

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### **New Orleans Homonyms**

Long ago in English class (longer ago for some of us than others), we learned that a synonym is a word or phrase that means precisely or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language. *Kind* and *considerate* are considered synonyms, as are the words *happy* and *joyful*. Words and phrases with the same or nearly similar meanings are said to be synonymous, such as *Carnival* and *Mardi Gras*, *oyster po-boy* and *oyster loaf*.

## New Orleans, Good Food Synonymous

As in the 1961 headline above from the *Dallas Morning News*, New Orleans has always been synonymous with good food, or “hot-blooded jazz,” as reported in a 1983 article on Jazz Fest.

An antonym, on the other hand, is a word that conveys the opposite meaning of another word, in other words, the antonym of synonym. Common antonyms are *victory* and *defeat*, *night* and *day*, *high* and *low*, *left* and *right*, *big* and *small*, *empty* and *full*.

A little trickier is the homonym, one of a group of words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings. They are often spelled differently, but they may have the same spelling, such as *tender* (a Popeye’s chicken *tender*) or to *tender* one’s resignation. Strictly speaking, homonyms are words that are homographs (words that share the same spelling, regardless of their pronunciation), as well as homophones (words that share the same pronunciation, regardless of their spelling).

After that elaborate series of explanations, I would like to present a few examples of New Orleans homonyms:

**Throne:** What Rex, King of Carnival, sits upon at the ball.

**Thrown:** What happened to the beads and doubloons earlier at the Rex parade.

**Succor:** Assistance or support during the time of hardship or distress, as in "Our Lady of Prompt Succor," a Roman Catholic title for the Blessed Virgin Mary. During and after the Battle of New Orleans, the Ursuline Nuns prayed to her image, presently enshrined at the National Shrine of "Our Lady of Prompt Succor," and her feast day is celebrated January 8th.

**Sucker:** (Informal) A gullible person or one whom it is easy to deceive, such as an easy mark in the French Quarter who falls for the old line, "I bet ya I can tell ya where ya got dem shoes."



*Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Patroness of Louisiana*

**Krewes:** (especially in New Orleans) A private social club that sponsors balls, parades, etc., as part of the city's Carnival festivities. The first such club was *The Mistick Krewe of Comus*, founded in New Orleans in 1857.

The word was the result of the archaizing or fanciful spelling of:

**Crews:** Groups of people who work on and operate ships, boats, aircraft, spacecraft, work vehicles or trains.

Sidney Torres and his crews quickly cleaned up the *Vieux Carré* after

Mardi Gras.

The Southern Yacht Club crews performed well in their regattas.

**Cruise:** A voyage on a ship or boat taken for pleasure or as a vacation and usually making stops (ports of call) at several places.

As their ad states, "A Carnival cruise from New Orleans is your chance to discover the unmistakable charm and flavor of the Crescent City."

**Main:** Chief in size or importance, such as Main Street (which in New Orleans is Canal Street).

**Main:** A principal pipe in a system of pipes for conveying water, especially one installed underground.

The New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board crews (there's *crews* again) will be repairing a broken water main.



*How 'bout that mane on Fess?*

**Mane:** The big growth of long hair on the neck of a horse, lion or other animal; also a person's long hair. Legendary New Orleans pianist Henry Roeland Byrd, more popularly known as Professor Longhair, learned to play piano as a child and was hired to play a club in 1948 when Dave Bartholomew was fired. The club owner dubbed him Professor Longhair because of his shaggy mane at the time. The rest is history.

**Knight:** (In the Middle Ages) A man who served his sovereign or lord as a mounted soldier in armor, usually elevated to that rank after service as a page or squire. In New Orleans, certain Mardi Gras krewes are composed of Knights, such as the *Knights of Momus*.

**Night:** The period from sunset to sunrise, during which time Bourbon Street comes alive.

**Maid:** A young lady presented at a Carnival ball.

**Made:** As in "made groceries," the past tense of "make groceries".

In a letter to the *Times-Picayune*, posted February 8, 1986, Mrs. Carol Wick wrote about "Blue Law Hypocrisy": "My husband and I 'made groceries' at Schwegmann's last Sunday and I have never seen anything so silly. I bought a large bottle of gin, but my husband was not allowed to buy four screws."

**Sachet:** A small bag, often perfumed, that contains a powder or a mixture of dried flowers and spices within to give a pleasant smell to clothes, sheets, etc.

If you stop in at the Hové Parfumeur, Ltd., at 434 Chartres Street in the French Quarter, you may find just what you're looking for:

"Made from dried botanicals, fragranced with Hové's oils, these old fashioned sachets gently scent a room or adds a touch of fragrance in closets, drawers, armoires and blanket chests."

**Sashay:** To walk ostentatiously, with exaggerated hip and shoulder movements. You'll know it when you see it.

It's the way those *New Orleans Ladies* walked in the 1978 song by Louisiana's LeRoux:

*New Orleans Ladies*  
*A sassy style that will drive you crazy*  
*And they hold you like the light*  
*Hugs the wick when this candle's burning.*  
*Them Creole babies*  
*Thin and brown and downright lazy*  
*And they roll just like the river*  
*A little wave will last forever*

*All the way*  
*From Bourbon Street to Esplanade*  
*They sashay by...*  
*They sashay by...*



*Sachet to attract one of those sashaying New Orleans Ladies*

**Profits:** Financial gains, or the money representing the difference between the amount earned and the amount spent in operating, buying or producing something.

The profits from the 1984 New Orleans Worlds Fair were not nearly as much as expected.

**Prophets:** Persons who speaks for God or a deity, or by divine inspiration. In New Orleans, there is a Carnival organization known as *The Prophets of Persia*, which held its first tableau ball at the Athenaeum on Feb. 11, 1927. The krewe's theme that year was "The Coronation of Napoleon and Josephine."

**Boos:** Words proclaimed to scare others or jeers yelled to show disapproval of someone, his position or sometimes a sports team. Boos are what Saints fans once refrained from by instead wearing bags over their heads. Boos are also a pet name for boyfriends or girlfriends.

Fans will therefore take their boos to Saints games and hopefully refrain from boos, or perhaps take their kids to the "Boo at the Zoo" at the Audubon Zoo.

**Booze:** A synonym for alcohol, consumed in large amounts on Bourbon Street. Also used to celebrate Saints wins or to bemoan their losses.



*Duel fought beneath the Dueling Oaks*

**Duel:** A contest with deadly weapons arranged between two people in order to settle a point of honor.

José (Pepe) Llulla, New Orleans' most famous duelist, participated in over forty duels with swords and firearms.

**Dual:** Twofold, i.e., consisting of two parts, elements, or aspects.

As both a colonial administrative body responsible to the Spanish Crown and an institution representing local interests, the Cabildo had dual and possibly conflicting loyalties.

**Rain:** Precipitation.

Irma Thomas sang out, "It's Raining so hard. Looks like it's gonna rain all night."

**Reign:** Monarch's time as ruler. In the Crescent City, Mardi Gras kings and queens reign over their make-believe Carnival realms.

Jay H. Banks was elected to reign as the 2016 king of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club parade, held on Mardi Gras morning.

As for additional homonyms, I wanted *to* add *two* more, but it's *too* late.

## **NED HÉMARD**

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