



The marching group gains momentum along its route. No one is a spectator - everyone is a participant.

RISE & REVEL

PHOTOS BY JAMES SHAW



No costume is too bizarre, too colorful or too outrageous for this celebration.

Each Mardi Gras morning, maskers – hundreds of them, perhaps a thousand – walk the streets of New Orleans’ Faubourg Marigny neighborhood downriver from the Vieux Carré. They are heading to a central gathering point where all of the individual cells of color will be united under a mass movement collectively known as the Society of St. Anne.

To the rhythm of brass bands, the group will saunter through the Marigny toward the French Quarter, channeling onto Royal Street before heading to Canal Street to witness the Rex parade. Like salmon making their upstream climb from the ocean to the mountains, some will make the total distance; some will drop off along the way. Those in their path will marvel at the splendor or perhaps join them.

St. Anne’s passing is a rolling wave of color and creativity. It is one of Carnival’s purest rituals, totally non-commercial; thoroughly high-quality; informal in its structure. The miracle of Saint Anne transforms ordinary, and not-so-ordinary, people into myriad images and shapes to worship at the altar of Mardi Gras. Blessed be Saint Anne, for it has created near perfection.

- Errol Laborde





While some of the New Orleans Carnival krewes maintain exclusive and expensive memberships, the Society of St. Anne's only real requirement is that one simply know about it - and of course, wear a costume. New Orleanians taking dressing up seriously: Months before Carnival season truly begins, would-be revelers begin handcrafting, sewing and designing their over-the-top outfits that will be proudly displayed on Fat Tuesday morning. The krewe was founded in 1969 by Henri Schindler, Paul Poche and Jon Newlin.



Some St. Anne costumers spend countless hours crafting costumes, yielding stunning results.



Some people mask themselves beyond recognition; others are embellished versions of themselves.



The parade was founded to rebel against an ordinance that removed traditional old-line walking parades from the French Quarter. To this day it maintains a sense of playful rebelliousness and satire.





Normally quiet neighborhood bars become crowded hot spots to grab a drink or take a break.



With St. Anne's marching parade, one can experience overindulgence and the beauty of community. But there is also a sense of solemnity, though it may be brief. At the end of the route, after Rex has passed, revelers walk to the Mississippi River and dip streamers, usually hanging from large hoops (pictured above), into the water and sprinkle droplets over the crowd in a baptism-esque ritual. Others may use this as a time to set the ashes of deceased loved ones into the river.