HISTORY OF 

beautiful 
Dauphin 
Island

ORIGIN 
OF 
STREET NAMES

PRICE 25¢
Air view of Dauphin Island lying 4 miles south of the Alabama mainland in the mouth of Mobile Bay. In the foreground is historic Fort Gaines where an extensive restoration program is in progress. Beyond the fort, the fairways for the championship golf course now being built are visible as are a great many of the streets which have been cleared through the virgin pine forest. On the left can be seen the beautiful wide Gulf beach which runs the entire 14 mile length of the Island. Many attractive homes have already been designed for construction in the wooded area and on the West Beach. Little Dauphin Island stretches out to the right in this picture and is crossed at its west end by the Gordon Persons Overseas Highway as it nears Dauphin Island. The center of the picture shows Dauphin Bay and Indian Bay extension, the first reclamation project that converted a marsh into 71 waterfront residential lots.
DRAMATIC HISTORY OF DAUPHIN ISLAND

by

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With the exception of Cuba, Dauphin is, historically, the most prominent and interesting island in the Gulf of Mexico.

Sixteenth century Spanish expeditions either passed close by it or nosed their ships into the mouth of Mobile Bay as they sought both rivers and bays that might give entrance to an unknown land in which the adventurers might find the treasures so dear to the Spanish heart. Better defined than the mouth of the Mississippi River, and hence a better landmark, Dauphin Island and its adjacent waters surely drew the attention of every Spanish expedition that sailed along the coast.

Historians have long believed that Alonza Pineda stopped near the island on his journey west to Mexico in 1519. The Final Report of the De Soto Commission (1939) accepts this belief. In Mobile Bay, Pineda careened his ships for necessary repairs.

Next came the crude ships, built on the Florida coast by Narvaez and his men who were trying to reach Mexico by sailing along the coast westward. On board one of those ships was the celebrated chronicler Cabeza de Vaca, destined to be one of the handful of men who survived the wreck of Narvaez's ships. The swift waters of a river wrecked this small fleet; it seems impossible that this river was the Mobile, as some popular historians have maintained, and it is even less probable that the human bones found on Dauphin by the Iberville expedition were the remains of Narvaez's followers who had died on Dauphin. Still, it is no wild assumption to say that the Narvaez ships, with Cabeza de Vaca aboard, passed Dauphin, most likely in sight of the great sand dunes on the south side.

Legend has placed Isabella de Bobadilla, De Soto's sorrowful wife, at the mouth of Mobile Bay, while her husband was fighting the destructive battle of Maubila close by, in Clarke County, Alabama. The Final Report of the De Soto Commission, although not supporting this legend
by placing Isabella at Mobile Point or on Dauphin Island, does show that Captain Maldonado, who was to rendezvous with De Soto on the coast, explored the coast of Florida as far west as Mobile Point, across the pass from Dauphin.

Tristan de Luna’s expedition of 1559 visited Mobile Bay. The expedition had been sent to Pensacola Bay for the purpose of making a Spanish post there and another on the Atlantic coast, which they proposed to reach overland. Dissention, poor communication, and bad luck in general finally produced a weakened and hysterical leadership. In an attempt to improve their lot, the men subsisted for a while among Indians in the Mobile area.

As romantic as they appear in the remoteness of history, the Spanish expeditions left nothing tangible to be associated with Dauphin Island—nothing except maps. That Iberville was using Spanish maps when he landed on Dauphin in 1699 is proof that the Spaniards had geographical knowledge of the island.

The history of the island really begins with the French, whose first attempt to plant a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi suffered a failure, under La Salle, as disastrous as any failure of the Spaniards. Sailing for the Mississippi, La Salle not only missed the entire coastline of Alabama, including Dauphin Island, but missed the coast of Mississippi and Louisiana, although he had already discovered the mouth of the great river, exploring from upstream.

But from La Salle’s failure as well as from his earlier explorations, the French learned more about the Mississippi Valley than the Spaniards had learned from the De Soto expedition and other ventures in the South; the French had, by the end of the seventeenth century, both geographical facts and empire claims. For their second attempt to establish a post near the mouth of the Mississippi, they chose the Canadian seaman-soldier Iberville, whose mettle and powers of leadership had just been tested against the English in the Hudson Bay area and on the North Atlantic coast.

After the hurricane season was over, Iberville with his five ships doubled the cape on the western tip of Cuba and turned north to locate the Florida coast. Once he had sighted it, he kept his ships in deep, safe waters in sight of land and his longboats close to the shore while he moved cautiously toward the Mississippi, which no one had yet located from the Gulf. He nosed into Pensacola harbor and found Spaniards there before him. They gave him a cold, suspicious reception, and he sailed on westward. On Saturday, January 31, 1699, between noon and 2 p.m., he anchored his ships about six miles southeast of Dauphin Island.

Iberville immediately explored the waters close to Dauphin. There was bad weather, at times heavy wind and pouring-down rain. On Monday, with a small detachment, Iberville landed on the island, which,
judging by the entries in his log, became his base for the next two or three days. The first night the detachment spent on the island they had trouble building a fire. During their visit ashore on the island, some men from the detachment went hunting and killed Canadian geese and a raccoon. Raccoons must have been numerous on Dauphin, as they were on other islands of the Mississippi Sound. On these islands, one French historian reported, raccoons lived chiefly off young birds and seafood and at low tide opened oysters with their claws.

Iberville's log for Tuesday tells the most exciting event of this first visit the French paid to Dauphin. The detachment came upon a stark scene: they came upon a pile of human bones. "More than sixty men or women," says the entry in Iberville's log. "A mountain of bones," the chronicler Penicaut said. Iberville observed utensils or personal effects near the bodies, from which the heads had been severed. From the condition of decay, Iberville estimated that the bones had lain there three or four years. "On the 3rd, I remained on the island," wrote Iberville, "which I am naming Massacre."

Where were the bones and where are they now? "At the southwest tip of the island" is the location given in Iberville's log. But where was that, on Dauphin or Petit Bois Island? In 1740 a storm cut away the western part of Dauphin. The western fragment now takes the name Petit Bois. But one should be cautious about saying that the bones were seen on Petit Bois. The entry in Iberville's log does not clearly show that the detachment explored so far to the west. The British Admiralty Chart of 1771 throws some light, but not enough, upon the problem of locating the bones. That chart shows the island directly west of Dauphin as Massacre, as though local tradition, still alive in 1771, had associated the bones with the Petit Bois half.

The Birmingham News, August 24, 1934, reported in an article by Varian Feare that souvenir hunters had long since carried away the bones that Iberville saw in 1699. It cannot be doubted that souvenir hunters are quite capable of lugging away even a mountain of bones; still, the disposal of the question in this way is to be doubted. Some driver of a bulldozer during the building of the city on Dauphin may yet locate these or other deposits of bones. All excavations for roads, driveways, and house sites should be done cautiously. As the building on Dauphin proceeds, a trained archaeologist and ethnologist, working with Boy Scouts, might locate some very interesting things left by the Indians and the French who lived on Dauphin.

Iberville was, without doubt, the greatest naval officer France sent to American waters during the early years of the eighteenth century. He deserves, and has received, full credit for establishing France's colony on our Gulf Coast. He has been called the first great Canadian. Even so, he passed little time in the colony, just time enough to discover the mouth of the Mississippi, establish the first French fort at Ocean Springs, near Biloxi, and supply and reinforce his establishment on two other voyages.
On his third voyage Iberville put in at Pensacola, which Louis XIV had been trying to get from the Spaniards by diplomatic pressure. On December 17, 1701, the day after his arrival, Iberville dispatched an order to his young brother, Bienville, at Biloxi, commanding him to prepare to build a fort on the Mobile River. Then Iberville fell ill with an abscess in his side which required a six-inch incision. He did not reach the scene of activity on Mobile Bay 'til the middle of February, 1702.

He landed at Dauphin and stayed there for two weeks before undertaking the trip upriver. When he arrived at Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff, on March 3, 1702, Bienville already had Fort Louis under construction. Four weeks later, Iberville sailed from Dauphin for the last time. He was never to see the colony again. From that date forward, the Mobile colony was guided by the younger Le Moyne brother, Bienville, whose destiny, whose luck, it was to inherit the government of the colony from three men who died above him in rank: Sauvole, who died at Biloxi in 1701; Iberville, who died at Havana in 1706; and the new governor, De Muy, who died before he ever reached the colony in 1707.

The founding of Mobile on the river was simultaneous, really, with the establishment of a post on Dauphin Island. As French ships could not enter the Bay because of the shallow water, Dauphin Island became the anchorage, the port, for the new colony. At Dauphin, goods shipped to Mobile were transferred to shallow boats that freighted them up the Bay and the river to Fort Louis. Once the order was sent from Iberville to Bienville to construct Fort Louis, activity on Dauphin was inevitable. Even as early as the transfer of equipment and the King's stores from Old Biloxi to the Mobile River, there was a warehouse on Dauphin, built to hold supplies awaiting transfer up the Bay.

In July, 1704, the French ship "Pelican" dropped anchor at Dauphin Island, bringing to the colony a shipment of twenty-four girls, who were supposed to serve their King by marrying the men of rambling natures and settling them down to a useful life about the fort on the Mobile River. These girls, chiefly from Paris, had been chosen for their good behavior, good morals, and skills in doing domestic chores. These were the Pelican girls, famous in Alabama history.

Coming to the colony as the first shipment of girls, they antedate the so-called cassette girls of New Orleans by twenty-four years. The Pelican girls suffered hardships in adjusting themselves to life at Fort Louis, which was too severe for some men; but, generally speaking, they conducted themselves well. If they rebelled at "ble d Inde," Indian corn, as a staple in the diet, they merely were exercising their feminine prerogative. This so-called "cornbread rebellion" does not appear to have made them less attractive to the suitors at the fort. All were soon married, except Francoise de Boisrenaud.

Her love for Major Boisbriant was crossed by Bienville, the major's cousin, who as commandant had the authority to forbid them to marry.
Boisbriant was at one time commandant on Dauphin Island. Refused permission to marry Major Boisbriant, Francoise de Boisrenaud would marry no one. She stayed in the colony for many years as a single woman, referred to in records as Danoiselle de Boisrenaud. One judges that she was respected. Among her good works was the teaching of children. Thus at Dauphin in 1704 landed the first schoolmistress in Alabama his-
tory.

The historian Du Pratz, who knew the connection between Dauphin Island and Fort Mobile, called Mobile the birthplace and Dauphin the cradle of the colony of Louisiana. In many respects the island was Mobile. Its anchorage being the port of the capital of Louisiana, which was Mobile from 1702 'til 1718, Dauphin developed into the nerve center of the colony. It communicated with the Spanish ports of Pensacola, Vera Cruz, and Havana, and with French posts in the upper Mississippi Valley as well as with the sugar island St. Domingue, now Haiti. So important did Dauphin become that by mid-summer, 1707, Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine, gave a new governor, De Muy, the power to move the fort to Dauphin.

Historians have generally given flood waters of the Mobile River full credit for forcing the colony to abandon Twenty-Seven Mile Bluff and settle on the present site of modern Mobile. If one reads only Bienville's report to Pontchartrain, of October 27, 1711, he will reach the same con-
clusion. But it is quite evident in letters written at Versailles in June, 1707, that a change in location of the colony had been contemplated for some four or five years before the overflow of the Mobile River actually became the immediate cause of the change.

Not just flood-waters, but also the desire to get within earshot of signal cannon on Dauphin and to find better land to till influenced the decision to move the post. After being in the colony less than a year, the prominent officer Martin D' Artaguette wrote that it had been a mis-
take in the first place to found the colony twenty leagues from Dauphin. Too, reducing the distance between port and fort made the King's goods safer from looting during the trip up the Bay. King's goods from the "Aigle" had been looted before 1707.

Perhaps fate had a hand in preventing the moving of Mobile to Dauphin Island. Governor De Muy, carrying instructions to consider such a change, died in Havana before he ever reached the colony. In 1713, when Cadillac arrived in the colony as governor, the proposed change was still being examined. Cadillac himself examined the proposals. Al-
though the commissary Duclos opposed the plan, he admitted that the change would be expedient, for the warehouses on Dauphin could be given better protection if Fort Mobile was moved to the island.

The importance of Dauphin was due to the beautiful harbor on the south side of the island. The old harbor is now called Pelican Bay, named for the long island that protected the south side of the harbor. The west
bar of Mobile Bay protected the east side of the harbor, and Dauphin itself protected the north side. Pelican Island was called Isle-aux-Espagnols by the French. The name Pelican was applied by them to another island, a little one southeast of present-day Pelican. They called this little island Grand Gosier, or Big Throat, which was a common name for the pelican. The name gradually worked over to the larger island in the translated form Pelican.

In the early part of the eighteenth century the sands of Isle-aux-Espagnols, modern Pelican, stretched to within a stone's throw of Dauphin Island, Cadillac, who was concerned with that narrow pass, estimated the width as the length of a French ship. The sands of Pelican have shifted so much over the years that it seems unbelievable now that Pelican Island practically touched Dauphin. The channel had twenty to twenty-one feet of water, according to Nicolas de la Salle's estimate; the harbor had thirty to thirty-five feet.

Penicault, who was usually rather accurate in his estimates, wrote that the Dauphin harbor could shelter thirty ships; Cadillac, usually pessimistic with his estimates, said four ships. D'Artaguette estimated the capacity at fifteen ships. The estimates of these observers show how important Dauphin was to the future of the colony, which was now on the eve of expansion to other posts.

The name Massacre, bestowed by Iberville, held on until October, 1711. No person called the island Dauphin until that date, so far as is known. On October 27th, to be precise, acting-governor Bienville was staying at Dauphin Island, which everybody called Massacre. On that day Bienville wrote Pontchartrain, the minister, that he and D'Artaguette had changed the name of the island to "Isle Dauphine" and had given the same name to the port. The port was the village facing the harbor. And Bienville dates his letter Port Dauphin.

If Port Dauphin and Isle Dauphine, the forms of the name that Bienville wrote, are the same name, then there is no reason whatever to infer that Isle Dauphine was named for the wife of the heir-apparent to the French throne and Port Dauphin for the heir. Of course, they were both given a name that happened to be the title of the heir-apparent. In a way, the two names may be said to honor the title. Perhaps it is more practical to say that Bienville and D'Artaguette merely chose the name Dauphin for the island as one might choose the name Royale for a street. Bienville gave Pontchartrain no explanation for the choice, although he did ask Pontchartrain what he thought of the name. Professor Giraud, whose new history of the French on the Gulf Coast merits careful study, holds the opinion that Bienville did not intend to honor any one.

As for the spelling with or without "e," Dauphin is a masculine adjective modifying the masculine noun port in Port Dauphin; and Dauphine is a feminine adjective modifying the feminine noun isle in Isle Dauphine. The "e" is the inflectional "e" of feminine adjectives demanded by French.
grammar. Because English grammar does not reflect its adjectives as French does, Dauphin Island is the logical form for the name when translated to English. Dauphin Island it has become, and Dauphin Island it should be.

While the little town was developing on Dauphin, all the spokesmen for the colony stressed the need of fortifying the island whenever they wrote letters to the ministry about their security at Dauphin. On September 9, 1710, that which had been dreaded so long finally occurred. A privateer from Jamaica struck a deadly blow against the island.

The villain of the act, if there was one, was a Huguenot who had been to the island before. He served as pilot of the ship. In the report of the raid, D'Artaguiette called the Huguenot a "fanatic." It would be unfair to this man to call him a traitor to France. He was really a man without a country. One of Louis XIV's greatest mistakes was the revocation in 1685 of the Edict of Nantes, which gave freedom of conscience to French Protestants. After the revocation French Protestants had been forced to leave the metropole, France, and they were forbidden to settle in Louisiana.

Flying the French flag, the privateer appeared three-fourths of a league off shore and fired two cannon shots as though signaling a normal landing at Dauphin. Two of the habitants set out in rowboats to meet the ship. They were captured, of course, and men from the privateer came ashore in small craft.

Without firing one shot in hostility, the privateer captured Dauphin. For two days the visitors pillaged and burned the small settlement. One Englishman only was killed, by a French hunter who made his way into the village without knowing that a raid was in progress.

On the third day the raiders left, having done much damage. D'Artaguiette, who was at the head of finances and accounting, reported the losses at 80,000 piastres. Specified in the loot seized were 8,000 to 9,000 bearskins and 15,000 raccoon skins. This great loss in furs and hides shows how important Dauphin had become as a port. It was, obviously, drawing upon the trade that couriers de bois and voyageurs had with Indians in the Mississippi Valley as well as along the upper waters of the Alabama and Tombigbee.

After leaving the island, the raiders changed direction and returned to make another landing. Their purpose was to kill the cattle grazing on Dauphin and to capture a buffalo, which the captain of the privateer desired to take away with him. D'Artaguiette does not report how the buffalo happened to be on the island. At that time herds of buffalo ranged as far east as Pensacola.

Being on the alert this time, the French drove off the landing party and thus saved the cattle and the buffalo.

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Between the death of Iberville in 1706 and the arrival of Governor La Mothe-Cadillac in 1713, the reports written by Bienville, D’Artaguette, and others show an increase in the activity on Dauphin Island. Business was on the increase and the little town was growing.

As early as 1708, the first shipyard in the colony—on Dauphin—produced a vessel of some thirty-five tons, according to Professor Giraud. In the same year, people living on the island had some money to show for their labors. As is the way of colonials who have accumulated some capital, some of the islanders desired to leave the colony and return to France. Bienville objected because he needed all the colonists he had, and more too. Those who were attempting to leave were so insistent upon leaving that soldiers on the island were assigned the task of preventing their escape. At another time, the citizens of Dauphin were asked to beach their rowboats in the inlet before the village as a measure to prevent unauthorized departures.

Both Bienville and Cadillac used soldiers as labor in the building of barracks on the island. Cadillac ordered huts to be built in rows of four and the camp to be enclosed with pickets. There was also a guardhouse.

There were nineteen families and several unmarried men living on the island during Cadillac’s time, 1713-1717. Before the raid of the privateer, La Vente, the Mobile parish priest, reported twenty houses in the village in 1710. Du Saut’s chart and drawing of the island, done in May, 1717, shows between seventeen and twenty-five houses, the larger ones enclosed with stake fences, which were probably made of cedar poles cut on the island. The houses were in rows facing the harbor and just above the rowboat basin on the inlet. A few houses, according to this drawing, were located close to the north shore of the island, but faced south. The fort, at that time, was built toward the north side and opposite the northwest tip of Pelican Island, where Cadillac had said a fort should be located as a protection for the narrow pass into the harbor. A battery of cannon, close to the water, was on the east end of the village, and another was on the west, close to the pass.

La Vigne Voisin, of St. Malo, whom Bienville called a famous “corsair,” visited the island and contributed to the erection of a church located close to the harbor so that sailors could, with little effort, come from the ships in port and hear Mass. The Dauphin church was as good as the one at Mobile, perhaps better. Even Cadillac, who was usually addicted to disparagement, wrote pleasantly about this church. “Fairly passable,” he called it, and better than the one at Mobile, which could hold twenty people if they were packed into the one room.

In May, 1717, one of Iberville’s predictions came true. He had said, fifteen years before that a south-southwest wind could damage the harbor. Two ships, the “Paon” and the “Paix,” were riding at anchor inside the harbor when a storm struck. A third ship, the “Ludlow,” was anchored south of Pelican Island, in la grande rade, as the French called the outer harbor.
Isle Dauphine

Port of Entry
La Province de la Louisiane
PORT DAUPHINE and
PELICAN BAY at
ISLE DAUPHINE or
MASSACRE ISLAND

Pelican Harbor
Paon
Pelican Isle

Paix

Drawn from descriptions given in reports from colonial authorities to the French government in 1717.
The storm blocked the narrow pass with a mass of sand and joined the tip of Pelican to Dauphin Island. One drawing of this dramatic event in the life of the port shows rowboats beached on the mass of sand and Frenchmen walking over the spot where the channel had been before the storm.

The several drawings of this event all are derived from the chart made by Lieutenant Du Saut, who commanded the "Paon" when she was bottled up in the harbor. Du Saut set down on his chart every step in the difficult navigation he pursued in saving his ship. Cautiously sounding his way, and anchoring repeatedly, he crossed the west bar of Mobile Bay and passed slightly to the north of Grand Gosier Island; then he swung about and anchored the "Paon" beside her sister ship south of Isleaux-Espagnols, now Pelican. The "Piex," which appears on the chart as a smaller ship apparently had no difficulty in crossing the bar in the ten feet of water charted by Du Saut.

This damage to the Dauphin Island harbor came very close to rendering Mobile untenable as a post. The French ministry moved the capital to a new site, at New Biloxi, where the shipping difficulties were really much greater than at Dauphin and Mobile, even with the harbor damaged. But Mobile had to be retained as a supply base for Indian diplomacy and trade in the Alabama-Tombigbee watershed. The Dauphin roadstead continued to be used after the capital was moved to Biloxi and then to New Orleans.

The next most interesting shipping drama in Dauphin waters occurred on April 1, 1725. The ship involved was the "Bellone" or "Bellona." Minutes of the Superior Council, New Orleans, December 18, 1724, show that the Sieur de Beauchamp, the captain of the "Bellone," objected to taking his ship to Dauphin to pick up a cargo of pitch and tobacco. Having weak anchor cables, he feared that a south-southeast wind might run the "Bellone" aground at Dauphin. At New Orleans, according to the minutes, the "Bellone" was taking on a shipment of indigo, bullion, and silver specie, which represented great wealth for the colony at that time. Also, this ship was to take Governor Bienville back to France as he had been recalled.

Against his better judgment, Captain Beauchamp took his ship to Dauphin, where he had her at anchor on April 1, 1725. Bienville was ashore, but his personal papers and effects were on the anchored ship. Presumably the indigo and silver specie and bullion—"the first returns of this colony," according to Bienville—were on the ship, too, as the Superior Council minutes had forecast they would be. Without warning, and, one may judge, without the south-southeast wind the captain had feared, the ship suddenly sank.

The loss was great. After arriving in France on another ship, the "Gironde," Bienville wrote the Regent, the Duke of Orleans, that the losses suffered in this disaster were six men and 200,000 livres. Neither this
letter nor minutes of the Superior Council show the exact position where this rich cargo went down on the "Bellone." The ship sank "while at anchor at Dauphin Island," wrote Bienville. The position of the wreck may invoke further attention from persons curious about bullion or silver specie. Spanish coins—piastres and pistoles—which came into the colony from Vera Cruz and an outpost on the Rio Grande, almost certainly went down on the "Bellone" somewhere south of the western tip of Pelican Island.

The French on the Gulf Coast were perhaps the only people in this country who have put the pelican to any service. They made night caps out of pelican pouches. If the French on Dauphin made night caps in this way, which has been reported from other parts of the colony, they had on Pelican Island one of the great concentrations of pelicans from which to get an ample supply of night caps.

Port Dauphin was so prominent that the Council of Commerce of Louisiana, meeting at Dauphin, listed Dauphin and Mobile and New Orleans as the "important places" in the colony in a set of minutes for 1719. By that time, there were other settlements to which the rowboat-and-pirogue routes went out from Dauphin like red lines on a modern road map—down Mississippi Sound to Biloxi and through Lake Pontchartrain to Natchez, Natchitoches, and up the river to the Illinois Country; up Mobile Bay to Fort Louis and Fort Toulouse, near modern Wetumpka, Alabama.

Those same minutes of the Council of Commerce list beverages to be sold on Dauphin by the clerk of the Company of the Indies, which held all Louisiana at that time as a commercial monopoly. The wizard of high finance, John Law, who was one of the first big business men of the modern world, had gained control of the Company in France and was attempting to exploit Louisiana. The Company set the prices of goods sold in the colony. At Dauphin wine sold for 4 reals a "pot," brandy for 1 piastre a "pot," vinegar for 4 reals a "pot," and olive oil for 12 reals a "pot."

At another meeting of the Council of Commerce, La Girardiere was authorized to keep a canteen on Dauphin and to sell red wine, white wine, and brandy. It is worth mentioning that the Council of Commerce often met on Dauphin rather than at Mobile or New Orleans.

Among the prominent men who either lived on the island or in their line of duty were assigned to the little town were Bienville, D'Artaguiette, Bienville's brother Chateaugue, his cousin Major Boisbriant, Governor La Mothe-Cadillac, and Governor L'Epinet.

Cadillac was the most critical and ill-tempered. He had lost a lucrative position at his little Detroit post when he was transferred to Louisiana as governor-general. The loss of between $50,000 and $100,000 put him into a pique that lasted during his entire tenure, from 1710 to 1716. As he did not come to Dauphin 'til 1713 and actually departed from the colony in 1717, he had just four years in which to grate his irascible
personality against life in the colony. His letters and reports from Mobile and Dauphin make good reading because of his poetic and often foolish remarks. He was a master of invective and hyperbole.

A sample of his poetic language is his epithet for the sands of Dauphin Island. Any one who stands on the beach at Dauphin and picks up a fistful of the white sand and lets it trickle through his fingers will understand why Cadillac called the sands “hour-glass sand” of Dauphin Island.

A short while after Cadillac arrived in the colony in 1713, he wrote a description of Dauphin for Pontchartrain. He gave the length of the island as six leagues and the width as scarcely one fourth of a league. The league was roughly two and a half miles. On the north part, he wrote, there was a border of woods of various sorts of trees. One league was wooded in pine. Ships entering the harbor, he reported, grazed the side of Dauphin, so narrow was the pass. He recommended that a fort be built on Guillory Point. (In American times Fort Gaines has been built here.)

In a garden or orchard, which Cadillac said D'Artaguette had portrayed to him as an earthly paradise, Cadillac saw, if his report is to be trusted, 12 fig trees bearing black figs, 3 pear trees, 3 apple trees, 1 plum tree three feet high, 30 feet of grape vine with 9 clusters, and 40 feet of French melons.

Cadillac lived at Mobile as well as at Dauphin. He took over the Mobile house of Chateaugue, Bienville's brother. When Chateaugue, attempted to repossess, Cadillac solved his own housing problem by assigning Chateaugue to Dauphin.

The story of Indians on Dauphin goes back to prehistoric times. Only archaeologists and ethnologists on location could properly tell this story. Were the shell banks once the disposal dump of a prehistoric village or a favorite site for visiting tribes to buccan oysters? Certain tribes preserved oysters by the buccaning process, took them inland, and kept them for months in their huts. In buccaning oysters, Indians used cane grills or fine-mesh slat-work built a few feet above the ground. They placed the oysters on the grills and cured them by smoking.

Observing the great oyster shell banks, Cadillac proposed to make use of the shells in building a stone fort, which he believed was demanded by the needs of defense. The historian Hamilton reported that the remains of walls on the north side of the island were the vestiges of kilns built by De Vauxbercy in American times.

The French had been settled in Mobile for fifteen years before a fish net was brought to the colony. This first fish net, according to Giraud, was brought to Dauphin Island in 1717. This delay in introducing the net has not been explained satisfactorily. Fish were plentiful in
waters adjacent to Dauphin, and one cannot keep from wondering why some industrious person hadn't provided a net before 1717.

When L'Epinet replaced Cadillac as governor in 1717, twenty-four Indian tribes sent diplomatic missions to Dauphin Island to sing their calumets to the new governor. Some tribes came from great distances—the Chickasaws from Tennessee and northern Mississippi; the Natchez, Oumas and Tunicas from the Mississippi; the Natchitoches from the Red River; and the Canapouces from Carolina—if the Canapouces were really the Catawbas, as ethnologists say they were. One tribe after another, they sang and danced and orated three days for each tribe in the great Dauphin Island Calumet.

This famous calumet, which surpassed all other ceremonial diplomacy during French dominion in the South, lasted more than two months, as all the Indian missions did not arrive at the same time. These red knights of the calumet brought their wives with them, not so much to see the show as to do the cooking. Indian men were, by modern standards, free of petticoat or braguet government. Of course, like children, both wives and braves wanted presents, which were an important part of any nation's Indian diplomacy. Presents were badly needed at this particular calumet to make amends for the haughty indifference that Cadillac had shown to Indian custom and prestige. One can only speculate about the feeling of relief that Governor L'Epinet must have experienced in watching the last canoe depart from Dauphin after the Great Dauphin Calumet was ended.

France's war with Spain in 1719 brought great numbers of Indians to the island once more. They came to help defend Dauphin from the Spaniards. Although L'Epinet's Indian policy had been superior to Cadillac's, he cannot be given credit for bringing Indian allies to the defense of the island. Bienville again came into command of the colony, and both Bienville and the glamorous, moody St. Denis were very effective in Indian diplomacy. Both had command of Indian languages.

The war was between France and Spain, but locally it was Dauphin Island versus Pensacola, which was the Spanish post long coveted by the French. News of the status of war, which reached the French before it did the Spaniards at Pensacola, changed Dauphin into the principal base of French operations.

Getting the news first, the French launched a surprise attack on Pensacola, by land and sea. The Spaniards, 1500 Spaniards, promptly surrendered. Getting good terms, they were transported to Havana in French ships. At Havana the Spaniards treacherously seized the two French vessels and armed them to suit themselves; then, adding some ten or twelve bilanders to the French ships, they returned to Pensacola, where Chateaugue was garrisoning the fort with three hundred Frenchmen. When Chateaugue's garrison began to desert, he was forced to surrender. There was little fighting. The returned Spaniards played their guitars
in their familiar quarters, and the prisoner Chateaugue was able to write a long letter to Bienville from Pensacola.

So much for the comic side of this war. It now took a serious turn. The Spaniards, victorious at Pensacola, now took the war to Dauphin Island, bringing the two French ships and their bilanders for an attack on the island.

The French were not caught unprepared. St. Denis, the great Indian diplomat, had brought fifty Pascagoula Indians to Dauphin. There were 114 soldiers, sixty Canadians, and finally some two hundred other Indians, as well as some newly arrived colonists, waiting to be sent to their concessions on the Mississippi.

Before the Spaniards came in sight, supplies were moved to Mobile. Fifty Negro slaves and some provisions and effects were ferried across to Mon Louis Island for safety. One of the two French vessels in the roadstead was hurried off to New Orleans; the other, the "Philippe," was retained for defense.

When the first Spanish bilander appeared and proceeded to the attack, the "Philippe" was moved to a deep "gulley" close to shore at the west point of Dauphin.

For some two weeks the Spanish fleet hovered about the island, at times attacking and attempting to capture the "Philippe," at other times attempting to land soldiers. They tried to make a landing at Guillory Point, where Fort Gaines now stands. One bilander raided Mon Louis Island and tried to seize the Negro slaves. Friendly Indians fought off the attack, killing several Spaniards and capturing eighteen Frenchmen who had deserted Chateaugue at Pensacola. All but one of these deserters later had their heads broken at Mobile, in Indian style. One was hanged on Dauphin Island. The barracks on Dauphin accidentally caught fire and burned while the siege was in progress. The French were badly frightened; but, because their leaders, St. Denis and Serigny, Bienville's brother, scattered soldiers and Indians and even some concessionaires to various points on the island, the attacking Spaniards could not force a landing.

The long siege suddenly ended when Commodore Champmeslin happened to bring a French squadron of five ships to the roadstead without knowing that an attack was in progress. Sighting Champmeslin's squadron, the bilanders and the two captured French ships faded off toward Pensacola. And Dauphin was saved from the Spaniards.

Immediately after holding a council of war, the French launched a new land attack on Pensacola by way of Perdido Bay while Champmeslin led his squadron, now reinforced by the "Philippe," into Pensacola Bay.

This time there was some fighting at Pensacola, but not much before it became the Spaniards' time to surrender again. When they did, the
French rewarded their Indian allies by permitting them to pillage the fort. Also, for the amusement of Commodore Champmeslin, the suave St. Denis induced the Indians to sing a calumet in Champmeslin's honor.

And what happened next? Peace was signed in Europe; and Pensacola, so long coveted by the French, was returned to the Crown of Spain by the peace settlement. If this see-saw between Dauphin Island and Pensacola accomplished nothing in the long run, it at least gave the French on the island the most exciting fortnight of their experience.

After the transference of the capital to New Biloxi and then to New Orleans, Dauphin Island became less and less important to the government of Louisiana. Both the Company's goods and the warehouses themselves were moved to Biloxi and Mobile. Nevertheless, the records show some activity in shipping and an occasional reference to troops on the island for many years under the French flag.

At the close of the Seven Years' War, in 1763, Dauphin along with all other French territory east of the Mississippi, except New Orleans, passed to British control.

In 1780, during the Revolutionary War, the Spaniards suspected that the British would attack Spanish Louisiana, west of the Mississippi. With this excuse for their action, they seized Mobile Bay and thus found themselves in possession of Dauphin Island. Dauphin—Isla Delfina in Spanish—remained Spanish for thirty-three years. After the Louisiana Purchase, which did not clearly fix boundaries, the United States had a claim to Dauphin as a part of the Mobile area in Spanish West Florida.

The War of 1812, between the United States and England, brought Spanish West Florida into public attention. It was believed that the Spaniards were permitting the British to use Spanish ports for hostile operations against the United States. Spanish soldiers were on Dauphin at the time.

When the American officer, General Wilkinson, began his operations against Mobile in 1813, the Spaniards fled from Dauphin to Pensacola. Wilkinson captured Fort Charlotte at Mobile and a week later moved down to Mobile Point, on which he began to construct Fort Bowyer, which was named for Colonel John Bowyer.

The next year the British landed troops on Dauphin and, according to Hamilton, established headquarters at the shell banks. The troops they lost in their attack on Fort Bowyer—some two hundred men—were buried near their headquarters. These burials presumably do not include any of the men who died of wounds or sickness while Packingham's troops were recuperating on Dauphin from the Battle of New Orleans. With the British units on Dauphin at this time was the 40th Regiment which, so shortly afterwards, was to see action in the Battle of Waterloo.

The building of Fort Gaines on old Guillory Point required some eighty years—that is, if one considers the present structure to be the
finished fort. Secondary sources give 1821 as the date when work actually began, although the contract had been approved several years before. All the brick and granite and steel, which are now Fort Gaines, are the work of Americans, who acquired Dauphin Island after the War of 1812. Interest in fortifying the island—that is, in building on to Fort Gaines—has revived with each new war over the years and subsided with each new peace.

Beginning the structure in 1821, the United States government had the fort completed supposedly in 1848. Yet, the Confederates, who seized it in 1861 to prevent the United States Army from strengthening it in anticipation of Secession, put it in better condition during the first three years of the War between the States. Fort Gaines as people look at it today represents the further building, done, according to the historian Owen, in the years just following the Spanish-American War, in 1901-1904.

Professor Burkhardt of Auburn supplied descriptive details of the fort that were published in the Birmingham News on August 26, 1934. The walls are seven feet thick at the top. The brick are black-speckled, deep brown. Steps, door sills, window-heads, and two hundred gun mounts are of granite. The bake oven is estimated at fifteen feet across. In the courtyard are two cisterns twenty feet in diameter, covered with slabs. The groined vaulting, which has attracted a great deal of admiration, is of brick. Steel gates guard the tunnels—unless they were removed during the scrap iron drive during the last war.

The seizure of Fort Gaines was ordered in 1861 by Governor A. B. Moore of Alabama. With state troops to support him, Colonel Todd, of the Alabama militia, formally took possession of Fort Gaines on January 18, 1861.

In early August, 1864, Admiral Farragut was about to attack both of the forts guarding the mouth of Mobile Bay. The original plan called for a landing of troops behind Fort Morgan on Mobile Point. This plan was abandoned in favor of a landing on Dauphin that would invest Fort Gaines before Farragut attempted to run his fleet between the guns of the two forts. That plan was carried out. At the time of the Battle of Mobile Bay, Fort Gaines was garrisoned by forty-six officers and 818 enlisted men, some of them young soldiers only recently hurried down from Mobile.

According to plan, General Gordon Granger landed two thousand Federal troops on Dauphin Island, seven miles west of Fort Gaines, at 4 p.m. on August 3rd, two days before Farragut was to move his fleet against the defenders of the Bay. By 10 o’clock next morning Granger’s sentinels were within 1200 yards of Fort Gaines, and the fort was technically invested. Captain McAlester, the U. S. Chief Engineer, established a line of entrenchment across the island from north to south. During the night six 3-inch Rodman guns were put in position on the south shore, on top of the sand dunes. The Chief Engineer estimated the height of these dunes at fifteen to thirty feet and reported that they afforded perfect cover to within four hundred yards of the fort.
The striking power of Fort Gaines was four 10-inch columbiads, two 7-inch Brooke rifles, twelve to fifteen smooth bores, 24s and 32s, and five or six flank casemate howitzers. Two of the 10-inch columbiads and six 24s bore upon the land approaches. Ammunition was abundant, and there was food enough to enable the garrison to withstand a siege of from two months to a year, according to various estimates. Colonel Charles D. Anderson, of the 21st Alabama Regiment, was in command.

Under Anderson’s command, too, was Fort Powell, on an island between Dauphin and Mon Louis Island. That small fort had just been built and was hardly finished. It guarded the pass into Mississippi Sound.

Colonel Anderson’s superior was General R. L. Page, the commandant at Fort Morgan.

The three forts were connected by telegraph as well as by the conventional communication system of the times, the firing of signal cannon and the use of lookouts.

Inside the Bay, the little Confederate fleet rode at anchor: four ships, the ram “Tennessee” and three small gunboats, the “Gaines,” the “Selma,” and the “Morgan.” On the “Tennessee” was the fleet commander, Admiral Franklin Buchanan, a very brave officer.

Planted across the Bay mouth were five rows of pilings which stretched about two miles toward Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines, leaving open water close to the guns of each fortress. On pilings embedded in the mud of the channel were sixty-seven mines, out of sight but guarding the entrance to the Bay. These mines were called torpedoes.

Farragut chose to enter the Bay between the east end of the visible line of pilings and the guns of Fort Morgan. A drawing of this maneuver, made by McAlester on the steamer “Laura” two and a half miles from Fort Morgan, shows Farragut’s fleet in line of battle on the point of entering the Bay.

At sunrise, Friday morning, August 5th, the fleet began to move, four iron-clad monitors in single file, the “Tecumseh” leading, and fourteen steamers, wooden warships, in double file behind them, each pair of steamers lashed together.

At sunrise, too, General Granger’s artillery opened fire on Fort Gaines.

At anchor inside the Bay, Confederate Admiral Franklin Buchanan, on the ram “Tennessee,” signaled to his three gunboats: “Follow my motions.” And with his four ships abreast, carrying 22 guns and 470 men on his decks, he moved down the Bay to meet Farragut’s eighteen ships carrying 199 guns and 2,700 men.
Fort Morgan's guns hurled 491 shells at the Federal ships as they passed in battle line and in turn received damaging fire from both monitors and the eight wooden ships on the right side of the double line. Not until they passed the fort and were inside the Bay were the smaller ships on the left side cut loose from their partners and made free for action against the Confederate fleet.

The "Tecumseh" struck a torpedo and sank immediately. Captain Whiting, an observer on Fort Morgan, estimated the position of the "Tecumseh" as 500-600 yards from Fort Morgan. He reported that he saw the bottom of the "Tecumseh" and reported that she sank in thirty seconds. Whiting had the false impression that Fort Morgan's guns had sunk her.

Approaching in his slow-moving "Tennessee," Buchanan singled out the "Hartford," Farragut's flagship, for a ramming attack. But the "Hartford" was too fleet for him. So were other ships. He was eluded in the very maneuver for which the "Tennessee" had been built.

The Confederate gunboats fought until they were helpless. Buchanan himself said the "Selma" and the "Gaines" fought "gallantly, and I was gratified . . . ." But they were too small with too little fire-power, for this engagement. The "Selma" was captured and the "Gaines," sinking fast, was run around 500 yards from Fort Morgan. The other gunboat, the "Morgan," escaped up the Bay.

Having passed by the forts and through the torpedo field with the loss of one ship, and having eluded the ram "Tennessee," Farragut took his fleet up the Bay.

The ensuing events should be reported in the words of Admiral Buchanan, written at the U. S. Hospital at Pensacola. "Soon after the gunboats were dispersed," he wrote, "and the enemy's fleet had anchored about four miles above Fort Morgan, we stood for them again in the "Tennessee" and renewed the attack with the hope of sinking some of them (there were seventeen) with our prow; again we were foiled by their superior speed in avoiding us. The engagement with the whole fleet soon became general at very close quarters, and lasted about an hour; and notwithstanding the serious injury inflicted upon many of their vessels by our guns, we could not sink them. Frequently during the contest we were surrounded by the enemy, and all our guns were in action at the same moment. Four of the heaviest vessels ran into us, under full steam . . . ."

Not until 10 a.m.—not until the "Tennessee's" smoke pipe was riddled and knocked down, her wheel chain carried away, her quarter-port covers jammed, and her admiral lay badly wounded below deck did the "Tennessee" surrender to the United States Fleet.

The action of this early morning battle began so close to Fort Morgan that the range was poor for the guns of Fort Gaines across the pass. Also,
The Confederate ram "Tennessee" was forced to surrender after single-handedly attacking the massed Federal fleet in the second conflict of the Battle of Mobile Bay. This is a picture of the painting by Artist Xanius Smith which hangs in the United States Naval Academy Museum.
Fort Gaines was under artillery fire from its rear from the very beginning of the battle and its participation in the naval action was limited.

While the "Tennessee" engaged the Federal fleet alone, two of the 10-inch columbiads at Fort Gaines got the range of enemy ships and fired until they were silenced by Granger's artillery behind the fort. According to the U. S. Chief Engineer's report, those columbiads were reached by Federal fire from the sand dunes because they were not protected by parados.

In the afternoon two monitors came down the Bay and exchanged fire with Fort Gaines; and next morning the monitor "Winnebago" had a duel with the fort at a distance of 800 yards. Subsequent reports showed no permanent damage to either, although Federal observers thought the "Winnebago's" fire had good effect.

During the night of the 5th, Lt. Colonel Williams evacuated Fort Powell and blew it up. His men waded to Mon Louis Island. The explosion was, of course, seen by various observers and was correctly interpreted.

At Fort Morgan, General Page reported that early on the morning of the 7th his look out saw a flag of truce pass from Fort Gaines to the enemy fleet. Two days before, Colonel Anderson had sent a dispatch to Page, saying that his position at Fort Gaines was critical. Officers of Granger's command on the island believed, too, that the fort was weak against the kind of attack they had launched.

On the 7th, Admiral Farragut communicated with Fort Gaines and demanded that Colonel Anderson surrender the fort unconditionally. The delivery of this communication was observed from Fort Morgan, where the command became frantic about the possible loss of Fort Gaines. General Page tried every means of communication in an effort to establish contact with Colonel Anderson. Finally, after sundown, he slipped across the pass himself to find out why he could not establish communications.

When he arrived, Colonel Anderson was away, communicating with the Federal fleet. In a last minute attempt to save Fort Gaines, General Page relieved Colonel Anderson of command—provided Colonel Anderson had not gone too far with his negotiations. Then General Page hurried back to Fort Morgan lest he be caught in the surrender.

During the night Colonel Anderson returned; and next morning, August 8, 1864, the United States flag was hoisted over Fort Gaines at 9:30.

Since the Battle of Mobile Bay there has been no military or naval action on Dauphin Island or in the adjacent waters. Since that time the island and the fort have seen relatively peaceful days.
In the 1940's the State Armory Commission leased fifteen acres on Dauphin, including the fort, as a camp site for the State Guard. A United States Coast Guard unit was on the island in 1943-44. During the Dixon administration, General Ben Smith had scrap iron collected on the island. Some 300,000 pounds of rails of military tracks, heavy gun mounts left there during World War I, and other scrap from all parts of the island was freighted to Cedar Point and then sent to Mobile. Governor Dixon issued an order, during this drive for scrap, that cannon used in the 1864 engagement be preserved intact.

During and since World War II, the U. S. Coast Guard has used Dauphin as a base of operation. New plans are now under consideration for establishing on Dauphin, near the fort, a helicopter and crash boat base of the United States Air Force, with recreational facilities, too, for military personnel at the Brookley Air Force Base in Mobile.

Dauphin is ideally suited for such recreational uses. With difficult transportation services in past years, a good many people have visited the island because they loved the beach or the old fort or because they merely felt relaxed in seaside isolation. The island has already given pleasure to vacationers. Wherever one goes on Dauphin—one cannot be so far from Cadillac's hour-glass sand of the beach that he fails to hear the sounds of the surf when breakers are rolling.

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The Author is Chairman of the Division of the Humanities of Birmingham-Southern College and an historical writer of renown. Among his books is "Fleur de Lys and Calumet" which colorfully narrates much of the extensive history of French Louisiana. Dr. McWilliams is regarded as one of Alabama's foremost historians.