

## **Following the Trail of (French) Bread Crumbs in the Coastal South**

John H. Lawrence

*Director of Museum Programs, The Historic New Orleans Collection*

French culture, taste, and heritage are inextricably connected to New Orleans's history and image, and one could convincingly argue that no United States city has a stronger sense of its Gallic past than does the Crescent City. The French imprint was established through decades of French colonial rule—and even after the shift to Spanish governance, French disposition, loyalty, and language remained. Although New Orleans is special by virtue of its tenacious grip on its French past, it is not the only place in the coastal South that fell under the sway of the *ancien régime* and the First Republic. France explored and colonized large swaths of territory in what is now the southern United States. Vestiges of the French language remain in proper names, terms, and phrases that have survived through centuries and still pepper conversations from Mobile to Abbeville. Moreover, the tastes of French rulers—and the designers who worked for them—live on to this day in objects of utility and delectation. This talk sets the table for the presentations that follow in the program.