

TIMES PICAYUNE

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James Pitot built one of the first cotton presses in New Orleans. It stood at the corner of Toulouse and Burgundy streets. He is spoken of as a gentleman of "respectability and talent." On June 2, 1804, he was elected second Mayor of New Orleans.

His career is signalized by the incorporation of the city municipal council, and the taking of the first steps toward the substitution of an elective magistracy for the appointive one.

Pitot took special interest in the police; he enforced an ordinance subsequently created, with Pierre Achille Rivery at its head, under the title of "commissioner general of police in the city and suburbs of New Orleans." The wretched pay received by its members attracted only the riff-raff, and this ordinance provided for the employment of mulattoes to fill the ranks and stipulated the officers must be white men.

The utter inefficiency of this organization occasioned general complaint, and in 1804 was supplemented by a patrol of citizens, drawn from the militia and under the command of Colonel Belle Chasse. It received no pay.

In 1805, Pitot made a further reform by reconstituting the "gendarmes" as a mounted corps. The mayor was made chief of the corps in a resolution of May 6, 1803.

The new system worked fairly well and the militia patrol became popular chiefly because it made considerable demands upon the leisure of the citizens.

During Pitot's mayoralty Congress divided, March 25, 1804, the province of Louisiana in two parts, the upper being annexed to the Indiana territory, and the lower part, which corresponds in boundaries to what is now the state of Louisiana, was erected into the territory of Orleans. New Orleans was made the port of entry and delivery.

On October 1, 1804, the new government went into operation. Claiborne was retained as governor. He too the oath before Mayor Pitot and then delivered an oration in English, afterward translated into flowery French. Governor Claiborne in his voluminous correspondence never lets his pen run over the name of Pitot without a commendation of him.

In early March the territorial council furnished the city with a charter. With the adoption of its nineteen sections, determining the area of municipalities, the real history of New Orleans as distinguished from the remainder of the province is said to have begun. The language used in this comprehensive document is the style incorporated by many officials today in their address and is a type clear and comprehensive.

Pitot resigned his office in July, 1805. In his message of resignation he said:

My own affairs not allowing me to fulfill the functions of mayor, I send the governor my resignation. Appreciating all the marks of kindness and of confidence which I have received at your hands. I beg you to accept my acknowledgment. Give me your esteem and believe me deeply grateful.

Yours,
(Signed) JAMES PITOT