
The Origin Of Celebration Of Mardi Gras Around The World

Mardi Gras, also known as Lundi Gras, which means Fat Tuesday, is a French holiday that is celebrated once every year, on the Christian calendar. It starts on January 6, also known as the twelfth Night, the feast of the epiphany, and it ends on Mardi Gras, the day of Ash Wednesday, which is celebrated by the people of Louisiana. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, Christians focus on repentance and prayer. The event of Mardi Gras lasts for a few weeks. The term Lundi Gras originated in 1987, in a musical called the "Staggerlee", which was written by Vernel Bagneris. In the play one of the characters refer to day as Lundi Gras. A member of the city's Mardi Gras committee seen the Staggerlee, liked the phrase so much that person bought it up at the subcommittee meeting. The member felt that they needed a new attraction on the evening before Mardi Gras. An attractive early event on the day before Mardi Gras could help draw more attention to the Mississippi riverfront and the urban carnival; and also to help Proteus change its route to include a loop down Poydras Street to the river so that event would go more smoothly. The committee liked the term. Later on term stuck and became popular. The tradition of Mardi Gras first originated in Paris, France since the middle ages. It came to North America when the French explorer, Pierre Le Moyne d' Iberville and his men came to explore the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico. They arrive at New Orleans and set up campground on the rivers west bank and they christened the site Point du Mardi Gras on March 3, 1699. In 1718, he founded New Orleans and ever since then the people regularly practiced this holiday. The Mardi Gras celebration typically last for few weeks. The holiday of Mardi Gras consists of opulent parades, ceremonial balls, feasting on rich food, and fancy costumes. In this essay, I will discuss the history and the many aspects, that makes up Mardi Gras.

Mardi Gras actually started before the French. Some people associate the origins of Mardi Gras to Rome, where they held tribal rituals of fertility to kick off the start of spring. They celebrated the season with Saturnalia, which is similar to Halloween. The Romans held a circus like party called the Lupercalia in mid-February. Instead of stopping these pagan customs, the early church decided to add Christian undertones to the event. Making Mardi Gras, a prelude to penance, (asking for forgiveness) season of lent.

What is the twelfth Night? In England, they celebrated the twelfth night as a holiday during this event they would party with some of their food collected during the growing season. Peasants would dress as royals and the royals would dress like peasants. At this event, some places would burn a straw dummy probably descended from the lord of misrule is burned as the event ends, as misrule lasts until the stroke of midnight every twelfth night. The Lord of misrule was a symbol of the world turned upside down. In England under the Tudor Reign celebrated Allhallows Eve through Christmas and until the Twelfth Night during the dark months. Christians declared the twelfth day of Christmas to be the feast of the feast of the Epiphany. The Feast of the Epiphany is the day that the new born Christ was acknowledged as god.

Krewes are organizations that host parades and balls. All of these Krewes were made by wealthy men. Some Krewes are private some are not. There are several different Krewes that influenced Mardi Gras into the holiday that we all know of today. Now, I'm about to provide a description of these krewes. A group of men founded the Twelfth Night Revelers organization

on January 6 1870, added different customs to Mardi Gras that made it well known and celebrated in today's times. They introduced the pagan practice of serving a cake that maids would draw beans attached to ribbons; and the one who got the gold bean would be queen. This cake was how the modern king cake became a major fixture in Mardi Gras. Another tradition the Twelfth Night Revelers started was the Tableau ball. These men made the Twelfth Night a holiday of great importance to New Orleans.

In 1837, The Cowbellian deRakin Society held the first modern form a Mardi Gras parade in mobile Alabama. Three years later, they made the first theme float called the "Heathen Gods and Goddesses. The parade inspired the men of the Pickwick club formed the Mistick Krewe of Comus in New Orleans, which was founded in 1857. This club was named after the Greek god of merriment. The Mistick Krewe of Comus was the first krewe to start parades in New Orleans; and created the word Krewe. They popularize the tradition of the meeting of the courts, when the king of Carnival, Rex and his queen made a visit to the throne Comus. In 1872, the New Orleans businessman and journalist formed Rex was made to help promote the city of New Orleans to tourists to help improve the economy. Rex held more parades than any other organization. Each year a different person of the organization gets to be rex, the king of the organization. Rex was the person who on the float to entertain the crowd. The colors purple, gold, and green was first used by the Rex organization in 1892. The symbolism of the colors is: purple for justice, gold for power, and green for faith. Bead throwing was another popular tradition that they started. The idea was that they would throw the beads to people in the crowd that had the traits of the colors associated with Mardi Gras. It was supposed to bring them good luck. The Rex organization included the Boeuf Gras (fatted Ox) float. The ox represents the feasting on Fat Tuesday before the arrival of the lent season. The float has masked krewe man; and it was decorated with gold accents, garland and ribbons behind Rex. This float design is still used in today's parade.

Four more krewes that was important to Mardi Gras are: The Nights of Mormus which was created in 1872. They are the second oldest krewe in New Orleans. The krewe wore masks to conceal their identity and was linked to the political and business communities of New Orleans. The Krewe of Proteus was formed in 1882. The float had a giant sea shell on it. The organization was originally private but opened up their invitations to everyone. It was name after the sea god Proteus. The krewe of Proteus made the tradition of wearing costumes while being masked they would invite the ladies that would be there to come up and dance with them. Other krewes like Rex adopted this custom. The float became a major part of the Mardi Gras parade. The king of Proteus was never revealed to the public. The Zula Social Aid and Pleasure Club was formed in 1916. It's the largest African-American organization. They kept the king a secret. The club would throw hand-painted coconuts to the crowd. The members wear blackface and grass skirts. The club is a major feature of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Their float would be decorated with palmetto leaves and tree moss. It was made with dry good boxes on a spring wagon. Any person of any race could join this krewe. Last but not least, The Mardi Gras Indians organization which date back to the 1800's, was a krewe were members would be dressed in African-Indian costumes and they would sing and march. The musicians would play drums and other percussion instruments. They organization was formed to preserve their traditions. They would march and sing songs. The biggest influence they had on Mardi Gras was their drumming music combined with the brass marching band of New Orleans which lead to the development of jazz.

Mardi Gras is a blend between the French Indian and African cultures. Mardi Gras over time

develop its own food, music rituals. Some of the most popular food served in New Orleans are: King Cake, Barbecue, Jambalaya, and Gumbo. In the field of music Mardi Gras also inspired many genres, like jazz, country, Cajun, and the original version of ("Mardi Gras Mambo"). While at the parade, the locals sell things like food and souvenirs. Most people go to Bourbon or Dauphin Street to watch the parades. The Majority of the parades take place in the uptown and mid-city district following a route on St. Charles Avenue and Canal Street on the upriver side of the French quarter. Visitors can stand and watch the parade or they can get reserved grandstand seating offered by companies near the parade route. The Rex parade allowed more participation from other maskers. The Muses Walking group created the opportunity for new groups to be part of the parade. People who take part of the Mardi Gras parade tend to wear extravagant costumes consisting of the colors purple, gold and green. Some people even wear masks or either have face paint.

At the parade, all kinds of interesting things get thrown at the crowd to catch at the Mardi Gras parade; some of the items include beads, doubloons, shirts, and cups. Mardi Gras is celebrated all over the world. In the United States, many parishes in Louisiana, and states like Texas, Alabama, and Missouri; and on the other side of the world counties like Brazil, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Quebec and Sweden take part in the Mardi Gras Festivities. So as you can see, Mardi Gras is a holiday that is rich in tradition and customs.

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