

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémond*

### **From the Highlands to the Lowlands**

Captain John Mackenzie served as an officer in the Peninsular War, under the Duke of Wellington, and later fought in the Battle of New Orleans. It is understandable how this faraway Scot made his way to the Chalmette Battlefield that cold January in 1815, but others of Clan Mackenzie have made their mark on the Crescent City.

The members of this Highland clan, traditionally associated with Kintail and the lands in Ross-shire, were of Celtic stock and not among those originating from Norman ancestry. The surname *Mackenzie*, derived from Gaelic, is an Anglicized form of *MacCoinneach*. *Coinneach* (meaning handsome, comely or fair) is the early form of the name Kenneth. The original Kenneth, who lived in the thirteenth century, was descended from Gill'Eoin of the Aird, from whom can also be traced the once powerful Earls of Ross.

The even more powerful Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots, brings to mind the once predominant Dick Bruce (whose domain was amidst the shelves of one of New Orleans' much loved but not forgotten bakery chains, The McKenzie Pastry Shoppes). He ruled the airwaves with the praises of McKenzie's pies, doughnuts, blackout cakes and king cakes. Then there were McKenzie's popular "white mountain" rolls, turtle cookies and the oyster patty shells for the holidays.

McKenzie's came into existence when a Wisconsin cheese maker named Daniel Entringer moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, in 1924. It was not long before he met up with Henry McKenzie, who later opened a bakery in Uptown New Orleans on Prytania Street. Entringer bought McKenzie's business and kept him on as manager (along with the McKenzie Pastry Shoppe name) until McKenzie's death in 1936.

Daniel Entringer's son Donald (then only 20) took over the management of the bakery, seeing the company grow to fifty

locations. McKenzie's slogan was "There is one in your neighborhood". McKenzie's didn't invent the king cake but introduced the plastic baby. After this innovation, the popularity of this confection soared into the thousands each year.

In 2000, McKenzie's closed after run-ins with the Department of Health and Hospitals over sanitation code violations and declining sales due to the loss of display space (15% of the company's business) after Schwegmann Giant Super Markets declared bankruptcy. Some local investors attempted a reopening of some of the stores, but that failed in 2001. They sold the right to use the McKenzie's name and its formulas to Tastee Donuts.

Today one can enjoy excellent ice cream and view the familiar McKenzie's sign above the door at Creole Creamery at the old shoppe at 4924 Prytania. And there is a McKenzie operation still in business. Back in 1952, Donald Entringer and his brother Gerald opened McKenzie's Chicken-in-a-Box. In the rear of an old McKenzie's Pastry Shoppe in Gentilly, one can buy some of the best fried chicken in town. Owned separately from the bakery company, it escaped bankruptcy. Gerald Entringer, Jr., reopened soon after Katrina on the relative high ground of the Gentilly Ridge.

Not far away from the old McKenzie's location on Harrison Avenue in Lakeview is another historic spot. Just a few houses off Harrison at 6339 West End Boulevard, one can find the house with the distinctive blue-tile roof. The first house in Lakeview was built in 1905, merely a raised cottage used as an office and tool house. But by 1910 a handful of homes went up, and one of the first was the memorable house with the blue-tile roof. Its building materials arrived by barge along the New Basin Canal, which the home faced at that time. Robert Markel was the builder and H. Jordan MacKenzie was the architect. For this, he would be forever known as Blue-Roof, or Blue-Tile, MacKenzie.

H. Jordan MacKenzie was a California native who arrived in New Orleans c. 1901. After first working under Thomas Sully, Mackenzie joined up with Moise H. Goldstein in 1906. In an age when Beaux Arts classicism reigned, MacKenzie and Goldstein built a very non-classical home at 1591 Exposition Boulevard in 1907. In 1910, MacKenzie designed the Bayhi House at 4437 Painters Street in Gentilly. This striking 2 ½ story home was modeled after a nineteenth century Norwegian homestead, with its topmost story created by two intersecting bow roofs.

Thomas Sully was the first president of the Louisiana Association of Architects, the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The New Orleans chapter of the AIA was formed in 1909, and its first social event was a day-long excursion on September 10, 1910, across

Lake Pontchartrain on Walter Jahncke's yacht. According to reports of the day's activities, a good time was enjoyed by all. Sam Labouisse (architect for the Delgado Museum, later NOMA) climbed the mast to escape the antics of those imbibing on deck, while Blue-Roof MacKenzie had his trousers run up the mast. Meanwhile, Charles Allen Favrot (of Favrot and Livaudais) almost beached the vessel.

The most recent McKenzie star in New Orleans' firmament is Michael Terrance McKenzie, better known as Mike McKenzie of the Saints. This talented Miami-born cornerback played the first four years of his career for the Green Bay Packers before joining the Saints in 2004. He established a non-profit organization, 34 Ways Foundation, to help underprivileged youth and was awarded the 2007 New Orleans Saints Man of the Year Award for his work.

From a former cheese maker to a former cheese head, from the Battle of New Orleans to a blue-tile roof, Clan Mackenzie has a diverse and interesting history in the Crescent City.

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