

A photograph of a street scene in New Orleans during Mardi Gras. In the center, a horse-drawn float is moving down the street. The float is decorated with flowers and has several people on board, including a man in a white shirt and a woman in a blue shirt. The float is pulled by a brown horse. In the foreground, a black dog is visible on the right side. The background shows a street with buildings, including a two-story building with a balcony on the left and a brick building on the right. The text is overlaid on the image in a large, bold, red font.

Since 1699, when French explorers landed at the great bend of the Mississippi River and celebrated the first Mardi Gras in North America, New Orleans has brewed a fascinating melange of cultures. It was French, then Spanish, then French again, then sold to the United States. Through all these years, and even into the 1900s, others arrived from everywhere: Acadians (Cajuns), Africans, indige-