

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Mousquetaires and Mouseketeers

For those readers that are old enough to remember, local children's programming in New Orleans brings back fond memories. Some loved to watch "Popeye and Pals" on WWL-TV, hosted by WWL Radio's "Dawnbusters" veteran Henry Dupré. Others tuned in to WDSU where Captain Sam (Sam Page) invited young landlubbers aboard his boat (safely moored in the studio before a beautiful bayou backdrop). The 50s and 60s had much to offer, considering the scarcity of channels in those days.

Wayne Mack (also on WDSU) was Midday co-host and sportscaster, but in the afternoon kids knew him only as "The Great McNutt". In his role as a wacky movie director, his giant megaphone was ideal for kids on the show introducing old but beloved "Three Stooges" shorts. They would recite these words in unison: "Lights, camera, action, start the cotton pickin' show!"

One film entitled "Restless Knights" had the Stooges deconstructing Dumas dialogue:

Larry: "All for one!"

Moe: "One for all!"

Curly: "Every man for himself!"

Queen: "What were you doing in Paris?"

Moe: "Oh, looking over the parasites."

Alexandre Dumas, père (author of "*Les Trois Mousquetaires*"), would have been appalled. But the kids loved it ... mostly the boys.

Young people in New Orleans and around the country were also avid fans of Walt Disney's "Mickey Mouse Club". Most kids back then were wearing either Davy Crockett coonskin caps or those distinctive mouse hats. There were mouse ears on the TV screen and rabbit ears atop the set. The show premiered in 1955 on ABC, and a cast of talented "Mouseketeers" entertained young viewers every weekday afternoon. The broadcast featured boy Mousketeers (like Tommy and Cubby) and girl ones (like Darleen and Doreen). Annette Funicello was everyone's favorite, but (for young gentlemen who preferred blondes) Cheryl was the real deal.

Born in New Orleans in 1944, Cheryl Holdridge was the adopted step-daughter of Brigadier General Herbert C. Holdridge (peace candidate who ran against Ike and Adlai Stevenson for the presidency in the 50s). A gifted performer with a winning smile, Cheryl's talents included singing, ballet and acting (playing Wally Cleaver's girlfriend on "Leave It To Beaver"). In 1964 she became a real countess by marrying wealthy playboy and racecar driver Lance Reventlow, son of Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton. He died in a plane crash in 1972.

Other blondes (from Lana Turner to Rebecca De Mornay) have played the fictional countess, Milady de Winter. One of the main antagonists in "The Three Musketeers", she is an assassin and spy for Cardinal Richelieu. Athos, Porthos and Aramis are the three Musketeers, and d'Artagnan is the young hero who has left home to become one.

Created in 1622 when Louis XIII furnished a company of light cavalry (created by his father Henri IV)

with muskets, *Les Mousquetaires* were a branch of the royal household (or *Maison du Roi*).

New Orleans' first mayor and father of Louisiana's sugar industry became a Musketeer in the King's Household Guards in 1768 and two years later was promoted to captain of the Second Company of Cavalry of *Les Mousquetaires Noirs*. His name was Jean-Étienne de Boré.

The scion of a noble Normandy family (whose grandfather was a councilor to Louis XIV), he was born in 1742 in Kaskaskia in the Illinois country. At four years of age, his family returned to France where young Étienne was educated. There he was married (three years after becoming a Musketeer) to Jeanne-Marguerite-Marie d'Estréhan des Tours. Her wealthy father had been royal treasurer of the French colony in Louisiana. The young couple returned to Louisiana where Boré was granted extensive property that included present-day Audubon Park.

Boré planted indigo but decided to switch to sugar cane in 1794 after insects ruined his crop. He recruited a sugar expert from Saint Domingue named Antoine Morin and they had a successful harvest the very next year. Not only that, by using a vacuum pan process Boré produced 100,000 pounds of granulated sugar and earned \$12,000 on that crop alone. Although Étienne de Boré was the first to commercially granulate sugar, Valcour Aime of "*Le Petite Versailles*" was the first sugar refiner in Louisiana.

Instead of Musketeers, Boré had three daughters to whom he left \$100,000 each. They married Messieurs Le Breton, Foucher and Gayarré (father of the famous Louisiana historian). Son-in-law Paul Foucher's plantation became Tulane's campus and the site of the first Sugar Bowl game.

Two earlier plantations were founded upriver in 1720 in the area known as *Cannes Brûlées* (present-day Kenner) by d'Artaguiette and d'Artagnan. This d'Artagnan was related to the real-life d'Artagnan in the novel, Charles de Batz-Castelmore, Comte d'Artagnan. Born in Lupiac in Gascony to Bertrand, II, de Batz-Castelmore and Françoise Montesquiou d'Artagnan, Charles was the daring Béarnaise Musketeer whose novelized and highly fictionalized memoirs were the source material for Dumas' work. His first cousin, Pierre de Montesquiou, Comte d'Artagnan, was a Musketeer who became Marshal of France in 1709.

Joseph de Montesquiou, Comte d'Artagnan, was the owner of the property bordering that of Jean-Baptiste Martin d'Artaguiette at *Cannes Brûlées*. In January of 1722, noted historian Father Pierre Charlevoix visited this site and observed a huge cypress cross overlooking the Mississippi where the d'Artagnans sang vespers.

When Étienne de Boré resigned as captain of his company of Musketeers in order to come to Louisiana, he probably didn't word it quite this way ... but he might have said:

"And now it's time to say goodbye to all our company."

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