broke in on his discourse. "Beloved friend," said the chief, "I will always admire this friend of yours, God Almighty, of whom you speak so well. Let us drink to his health."

The Reverend shook his head and wondered how the Catholic Clergyman had ever gotten through to these amazing people. The English managed to hold on to Mobile for awhile but between the Indians and the uncooperative Creoles, their enthusiasm was diminishing. William Bartram, the British naturalist, came canoeing into Mobile in 1777 and a few years before, Bernard Romans made

a sashay through Mobile. Both of these distinguished visitors found the colony to be in fairly good shape but their ears were not so keen. Had they been attuned to the times they could have heard the rumblings of revolt in Virginia and the murmurings of intrigue in New Orleans.

The American colonies were revolting! The shot heard 'round the world made a big noise in the East but it bounced off the walls of Fort Charlotte with a flat thud. Mobilians' sympathies went out to the colonists but surrounded by English bayonets, there was little else they could offer. They watched helplessly as agents from Virginia, trying to sneak into the city to circulate the Declaration of Independence, were captured and thrown into the dungeons.

Spanish Besiege Mobile

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Young Bernardo de Galvez, the Spanish Governor of Louisiana, was not so timid. Sensing his opportunity, he made a dash up the Mississippi and seized Baton Rouge from the English. The next year, he landed his ships on the shores of Mobile Bay and was soon knocking at the doors of Fort Charlotte. At the arrival of Galvez, the entire city of Mobile, Creoles and Britons alike, rushed inside the fort and waited for Galvez to make his move.

It wasn't long in coming. Ever the unpredictable one, Bernardo sent an envoy on a drinking expedition. Waving a flag of truce, Colonel Bolyny, was received into the fort with cordiality. He immediately proposed a toast to George III, and Captain Durnford, the English Commandant, issued a toast to the Spanish King. They then proposed a toast to one another which they quickly acted upon, then a toast to all Spaniards and each Creole and every Englishman. When all had thus been properly toasted and the two leaders had attained a spritely mood the Spanish Envoy politely suggested to Durnford that he surrender. The English Commandant politely refused and after another toast, the Spanish Envoy returned to Galvez and the guns began to roar. Surely, the gallant touch still had its place, even in the midst of the clashing of empires.

On the first day of siege Captain Durnford called his men together, read Galvez's demand to them, and announced that if any soldier wished to surrender, he could freely walk out the gates and hand over his sword. None did, of course, and the

captain read aloud his message of refusal to surrender. The garrison responded with rousing shouts of defiance and bravely the English braced themselves to withstand the siege. After thirteen days of bombardment, Captain Durnford looked at the huge holes in Fort Charlotte's walls and decided it was an unlucky day. His stickmen struck up the drums, his ropeman pulled up a pale flag and the small garrison of red coats marched out the front door and stacked their arms. Galvez had taken Mobile. For the next thirty years the port city would be Spanish.

Across Mobile Bay, a Pensacola expedition had been on the way to rescue Captain Durnford. But hearing of the Captain's surrender, the rescue party fled to Pensacola, and Galvez, in order to prevent the return of the English built a fort that still stands and has since ever been known as the Old Spanish Fort.

The Era of the American Revolution

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Under the rule of Spain, Mobile took on a new look. All the new buildings constructed were clearly recognizable as Spanish in design. Blocks of low, wide-spreading houses began to appear over the city, replacing many of the old Creole and English edifices that, in time, crumbled to earth.

And the Spaniards felt a curious urge to change the names of streets, which confused the citizens as well as the mailman. St. Charles became San Emanuel and Conti became San Pedro. St. Michael became San Iago and Dauphin Street was changed to San Juan. The Spanish apparently intended to give the whole town to the Saints! It wasn't until thirty years later when the Americans came that it was turned over to the Presidents.

The Catholic Church was reestablished as the official church of Mobile. In fact, it was the only one tolerated. Protestants were told to get out of town or keep it to themselves. Spanish became the official language but most Mobilians went right on speaking "La Langue Francais." The Negroes fared a little better under the Spaniards. They were still bought and sold but were often allowed to work out their freedom and some free Negroes even owned their own slaves. One military company was composed entirely of mulattoes and free blacks. Its commander, P. J. Lusser, was a soldier of such merit that his widow, a free Negro, was eventually presented with a fine home near Fort Charlotte.

The end of the Revolutionary War brought a confusion of boundary lines between the

claims of England, Spain and the United States. The disputed territory was inhabited and controlled by the Creek Indians and none of the three nations had enough soldiers to seriously occupy the lands. The result was a war of diplomacy between the disputants and the man whose favor was being courted was the chief of the Creek Nation-a cunning half-breed named Alexander McGillivray.

The Pre-Civil War Years

Spain's power was beginning to wane and she hastily concluded a treaty with the Americans which recognized the old line of 31° as the northern boundary of her lands in Florida. A Yankee engineer named Andrew Ellicott was sent to survey the boundary line. Using smoke to signal his assistants, he made his way through the dense forests north of Mobile and left a stone that is still the basis of surveying in South Alabama.

But now France was back in the picture, casting greedy glances at her lost territories in the new world. After exhausting Spain in the European Wars, Napoleon now demanded the return of La Lousiane and Spain was forced to hand it over. Would Mobile once again be French?

Not quite. The United States claimed Mobile was not a part of the Louisiana territory granted to Spain by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Therefore, what had not been given could not be returned. Spain readily agreed and with the backing of the United States held on to Mobile. Napoleon was in the midst of a vigorous protest when a revolution in Santo Domingo forced him to sell all of Louisiana to Thomas Jefferson. Now the tables were turned. The United States desperately wanted to add Mobile to her collection, but to now claim that Mobile was a part of the Louisiana acquisition would be just a little too much, even for the most spurious of logicians. Nevertheless, American expansionists had their lunchhooks set and even optimistic Spaniards must have sensed the inevitable.

As the dawn of Spanish Mobile began to settle over the bay, three shadowy figures were inching their way toward the port city. From New Orleans, General James Wilkinson was setting the sails of his warships. From Natchez on the Mississippi, Aaron Burr was launching a grander scheme of conquest. And from the North, an unknown English judge was approaching the city.

The Civil War Years

Behind the lines of defense, Mobilians spent most of the war years gay and confident. General Joseph E. Johnston had said Mobile was " the best fortified city in the Confederacy." And even the Yankees had to agree. Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan at the mouth of the bay guarded entrance to the harbor. No Union ship would dare to pass those fearsome portals. But the Yankees set up a blockade out in the Gulf. If they could not get in, at least they would keep Southern ships from getting out. Over the next few years, the blockade tightened. Admiral Davy Farragut who was reared just outside Mobile captured New Orleans in 1862, then set up headquarters on Ship Island while he brooded over a plan to capture the city.

Meanwhile, Jefferson Davis came to Mobile. He looked over the defenses, made a speech and went to Richmond. Then he sent down a famous old war horse to take charge of the defense of Mobile. Admiral Franklin Buchanan had won fame as the commander of the Merrimac. After his battle with the Monitor, Buchanan came to Mobile and teamed up with General Dabney Maury to lay plans for the defense. Tough, experienced, and fiery, Buchanan had been chosen by Davis not only for his naval skill but because he had an intimate knowledge of the ways and methods of the cunning Admiral Farragut, having been a former classmate of his. As the war dragged on, Buchanan and Farragut eyed one another across the Gulf waters.

During the stalemate, Sherman marched his army to Meridian from Memphis. From Meridian he was planning to attack Selma and then move down the river to invade Mobile. But his plans were thwarted by Nathan Bedford Forrest. Instead, Sherman turned toward Atlanta and began his famous march to the sea.

Across the bay General Grant had sent the survivors of the Vicksburg campaign. Under a flag of truce they were being cared for at the Grand Hotel at Point Clear. Grant's wounded were oblivious to a new contraption being built on the other side of the bay. Its designers were calling it a " submarine" but Buchanan was dubious of its value. The first one constructed sank but the second one blew up a coal barge in the Mobile River before it went to the bottom. Buchanan's interest was aroused but Mobile Bay was too shallow to put the underwater boat to any good use. The Admiral sent the contraption to Beauregard at Charleston where it sank the Housatonic. Mobilians were unaware that a new weapon had been invented under their very noses. They were still dancing and dining at Madame Le Vert's home when the most powerful iron clad ever built was towed down the Alabama River and into Dog River. The Tennessee had been built at Selma the year before. When the finishing touches were added, she steamed out across the bay, followed by three impotent wooden gunboats,

the Selma, the Morgan and the Gaines. With these vessels, Admiral Buchanan went forth to defend Mobile Bay.

Looking through his binoculars, Admiral Farragut caught sight of the Tennessee. He had made up his mind to attack but when he saw the Tennessee, he held back. The magnificent ironclad appeared to be too formidable an opponent for Farragut's wooden fleet. Quickly, he asked Lincoln for some ironclads, but the President was a long time replying.

While Farragut was waiting, an uneasy quiet settled over the city of Mobile. The ill wind bore increasingly bad tidings. Belle Boyd, staying at the Battle House, heard of the death of Stonewall Jackson. Then news came that Jeb Stuart had been shot off his horse at Yellow Tavern. Sherman had captured Atlanta and was burning his way to the sea. Lee was nearly surrounded at Richmond. But most depressing of all, news came that the great Mobilian, Admiral Raphael Semmes, had finally been trapped in the English Channel and the Alabama had been sunk. Could it really be so? The Alabama sunk? That most feared of all ships of the Confederacy, that ghostly galleon which had captured over seventy ships on the seven seas? Mobilians could hardly believe it. Some had half-way expected one morning, when the ring was closing in and Mobile was at her darkest hour, to look out over the horizon and see the banner of the savior ship sailing in at forty knots to rescue the lost city. As long as the Alabama sailed, there was hope. But now she lay at the bottom of the English Channel and a wave of gloom passed over the residents of Mobile as they somberly sipped at their coffee and nibbled at their grits.

They were rudely awakened on the morning of August 5, 1864. The big bell of the cathedral electrified the city! With quick, strong strokes the great gong sounded the alarm. The other bells over the city quickly followed suit and soon a nightmare of clangor brought the residents out of their homes and into the streets. They rushed to the edge of the bay, realizing full well that the long anticipated moment had arrived. Admiral Farragut had attacked!

Over the bay waters, the sounds of cannons rumbled across the waves. At the mouth of the bay, eighteen ships in a line, two by two, were moving straight forward, running the gauntlet between Forts Gaines and Morgan. Only one stood out-The Tecumseh. Alone, unprotected, she had fired the first shot of the battle. Now, within range of the big guns of Fort Morgan, her captain spied the Tennessee waiting patiently for her to break through the narrow channel. The Tecumseh moved forward, her crewmen anxious to be the first to attack the Tennessee. But as the monitor Tecumseh was nearly past the fort, a terrific explosion was heard. From Fort Morgan, the Confederates could see the

rear end of the Tecumseh sticking up in the air with the propeller spinning furiously. A mine had exploded, sending huge clouds of smoke into the sky. But had the mine only camouflaged the catastrophe? Was it the guns of Fort Morgan or those of the Tennessee which hurled the death blow?

The men on the deck of the Brooklyn let out a mighty roar. The cheering soon spread to the Chickasaw and the Metacomet. The Yankees thought that the Tecumseh had sunk the Tennessee! When the smoke had cleared it was believed that the Confederate torpedoes had sunk the Tecumseh and the word was urgently delivered to Admiral Davy Farragut. The whole bay was laden with mines. Would it not be suicide to send defenseless ships against an invisible enemy?

Davy Farragut stood on the deck of the Hartford, looking straight ahead. Nearing sixty years of age, he was at the high water mark of a great career. Thus far, he had made a brilliant record in the service of his country. He had captured New Orleans and Biloxi and had been instrumental in the capture of Vicksburg. His reputation was secure. But if he blundered now, his record might be permanently blemished. He might be forever remembered as the buffoon who sent the greatest naval fleet ever assembled to a needless death. Now he must make a decision and he must do it quickly.

Looking ahead, Farragut saw the Brooklyn backtracking, her engines reversed. In a moment, the Brooklyn would ram the Hartford and the whole fleet would be hopelessly entangled, sitting ducks before the mighty guns of Fort Morgan. Quickly, Farragut signaled the Brooklyn. "Why are you backing?" he demanded.

"Torpedoes in the channel," the Brooklyn signaled back.

"Damn the torpedoes! Go ahead!" he ordered. It was too late to back up now. There would either be a great victory or a disaster. The Brooklyn again reversed her engines and the procession continued up the channel, past the fort, into the bay. As each pair of ships entered the bay, Admiral Buchanan on the Tennessee tried to ram them two at a time. They were too fast but the guns of the Tennessee damaged ship after ship as they entered the bay waters. As each ship cleared, she began the pursuit of the three Confederate gunboats. The Gaines was run aground, the Morgan fled to Mobile and the Selma surrendered. There was nothing left now but the Tennessee.

The Tennessee, outnumbered seventeen to one, was still a formidable opponent. Buchanan, thinking he was unsinkable,

began a furious assault on each ship. He was successfully ramming one after another. Then his eye fell upon the Hartford. He would destroy the Hartford and Farragut with it, if nothing else. Straight forward in the direction of the Hartford, Buchanan pushed the Tennessee.

Apparently, Admiral Farragut had the same idea. With the battle at a stalemate, he would send his Hartford against the mighty Tennessee. If he could gather enough steam, perhaps he could run over the Tennessee and if he sunk himself, he would, at least, take the Tennessee down with him. Deliberately, the two captains steered their ships to a head-on collision as the great naval battle was coming to a climax.

Just when the two ships were upon each other, the Tennessee veered away and the Hartford bounced off her side and into an untenable position. The Tennessee let loose a volley of shell which tore through the Hartford's deck, killing and wounding a dozen men. The Hartford was then knocked into the path of the oncoming Lackawanna and a collision resulted in the Hartford's side being crushed. Farragut, thinking he was on the verge of sinking, rushed to the deck just in time to see the Lackawanna begin another charge at the Tennessee. Frantically, he ordered his signalman to wave the Lackawanna aside but the signalman became so excited he whopped Farragut over the head with a flagstaff.

By the time Farragut recovered, the Chickasaw had rammed the Tennessee, knocking over her smoke stack and stripping away her steering apparatus. After two hours of battling the deadliest armada ever assembled, Admiral Buchanan, with his leg broken and his ship hopelessly adrift on the bay, hoisted the white flag. The Battle of Mobile Bay was over.

The next day, Fort Gaines surrendered and two weeks later Fort Morgan gave up. But the city of Mobile held out for nine more months. Admiral Farragut, unable to move his ships in close enough to bombard the city, finally evacuated the bay and returned to Washington to become the first full admiral in the annals of the United States Navy. Admiral Buchanan was taken prisoner and sent to Pensacola while his comrades in Mobile barricaded the city and stacked all the cotton bales in Bienville Square. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox but Mobile still fought on. Then Blakely fell and the Confederates abandoned Mobile in hopes of joining Nathan Bedford Forrest at Citronelle. When Union troops waded ashore, the Mayor of Mobile hopped on a carriage and rolled down the bay road to surrender the city to General Canby, waving a little white flag in the wind. Mobile, the last major city in the Confederacy had at last fallen. A month later, news of Appomattox reached Forrest and he surrendered the last remnants of that once magnificent Confederate Army.

Famous Mobilians to come: