

NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions

By Ned Hémard

What Is Love?

What Is Love?

In the 1950s, it was the musical question posed by the Playmates in their 1959 Roulette recording "What Is Love?"



"What is love?

Five feet of heaven in a ponytail.

The cutest ponytail that sways with a wiggle when she walks.

What is love?

Five feet of heaven and the bluest eyes,

And what a pretty smile that shows you a dimple when she talks."

OK, the lyrics are "over-the-top" corny, but if you were "A Teenager In Love" back then, who knows what was going through your mind?

The definition of love could only get better and more sophisticated in the 1990s, right? Well, not exactly.

The song title "What Is Love" reemerged with the 1993 recording by Trinidadian-German Eurodance performer Haddaway. It was spoofed three years later when Saturday Night Live debuted its first "Roxbury Guys" sketch, in which comedians Chris Kattan, Jim Carrey and Will Ferrell bobbed their heads in unison to the song while driving in a car. How their necks survived the repetitive jerking motion is still a mystery.



What Is Love in the 1990s

Musically speaking, love in New Orleans can be painful, as in Earl King's "Trick Bag", Prince La La's "She Put The Hurt on Me" or "Wish Someone Would Care" by the city's beloved Irma Thomas. It can be sweet and tender, as in "All These Things" by Art Neville or inevitable, as in Fats Domino's "I'm In Love Again". But just over a century ago, there was a contest in New Orleans awarding prizes for the best answer to the question "What Is Love?"

The contest was sponsored by the *Times-Picayune* and took place in 1916 from November 12th until December 3rd. Fourteen cash prizes were offered with \$50 going to the grand prize winner. In the end,

nearly 24,000 entries were sent in to the paper. Oh, and it was "Another 'Duck' Contest". Allow me to explain.

WHAT IS LOVE?

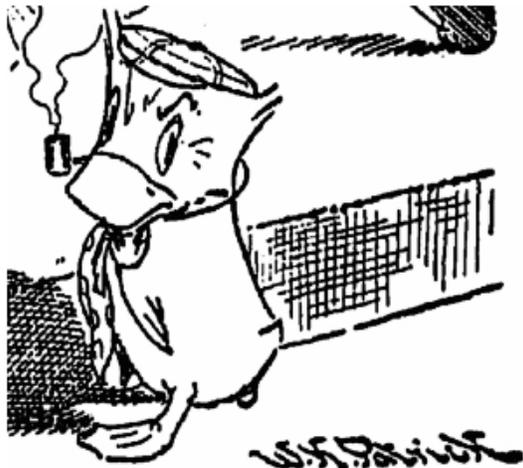


Another "Duck" Contest

For the best original answers in thirty words or less, to the question, "WHAT IS LOVE?" The Times-Picayune offers fourteen cash prizes as follows: First prize, \$50; second, \$25; third, \$15; fourth, \$10, and \$5, to the sender of each of the next ten best answers.

1916 ad for the Times-Picayune's "What Is Love?" Contest

In 1916, the mascot of the *Times-Picayune* was "The Duck". Before the *Daily Picayune* merged with the *Times-Democrat* in 1914, the *Picayune* had the frog and the *Times-Democrat* had the duck. Ashton Phelps, former associate editor of the *Times-Democrat*, took over the reigns as president of what would become the *Times-Picayune* and replaced the frog with "The Duck".



"The Duck" by W. K. Patrick

The frog, aka "The Picayune's Weather Prophet", first jumped onto the pages of the *Daily Picayune* on January 13, 1894. Eliza Jane Poitevent Holbrook Nicholson, better known by her pen name Pearl Rivers, owner of The *Daily Picayune*, commissioned staff cartoonist Louis A. Winterhalder to illustrate the newspaper's popular frog mascot.

The Times-Democrat.

L. H. (L. S. MERRILL) : : : : : NEW ORLEANS, SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 1914. — 60 PAGES — PART FIRST. [REPRINTED FROM THE TIMES-DEMOCRAT, APRIL 5, 1914, PAGE 43,004]

NEW ORLEANS SEEKS JUSTICE FROM UNITED STATES CONGRESS

MEETING REMARKABLE DEMONSTRATION

Against Discrimination in Location of Regional Banks and Local—Sentiments of Meeting Voiced by F. S. Parkerson, Sol Winkler and M. J. Sanders. Mayor Behrman Presides—Hall Not Large Enough to Contain the Crowd Attending

of the most remarkable and enthusiastic of greater than that taken place in New Orleans since the late war. The meeting, which was held in the hall of the Chamber of Commerce, was attended by a large number of the business and professional men of the city, and was presided over by Mayor Behrman. The meeting was held in the hall of the Chamber of Commerce, which was not large enough to contain the crowd attending. The meeting was held in the hall of the Chamber of Commerce, which was not large enough to contain the crowd attending.



UNION OF THE MORNING PAPERS MEANS GREATER, BETTER PAPER

TIMES-DEMOCRAT AND PICAYUNE ARE MERGED

Negotiations Which Have Been in Progress for Some Time Finally Closed Saturday—Last Issue of the Picayune as Separate Publication This Morning—Many Picayune Men Are to Join the Staff of the Times-Picayune

The morning edition of the Picayune is the last issue. Negotiations, which have been pending for some time for the consolidation of the Times-Democrat and the Picayune were closed yesterday. Negotiations commencing the two papers will be published to-day. Until such time as all legal formalities have been completed, the joint issue will carry the name of both papers; from that time on it will be the Times-Picayune. The name of the two newspapers means for New Orleans and its territory a bigger and better paper. It means better service to the advertiser, to the advertiser and to the community. It means that both sets of writers and editors will get more for their money. The policy of the paper will be the best of both New Orleans and the surrounding territory. The same line of clean journalism that has served the interest of both papers in the past will govern the bigger paper of the future. It will avoid needless party contentions and will devote itself to building the territory that it serves to the highest extent possible. Under the plan of consolidation the former stockholders of the Picayune become stockholders in the Times-Democrat Company. The Board of Directors of the Times-Democrat Company will be increased from five to nine, and the Picayune interests will be given representation in the new board. Thomas G. Baker, for many years at the head of the Picayune; Herman J. Bellamy, long its editor; and other members; Leonard K. and Victor F. Nicholas, the principal owners, and a large number of employees of the various departments of the Picayune, both in New Orleans and in the country, will join the staff of the Times-Picayune. The new paper takes over all the circulation and advertising contracts of the Picayune. Persons who have paid subscriptions to the Picayune and who have advertising contracts with that newspaper will be served by the new paper.

... (Continued from previous page) ...

KEITH INTERESTS TO GET CONTROL OF RAILROADS

Will Be Paramount in the Transportation Business of Central America

LATEST CONCESSION FROM HONDURAS

BRYAN ASSAILED BY HOUSE SPEAKERS

Mondell Wants Union Jack on State Department Liveries

Washington, April 5.—The speaker of the House today assailed the administration of President Woodrow Wilson for its policy in Honduras.

BRINGS BODIES OF SIXTY-NINE VICTIMS OF ICE

Rescue Vessel Reaches Port With Newfoundland's Dead and Dying

ONE MAN UNSCARRED BY LONG EXPOSURE

... (Continued from previous page) ...

April 5, 1914, Times-Democrat front page announcing the merger of the two papers with cartoon (center) of frog joining "The Duck" in a puddle

"The Duck", which was illustrated by the political cartoonist for the Times-Democrat, W. K. Patrick, offered commentary and spouted witticisms in response to happenings of the day. When Patrick left the Times-Picayune in 1919 for the Fort Worth Star Telegram, he took "The Duck" with him. After his departure, the Times-Picayune revived the weather frog. The amphibian's career at the Picayune was off-and-on over the years, but he did win a seven-day popularity contest in 1952 against cartoonist Walt Kelly's popular Pogo Possum. The frog won with 5,170 votes to Pogo's total of 4,087.

The frog was absent again from early 1982 until 1995, when the old drawings, predominantly by staff artist Louis Benedic (who had retired in 1976), were resurrected. On February 21, 2011, Danny Monteverde (then writing for the Times-Picayune) announced that the frog would be making "his digital debut" on the "electronic pages of NOLA.com". Here's how the old weather prognosticator looked on Valentine's Day over 120 years ago:



The Picayune's Weather Prophet as Cupid, February 14, 1895

The verse below the cartoon warned, "Sweet maid have a care! Of Froggy beware!"

But in 1916, "The Duck" was in charge, and here are some of the numerous entries in his "What Is Love?" Contest:

Love is a cherry in the cocktail of life.

- Mary Mischler, Congress Street, New Orleans

Love is all that is left of paradise.

- Mrs. A. Collins, Berlin (General Pershing) Street, New Orleans

Love is a germ usually imparted when two lips meet.

- Anita Quintana, 714 Kerlerec Street, New Orleans

Love is a live and active agent for the matrimonial bureau.

- William H. Dane, 4432 Laurel Street, New Orleans

Love is a rope of pearls which falls apart unless it is held together by a strong cord of mutual respect.

- B. Smith, 4218 Magazine Street, New Orleans

Love is that divine faculty which renders the reasoning powers of the head subservient to the impetuous influence of the heart.

- Mrs. J. F. Williams, 2219 Prytania Street, New Orleans

Love is Cupid's game of cards, played with human hearts.

- Vivian deLeon, 619 N. Carrollton Avenue, New Orleans

Love is that which makes your heart go pit-a-pat,
Whether or not we're lean or fat,
Whether or not we're bashful or bold,
Whether or not we're young or old.

- Noah Lord, Clio Street, New Orleans

Love is a magnetic wave which creates a blink, then a wink, then rapture, and all is enveloped in the ocean of ecstasy.

- Mrs. R. P. Kenny, Tchoupitoulas Street, New Orleans

Love is a mild form of brain-storm, or a mental stampede, superinduced through heart attachments, causing those infected to feel that they exist in a rose-colored dreamworld.

- James C. Peyton, Jr., Desire Street, New Orleans

Love is the result of intelligence and goodness combined; goodness, which leads to devotion, to sacrifice; intelligence, which charms and retains the loved one.

- Ellen Stauffer, 1904 Canal Street, New Orleans

Love is a gem that makes fools of good men, the tools of heartless women; and slaves of good women to worthless men.

- Miss T. France, 810 Chartres Street, New Orleans

Love is that which calls for the best in the worst of us.

- Miss Reid, 923 Philip Street, New Orleans

Love is a raging tempest, and a gentle wooing zephyr.

- Mrs. S. A. St. C., 3103 Annunciation Street, New Orleans

Love once was found in the parlor,
In parks or on porches, you know;
But now he just lives at the "movies,"
You'll catch him on the last row.

- Mary Marlborough, Carondelet Street, New Orleans

A sweet little cherub winked one day,
At an angel up above;

He shot an arrow, and struck her heart,
That was what she called Love.

- Norma G. Riley, Onzaga Street, New Orleans

Love is a method employed by woman to separate a man from his
money.

- "Bach", 130 South Lopez Street, New Orleans

When the heart is tender and kind,
And we are inspired as from above;
When we see only good in all mankind –
That is my definition of love.

- Marguerite Hall, 1238 St. Andrew Street, New Orleans

Love is an insipid and tasteless morsel, which becomes delicious and
delectable in proportion as it is flavored with a kiss.

- F. Klock, 4222 Constance Street, New Orleans

Love is a duet in "A" flat" with incidental minor accompaniments.

- Pearl J. Manderer, 333 Royal Street, New Orleans

"What is love?"
Can anyone tell?

All I know is
It's some crazy spell.

- A. V. W., 1620 Annunciation Street, New Orleans

Love is like the Devil – a constant temptation.

- Mrs. F. Lang, 1507 Esplanade Avenue, New Orleans

Love is the seasoning in life's stew.

- Ella Alice Moses, 822 Calhoun Street, New Orleans

This life consists of many a thing
Imparting to us its zest,
But give me love, Dan Cupid's sting.
And you may have the rest.

- H. P. Lindee, 821 Webster Street, New Orleans

Love, to Grandma is a memory;
To mother, love is strife;
To father, it's the gas bill –
To sister, love is life!

- Mrs. M. Guise, 1019 Aline Street

Love? It takes two to make it;
Defined, it's a game of chance –
One produces the loving,
The other one "wears the pants."

- C. O. D., 428 Bolivar Street, New Orleans

Love is a pleasant thing,
Love is a joke;
Love is the darndest lie
That man ever spoke!

- Charles A. Gordon, 2128 Magazine Street, New Orleans

Love is the lucky number on life's wheel of fortune.

- T. D., 345 Baronne Street, New Orleans

Love is a short name for the biggest disturbance in the universe.

- Mrs. C. Gilmer, 1414 Eleanore Street, New Orleans

Love is a dewdrop from the dawn of life.

- George Gowland, Arabi, Louisiana

The grand prize winner of the contest, Molly Anderson Haley, was not from New Orleans but from Mobile, Alabama. Her winning entry was:

Love is the doorway through which the human soul passes from selfishness into service, from solitude into kinship with all humanity.

The second prize of \$25 went to "Chris Rose," Mrs. W. P. O'Toole of 1226 Napoleon Avenue, New Orleans:

Love is a chisel that carves into soft outlines the granite block of stern reality.

The third place winner was "Austin Hubbard," Mrs. Albert Godchaux of 497 Audubon Street, New Orleans:

Love is what makes red hair "golden," white hair "silver," and no hair "a noble brow."

CLEVER YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DEFINED "LOVE" FOR THE DUCK



Among these varying definitions there is humor, wisdom, sadness, suspicion, joy and wonder. No one definition can say it all.

Perhaps, dear readers, you have recognized departed friends or family members among the participants, or addresses very near to yours. It all goes to show that Love is the greatest thing and it's all around us.

Hope it finds you this Valentine's Day.

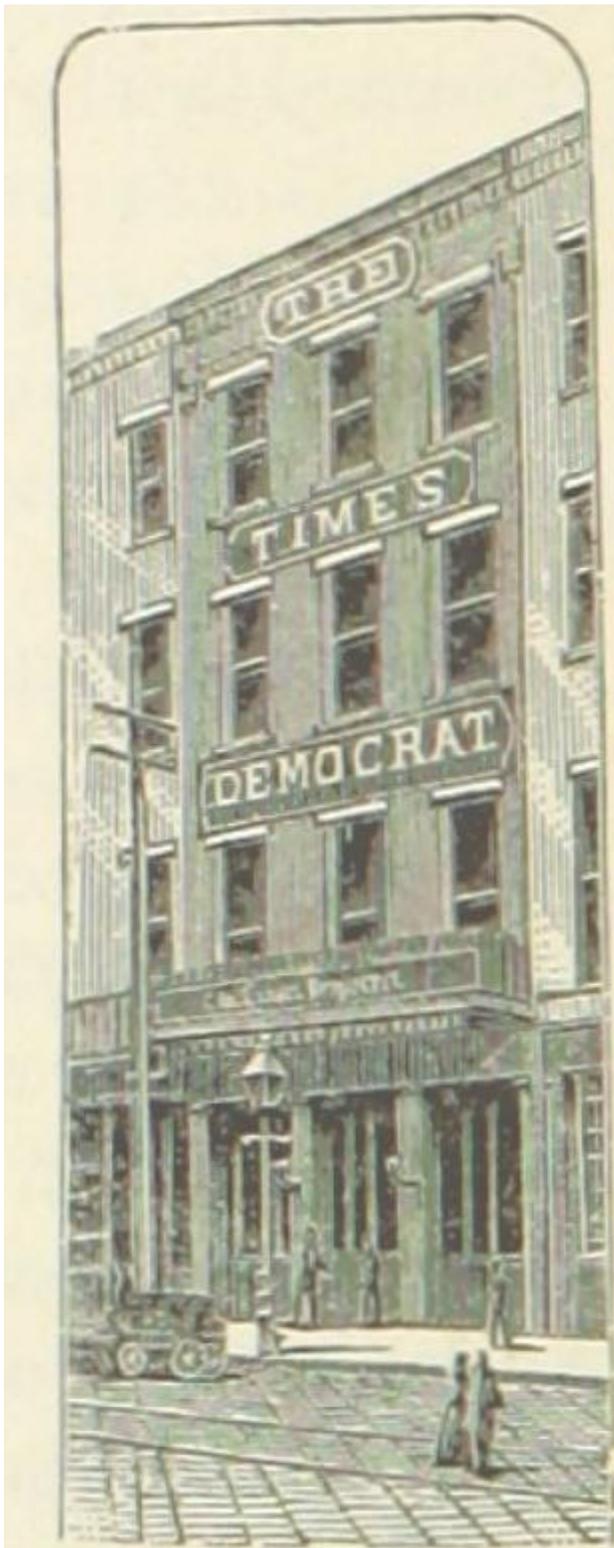


Pogo in a Valentine's Day Mood?

Pogo, a possum inhabiting the Okefenokee Swamp, was the humble, amiable and philosophical everyman in a comic strip by Walt Kelly, running 1949-1975. He awaits an arrow from Albert the Alligator.

NED HÉMARD

New Orleans Nostalgia
"What Is Love?"
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NEW ORLEANS :
TIMES-DEMOCRAT.