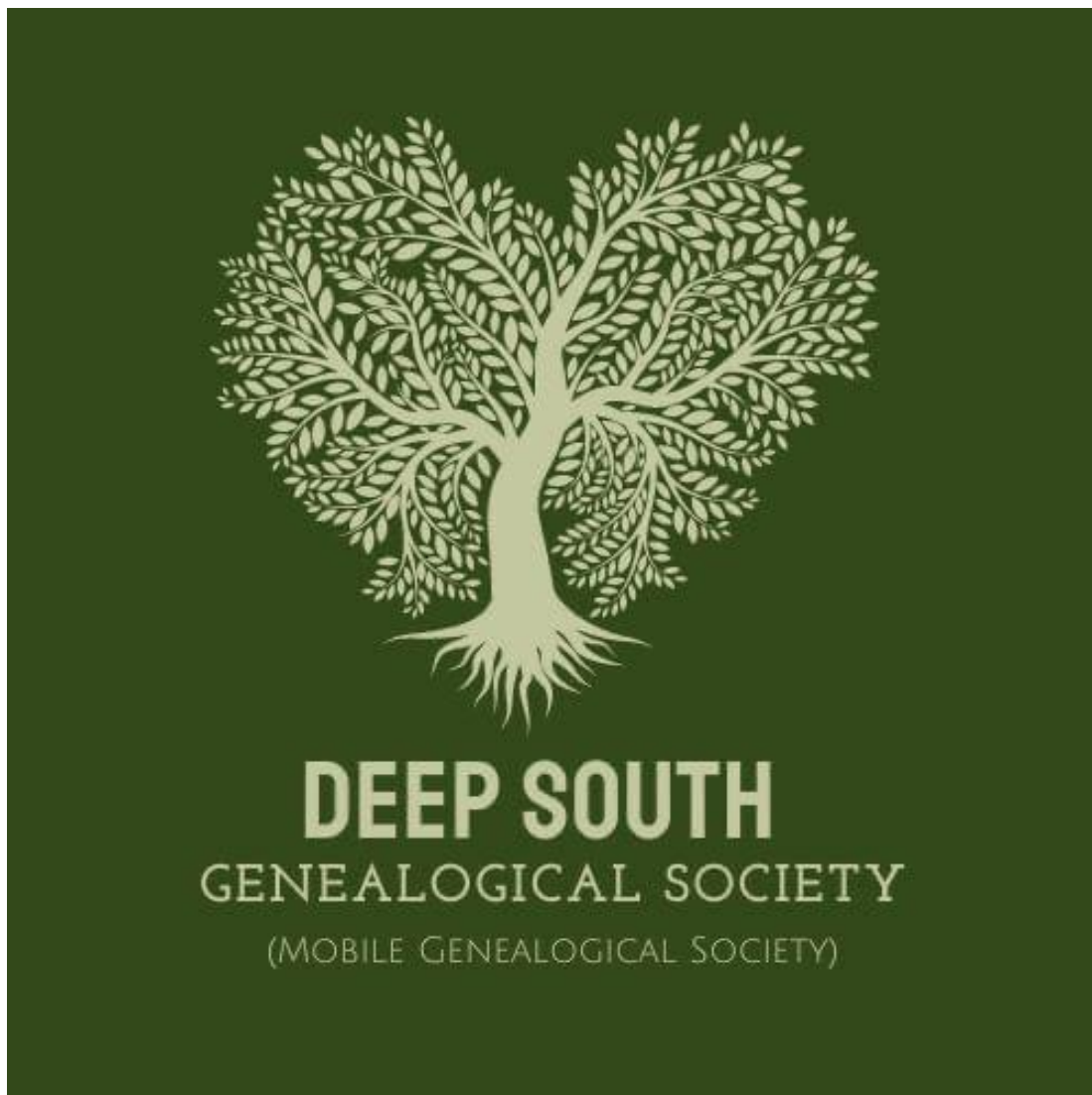


Deep South Genealogical Journal

Volume I – Number 1

January 20, 2023



Published by
Deep South Genealogical Society
Mobile, AL

Letter from the President

Greetings and welcome to the Deep South Genealogical Society and our new Deep South Genealogical Journal. I am Debbie Nicoll, DSGS President.

🌱 So why has Mobile Genealogical Society (MGS) become Deep South Genealogical Society (DSGS)? We wanted to create a new identity as we move into this new era of our organization. For so long the focus was primarily Mobile and nothing too far outside of the city and/or county of Mobile. This change opens our area of coverage into areas from Northwest Florida to Southern Louisiana and include Alabama and Southeast Mississippi. This region has always had a diverse population. With this diversity Mobile, as well as the surrounding regions, has had changing populations - people coming and going but always leaving a piece of their histories along the way. We are looking forward to be able to help people in Mobile as well as these other regions, or even nationally locate the parts of their history and fill in the gaps on their puzzle of life. These diversities include those from the times our regions were first inhabited in the 1700-1800s from either the newly formed union of states or explorations from other countries. They include those from the good times of growing states and the bad times of political and racial struggles. They include those that came on the Clotilda slave ship to those that were titans of their industry. Diversity has many facets, and we want to have persons from all these facets join us to discover their part in the collective history of the regions in which we live. Welcome!

🌱 This first complementary edition hopefully will provide an insight into the type of stories from our region that may not be widely known about but none the less are intricately part of our history.

🌱 We are working on some exciting things for this group but need your help! Many have inquired about joining and we have added the membership application to the Facebook page as well as including in the journal. We welcome your joining us as we work at rebuilding and improving the organization.

🌱 Paid Membership Benefits will include the following:

📁 Quarterly Journal with interesting articles from days past; genealogical research tips and more.

📁 Eventual electronic access to digitized past issues of MGS DSGQ Quarterlies (1962 to 2017)

📁 Four educational meetings a year

🌱 Membership levels are:

\$15 Individual

\$25 Couples

\$25 Institutions/Organizations

🌱 We look forward to your joining DSGS on this new journey and finding the missing branches in our histories.

Deep South Genealogical Society
Mobile, AL
Originally Organized as Mobile Genealogical Society, Inc.
February 1962

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The Deep South Genealogical Society, a non-profit organization, was founded 2022, in Mobile, Alabama. The Society has been granted a tax-exempt status by the U. S. Treasury Department.

Membership in the Society is \$15.00 per year, which includes a subscription to the *Deep South Genealogical Journal*, published in January, April, July, and October. Back issues of the Quarterly can be purchased for \$5.00 plus shipping unless sent electronically. A list of all other publications and their prices will be published later.

Neither the Editor nor the Society can accept responsibility for the correctness of material supplied by our contributors. The Editor reserves the right to edit any material submitted, and no material of a controversial nature will be printed. The Society cannot authorize its members to represent themselves as agents of the Society when doing research.

All correspondence relating to membership, subscriptions, orders for back issues or other publications should be mailed to Deep South Genealogical Society 6300 Weddington Court, Mobile, AL 36693. Submissions for the journal and queries can be sent to the same address.

From the Editor

I have accepted the office of Editor of the *Deep South Genealogical Journal* with an appreciation of the high standards that my predecessors have achieved over the last 50 years. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for maintaining these standards and will certainly spare no effort to do so.

A genealogical journal is only as good as the genealogical information it provides its readers. The geographical area with which we deal has a long and varied history, and many of you in the United States and even beyond have roots in this area. The materials which will help you connect with those roots are probably out there – somewhere. You may need the help of someone else to make them available to you. So a necessity for a good journal is a lot of “somebodies” uncovering whatever they have access to and making it available to researchers everywhere.

We have staked out as our primary geographical area South Alabama, the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the panhandle of Florida. I am appealing to each of our readers, wherever you are, to consider yourself a potential contributor and help make the journal a rich source of genealogical information by contributing your bit, large or small, for publication. Our focus will be more historical instead of transcriptions since there are already fifty years of transcriptions available in the back issues of the *DSGQ*. However, all transcription submissions will be reviewed, and if not published in the past, will be edited and published.

I am looking forward to serving as the Editor of the *Journal*. I am sure that together we can keep it one of the outstanding genealogical publications in the nation. Please submit any suggestions for articles via the Facebook page or you can mail them to the Society at the address on the previous page.

Petty Shackleford

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Mothers of Mobile

Editor's Note: All the information below was taken from only one source – *Old Mobile Fort Louis De La Louisiane 1702-1711* by Jay Higginbotham. No information on the Pelican Girls past 1711 was researched but if anyone is related to these women and wants to share their family history, please send it to the editor for inclusion in future volumes.

Fort Louis, located twenty-six miles north of present-day Mobile was settled around 1702 by a group of Canadians led by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and his brother Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville. Iberville and Bienville wanted the colony to prosper but there were no women among the Canadians in the fort. Bienville wrote a letter recommending 100 girls be sent to Mobile in hopes of increasing the birthrate and achieve population growth and to give the Canadians a reason to settle down and become permanent residents. The girls were expected sometime between October and November 1704.

Monseigneur Saint-Vallier, Bishop of Quebec, was entrusted with selecting the prospective brides. They were only interested in girls of high moral character and felt they could be found in orphanages and convents. During the Summer of 1703, he selected twenty girls who were "reared in virtue and piety and accustomed to labor and diligence."

During the first week of October 1703, the girls expected to make a quick trip to Rochefort where they could spend a few days freshening up before boarding the ship and leaving for Louisiana by the last week in October. The convoy did not leave Paris until the second week in October. After three thousand miles, the convoy arrived at Rochefort the last week of October. Much to their dismay, the ship was not ready and in fact had not even been chosen.

The girls were temporarily housed in a local orphanage, but they were allowed to go out and see Rochefort with strict conditions. That practice came to an end as rumors of what awaited them in Mobile began to make them second guess their decision to go there. The girls were confined to the orphanage but there were soothed with occasional gifts and the promise of private quarters on the ship.

The ship they would eventually travel on was a large, recently captured Dutch vessel of some 600 tons called *Pélican*. It was to be commanded by Hervé Guymont Ducoudroy. The ships necessary to escort them were not available, Iberville was very ill, but they were ordered to leave by January 1704.

The first of February passed, and they were still there. There were several more additions to the passengers as well. Two nursing sisters from a local orphanage, Catherine Moulois (midwife) and her husband Laurent Cloquinet, and a seminary priest of ill health, Alexandre Huvé.

Despite being ordered to leave by the end of January 1704, delays continued to impede their embarkation. In late March an attempt was made to load the girls. A launch left Rochefort for the harbor. Unusually rough seas made it impossible for the small vessel to reach its destination. After three or four days, the launch was forced to return to port.

The *Pélican* finally weighed anchor on April 19, 1704, and headed for the open sea, escorted by a squadron of twelve gunboats. Their first port of call was Cap-français on the northwest coast of the

island of Saint-Dominique. By June 17th they departed Cap-fraçais and headed to Havana. They stopped for a few days at Baracoa, on the eastern tip of Cuba, and departed from there on the last day of June. The ship arrived in Havana on July 7th. The girls and the nursing sisters were allowed to leave the ship for the first time since leaving Rochefort. Louise-Françoise Lefevre de Malpalu complained several times of being bitten by mosquitoes.

They hoisted sails on July 14th. Massacre Island was only a week away. Shortly after departure, some of the crewmen began to complain about chills and fever. Louise-Françoise was also ill. By the time they reached Massacre Island on July 22nd, nearly sixty of the *Pélican's* soldiers and crewman were already feverish and the number was increasing almost hourly. Due to the sickness, unloading the ship onto the transport boats was slow but on August 1, 1704, they came upon the settlement.

Of the several girls who had fallen ill aboard the ship, all but Louise-Françoise seemed to be recovering. She had been immediately taken to the seminary upon arrival where after a night of delirium and vomiting, she succumbed the next morning. She was buried the same day (August 2, 1704).

The girls knew quite a bit about the Canadians before they landed thanks to the efforts of their "governess" Marie-Françoise de Boisrenaud who wanted to ensure the girls were well matched. Of the 50-60 eligible men, only 40 would be seriously considered and only twenty-five were regarded as good prospects by Marie-Françoise.

Courtships began soon after debarkation. Beginning the second week of August 1704, eight of the girls has already entered marriage contracts. Practically every day during the middle of August, one or more marriage ceremonies were held at the small, unadorned chapel inside Fort Louis. By August 17th, thirteen marriages had been consecrated. The remaining eight girls were holding out for better prospects.

Marriages slowed down after this because of the return of Yellow Fever. By the time the *Pélican* landed on August 1st, most of the sickness was gone. What they did not realize was that the mosquitoes at Fort Louis had already bitten some of the recovering individuals and began to spread the disease at Fort Louis. Two of the most prominent bachelors, Henri de Tonti and Charles Levasseur, were infected toward the third week in August.

By late August, things at the fort came to a halt. Yellow Fever had attacked more than half of the population. Henri de Tonti died on September 4, 1704, followed by Charles Levasseur the next day. The Yellow Fever did not end until the first frost when all the mosquitoes were killed.

The Pelican Girls' stories follow:

Marie-Catherine Philippe

Marie-Catherine Philippe was 16 years old. She was the daughter of Charles Philippe, a respected resident of Meaux-en-Brie. She was illiterate and before she consented to a marriage contract with Pierre Alain, Marie-Françoise made sure she understood everything in the contract before she placed her mark on it. They were married very shortly after the Pelican arrived in August 1704. She gave birth to a child in 1709.

Gabrielle Savary

Gabrielle Savary was the daughter of Pierre Savary and Jeanne Fautisse. She was born 28 January 1684 in the parish of Saint-Denis. As one of the last ones to marry, she married Jean-Baptiste Saucier. They had two children within a fourteen-month period which indicates she either had twins or employed a wet nurse. Her third child, a son, was born on 27 November 1707 at 11 O'clock at night. He was baptized the next day and given the name Jean-Baptiste. On 28 April 1710, at nine-thirty in the evening, she gave birth to her fourth child. He was baptized the next morning and given the name Jacques.

Marie-Marguerite Dufresne

Marie-Marguerite Dufresne was fourteen years old. She was the daughter of Charles Dufresne, Sieur Demotel, a squire of the parish of Saint-Germain. She was formally betrothed and married to Jean-Baptiste Alexandre in 1704. In the early Spring of 1708, she bore a son. She bore a second son, Philippe, who was baptized on 20 July 1710.

Marie-Therese Brochon

Marie-Therese Brochon was not considered a high or well born girl, but she was very pious. She met and made a marriage contract with Pierre Broussard during the second week of August 1704. They had at least two children, the second born in the Spring of 1708. He was named Pierre.

Angélique Drouin

Angelique Drouin, like Marie-Therese Brochon, was not highborn but very pious. She was not married by mid-August 1704, but she was formally betrothed to Jean-Baptiste Le Croix. They lived on Ile. Massacre (Dauphin Island) where he was in high demand as a carpenter. They lost several children in the early days of their marriage. On 8 February 1709, Angelique bore him a son. As soon as she was able to move, they boarded a pirogue and headed to Fort Louis. It was cold and the water was choppy, but they safely reached Mobile on 23 February and their son was baptized the next day. He was named Jean-Baptiste.

Burelle Sisters

Jeanne-Louise Burelle

Jeanne-Louis Burelle, 20 years of age, was the oldest of the Burelle sisters to come to Mobile. Her parents were Etienne Burrelle and Marguerite Rousseau. Her younger brother Louis also made the trip. Jeanne was betrothed to and married Francoise Trudeau. The only other information on Jeanne is she was in the last stages of pregnancy during the Winter of 1709.

Genevieve Burelle

Genevieve was seventeen years old when she came to Mobile. She was wooed by Claude Trepanier. They had two daughters, Marguerite born in 1708 and Genevieve on 5 February 1709. It is very likely she had other children not listed in the source material.

Marguerite Burelle

Marguerite was the youngest of the three sisters. She was fifteen years old. She was wooed by Gilbert Dardenne. Marguerite and Gilbert reportedly had three children but only two daughters, a five-year old and Jeanne (born around 1706) are mentioned.

Jeanne-Elisabeth Le Pinteaux

Jeanne-Elisabeth was married in mid-August, became sick in September and died on 25 September 1704.

Jeanne Catherine de Berenhard

Jeanne Catherine took many of the girls under her wing and acted with some authority over them. She made sure the ones who were illiterate understood the marriage contracts before they signed them. She married Nicolas de La Salle. They had a son born in 1708 who was baptized as Henri. Jeanne was also pregnant in the winter of 1709 and a daughter was born 24 August 1709 named Marie. She died at six days old. In early December 1710, Jeanne became very sick with influenza, and she dies within a few days. Nicolas died on 31 December 1710.

Marie-Francoise de Boisrenaud

Marie was the “la fille supérieure” who acted with authority over the other girls. She made sure the illiterate girls understood everything in the marriage contracts before they placed their mark. She took it upon herself to make sure her *filles* were well matched. She spent so much time assisting the others making a good match that by 1708 she was ruled out as a possibility for marriage. Before she left France, Marie-Francoise had been associated with some of the more prestigious convents. She was also associated with Louis XIV’s most prolific mistress. As a result, she did not feel that any of the Canadian men were up to her standards. She was the only one not married within the first two months of their arrival. She refused to marry and her relationship with Bienville became strained. Several of the Canadian men pressured Bienville to make her choose.

There was one Canadian towards whom she showed no prejudice – Pierre Dugué de Boisbriant. He was brought back to the fort in March 1705 after being in Choctaw territory. Marie-Francoise accepted the responsibility of nursing him back to health. During his convalescence, a romance blossomed between the two. Boisbriant proposed to her but by the time he was fully recovered, Marie-Francoise’s relationship with Bienville had deteriorated due to her vocal criticisms of his administration of the colony. Bienville refused to allow his chief supporter to have such a strong association with those not aligned with his views. This decision created a permanent rift between Bienville and Marie-Francoise.

Marie-Magdeleine Öuanet

Marie-Magdeleine entered a marriage contract and eventually married Françoise Dupré. She was illiterate but Marie-Françoise ensure she understood everything in the contract before she placed her mark on it. In the Autumn of 1708, she gave birth to a daughter who was named Marie-Thérèse.

Marguerite Guichard

Very little is known about Marguerite except that she entered a marriage contract.

Renée Gilbert

Renée was not one of the girls recruited in Paris. She replaced one of those girls and was originally from Tours. She married a young cannoneer from LaRoche named Jean-Baptist Roy. They were married in mid-August 1704 and moved into his house on the corner of rue de Port and rue d’Iberville. On the morning of 16 August 1705, the midwife Marie Grissot was summoned to their house. Their son was delivered at noon but not baptized for a week. They named him Jacques. In the Spring of 1708, they

moved to Massacre Island and their second son was born on May 18th. He was also baptized a week later and named Jean-Philippe.

Louise-Françoise Lefevre (de Malpula)

After the Pelican stopped in Havana on the way to Mobile, Louise-Françoise complained about being bitten by mosquitoes. By the time they reached Massacre Island, she was nearly delirious with fever. She was taken to the seminary quarters on the rue Sainte-Anne, where after a night of delirium and vomiting, she succumbed the following morning, 2 August 1704.

Marie Briand

Upon arrival. Marie caught the eye of Antoine Rivard de la Vigne, a merchant from Batiscan. He was born in Canada to Nicolas Rivard, a native of Tourouvre, France and Catherine Saint-Père from Saint-Jean-de-d'Angèly. They moved to the outskirts of town on the rue Dugué. Aside from its immediate importance, this courtship was to have far-reaching repercussions in the political and social history of Louisiana. Their first daughter was born in the Autumn of 1705. She was named Marie. Just after 5 o'clock in the morning of 4 October 1707, their second daughter was born. Their third daughter, Marie-Geneviève was born in 1708.

Marie-Catherine Christophe

Catherine was wooed and eventually married master gunsmith of Rochefort René Boyer. In the Fall/Winter of 1705, their child died. Boyer blamed Bienville for his child's death because Boyer was denied the milk needed while the child was sick.

Louise-Marguerite Housseau

Louise-Marguerite was another late addition to the passenger list of the Pelican. She was from Chantilly. She was courted by and married Guillaume Boutin, a 29 year-old from Dombourg in Upper Quebec. Two days before Christmas in 1707, Louise-Marguerite gave birth to son named Nicolas during his baptism on Christmas Eve. On 19 January 1709, Boutin received word his wife had a daughter. Her baptism was one of the most ceremonious that had yet taken place in Mobile. Chaplain François Le Maire performed the rites, and the child was named Marie-Marguerite.

Gabrielle Bonnet

One of six women not married in 1708. She was not a good prospect because she was demented from being deserted by her husband three years before.

Marie-Nöel Dumesnil

One of the eight girls without a husband in mid-August.

Marguerite Tavernier

By the second week of August, satisfied with her courtship and consented to a marriage contract. The name of the man she married was not given.

Marie-Élisabeth Deshays

One of the eight girls not betrothed by mid-August but she was formerly betrothed by the first part of September. She eventually married Jean Bourbonnois. In mid-October 1707, she gave birth to a daughter Élisabeth-Angelique.

Gabrielle Bonnet

Gabrielle married Jean-Baptiste Roy. He deserted her shortly after the marriage. In 1708, she was one of six single women but considered undesirable because she became demented after her husband left.

Catherine Tournant

By the second week of August 1704, Catherine was satisfied with her courtship and consented to enter a marriage contract. Shortly after, she came down with Yellow Fever. She was married in mid-August, got sick in September and was dead by September 23rd.

Pelican Girls in 2021

In 2021, a group of local women were lamenting over the fact Mardi Gras had been cancelled. They learned that Dauphin Island was going to have a tableau. To participate, you had to represent a part of history for the area. Thus, the idea of the Pelican Girls Mardi Gras Society was formed. In order to be in the group, the lady had to have a gown, a casquette (luggage they came over with), mask and throws. The throws had to be handmade from materials that were only available in the early 1700s. They participated in the Massacre Island Secret Society (MISS) and Joe Cain Day.

Membership in the Pelican Girls is limited to twenty-three ladies just like the original ladies that came over on the *Pélican*. They march as a guest for the MISS and on Joe Cain Day. They agreed to a pannier instead of a hoop skirt. The pannier was period-specific, and the hoop skirt didn't appear until the 1860s. They will have to make their own throws. It will be nice to see this group of ladies represent the Mothers of Mobile in the future.

The “Can’t-Get-Away” Club of Mobile

Editor’s note: This article is reprinted with permission from the Alabama Historical Association. This paper was presented on April 22, 1988, at the Alabama Historical Association annual meeting held in Montgomery, Alabama. It was written by Helen Coffin Wilson (September 1917-October 2010) of Mobile, AL.

Many are the names of clubs and organizations that have crossed the pages of history and have appeared in fact and in fiction.

But can you recall a name as strange, as tantalizing to the imagination, as unique as “The Can’t-Get-Away Club?”

Can’t get away from what? From home, from family, from the office, from school?

No, the Can’t-Get-Away Club was really the Won’t-Get-Away Club, whose members would not leave their city during the epidemics of yellow fever which devastated Mobile at several intervals during the nineteenth century.

Let’s look back a bit to the many long years that led up to the six decades that the Can’t-Get-Away Club ministered to the special needs of the people of Mobile.

WE know that the earliest settlement which became Mobile was established on the high bluff of the Mobile River twenty-seven miles above its mouth in the eighteenth century, 1702, a little French colony led by Bienville.

We pause to wonder then why history documents Mobile’s first deadly yellow fever epidemic as occurring in 1839, 137 years after its founding. Surely there was this particular sickness during all of those long years. And indeed, there was. Perhaps the sparsity in numbers of the colonists precluded illnesses and deaths from being historically documented as epidemics.

The little colony on the river bluff tried to echo the court life of its homeland, but wives and families and eligible maidens were scarce in the man’s world of the military post.

So King Louis XIV decided to do something about it. Along with the supplies being sent to the little settlement on the ship, the PELICAN, in 1704, there were twenty-three passengers, young girls who had agreed to go to the colony to marry and establish homes. The king had given each of them a dowry in a little trunk called a cassette – hence their name, the “Cassette Girls.” Within a month they were all married – except one, “unusually coy and hard to please,” it was said.¹

Tragically, also on the PELICAN rode an invisible passenger. The little ship has touched at Santo Domingo – and it brought from there yellow fever.

Resulting from this was the first colonial incidence of yellow fever – perhaps in proportion the most fatal. Half of the crew of the PELICAN, thirty of the newly arrived soldiers, a priest and explore Henri de Tonty all died in that September 1704.²

The site of their burials has been lost. De Tonty – who explored with LaSalle, who had seen the discovery of the Mississippi River, who had aided Bienville in the new little fort – lies in an unknown grave alongside his compatriots near the Mobile River at 27-Mile Bluff, a victim of the scourge of yellow fever.

Bienville, struggling to cope with the ravages of the fever and the frequently flooding river waters, in 1711 moved his little colony twenty-seven miles south to the mouth of the Mobile River at the top of Mobile Bay – and here Mobile has remained ever since.

It continued as a French colony until 1763, when, by the Treaty of Paris, England took from France all of Louisiana east of the Mississippi and all of Canada.

The English flag flew over Mobile until 1780 when the Spaniard Galvez besieged and bombarded the city. Possibly the first to succumb to yellow fever in Spanish times was Antonio Espejo, a prominent citizen who died in 1805, a victim of the disease caught from a vessel sailing from Havanna.³

What is yellow fever, what was it then, this terrifying, ravishing, fatal disease? Cecil and Loeb's A TEXTBOOK OF MEDICINE defines it graphically in terms of modern medicine:

"Yellow fever is an acute viral disease characterized by sudden onset, prostration, moderately high fever, a pulse rate slow in relation to temperature and, when severe, by vomiting altered blood...When the virus is transmitted from man to man by the domestic mosquito, it is called urban yellow fever."⁴

As it appeared sporadically on the Gulf Coast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its cause was unknown, knowledge for its treatment was limited, and its awful result was only too apparent.

By the 1830s Mobile has become a growing American city. General James Wilkinson, under orders from President Madison, had captured the city from the Spanish on April 13, 1813. Under the American flag the city was prospering. Cotton plantations in inland Alabama were shipping their "white gold" to and through Mobile. A period of affluence was developing.

Yellow fever was the greatest drawback and no sure was known. From 1839 to 1897 there were eight documented epidemics in Mobile.

People were convinced that the terrible affliction was caught only at night, but they did not know that a mosquito that bit only at night carried the germ. A common theory was that night fogs rising from the ground carried contagion. Nor did people know why the coming of frost brought relief from the sickness.

Another general belief was that it was spread by contact with the sick or with their clothing or with anything they touched. Also, it was thought to be communicated at a distance by means of letters and even newspapers.⁵

People did realize that the disease did not seem to flourish in the pine woods or on hills. The demand for summer residences on the elevated land west of Mobile hastened the development of Spring Hill and Cottage Hill in the 1830's, and many attractive residences were built, particularly in Spring Hill.⁶

Still the numbers of widows and orphans increased as families became victims of the dreadful scourge. IN 1829 the Female Benevolent Society was organized to care for the poor and the sick under the leadership of Anna Mary Garrow, the wife of twice-mayor Samuel H. Garrow. Mrs. Henry Hitchcock,

whose husband was Alabama's first attorney general and who later represented Mobile County in the legislature, was also a leader in this venture.

Henry Hitchcock donated a parcel of land and, with \$5,000 from the city and \$5,000 from individual citizens, on this land were built "twelve neat tenements in a healthy part of the city, where widows have their homes and are made happy."⁷ This Society is still active today and maintains a home on Government Street for "genteel ladies."

Henry Hitchcock himself died in 1839 "of the prevailing disease," it was said, before he was fifty years old.⁸

That same year the Protestant Orphan Asylum was organized to care for orphaned children. Yellow fever decimated many families. Led by Mrs. William T. Hamilton, wife of the minister of Government Street Presbyterian Church, its board was composed of lady delegates from each denomination. By 1853 this dedicated group has succeeded in erecting a large brick building on Dauphin Street for the care of the little ones.⁹ The building still stands, but the orphanage has been dissolved.

The fever was prevalent in Mobile in 1837. Two years later a series of devastating fires ravaged the city. In the wake of the stricken city and burned-out homes and buildings came one of the greatest epidemics in Mobile's history.

People died by the dozens every day. Doctors and nurses and medicine were scarce.¹⁰

The city of Mobile was in a crisis situation in this August of 1839. A group of greatly concerned citizens resolved to find a way to give help in whatever way they could.

This group were old friends. For quite some time they had met every day for lunch at the Alhambra Club, a popular downtown gathering place. Among them were lawyers, bankers, merchants, businessmen – all well-known, highly respected, influential citizens.

They knew quite well what their city was facing – rampaging disease, daily deaths by the dozens, too few nurses and doctors, many citizens with too little money to afford medical services even if they were available.

First, they decided to raise a relief fund. Then one of them suggested forming an organization not only to raise money, but to actually care for the sick themselves, a true yellow fever relief organization. And this they did.

They elected John Hurtel, port warden, as president. Other officers were Evan Austill, merchant; William H. Redwood, banker; John H. Higley, bookkeeper; David P. Reid, dry goods clerk; and Thomas McConnell, bookkeeper.

And then they searched for a name to call themselves. Charles J. B. Fisher, who later was city editor of THE MOBILE REGISTER, suggested that all persons should be eligible for membership who, poor things, couldn't get away. There were many who were fleeing the city to Spring Hill and travelling to other cities, but the majority had to stay behind because they couldn't get away.

There was the name – and thus was born THE-CAN'T-GET-AWAY CLUB.¹¹

These first members started work at once for the sick and the dying. The need was overwhelming. Several thousand people were ill and death tolls exceeded six hundred. It took courage to enter a sick room when the cause of such sickness was unknown. But the Can't-Get-Away Club was on the scene everywhere. Others joined the Club in its efforts and its membership expanded and was open to all citizens.

It was not until mid-November that the worst was over, and a frost brought this siege to an end.

A letter from Daniels Prairie, Alabama, dated October 14, 1839, to Mrs. William Sayre in Mobile from her friend, S. C. Thornton, makes poignant the stress of the times. She wrote, "...Since the appearance of the fever among you, I have not had the courage to write to a friend in Mobile, not knowing that they would be spared until it would reach them...My spirits have been depressed on account of the mortality among my friends and neighbors. At one time it was reported you were dead, but I did not believe it, as I know you had been wise or prudent enough...to move out early to Springhill. Never was I more shocked than when the report reached us of the first case, and that one, our beloved neighbor and friend, Judge Hitchcock...I trust all your immediate family have been spared, but I regret to learn that your house has not – that Mrs. Converse is dead."¹²

Among the doctors in Mobile at this time was one who was already well-known and who would later become quite famous in medical circles.¹³

He was Dr. Josiah Clark Nott, a native of Columbia, South Carolina, who came to Mobile in 1836 to practice his profession. He was eminent as a physician and surgeon, a sound pathologist and one who was not much wedded to the use of drugs unless experience had proved their unquestionable value.

No year in Mobile went by without at least sporadic cases of yellow fever and many years could be characterized as mild or severe epidemic years.

Some thought that decaying vegetable and animal matter was a source of the disease and Mobile went through a flurry of activity to clean itself up. Dr. Nott became convinced that such a source was not accurate. The pattern of the outbreaks of the early 1840's disproved the theory, he felt sure.

He believed that there was an unknown animalcular origin of yellow fever and was the first to suggest that insects could be carriers. He presented his views in a paper entitled "On the Cause of Yellow Fever," published in the NEW ORLEANS MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL (Vol. 4) in 1848. He wrote, "it is probable that yellow fever is carried by an insect...bred on the ground, and in what manner it makes its impression is but surmise..."

Dr. Nott moved his own family out to Spring Hill during the dangerous months of August to October each year, spending his days tending his patients in the city.

In the summer of 1853 Mobile fell victim to perhaps the worst epidemic of all. Spread from New Orleans on a ship with an infected crew that anchored in Mobile Bay on July 11, the fever increased with dramatic suddenness by the last week in August – thirty-seven victims one week, 156 in the week following and 194 the week after that.

Merchants were opening only a few hours each day, and offices closed by three o'clock to give clerks time to get out into the country before nightfall.

A week later the disease was shifting location and Spring Hill was threatened. Here the Nott family lived on the property of his father-in-law, James Deas. Yellow fever struck first the Deas household, then Dr, Nott's own family. Sarah, nearly four, died on the fifteenth of September; Emma, ten, on the eighteenth; baby Allen, nearly two, on the nineteenth; and on the twentieth, Edward, the eldest son, age nineteen. What tragedy! The Nott children are buried in Mobile's Magnolia Cemetery, and along with their headstones is a cast-iron effigy of their dog, a faithful friend in their last sickness.

The Can't-Get-Away Club strived valiantly through the terrifying weeks of the epidemic. There were 764 deaths and there would probably have been more had it not been for the Club's ministrations.

On February 1, 1854, the General Assembly of Alabama passed an act, signed by Governor J. A. Winston, to incorporate the Can't-Get-Away Club of Mobile for Charitable and benevolent purposes, authorizing the Club to adopt a constitution and by-laws, and to hold real and personal property and money by gift or will. John Hurtel, the Club's first president, was one of the incorporators.

In Article I of its constitution, the Can't-Get-Away Club set forth its reason for being: "The object of this association shall be to relieve the destitute sick of Epidemic Fevers." And Article XII stated, "No member of the Club shall receive any pay for his services..."¹⁴

Mobile enjoyed a respite from the fever for the next dozen or so years. The Club maintained its active membership, ever ready for the next emergency.

The years 1867 and 1870 brought renewed fever resurgence. One hundred forty-eight deaths occurred in 1867 and 289 in 1870. D. R. W. Davis was president at this time.

Judge of Probate Price Williams, Jr., became club president in 1878.

Dr. Nott, during the epidemics of the 1850's, 60's and 70's, continued in his thoughtful quest of what the cause of yellow fever could be and why its rapid spread during only the summer and early fall months. He discarded his early theory that it may be linked to decaying matter, maintaining that the disease skipped about too much for that to be possible. He clung to his theory of an insect culprit, even though he was ridiculed by some of his medical colleagues.¹⁵

It would not be until 1900, twenty-seven years after Dr. Nott's death, that Dr. Walter Reed proved that the yellow fever parasite was carried only by the mosquito called *Stegomyia fasciata*.

It was two years later, armed with this knowledge, that Major William Crawford Gorgas and a team of United States sanitary engineers eradicated yellow fever from Cuba and later from Panama, making possible the construction of the Panama Canal.¹⁶

An interesting sidelight us the closeness of the Nott family and the Gorgas family through many years. William Crawford Gorgas was born at the home of his grandfather, Judge John Gayle, in the Mobile suburb of Toulmanville on October 3, 1854. In attendance was none other than Dr. Josiah Nott, the close family friend.

Forty-eight years later, the tiny baby, grown up, would play the major role in eradicating the pest that caused the yellow fever, the insect that was first suspected by the very doctor who brought him into the world.

This same Dr. Josiah Nott was the leader in the founding of the Mobile Medical Society in 1841. And it was largely through his energy, vision and popularity, and his sheer persuasiveness with the State legislature, that in 1858 the Medical College of Alabama was established in Mobile. In 1920 the college was moved to the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa where the medical building was named Nott Hall for Dr. Nott.¹⁷

Mobile was last visited by an epidemic in 1897. Judge Price Williams was still club president. The Reverend Gardiner C. Tucker, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, was a Can't-Get-Away Club member at this time and he kept a diary log of his experience.

His diary is vivid with accounts of panic, of fleeing the city, of quarantines of people and streets and mail and packages. "For," he wrote, "in those days it was believed that the disease was both infectious and contagious, and that it could be carried from one place or person to another in clothing, bedding or anything that was not solid...and to go into a house where there was a case was taking one's life in one's hands...At funerals I was required to stand ten feet from the grave-side and to the windward. This was so at first, but when the work became heavy, precautions were thrown aside, and we were merely content to wash our hands and faces afterwards..." It was apparent that extreme precautions did not stop the spread of the fever.¹⁸

The Can't-Get-Away Club held daily meetings and investigated every case of sickness or need and provided all possible relief. All doctors and nurses reported their cases to the Club.

By December 1897 the emergency had subsided. The Club met to assess its accomplishments and to express its thanks in its report to "the generous people of Mobile for the unbounded liberality...to members of the medical profession who gave their time and talent to the cause of humanity; and ...to the ministers of religion, Jew and Gentile." The report was signed by O. J. Semmes, P. F. Alba, G. Van Antwerp, Robert F. Acker and Louis Donald, names still familiar in Mobile.

The Reverend Tucker was the last surviving member of this gallant humanitarian organization. He dies in 1941 at the age of ninety-one and is buried in the Can't-Get-Away Club lot in Mobile's Magnolia Cemetery.¹⁹

The people of Mobile continue to remember the deeds of heroism and courageous service of the dozens of citizens listed on the rosters of the Can't-Get-Away Club from its first beginning in 1839 until the end of the century.

Modern science has conquered yellow fever and abolished the threat. But when its scourge challenged the very life of the city, the Can't-Get-Away Club wouldn't go away. It stayed to fight.

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Excelsior Band Celebrates 140 Years

The Excelsior Band will open Mardi Gras 2022 and mark its 140th anniversary. On November 23, 1883, John A. and Odeil Pope welcomed their one and only son into the world. John was so excited he invited his musician friends over and they played all night long and the Excelsior Band was formed.

John A. Pope was born in Mobile in 1863. He attended the Creole Catholic School on the southeast corner of St. Louis and Bayou streets. He worked with his father in the cotton business but later went into the family sheet metal business on Spring Hill Avenue. John A Pope died in Mobile in 1951. His son, John C. had already taken over the band in 1902 at the age of 19.

The Excelsior Band has played at weddings, funerals, baseball games, ferry boat outings on Mobile Bay and various parades. In the 1920s and 30s, the members formed an orchestra called "Pope's Dreamland Serenaders and they performed at more formal functions at the Battle House, Country Club of Mobile and the Athelstan Club.

The Excelsior Band originally began marching in Mardi Gras parades when the streets were still dirt. They would follow at the end of the parade and people would fall in behind them and them all over Mobile.

The Excelsior Band joined the black musician's local No. 613 in 1942. In 1905, the white musician's local No. 407 was formed. In 1969 the two unions merged and are now known as the 407/613 Chapter of the American Federation of Musicians. Their membership is mostly from Alabama and Mississippi.

The Excelsior Band has won several awards and was also recognized by the Mobile Carnival Association in 1993. The award was a special medal made to commemorate their one-hundredth anniversary. In 2013, they received the Alabama Folk Heritage Award presented by the Alabama Council on the Arts. The Mobile Chapter of the NAACP presented them with the Image Award in 2016. The National Endowment for the Arts named the Excelsior Band as one of the ten National Heritage Fellows for 2022.

When the Conde Cavaliers start off the Mardi Gras season on February 3, 2023, the Excelsior Band will lead the parade for the 140th time. They are easily one of the most recognizable bands in Mobile and will stay that way for many more years to come.

Original Excelsior Band Members

- John A. Pope – B flat trumpet player, founder, director and president of the Creole Fire Co.
- Ted Collins
- Tilly Laurendine
- Leo Battiste
- "Cootie" Williams
- Alex Terez – captain of the Creole Steam Fire Station No. 1

1922 Excelsior Band Members

- Dennis Trenier
- Egor Collins
- Stewart McNeil

- George Washington
- Emile Ponquinette
- Albert LaLand
- Toby Pitts
- Walter Trenier
- Charles Lipscomb
- John C. Pope
- Hays Brinkley
- E. A. Ponquinette
- Nathaniel Holman
- Willie Ballariel

1981 Excelsior Band Members

- E. B. Coleman – bass, assistant band director at Murphy High School
- Robert Petty – trombone, mail carrier
- Hubert Standfield – saxophone, mail carrier
- Joseph Lewis – saxophone, upholsterer
- Hosea London – trumpet, employed at the Brewer Center
- Herbert Dillard – trumpet, band director at Hillsdale Middle School
- Phillip Moody – snare drums, employed at Courtaulds
- James Matthews – bass drums, in the construction business
- Joseph Morris – saxophone, window display artist for Metzger's
- James Seals – trumpet

1998 Excelsior Band Members

- Robert Petty
- Hubert Standfield
- Leon Rhoden
- James Matthews
- Ray Packer
- Theodore Arthur
- Charles Hall
- James Seals

Current Excelsior Band Members

- Hosea London – leader and manager, member since 1975
- Theodore Arthur – tenor, alto and soprano saxophone
- Leon Rhoden – snare drum for parades, drum set with orchestra
- James Moore – soprano saxophone
- Carl Cunningham, Jr. – trombone, began playing in 5th grade
- Danny Mosley – smooth classical/jazz trumpeter, member since 2000
- Ronnie Hunter – saxophone beginning in 6th grade, tuba in high school, member since 2018
- Bradley Cooper – classical trained pianist, trumpet player

- Sean Thomas – began piano at a young age, also plays trombone, tuba and drums, member since 2005
- Luquen Cannon – trained trombonist
- Herbert O. Nelson, III – alto saxophone
- Aaron Covin – trumpet, youngest member, member since 2021

Barton Academy – Alabama and Mobile’s First Public School

Led by Willoughby Barton, Mobile County established the state’s first public school system in 1826 and began building Barton Academy in 1836. For the design, the school commission selected architects James Gallier Sr. and brothers James and Charles Dakin, major figures in the Greek Revival movement who began their careers in New York and made their mark creating some of the best-known buildings in New Orleans. Barton Academy and Government Street Presbyterian Church, a National Historic Landmark, are Mobile’s last surviving examples of works by Gallier and Dakin.

Although the school commission bought an entire block on Government Street in 1830, problems raising funds delayed construction of a school. Eventually the state legislature allowed the commission to raise funds through a lottery. By early 1836 they had \$50,000 in lottery funds, a \$15,000 municipal loan and private donations, including a large gift from Henry Hitchcock, a local millionaire and major funder of nearby Government Street Presbyterian.

After finishing touches were completed in 1839, students began attending Barton – but for a tuition fee. A large construction debt prevented the commission from offering full public education, and classrooms were rented to a number of private and denominational schools, with costs supplemented by the school commission. After more than a decade, a new board of commissioners reorganized the school system and reopened Barton as a public school in November 1852. This system became the model for Alabama’s public school system.

Aside from being closed during the Civil War, Barton continued to be Mobile County’s public high school until Murphy High School opened in 1926. Barton served as an elementary and middle school until the 1960s when it was converted to the central office for the Mobile County Public School System. Barton was expanded with wings to the east and west in 1899 and with an additional building – J.D. Yerby School – along Conti Street in 1904. Over the years Barton’s interior has been dramatically altered, divided and rebuilt. Only the interior of the rotunda under the dome remains in its original condition and configuration.

The building was surveyed by the Historic American Buildings Survey several times from 1934 to 1937, resulting in a large collection of photos and drawings maintained at the Library of Congress. Barton was added to the National Register of Historic Places in February 1970.

Vacant since 2007, Barton has twice landed on Alabama’s list of “Places in Peril.” In 2012, the Barton Academy Foundation launched a campaign to renovate the building for use as a world studies school and prepare this landmark for a dramatic new role in the 21st century. The Mobile County Public School

System allocated \$3.5 million from its \$100 million construction bond for repairs to the exterior of Baton Academy in 2013. The renovations were completed in 2015. Interior renovations were begun in 2020 when the Barton Foundation reached its \$14 million goal. The Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies opened in August 2021. It serves grades 6-9.

DNA and Genealogy

In the last ten years, DNA testing for ancestry research has skyrocketed. There are many services to choose from and deciding on the best one for you can be difficult. One word of caution, be one hundred percent sure you are ready for the results you may receive. You may find out that your parents are not really your parents and that can be very difficult to understand. Here is some information on the top testing companies:

Ancestry DNA

Ancestry started their DNA testing in 2012. This is an autosomal DNA test which means they are the twenty-two pairs of chromosomes we all have and do not indicate your sex. In October 2022, Ancestry reported they have a network of over 22 million people, making them the largest testing company in the world. They offer ethnicity results and familial matches up to 4th-6th cousins. The test costs \$99 but several times a year they are placed on sale for 1/2 price (Black Friday was the last sale). For an additional fee of \$20, you can also have your DNA traits provided. You can share your DNA results with other family members and compare your matches. This is especially helpful if you are adopted and trying to locate your biological family. The one major drawback to Ancestry is you must have an account with them to contact relatives and see their records.

23 and Me

23 and Me has a database of 12+ million tests. This test is more popular with younger adults. The test will give you autosomal DNA results, sex chromosome and mitochondrial DNA (DNA you get from your mother). 23 and Me will provide you with a list of DNA Relatives as well as genetic information. Their kit costs \$199 for both Health plus Ancestry. Ancestry only or Health only is \$99. For an additional \$29 per year, you can get the 23 and Me plus membership which allows you to see personalized health reports and use advanced Ancestry features but 23 and Me does not have records available for research. The main drawback is you can only have 1500 matches at a time and as you receive new matches, the older ones will disappear.

My Heritage DNA

As the third largest database, My Heritage had 6 million tests in their database as of December 2022. There are more European customers in this database because my Heritage has more European records than any other genealogy source. They also test autosomal DNA and breakdown your results based on 42 ethnic backgrounds. Your match count will depend on your ethnicity. Like Ancestry, My Heritage has searchable records and like Ancestry, there is a cost associated with accessing these records. Their DNA test kits cost \$79 but unlike Ancestry and 23 and Me, they allow you to upload your raw DNA from another site for free. The main drawback is the limited amount of space for you to build your family history. Once you get to 500 mb you must buy a plan and the cost can be as much as \$299 per year.

Family Tree DNA (FTDNA)

If you are male and want to trace your line back as far as you can, then Family Tree DNA is for you. They are the only company that offers the Y-DNA test. Without getting too technical, males have an X and a Y chromosome. Females have two XX chromosomes. Males are unique because the Y chromosome can only come from their father and the X chromosome can only come from their mother. Because of this,

males can trace their direct ancestors back many generations depending on how much they want to pay. FTDNA does not have searchable records, but they do allow users to upload family trees that are searchable for all your matches. Their kit prices start at \$99 and go up from there depending on the level of Y-DNA you want tested.

Conclusion

As you can see, DNA testing is the future of genealogy. Just like Family Tree Maker was the development in the 1990s for technological upgrades, DNA will launch genealogy even further as the tests are updated and improved.

Mobile Public Library

Local History and Genealogy

The Local History and Genealogy Library specialized in the history of Mobile and the greater Gulf Coast region, including genealogical records for the Southeastern United States with emphasis on migration paths into Alabama. The library is open Monday through Saturday from nine o'clock in the morning to five o'clock in the afternoon.

Vertical Files

The vertical files collection is comprised of over three thousand files covering topics relevant to Mobile and the state of Alabama, including but not limited to:

- Biographies
- Businesses
- Cemeteries
- Churches
- Crime
- Family Histories
- Hurricanes
- Mardi Gras
- Schools
- Ships
- Sports Yellow Fever

Resources for Mobile Research

Newspapers on Microfilm:

- Mobile Register, 1819-present
- Mobile Press, 1930-1997
- Mobile Daily Item, 1899-1939
- Mobile Beacon, 1959-1994

Microfilm and Microfiche:

- Mobile County Death Certificates, 1876-1908
- Probate Court Judicial Index, 1819-1964
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- Parish Registers: Saint Gabriel d'Iberville, LA and Notre-Dame du Fort Condé de la Mobile, 1700s-1850s

Mobile County Records Indexes:

- Mobile Funerals, 1726-1764
- Burial Records, 1820-1880
- Mobile Marriages, 1813-1875
- Divorce Cases, 1816-1918

- Naturalization Records, 1833-1906

Digital Archives

Featured Collections Include:

- The Clotilda Collection
- 19th and early 20th Century Mardi Gras Invitations
- Souvenir History of the Mobile Fire and Police Departments, 1819-1902
- City Atlas of Mobile, Alabama, 1878
- Mobile Tricentennial Video Oral History Interview Clips

To view the Digital Archives, visit digital.mobilepubliclibrary.org.

Spotlight on The Camellia Club of Mobile

The present Camellia Club of Mobile Inc. began over eighty years ago. In the late 1930's there were a number of Mobile businessmen who were so interested in their hobby of growing camellias that they were proudly displaying their beautiful blooms in their offices, show windows and building lobbies. In late 1939 and early 1940 these gentlemen decided to organize and form the Men's Camellia Club of Mobile. This new Club held its first Camellia Show early in 1941.

The purpose of the Club was, and still is, to promote interest in camellias, including providing information on growing them, and holding a free annual Camellia Show for the public to enjoy these delightful flowers. There was no competition or judging in the early Shows; exhibitors just enjoyed showing off the results of their work. Murphy High School was the venue for many of the early Shows, often with thousands of blooms on display.

The first Club President was Dr. R. M. Shackleford, the annual dues were \$5.00 per member, and just prior to 1953 the Club was incorporated as a non-profit organization. About 1968 the Men's Camellia Club of Mobile changed its name to the Camellia Club of Mobile, Inc. The Club now awards trophies for the best blooms on exhibit, but after forty-seven Presidents and over eighty years, their dues are STILL \$5.00 per member and they are still, naturally, a non-profit organization.

Several members who founded the Club in 1940 were among those camellia enthusiasts who formed the American Camellia Society which held its first Annual Meeting in Mobile in 1946 at the Admiral Semmes Hotel. The ACS held their Annual Meeting again at the Admiral Semmes Hotel in 1953, and in 1985 the ACS members were once again welcomed to Mobile by its "older brother" Club. Two past Presidents of the Camellia Club of Mobile, Mr. Hoyt W. Lee and Mr. Charles R. Butler, also served as Presidents of the American Camellia Society.

For over eighty years many people have been introduced to the beauty of the camellia, Alabama's State Flower, through visiting the Camellia Shows held each January by the Club, first at Murphy High School, then Fort Whiting Auditorium, the Municipal Auditorium, the Springdale Mall Plaza, Colonial Bel Air Mall, and finally, a change to their present venue at the Shriner's Abba Temple.