

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

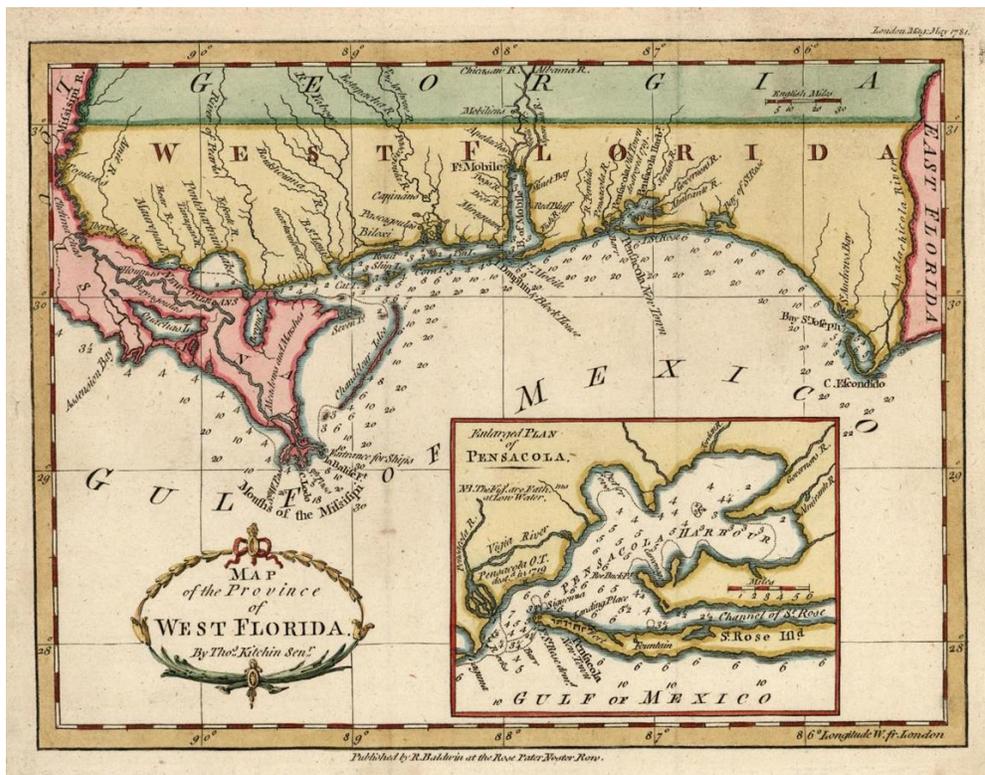
Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

Saint Tammany, the Affable Parish

Orleans' neighboring parish of St. Tammany was once part of West Florida and was not, like so many other Louisiana parishes, named for a Christian saint at all.

After the French were defeated in the French and Indian War, the land that would later become St. Tammany Parish was now part of British West Florida. Both West and East Florida remained loyal to the British crown during the American Revolution, and served as havens for Tories escaping persecution in the original thirteen colonies. Spain's Colonial Louisiana Governor Bernardo de Gálvez invaded West Florida and captured Pensacola in 1781, thus ending British sovereignty in West Florida. After the Revolutionary War Britain ceded both Floridas to Spain. The lack of well-defined boundaries led to a number of border disputes between Spanish West Florida and the nascent United States known as the West Florida Controversy.



Map of British West Florida, published in London, May 1781

In 1810, continuing disagreements with the Spanish government prompted American and English settlers between the Mississippi and Perdido Rivers to declare that area the independent Republic of West Florida. On October 27th of that same year, President James Madison proclaimed that the United States should take possession of West Florida on the basis that it was part of the Louisiana Purchase. He sent Territorial Governor of Louisiana, William Charles Cole Claiborne, to annex and occupy the short-lived republic before other nations became involved.

On December 22, 1810, Governor Claiborne created the parish of St. Tammany Parish, named for Tamanend (circa 1625 – circa 1701), a *sachem*, or chief of one of the clans that made up the Lenni-Lenape Indian nation in the Delaware Valley, who negotiated peace with William Penn. Tamanend (variously called Tammany, Taminent and Temane) was revered by many of the Founding Fathers as a lover of peace, friendship and universal brotherhood. His name meant the "Affable One" in his tribe's dialect. Tamanend reportedly announced during the treaty summit with Penn that his people and the English colonists would "live in peace as long as the waters run in the rivers and creeks and as long as the stars and moon endure."



William Penn's treaty with Tamanend, painting by Benjamin West

Sometime in the early 18th century Tamanend achieved a "canonization" of a sort when his admirers proclaimed him the "Patron Saint of America." There were Tamanend festivals and celebrations all

over the United States. Organizations inspired by this peace-loving Indian leader sprang up in cities everywhere, including the famous Tammany Hall in New York City, which was later to become a symbol for corrupt politics. But why would Claiborne name a Louisiana parish for a Delaware Indian? There must be more to this story.

Tammany Hall, also known as the Society of St. Tammany, the Sons of St. Tammany, or the Columbian Order, was the New York City political organization founded in 1786 and incorporated on May 12, 1789, as the Tammany Society. Soon after its organization, national political figure Aaron Burr saw the possibility of transforming this boisterous society, with its democratic principles, into a compact and effective political machine that could be used in opposition to the Federalists.



Statue of Tamanend in Philadelphia

In the news of today, much reporting revolves around delegates and the role of the Electoral College in the election of the president of our republic. Americans are learning much more about the subtle intricacies of the political process. Over two hundred years ago, Aaron Burr figured out the importance of New York's electors and saw to it that the Tammany Society came under his influence. It was also a means to counter Alexander Hamilton's Society of the Cincinnati. Thomas Jefferson, too, realized that had he received New York's electoral votes in 1796, he (instead of John Adams) would have been the second American president.

In the campaign of 1800 to select state legislators, who in turn would choose the presidential electors, the Tammany Society made every effort to carry New York City for the Republican candidates, which they did. Jefferson and Burr received twelve votes each.

Here's how the process worked back then. Prior to 1804 each elector voted for two candidates for President. He who received the greatest number of electoral votes became the President and the person with the next highest the Vice-President. In the Electoral College Jefferson and Burr each received the same number of votes — 73 — and the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. It wasn't until the 36th ballot that Jefferson was chosen by the House as the third President of the United States. Six members of the New York delegation voted for Jefferson, but only four voted for Burr, thus giving the State's vote to Jefferson. In the Electoral College as a whole, Burr lost by one vote and became the Vice-President. Interestingly, one of those electoral votes that went to Jefferson was that of a young William Charles Cole Claiborne.

The Tammany Society claimed much of the credit in electing Jefferson, and he rewarded some of the Society's leaders with federal offices. Claiborne, a Virginia-born elector from Tennessee, was rewarded with the governorship of Louisiana. In the 1804 presidential election, Jefferson once again carried the State of New York. It is not surprising, therefore, that the parish to the west of Orleans Parish would be named St. Tammany, more for its connection with the Society than for the Delaware Indian chief.

Thomas Jefferson, whose presidency was responsible for the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, is the namesake for the neighboring parish on the other side of Orleans Parish. What is rarely discussed is the importance of the Tammany Society in making his election possible.

Another curiosity is that on September 19, 1811, a proclamation from Governor Claiborne was printed in the St. Francisville *Time Piece* of West Florida, which announced that an election "be holden in the several counties of this territory." Remember, Louisiana was not yet a state. It is interesting that the governor mentioned the "county of Orleans," but "the parishes of East Baton Rouge and Feliciana," as well as "the parishes of St. Helena and St. Tammany." Unlike any other state, "parishes" would eventually win out over "counties."

Another person who negotiated with the Lenape Indians and other tribes in Pennsylvania was Colonel George Morgan (1743 – March 10, 1810), a merchant, land speculator and United States Indian Agent during the American Revolutionary War. Because of his fairness in dealing with the Delaware Indians, they honored Colonel Morgan by bestowing him with the name of their "affable" chief Tamanend. Morgan's grandson, Henry Gibbes Morgan, was a sugar planter and respected attorney in New Orleans. One of the original incorporators of the first board of trade, he was also for many years president of the Audubon Park Commission.

On January 29, 1910, his son, Henry Gibbes Morgan, Jr., wrote a letter

to noted Louisiana historian Alcée Fortier, then President of the Louisiana Historical Society:

With "pardonable pride" Mr. Morgan submitted facts "compiled from letters and documents in the archives of the State Department in Washington" and other "letters and copies of letters, manuscripts, etc." in his possession referring to "an incident in the remarkable life" of his great-grandfather, "Col. George Morgan, the now almost forgotten pioneer, Indian Agent, explorer and scientific farmer."

"At his splendid estate, 'Prospect,' the site of which is now occupied by the official residence of the president of Princeton College," wrote Morgan, "the Delawares gathered and solemnly conferred upon him the name of Tamenand, or Tamene, signifying 'the affable.'"

The name conferred upon his great-grandfather "afterwards became popularized 'into the 'Tammany' of our day," explained Morgan, "the name of the greatest chieftain of their legends and time" and "the first man they had found worthy to bear it."

Morgan explained that since the original Tamanend was a great chief "who loved liberty more than life," the admirers of this peace-seeking Indian "conferred upon him the title of Saint — hence Saint Tammany — his name placed on some calendars, and after the Revolution an association was formed ... called the Tammany Society, or Columbia Order, and the first meeting was held during 1789."

"Popular and very patriotic in its influence," he wrote, "and no party politics was then tolerated. How times have changed!"

Morgan closed his missive to Fortier and the Society by writing, "Trusting this little incident in the life of an almost forgotten pioneer will prove of some interest, and thanking you particularly for your interest in the matter, I remain,

Very Respectfully,

H. G. MORGAN, JR."

Another descendant of Colonel George Morgan is American journalist, author, and television personality Anderson Cooper.

In 1804, the last full year of his single term as vice president, Aaron Burr killed his political rival Alexander Hamilton in their famous duel. Never brought to trial for this illegal activity, and with all charges against him eventually dropped, Burr's political career nevertheless

ended with Hamilton's death.



Pennsylvania historic marker

Traveling west and seeking new opportunities, Burr was later charged with treason in 1807. The year before, on August 22, 1806, Burr visited Colonel George Morgan at his home in Pennsylvania, Morganza Farm, and told the Colonel and his sons, John and Thomas, about his scheme for founding a new nation west of the Allegheny Mountains. Colonel Morgan was the first to warn President Jefferson of Burr's conspiracy to overthrow the federal government in a letter of warning on September 15th. George Morgan and his son Thomas were called to testify at Burr's trial in Richmond, Virginia, presided over by Chief Justice of the United States John Marshall. The only physical evidence presented to the Grand Jury, however, was a letter from Burr to General James Wilkinson, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Army at New Orleans. The letter, which proposed the idea of stealing land within the Louisiana Purchase, was discovered by the court to have been written in Wilkinson's own handwriting. Wilkinson's explanation was that he had made a copy because he had lost the original. The Grand Jury threw the letter out as evidence, and the news made General Wilkinson a laughingstock for the remainder of the proceedings. Wilkinson himself was in fact found to be treasonous, but only after his death, when it was discovered that he had been a paid agent of the Spanish crown.



Aaron Burr



General James Wilkinson

On September 1, 1807, Burr was acquitted on the grounds that, although he may have conspired against the United States, he was not guilty of treason because he had not engaged in an "overt act witnessed by two people," a requirement of treason as specified by the U.S. Constitution. Public opinion still condemned Burr as a traitor and, since he had debts and few influential friends, he spent several years in Europe before returning to New York City in 1812 to resume his law practice. He spent the rest of his life there in relative obscurity.

Colonel George Morgan died on March 10, 1810, in Pennsylvania at his Morganza home, the same year Saint Tammany became a parish.

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