

# 2003 Rex Procession

## “Bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase”

March 4, 2003 New Orleans, Louisiana

- 1. Rex, King of Carnival, Monarch of Merriment** Rex’s float carries Rex and his pages through the streets of New Orleans on Mardi Gras day.
- 2. His Majesty’s Bandwagon** A band rides on this permanent float to provide music for Rex and for those who greet him on the parade route.
- 3. The King’s Jesters** Even the Monarch of Merriment needs jesters in his court. Rex’s jesters dress in Mardi Gras colors—purple, green, and gold.
- 4. The Boeuf Gras** This is one of the oldest symbols of Mardi Gras, symbolizing the great feast on the day before Lent begins.
- 5. Title Float: Bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase** 200 years ago the United States purchased the enormous Louisiana Territory from France, gaining not only the vital port of New Orleans, but assuring the westward expansion of the young America.
- 6. Louis XIV** “The Sun King” ruled France at the peak of its political, cultural, and military power. He chartered LaSalle’s expedition to claim the Mississippi River and d’Iberville’s exploration of France’s vast new world territories. Louis’ royal fleur-de-lis is still the symbol of New Orleans.
- 7. Mississippi, Father of Waters** “Miche Sipe” is the personification of the “father of waters”, as the Indians called the great river whose waters begin in the icy North and flow to the warm marshes of the river’s mouth.

**8. City of the Red Sun** “Tchoutchouma” (literally “The Red Place”, or, more poetically, “The City of the Red Sun”) was the Indian name for their settlement which occupied the present site of New Orleans.

**9. LaSalle** Rene Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, claimed the Louisiana Territory for France in April of 1682. He holds the Royal Proclamation in his hand; the white crosses on the float’s side suggest his fate—he was killed by his own mutinous men.

**10. Napoleon** Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul and Emperor of France was probably the most powerful man in the Western world when he sold his Louisiana Territories to America. This float shows the Neoclassic Empire style he favored, his ermine draped initials, and his symbolic Bonaparte bees.

**11. Laussat** Pierre Clement de Laussat was Napoleon’s last Colonial Prefect. He was present when the Louisiana Territory was turned over to the United States, and he appointed New Orleans’ first Mayor and Council.

**12. Louisiana 1812** is the first of the floats representing states created from the lands of the Louisiana Purchase. Note the state symbol, the pelican feeding its young, and the profusion of Live Oaks and Magnolia blossoms.

**13. Missouri 1821** The bear and knight in armor come from the state seal, and the nineteenth century steamboat with its ornate smokestack is a reference to native Missourian Mark Twain’s book: Life on the Mississippi.

**14. The Streetcar Named Desire** This permanent float honors the most famous of all of New Orleans’ streetcar lines.

**15. Arkansas 1836** was first settled by one of LaSalle’s lieutenants, Henri de Tonti. State symbols include an angel imploring mercy and the sword of justice, and the float is graced by an abundance of red and white apple blossoms, the state flower.

**16. Iowa 1846** is represented by two enduring images—its endless clear blue sky and the legendary Iowa State Fair, symbolized by the ferris wheel and the bright colors of the Fair’s tents. Note the Wild Rose, the Iowa state flower.

**17. Minnesota 1858** Daniel Greysolon, sieur Duluth claimed Minnesota for France in 1679. The float bears the state motto: "l'Etoile du Nord"—the Star of the North, but it is better known as "The Gopher State". Note the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights, and the snowflakes and icicles.

**18. Kansas 1861** The "Sunflower State" was first claimed for Spain by Coronado, but was ceded to France just in time to be transferred to the United States as part of the Louisiana Purchase. This float is an explosion of sunflowers and wheat sheaves, Kansas' most famous crop.

**19. Nebraska 1867** The "Cornhusker State" could only be symbolized by corn-- corn flowering, corn spilling out of a cornucopia, kernels of corn, ears of husked and unhusked corn.

**20. Colorado 1876** Below the state seal is the motto "Nil Sine Numine", or "Nothing Without Providence". The float is draped with purple Rocky Mountain Columbine, the state flower. Only part of Colorado was included in the Louisiana Purchase.

**21. North Dakota 1889** Home to the Sioux and other Indian tribes ("Dakota" is a Sioux word for "ally"), North Dakota's float carries a Chief in war bonnet, Indian tipis, and an abundance of Prairie Rose, the state flower.

**22. South Dakota 1889** Pasque flowers and evergreen landscapes decorate this float. The towers and domes refer to the World's Only Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota.

**23. Montana 1889** The Western Meadowlark is Montana's state bird, and the state motto "Oro y Plata"—"gold and silver"—is shown with pick and shovel on the side of the float. The state flower, the Bitterroot, cascades over the float.

**24. Wyoming 1890** The American Bison, once nearly extinct, still roams in Wyoming, especially in Yellowstone Park. "The Equality State" is also known for livestock and mining. Note the Indian Paintbrush, the colorful state flower.

**25. Oklahoma 1909** was the last Louisiana Purchase state to enter the Union. Prior to statehood it was known as “Indian Territory”, and that heritage shows on this float, along with the state seal, mistletoe, the state flower, and a covered wagon pulled by oxen, symbolic of the Oklahoma Land Rush of 1889. Some of those waiting for the signal to claim land left a little “sooner” than they should have, thus the state nickname, the Sooner State.

**26. Under My Wings Everything Prospers** is the title of a panoramic view of New Orleans painted by a local “designer, drawer, geographer, and engineer” named J.L. Bouqueto de Woiseri. In his painting the American eagle flies over the city carrying a scroll with this inscription. It is a fitting depiction of the joy, pride and promise felt in the United States at the time of the Louisiana Purchase.

**27. The Royal Barge** is a permanent float, complete with Royal Gryphon, and this year brings the Rex Procession of Mardi Gras, 2003 to a close.