



envision



WHAT IS THE MOBILE MARDI GRAS TRAIL?



The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail is a series of historic sites which explain how America's Mardi Gras tradition was born in Mobile, while providing a chronological and engaging overview of the city's history. The Mardi Gras Trail celebrates the diversity of cultures coming to the port of Mobile (French, Spanish, British, African, Caribbean and others) which formed our unique celebration.

The plan was developed in cooperation Mobile Historic Development Commission and is operated by the Historic Mobile Preservation Society, a non-profit 501C3 organization which preserves and promotes Mobile's history through advocacy, educational programs and community engagement.

The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail project celebrates Mardi Gras as the most compelling symbol associated with Mobile. Although regarded by most as the city's most visible contribution to American culture, the real history of Mardi Gras in Mobile is very often misunderstood, muddled with inconsistent and inaccurate information.

With walking and driving tours, website, social media, and community outreach, the Mardi Gras Trail provides the public with a professional interpretation of Mobile's history and its mystic parading tradition with abundant online resources, easily accessed at each site with a mobile device. The website (mobilemardigrasrail.com) describes the historic significance of the riverfront, Duncan Place, Mardi Gras Park, Royal Street, Bienville Square, and Broad Street from Augusta to Martin Luther King Blvd., as well as the places in between. Unlike the architectural focus so common in Mobile's historic interpretation, the Mardi Gras Trail describes the people, places and stories of early Mobile. The entertaining and educational programs reveal for the first time, Mobile's unique contribution to the country's economy and culture and draw people to the riverfront.

The Historic Mobile Preservation Society is proposing to mark each site with a bronze marker, funded by individual and corporate sponsors through the sale of commemorative bricks, arranged in a subtle, aesthetic and historically appropriate border surrounding the plaque and measuring 24 inches on either side.

Following the theme of exploring "places," this project is intended to be the Preservation Society's signature contribution to Alabama's Bicentennial Celebration for the year 2017.



The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail is a celebration of Mobile's history and heritage.
It is a signature contribution to the

Alabama Bicentennial Celebration

In preparation for Alabama's Bicentennial Celebration,
Mayor Sandy Stimpson noted,
"Mobile is Alabama's oldest city... We've got the history, but we also
have an amazing here-and-now. You all will know that Mardi Gras took
over Mobile this week. That's just one reason we're called Mobile: The
City Born to Celebrate."

At a recent meeting in Mobile, Carolyn Feltus of the Alabama
Bicentennial Commission noted, "you can stand on the river [in Mobile]
and see all the history. You really see all the past, present and future all
in one place. There is nowhere else in Alabama where you can see that..."
That experience is how the Mardi Gras Trail begins and the Mardi Gras
Trail offers the only regularly-scheduled walking tours of the city.

The annual themes of the Bicentennial programs are focused on the
PLACES, PEOPLE, and STORIES of Alabama.

The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail will be a real and permanent way for
Mobile to make its unique history apparent to all who visit.

Tangible, visual symbols like the proposed historic markers of the
Mobile Mardi Gras Trail identify these historic places while the
commemorative bricks of the trail bring them to life in a way that truly
engages the public in their significance, while also improving the look
and historic appeal of the city.

SITE #1

The historic markers of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail provide a clear and visual chronological overview of the city's history .

The first site of the Mardi Gras Trail is located at the end of Government Street on the river, the traditional entry to the city and to the state of Alabama, also the first location most tourists notice upon entering the city from the interstate onto Water Street heading to the Convention Center or Cruise Terminal.

Text for the bronze marker at this location is proposed as follows:



Soon after Alabama gained statehood in 1819, Mobile grew quickly from a small European settlement into a major American port.

The expanding demand for cotton turned Mobile into a center of international commerce, greeting ships from the industrial northeast and all around the world.

At this location around the year 1830, Michael Krafft and other young merchants formed the Cowbellion de Rakin Society, the first mystic parading association.

Their unique form of revelry was inspired by the blending of diverse cultures that came to the port of Mobile in the nineteenth century and it laid the foundation for Mardi Gras traditions celebrated across the Gulf Coast and southern United States.





As the historic entry to the city and the state of Alabama, the riverfront between Dauphin and Government Streets was the site of the first mystic parades in the 1830's.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the city's first Mardi Gras court entered the port at this location and ceremoniously disembarked their ship, were escorted through Duncan Place and around Bienville Square before meeting with the mayor at the County Courthouse (now Mardi Gras Park), where the mythical "Emperor Felix" received the key to the city, allowing revelry to rule for the last day of carnival, a tradition still continued today.

Beginning in the 1940's, King Elexis of Mobile's "Colored Carnival Association" also arrived on a royal yacht, just to the north at the foot of Elmira St. and was similarly escorted through the city on the Sunday before Mardi Gras to receive "the keys to colored Mobile."

A 1922 report of Emperor Felix's arrival at the foot of Government Street.

The King's tour of his city started as soon as he had been officially greeted at the foot of Government Street... Felix stepped from the Royal Yacht 'Messenger' shortly after the noon hour and, surrounded by his knights and members of his court, took part in a great street pageant.

*Montgomery Advertiser,
February 28, 1922*

A 1949 report of King Elexis's arrival at the foot of Elmira Street

With the pomp and laughter that is befitting a Ruler of Mirth King Elexis and his courtiers arrived at the Elmira St. dock promptly at the stroke of 3...A motorcade was awaiting the docking of the king his court.

*Mobile Register,
February 28, 1949*

**According to a recent report by
“Partners for Livable Communities,”**

***...forward thinking communities of today are
finding ways to truly engage with their residents
around the heritage assets that everyone shares.***

Interpreting the Past Creates Attachment to the Present .

**The Historic Mobile
Preservation Society**

placed its first historic markers in the city in the 1930s, which can be seen today on the corner of Royal and Theater Streets and in front of the Conde-Charlotte House.

HMPS has placed many markers at historic sites in Mobile over the past eighty years and is now proposing its most important contribution to the recognition of Mobile’s historic past, commemorating the port itself as the first gateway into the city of Mobile and the state of Alabama and the location of the first mystic parades, which brought national acclaim to the city and inspired the American Mardi Gras tradition.



FUNDING :

No funding for the Mardi Gras Trail project has been requested from the City. The project is funded entirely by the Historic Mobile Preservation Society and all funds have been raised from individual and corporate supporters, inspiring a cooperative effort among area businesses, non-profit organizations and private citizens with a desire

- to enhance the historic ambiance of the downtown and Broad Street areas,
- to increase public awareness, knowledge, confidence and pride
- to provide an authentic account of Mobile's significant cultural history.

The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail gives each citizen a stake their heritage and pride in promoting their city to others, a model for public involvement and cooperation between private, non-profit, and civic entities toward a common vision.

MAINTENANCE

The HMPS also recognizes its ongoing responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of each site and takes this responsibility very seriously. Because of this, seven sites have been carefully selected for their strategic locations and a plan has been created for phased progress over a 2 year period. The proposed installations, although small, could replace cracked and dangerous portions of the concrete already in need of replacement, with sustainable materials or simply stand on their own.

The Primary Mission of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail is TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN MOBILE'S HISTORY

Read the full Mission Statement [HERE](#)



INCLUSION

is central to the mission of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail

Mardi Gras unifies the community around a singular heritage. The tour describes the mystic tradition as a cultural celebration that represents the rich cultural tapestry and the city's diverse heritage. It is a form of artistry and festivity in which all Mobilians have a stake, one that was renowned across the country when it developed in the nineteenth century and is still recreated in very much the same form today, a sign of **Mobile's incomparable reverence for both tradition and celebration.**

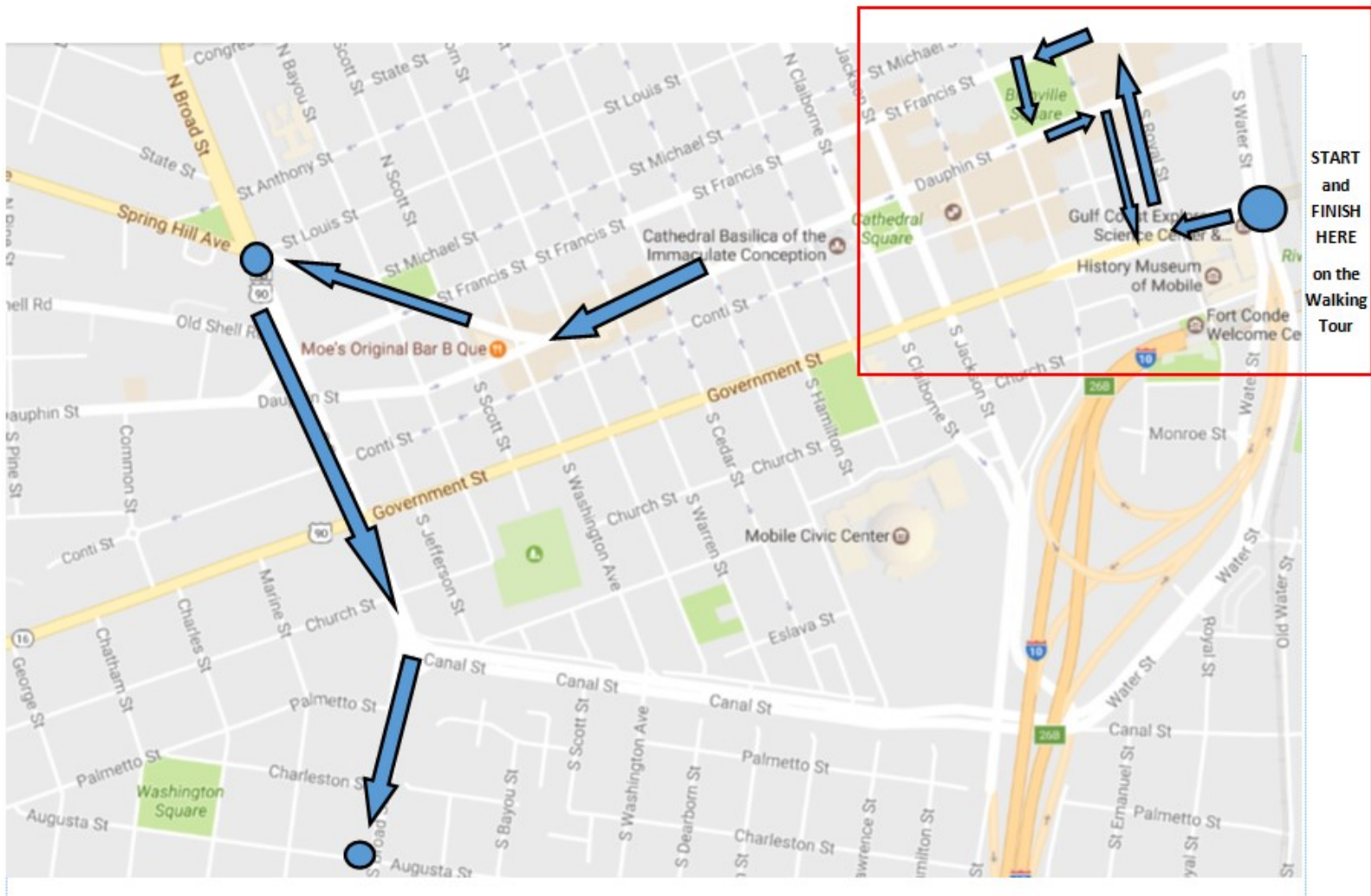
A NEW INTERPRETATION, A COMPELLING and LOGICAL PATH FOR DISCOVERING MOBILE'S HISTORY

As one of just a few strategic commercial destinations during the steamship era, Mobile played a very significant and often overlooked role in the country's social, cultural, and economic development.

The importance of the port of Mobile for the American economy during the steamship era cannot be overstated. Mobile was known not only as a destination of trade but also as a center of culture and the arts. It was the city's nationally renowned theatrical community that inspired many of the unique customs now associated with the American Mardi Gras tradition.

Instead of providing obscure details with little context or background as many historical plaques, the online resources and the proposed markers of the Mardi Gras Trail put Mobile's history in the context of American history so that it is more easily understood by the average citizen, student and tourist.

Additionally unlike any other historical sites, the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail follows a logical and chronological sequence, so that moving from one site to the next provides an appropriate introduction to Mobile and a sound overview of the city's history.



THE NEED FOR PLANNING and A BETTER INTERPRETATION of the City's History

A Few Examples:

The Mobile Carnival Museum is the typical recommendation for residents and tourists interested in Mobile's Mardi Gras history. Yet their online resources still present many factual problems, perpetuate outdated myths and are not consistent with information provided in other locations.

At the unveiling of his privately funded historic marker across the street from Mardi Gras Park, journalist Steve Joynt added valuable commentary to the conversation.

"Anytime you say, 'describe your city,' I think most folks put Mardi Gras close to the top of the list saying this is what we do, this is what makes us different. And I feel like most people know something of the history of how this all got started, but putting it up there and saying here it is, this is where it started, that has some impact." From: <http://local15tv.com/news/local/new-historical-marker-for-mobiles-first-mardi-gras-parade>

Joynt independently applied for the historical marker to be placed across the street from Mardi Gras Park honoring the first parade of the Order of Myths. The unveiling was celebrated, yet the text recognizes Mobile's first Mardi Gras parade in 1868, many years after the tradition was recorded in New Orleans, using the British term "Shrove Tuesday," confusing the average person not familiar with the two names for the same day of the year.

At the same time not far away, billboards at the entrance to the city proclaim Mobile as the "Birthplace of Mardi Gras," again offering no reasoning for the claim, leaving visitors confused and residents uncertain, feeling little connection to a past they do not understand.

It should be clear that Mobile was already recognized around the country at the time for the pomp and pageantry of their impressive New Year's Eve parades. It was no secret at the time that Mobile originated the mysterious, artistic, thematic street procession, with dramatic music and spectacular lighting effects. Mobile's "mystic parades" already existed but this was the first on "Fat Tuesday," just before Lent.

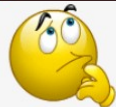
Mobile should be assured that a consistent and appropriate message is provided to the public in order for Mobile's significant role in the development of the nation to be recognized.



Architect Douglas Kearley recently requested the installation of a sign to designate the Government Street median between Royal and Water Streets as "Duncan Place" and an aluminum sign was erected but no information has been provided to the public to explain or justify the expense or appearance of the sign in perhaps the most prominent location in the city. There are still very few individuals who know anything about Col. Duncan or the historic significance of this block. Only the Historic Mobile Preservation Society and Mardi Gras Trail websites provide a basic explanation, resources and further information for the public. The proposed installation at this location, enhance public knowledge and help to explain how and why "Duncan Place" fits into Mobile's history.



PLEASE Explain!



The mission of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail is purposefully aligned with the goals of the

Map for Mobile



The Executive Summary of the Map for Mobile begins with this:

The Map for Mobile is to recommend strategies that improve places for people.

The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail addresses the following themes repeated throughout the input process :

- Physical design as a priority
 - More walkability
 - Preserving our history
-

The Mobile Mardi Gras Trail assists in attracting residents and visitors to the riverfront and provides information about the historic significance of the port of Mobile for national and international commerce during the steamship era. to the growth of the nation's economy in the nineteenth century.

The driving tour of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail emphasizes how the city grew to the west and takes participants into each of its historic neighborhoods, emphasizing the importance of Broad Street and the Spring Hill community as well.

It therefore addresses each of the following goals as stated in the “Map for Mobile” :

MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Mobility and connectivity are more than just transportation. These terms encompass all forms of getting from one place to another, including walking, biking, driving, taking transit and even water transport. GOALS › More walkable places with a variety of destinations, services and necessities within close proximity

NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods are what people call home. A collection of unique, diverse and characterful places, Mobile's neighborhoods are more than just housing. They are havens, playgrounds and places citizens love.

GOALS › Better connectivity among neighborhoods and destinations › Well-designed, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood centers with a mixture of uses › Well-maintained infrastructure and recreational amenities › Active and engaged neighborhood organizations › Vibrant neighborhoods with a strong and diverse sense of place › Protected and enhanced neighborhood character

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mobile's natural resources are unparalleled in the state and the region.

GOALS › Strategic utilization of the waterfront as an economic engine while respecting its natural beauty and sensitivity › Creation of trails and passive recreation spaces along streams, creeks and other flood prone areas › Better connectivity to parks and recreational areas from neighborhoods › Accessibility at multiple locations to the rivers and Mobile Bay ›

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

Collaboration and Cooperation refer to the partnerships and alliances that work together, leveraging knowledge and resources, for the betterment of the Mobile area.

GOALS › Encourage and foster public private partnerships › Greater access to educational opportunities of all types for all ages › Well-maintained arts, cultural and attraction amenities

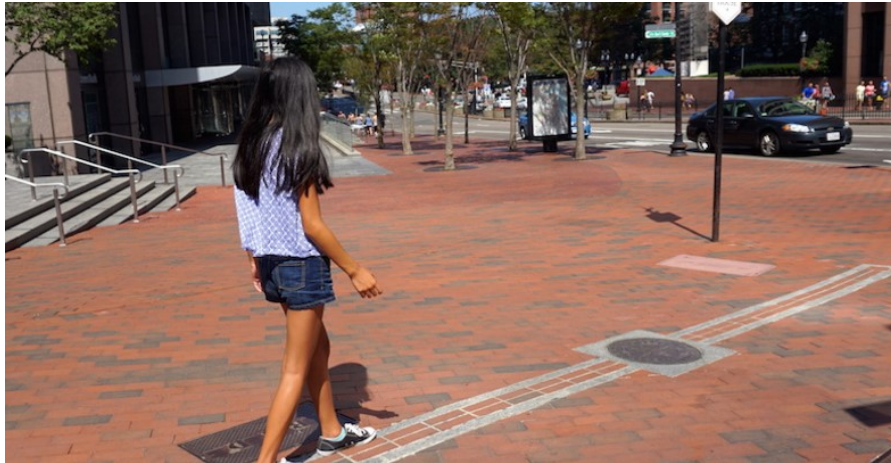
MARKING the SITES

The installation of sidewalk markers was inspired by the need to create a clear and visual historical narrative that is distinguished from the vast array of unconnected historical markers that currently exist.

The Mardi Gras Trail historic plaques represent a professional and
PLANNED APPROACH
to interpreting the city's history while providing the opportunity for future growth within that framework.

The inspiration to include BRICKS was inspired to by desire to create an historic
ambiance and based on the success of the

[Freedom Trail](#)



Boston's #1 Tourist Attraction

according to

[The Travel Channel](#) / [Planetware.com](#) / [USA Today](#)

While a vision for the future might be to expand and connect the markers of the Mardi Gras Trail, the installations currently proposed for Mobile are not large.

Each proposed installation would be approximately 3' X 4' in size
and would include a 24" X 24" bronze plaque with brief historical text
surrounded by 4 rows of commemorative bricks.

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT : What Works?

<http://livable.org/storage/documents/reports/CBC/culturalheritagetourism.pdf>

More and more, residents want to preserve the community gathering places that existed in the past, places that provide the nodes of community exchange and that thus hold the most value to their cities.

According to a recent report by the Knight Foundation, “Community attachment is an emotional connection to a place that transcends satisfaction, loyalty, and even passion. A community’s most attached residents have strong pride in it, a positive outlook on the community’s future, and a sense that it is the perfect place for them.

The commemorative bricks reserved for current supporters of the Mardi Gras Trail, create a model of community involvement uncovering memories from past generations and revealing how closely unified Mobilians are in their appreciation the city’s Mardi Gras traditions as well as their shared memories of certain places and events.

The collection of these memories has revealed the common themes that tie us together and make Mobile a community with a unique history that is shared by all. All together they are a collage of the families, the arts, the historic homes and mystic associations that are the real history of Mobile.



Following are a few examples :



Read more about the Marston and Trigg family home, their Haunted Book Store and friendships with Eugene Walker and Caldwell Delaney. [HERE.](#)



The Greene-Marston House, “Termite Hall,”

2000 Dauphin Street

Added to the National Register of Historic Places on January 11, 1983.

ORDER OF DOVES

est. 1894

On March 4, 1897,
the *Mobile Daily Register*
reported the
Order of Doves,
the first African-American mystic
parading society,
held their "4th Annual" parade in
which about 30 of the 50 members
marched ...

"...from their quarters through
Dauphin, Royal and St. Louis Streets
to the Gilmer Hall, making a very
pretty show."

"Costumes represented no
particular cast, they were made up
of silk, satin, velvets and
represented princes, knights and
cavaliers."

Mobile Daily Register
Mobile, Alabama
3 February 1894, Saturday
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Mobile History Museum Archives

THE O.O.D. Ball

The O.O.D., the new colored mystic society, gave their first ball at the armory of the Gilmer Rifles last night. The elite of colored society was present and the affair was a grand success. Miss Florina Nicholas, attired in pink silk, with satin stripes, was the acknowledged belle of the ball. Refreshments were served throughout the evening and a delightful time was had by all.

The novel feature of this carnival is the parade and ball to-night of the first colored mystic organization ever known. It is called the O O D and its members must be the best class. We grow to judge from the execution and richness of its costumes and the elegance of its program that to-m

Knoxville Journal, February 26, 1895

The Order of Doves, Mobile's colored mystic organization, gave a very credible parade to-night, followed by a ball, which was attended by the cream of colored society.

— *Times Democrat*, February 18, 1896

Text
Charles Torrey, archivist of the Mobile History Museum, has compiled a list of early Order of Doves Members with information about each.

Members included the names:

Willis Banks
Alexander Boyd
Claiborne Carter
J. Evans
Francisco Gomez
Thomas Jackson
Frank Leavens
Henderson Morgan
William Moulton
John Preston
Samuel Washington

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are pleased to acknowledge the receipt of an invitation of the Order of Doves to their annual reception at Mobile, Alabama, extended to us by Mr. G.M. Wilderson of the Gulf City Drug Store, also of The Western World.

— *Freeman* (Indianapolis, Indiana), February 10, 1910

Remembering A King



Phillip "Gator" Burk
1974 - 2005
I Did It My Way
Gators Princess



Phillip Michael Burk

Knights of Mobile
The Royal Order of King George III



a former director of city of Saraland parks and recreation for senior citizens and the reigning king of the Knights of Mobile mystic society, died Saturday.

He was 31.

Burk, a resident of Saraland, also formerly worked for Mobile Mental Health, Camp Martin and the YMCA. In 1998, he served as schedule manager and events coordinator for Judge Douglas Johnstone's campaign for the Alabama Supreme Court, according to relatives.

A 1992 graduate of Satsuma High School, he was student council president, senior class officer, a Tri-Hi-Y Sweetheart and the Gator mascot.

He received his bachelor of science degree in marketing and business and his master's degree in psychology from Troy State University.

At the university, he was a cheerleading squad member, a special events coordinator, TS&You editor, Lambda Chi Alpha president, Troy Interfraternal Council president and the Student Government Association vice president.

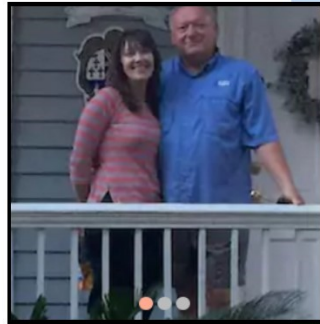


He was Lambda Chi Alpha International Leader of the Year in 1996 and Lambda Chi Officer of the Year 1993-97. He also was selected for the Order of Omega Greek Honor Society and Who's Who Among American Colleges and Universities 1993-94.

Survivors include his parents, Ronnie Burk and Theresa Burk; and a sister, January Burk, all of Saraland; and his grandmothers, Alice McAll of Saraland and Myrtle Paul of Eight Mile.



The Denny-Warren House, purchased by Bob and Robyn Warren in 2008, one of the oldest shotgun houses in the city.



“Shotgun” houses are prototypically long and narrow with a gable-ended entrance, one room wide, and two or three rooms deep. It is usually no more than about 12 feet (3.5 m) wide, with rooms arranged one behind the other and doors at each end of the house.

Some say the shotgun house is so named because one can fire a shotgun through the front door and the shot will exit out the back door without touching a wall. The style originated in the American South, particularly in Mobile and New Orleans. Read more about the “Shotgun” house of the American South here: [SHOTGUN HOUSES](#)

The bricks of the Mobile Mardi Gras Trail involve citizens in recreating the history of their community, bringing with it a greater attachment to the city’s past and personal investment in the city’s future.