



Marking Time, Making Place: A Chronological History of Blacks In New Orleans Since 1718

James B Borders IV

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Most of the world has seen pictures of the devastation of New Orleans after being hit by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. But few know about the storied history of that famed city. And yet fewer are aware of the complicated and fascinating connection that black Americans have had with the celebrated town. James B. Borders IV has compiled a chronological history disclosing the pivotal African-American names, events and locations in "Marking Time, Making Place: An Essential Chronology of Blacks in New Orleans Since 1718." According to Borders, New Orleans' African influence has blanketed the city culturally, spiritually, and psychically. Considered the birthplace of jazz and gumbo, and habitat of the fascinating blend of black and European blood called creole, New Orleans is the site of historical and cultural contributions that include music, cuisine, architecture, and politics. "New Orleans is one of the most Africanized spaces in North America," says Borders, adding, "it's a fascinating repository of black life." Named in honor of the Duke of Orléans, who was governing France on behalf of the boy king, Louis XV, New Orleans will celebrate its 300th year of founding in 2018. Although Borders' chronology describes specific events by year, he often expands it with narrative touches featuring real personalities and scenes. He begins in 1718 with the fact that among the first black people known to live in New Orleans are a couple of enslaved Africans named Jorge and Marie. The author elaborates frequently on events of special significance. For example, in 1736, Charity Hospital was founded to care for the indigent and became the nation's second oldest continually operating public hospital, after New York's Bellevue Hospital. It closed in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina. In 1803 after the Louisiana Purchase, the city developed into the country's largest marketplace for the sale of enslaved people. And in 1903, "Buddy" Bolden started band battles by setting up in Johnson Park and blowing his trumpet in the direction of Lincoln Park to draw the crowd over to his side of the street. He won so many of the street battles that he earned the nickname "King Bolden." Repeating a phrase from the Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Borders says, "The history of New Orleans is filled also with moments of retrospective significance of which we all should be cognizant, especially as the city heads toward the 300th anniversary of its founding."

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