The Battles of New Orleans

Archeological Investigation in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana

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The Battles of New Orleans

Archaeological Investigation in
St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana

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Chapter 1. Introduction

No greater military conflict captures the essence of America’s formation than the Battle of New Orleans in 1814-1815. The American victory below New Orleans sealed the coffin of British domination over the United States of America. This LAMAR Institute report is a battlefield archeology study of the Battles of New Orleans. The project was designed to document historical events at the War of 1812 battlefields in the Chalmette vicinity of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana with a multi-disciplinary, “battlefield archeology” approach. The St. Bernard Parish Government contracted with The LAMAR Institute, Inc. to accomplish this task. This work was conducted to fulfill terms of a research grant awarded in 2009 to the St. Bernard Parish Government by the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) of the U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service (NPS). Past historical and archeological efforts to document the Battle of New Orleans have concentrated on the National Park Service property of the Chalmette National Battlefield Park, also known as the Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park. The present study expanded the search to two outlying tracts, which were also part of the battlefield study areas. This research provides knowledge useful for wise management of these properties, including historic preservation.

Background

The popular hero of the New Orleans campaign was the American commanding general, Andrew Jackson. Under his command, an unskilled medley of armed men defeated an overwhelming force that was the pride of the British Royal Army and Navy. Major General Jackson was not formally schooled in military discipline. Following a string of victories over the Creek Indian “Red Sticks” in Alabama and at Pensacola in West Florida; however, Jackson won the admiration and esteem of his troops and the American people. The citizens of the southern states and territories recognized that the British campaign to invade New Orleans was a serious assault on their homeland and in the weeks prior to the battles they swarmed to the scene to join in the fray.

The commander of the British force at New Orleans was Lieutenant General Sir Edward Michael Pakenham, brother of the Duke of Wellington, who himself had achieved his place in world history with the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. The Duke of Wellington remarked about his brother in September, 1812: “Pakenham may not be the brightest genius, but my partiality for him does not lead me astray when I tell you that he is one of the best we have” (Gurwood 1837, Vol. 9:395). General Pakenham met his death in the January 8th engagement at Chalmette plantation, as did several other high ranking British officers and hundreds of non-commissioned officers and enlisted men. Badly stung and without their primary leaders, the British army and navy re-embarked their armada and sailed east for an assault against Mobile and Fort Bowyer.

Despite its celebration in history books and in the popular media of American culture, the Battle of New Orleans landscape has been sorely abused and neglected. Archeologist Ted Birkedal described the Federally-recognized memorial as, "a postage-stamp-sized piece of real estate known as the Chalmette Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve" (Birkedal 2009: xiii). Sadly, Birkedal’s description of the size and appropriateness of the park is apt.

In 1938 the U.S. Congress appropriated $300,000 to purchase lands for a National Military Park to commemorate the victory of the battle of New Orleans”. Roy Appleman noted,

Chalmette National Battlefield Site under the administration of the National Park Service already exists in recognition of the importance of the battle of New Orleans in our national history. It includes a portion of Jackson’s line of defense. But it is a small holding, containing only 18 acres, with a frontage of 450 feet at State Highway No. 1 which tapers down over a length of 2650 feet to a frontage of 135 feet at the Mississippi River. This area is inadequate for proper development and interpretation and it does not include many of the most historic features and sites associated with Jackson’s defense of New Orleans (Appleman 1938).

In a Historic Resource Study conducted for the Chalmette Unit, archeologist Jerome Greene (1985a) made a series of recommendations for future research on the Battle of New Orleans study area. Recommendation No. 11 pertains to the present study and it called for,

A study of the plantations in the immediate vicinity of the battlefield, namely those of Macarty, Rodriguez, Chalmette, Bienvenue, de la Ronde, Lacoste, and Villére. The land encompassed by these tracts figured more or less decisively in the engagements of December 23 and 28, 1814, and January 1 and 8, 1815. A detailed study would identify the historic scene and buildings that might have
has been appropriately utilized by the opposing forces and would contribute to a broader understanding of events in the area adjoining the park unit.

The current project effort addressed Greene’s recommendation, and the research approach included conducting archeological, historical, geographical, biographical, and genealogical research, which was then examined and merged to record the story of the relevant battles. The LAMAR Institute research team employed archeological techniques to search the battlefield landscape to locate, delineate, and establish baseline information on the battlefield sites, associated features and their archeological remains. The archeological data was merged with the other lines of evidence to reconstruct battle events.

Environmental Setting

The battles of New Orleans took place downstream from New Orleans, along both banks of the Mississippi River, in Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes (Figures 1-5). The battleground today bears the name “Chalmette”, which is an oversimplification of the battlefield landscape. Appleman (1938) described the battlefield’s condition at the time of creation of the National Military Park,

The physical appearance of the area where the battle of New Orleans was fought has suffered many changes in the last 123 years. Of the old plantation buildings which stood in 1814-15 all are gone with the exception of the Lacoste house. Modern railroad lines and highways bisect the historic field. Commercial enterprises have encroached on the site, seeking waterfront terminal facilities below New Orleans. Even the river itself has made many changes in the landscape with the passage of time.

Jackson’s breastworks and line of battle extended from the Mississippi River to a cypress swamp about one mile away. Eight batteries were erected along this line. Since 1815, 800 feet of the line has been lost in the river, which at this point has constantly encroached on the land. Battery positions 1, 2 and 3 were situated in the part of the line which has

Figure 1. Project Location.

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Figure 3. Relic of Hurricane Katrina on Murphy Oil Tract, January, 2011. (Courtesy of Daniel Battle).

Figure 4. Murphy Oil Tract, Facing South Toward Villere Plantation, 2011. [Visible trace of Villere Canal has been obliterated on this portion of the property.]

Figure 5. Housing Under Construction North of Meraux Airport Tract, Facing Southwest, 2011.
disappeared in the 'Father of Waters.' A fine ante-bellum mansion, now abandoned and despoiled of its interior woodwork, is situated only a few hundred feet east of Jackson's line, the Rodriguez Canal, and the boundary of the present national area, on ground where the British attack was received by the deadly fire of the Americans... The ruins of the De la Ronde plantation house, which was the most pretentious of all those in the Chalmet area, still stand at the head of the magnificent alley of De la Ronde Oaks. According to the best available information this imposing mansion was built in 1805 and named 'Versailles' by the owner, Pierre Denis de la Ronde. This mansion was two stories high, contained sixteen rooms, and had galleries and colonnades on all four sides. It was of brick construction, covered with white cement. The famous De la Ronde Oaks, sometimes mistakenly called the Pakenham Oaks or the Versailles Oaks, probably the finest in the United States, were planted by Pierre Denis de la Ronde in 1788 with slave labor on his twenty-first birthday. An avenue of pecan trees was planted in the rear of the mansion site, but it has long since disappeared.

Appleman had some misinformation regarding the name Versailles and the date of the oak alley. The de la Ronde plantation was not called Versailles until later in the 19th century, decades after de la Ronde's death. The oak alley may not have been planted until several years after the Battles of New Orleans. In spite of these details, Appleman's point was valid in 1939 and still remarkably applicable today. Many of the most significant areas related to the Battles of New Orleans are being destroyed even as this report is being written. Housing developments, roads, utilities and other construction combine to eliminate the archaeological components of the battle as well as the above-ground battlefield landscape.

This report is organized into three parts, followed by two appendices. Part 1 is the report text consisting of 10 chapters. Chapter I is the introduction. Chapter II provides cultural background for the study. Chapter III discusses the research methods employed by the study. Chapter IV presents a historical summary of the Battles of New Orleans. Chapter V presents the results of the archaeological field study. Chapter VI discusses the defining battlefield features and the battlefield landscape. Chapter VII contains a discussion of artifacts recovered from the battlefield. Chapter VIII interprets the data gathered by this study. Chapter IX discusses historic preservation findings of the project and it advances some recommendations for management of battle-related resources on non-federally owned property. Chapter X summarizes the project. The report is followed by a complete bibliography of references cited and appendices. Appendix 1 contains an inventory of artifacts collected by this study. Appendix 2 contains photographs of selected artifacts recovered by the project. Part 2 contains

a large selection of illustrations pertaining to the battles of New Orleans. Part 3 contains a series of GIS maps of the battlefield, which were generated by the present study.
Chapter 2. Cultural Background

Previous Battlefield Research

Appleman (1938) summarized the initial research efforts by the NPS, prior to the acquisition of the National Battlefield Park property:

The research has been done chiefly by Francis Wilshin, Junior Research Technician, Vicksburg National Military Park. Mr. Wilshin has made extensive use of materials in the various libraries and historical societies in New Orleans. Among the materials used by Mr. Wilshin were thirty-two original letters written by Jean Lafitte. Many contemporary maps were used, the most important being one prepared by Major A. Lacarriere Latour and published along with other maps in his Historical Memoirs of the War in West Florida and Louisiana, 1814-15. Major Latour was General Jackson’s Chief Engineer and held the regular position of Principal Engineer, 7th Military District, United States Army. Among the contemporary maps in the British Archives relating to the battle of New Orleans, that drawn by John Peddie is one of the most useful. A map prepared in 1935 by D. C. W. Ricketts is invaluable in a present day study of the terrain and for locating features on the battlefield. By working backward from 1835 to 1814-15 using all known surveys made during that interval, Mr. Ricketts was able to establish all the original positions of the American and British Armies in the series of battles below New Orleans. Certain existing remains were tied in with Latour’s map of 1815 and even the change in the shore line of the Mississippi River in the battlefield area was calculated. Old maps have been found which name and locate the plantations which were situated on and in the vicinity of the battlefield. These included the McCarty, Chalmette, De la Ronde, Lacoste, and Bienvenu plantations.

Samuel Wilson (1965) was a prominent historical architect and champion of historic resources in the New Orleans vicinity. Wilson’s study of plantations in the Battle of New Orleans vicinity is invaluable, particularly as several of the historic sites have since been destroyed. Without Wilson’s pioneering efforts, important historical information about the battlefield and its associated properties would have been lost completely. Thanks to his documentary efforts, we have some inkling of how the battlefield landscape once appeared. Several other photographers and historians also contributed to this aspect of historic preservation.

The first formal archeological study of the battlefield was conducted by the National Park Service by archeologist Francis H. Elmore in 1956 and 1957. Later archeological studies were conducted by Rex Wilson (1963) and Francis J. Mathien (1979). These projects were confined to the National Park property.

National Park Service archeologist Ted Birkedal conducted extensive excavations in 1983 and 1984, which are well documented in a three volume report (Birkedal 2009). Birkedal identified the former location of Jackson’s Battery 3, the Rodriguez house, the Line Jackson, as well as an earlier historic plantation home site that predated the war. Birkedal’s account of the excavation project was elaborated during a site visit with one of this report’s authors (Daniel Elliott) in March, 2011.

Archeologist Scott Travis recorded the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park as archeological site 16SB147 in 1987. The site limits, as defined by Travis, correspond with the NPS’s property boundary. This boundary was not defined on the basis of archeological study and many portions of the 1814-1815 battlefields in the New Orleans campaign extend beyond this boundary, particularly those involving the December 23-24, Night Battle.

Scientists with the Tennessee Valley Authority were dispatched to Chalmette to conduct magnetometry mapping of portions of site 16SB147 (TVA Mapping Services Branch n.d.). Although maps detailing these investigations were located, no written report was identified.

The NPS archeologists conducted archeological survey on portions of site 16SB147 and areas north of the existing site boundary currently occupied by the Chalmette National Cemetery (Cornelison and Cooper 2002). Cornelison and Cooper summarized their project,
British army. The victory helped propel the American commander, Andrew Jackson, to the presidency and heralded the young United States as a world power. The Chalmette archaeological project began with 221 systematic shovel tests laid out on a 20-m grid. A total of 22.1 acres representing 15 percent of the park unit's acreage were covered by this method. Of the shovel tests, 69 (31 percent) contained cultural material. None of this material was battle related. Following the completion of the shovel testing, systematic metal detecting was undertaken. Composite maps produced by CRGIS were used to select the area for survey. Three days of metal detecting were undertaken with as many as 16 volunteers as well as five additional days of metal detecting with three to five volunteers. The metal detecting survey covered 73 acres, representing 51 percent of the total park acreage. These acres include the majority of the area that was shovel tested as well as non-shovel tested areas. Concurrently with the metal detecting, ground penetrating radar (GPR) was employed on the battlefield for three days. Since the accuracy of the reconstructed rampart has been challenged, the unit was employed around the rampart. It was also used in the National Cemetery, north of the Malus-Beauregard House, across the Rodriguez Canal, on the suspected area of a Civil War powder magazine, and on the suspected area of the Freedmen's Cemetery. While a number of anomalies were located, the scope of this project only permitted subsurface testing of two of the anomalies found by the GPR. A thermography unit was employed in an attempt to locate the British mass burials. Several anomalies were recorded and one was tested with an excavation unit. However, no documents maintained by the park indicate that these burials are located well out of the park and the testing did not produce the predicted grave or any other cultural features.

The NPS archeologists conducted shovel testing, systematic metal detecting, ground penetrating radar survey, excavation units, and trench monitoring on portions of 16SB147 in 2002-2003 (Kidd 2003). While a final report of Steven Kidd's study was not available for the present study, his summary description of artifacts recovered on the updated site form included, “brick, nails (cut and wire), historic ceramics, glass, slate, shell, iron and lead shot, cannonballs, minie balls, case shot, buttons, and artillery shell fragments”. Kidd described the artifact density as low and the distribution of artifacts as diffuse. He presented a revised site boundary and recommended that the site was potentially eligible for listing as a National Historic Landmark, and he based its significance partly on the archeological finds. He also noted that the park experienced occasional looting and he recommended monitoring of the park grounds for any future evidence of looting. Kidd also listed previous investigations of 16SB147, which included Francis H. Elmore (1957), Rex Wilson (1963), and SEAC (1998).

In 1984-1985, historian Betsy Swanson conducted a battlefield landscape study, which was documented in a draft report to the NPS. A final report was never completed but her draft report was heavily utilized in the present study (Swanson 1985). Swanson's draft report represents an important research document that should be edited and released to the public by the NPS. Greene (1985a) conducted a detailed historical resource study of the Chalmette Unit for the NPS. Greene also contributed to Birkedal's research report (Birkedal 2009, Vol. 1). Greene summarized the extent of the two battles that preceded the better-known January 8th battle, "The engagement of December 23, 1814, occurred on the de La Ronde, Lacoste, and Villé properties, while those of December 28, 1814, January 1, 1815, and January 8, 1815, took place on the Rodriguez, Chalmette, and Bienvenu holdings, although cognate operations occurred on all the tracts.”

The NPS conducted a cultural landscape study, which was reported by Risk (1999). That study focused on the federally-owned park property. Two plantations were discussed, Rodriguez and Chalmette, as well as the Mississippi riverfront. This report did not provide much useful information on privately owned portions of the New Orleans battlefield.

In August, 2005, Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent failure of the levees on Lake Pontchartrain resulted in severe flooding at the Chalmette Unit and all of St. Bernard Parish. The museum and any archival records it contained were destroyed. The park ground also received extensive damage, including destruction of large sections of the brick wall on its eastern boundary, which separates the park from the Chalmette National Cemetery. The NPS archeologists conducted a ground penetrating radar survey on portions of site 16SB147 in 2009. This work was done in conjunction with repairs to the brick cemetery wall in the Chalmette National Cemetery. The wall received extensive damage from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 (Lawson 2009).

A few cultural resource studies have explored portions of the battlefield of New Orleans on property not owned by the U.S. government in the past few decades. For the most part these efforts have failed to locate any artifacts or features relating to the 1814-1815 battlefields.

The Pecan Grove plantation house, then known as the Debouchel Estate, was examined in 1982 by Gene Cizek, who listed the home in an inventory of historic standing structures of St. Bernard Parish (Cizek 1982). On the inventory form, however, the date of construction was erroneously listed as "circa 1840". The house was described as
a French Colonial or Creole style manor house, and Cizek noted, “Overall roof shape and many details indicated very early date”. A barn and outbuilding also were recorded by Cizek, which no longer exist. According to Pecan Grove plantation’s current owner, Gayle Buckley stated that the house was constructed prior to 1814 and that it had served as the overseer’s house for Jumonville Plantation. She also stated that the house had been moved from its original location several dozen meters to the north in the 1930s when the St. Bernard Highway was created (Gayle Buckley personal communication July 5, 2011).

The site of Jumonville Plantation is largely, if not completely, destroyed. An archeological site in the general vicinity of Jumonville was recorded in the archeological files as site 16SB124. The archeologist who recorded the site relied on historical information provided by St. Bernard Parish Historian Bill Hyland. This site contained a mix of historic artifacts from several centuries and was deemed ineligible for listing in the NRHP because of its disturbed condition. No photographs of Jumonville plantation have survived.

Some writers have identified the Three Oaks plantation house as the Macarty plantation house but this is incorrect. Three Oaks Site (16SB145) was an early 19th century site recorded in 1985 (Church 1985:1-2). It was located on property owned by the Amstar Sugar Refinery on portions of Section 11, T13S, and R12E. Church noted on the site form that the main “Three Oaks” house was destroyed in 1969. The site investigation consisted of a “grab surface collection” and auger tests. Artifacts reported included: “early 19th century wind [sic] bottle seal, a caliper [sic], file, wagon wheel, ink well, cannon balls” and whiteware and pearlware sherds. Church noted that old brick foundations, circa 1830, extending one or more feet below ground, “which once supported 2-3 dwellings”, were present. The site measured 200 feet by 200 feet and contained a moderate artifact density. The site’s NRHP potential was listed as unknown. No report was identified detailing the archeological investigations at this site. Several surviving photographs of the Three Oaks house reveal it to be a stately, two-story mansion. No formal excavations or systematic surveys are reported for Three Oaks plantation.

In 1994, R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc. produced a research design document for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that included portions of the battlefield (Irion et al. 1994). The study examined the research potential of the Meraux Tract, which encompassed portions of the former Langille and Macarty plantations. Goodwin’s study location is shown in Part 2 of this report. That firm’s historical research provided useful background information about its study tract. Regarding the potential for War of 1812 era resources on the Meraux tract, it concluded:

“few if any artifacts or features from neither the Battle of New Orleans nor any cultural resources connected with plantation agriculture along the lower Mississippi River should be located in the project area” (Irion et al. 1994:55). Goodwin's study area lies north and west of the Chalmette Unit property and west of the Meraux Airport Tract that is part of the present study. The 1994 study involved no archeological field investigations but was a planning document.

In 2009 Earthsearch, Inc. (ESI) reported on its survey of the Wedell’s/Menefee’s Airstrip, which included 24 shovel tests within an area that measured 125 meters by 125 meters. All shovel tests were devoid of artifacts. The ESI survey effort failed to identify any resources associated with the War of 1812. ESI summarized its work at site 16SB168, as follows:

In December of 2008, Earth Search, Inc. (ESI), under contract to Environmental Support Services, Inc., performed a Phase I cultural resources survey of a parcel of land in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Provident Realty Advisors, Inc. proposes to build a residential complex on this parcel. Approximately 4.13 acres (A) (1.67 hectares) [ha] were surveyed. The survey included pedestrian survey, shovel testing, and metal detecting. The remains of the Menefee airstrip lie within the northern portion of the project area. This airstrip was assigned site number 16SB168. Although the airport is associated with the famous aviator Jimmie Wedell, the site does not possess the quality of integrity required for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion B. In addition, there are no archeological deposits associated with the site. Therefore it is not eligible for nomination under Criterion D. Additionally, there is no evidence that archeological deposits associated with the Battle of New Orleans or the Civil War are present in the project area, despite the proximity of the Chalmette Battlefield (16SB147). It is ESI’s opinion that residential construction in the project area will have no affect on historic resources. No additional investigations are recommended (Montana et al. 2009:1).

The specific area examined by Montana and colleagues is positioned just north and west of the Meraux Airport Tract. The absence of any War of 1812-related artifacts in their study collection may help to mark the limits of the fighting. It may result, however, from their survey techniques, which were not optimal methods for the discovery of battlefield debris.

Archeologists with Coastal Environments, Inc. examined the Saxholm Plantation site (16SB179) in 2010 (Kowalski 2010). The site measured 360 m by 340 m and was located in Section 3, T13S, and R13E. That study
included systematic shovel testing and a grab surface collection. The site contained 19th and 20th century artifacts. Additional testing was recommended to assess the site’s significance and its eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP. This site was investigated in advance of a proposed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers canal improvement, although Site 16SB179 will not be directly impacted by this proposed development. Saxholm plantation was situated east of Pecan Grove and Jumonville plantations. Saxholm plantation dates to the later 19th and 20th centuries and was not in existence in 1814-1815. Saxholm plantation is shown on early topographic maps of the study area; however, which makes it an important landmark in the GIS study. Kowalski and her colleagues did not report any War of 1812 related artifacts in their study. This location was likely east of the skirmish that took place at Jumonville plantation on December 23, 1814.
Chapter 3. Research Methods

Research Design

In a 2007 report to Congress on the historic preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 battlefields, NPS researchers identified three important War of 1812 battles in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana (Gossett and Mitchell 2007:61). These are: Battle of New Orleans (Villeré Plantation, ID LA401); Battle of New Orleans (Chalmette Plantation, ID LA406) and Battle of Rodriguez Canal (ID LA402). The first two of these, LA401 and LA406, were designated “Priority I” battlefields by NPS. Both battlefields face High levels of “Short Term Threat” and Medium levels of “Long Term Threat”. LA406 was ranked as a “Class A” battlefield and LA401 was ranked as a “Class B” battlefield. The Battle of Rodriguez Canal (ID LA402) was listed as a “Priority II” battlefield and a “Class C” battlefield. This battlefield faces Medium levels of Short and Long Term Threat (Gossett and Mitchell 2007:61). Only 16 of 78 battlefields in the 2007 NPS inventory were classified as Priority I battles, which illustrates their rarity and the enormous historical importance of these military resources in St. Bernard Parish to America at large. Evidence of all three of these engagements, as well as other minor skirmishes, were sought on the properties under scrutiny. The LAMAR Institute developed a research design that addressed the entire New Orleans campaign with particularly attention to the battlefields in St. Bernard Parish (Elliott 2010).

Historical Research

The Battles of New Orleans have been the subject of extensive prior study by historians, military historians and archeologist. The breadth of this research may be gauged by a quick review of the bibliography in this report. Many of these previous works are quality research products that stand on their own merit. Others are outdated studies that, despite their obsolescence, still retain some factoids about the battles, the battlefield landscape or the participants. These factoids were carefully gleaned and incorporated into this study. The historical research also tapped into a wealth of primary written and graphical data about the battle. While photography obviously had not been invented at the time of the War of 1812, quite a few related photographs have survived from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These photographs assist and enliven our modern observations. The present study is a studied exercise in Battlefield Archeology, which is a relatively young sub-discipline of archeology. Battlefield archeologists embrace data about the battlefield in its various forms to rewrite, if necessary, the history of a battle. This approach employs critical analysis of its information sources to weed out factual errors and author biases to create a more accurate battle story. This journey led the research team to many different sources of information, which are described below.

Archeologists visited the following archives and repositories: the Williams Research Center, Historic New Orleans Collection; the Louisiana Division in the New Orleans Public Library, Loyola Street; the Louisiana Collection in the Tulane University Special Collections; the New Orleans Notarial Archives; the Orleans Parish Conveyance Office; and the Louisiana Special Collections at the University of New Orleans Library.

Williams Research Center

A visit was made to the Williams Research Center in New Orleans to examine maps and documents in the Historic New Orleans Collection. Historic maps of the area and battles were reviewed and copies made. Maps examined included Topographical Map of New Orleans and Its Vicinity (Zimpel 1834), the Sketch of the Position of the British and American Forces During the Operations Against New Orleans from the 23rd Decr 1814 to the 8th Janu 1815 (British perspective), and Map Shewing the Landing of the British Army Its Several Encampments and Fortifications on the Mississippi (Latour 1815), and the Defeat of the British Army 12, 00 Strong Under the Command of Sir Edward Packenham... (Lacelotte 1817). These maps are also published in the center’s book, Charting Louisiana: Five Hundred Years of Maps (Lemmon, Magill, and Wiese 2003).

New Orleans Public Library

An examination was made of the Louisiana Division in the New Orleans Public Library on Loyola Street. Not all of its holdings are listed online. The division’s Genealogical Materials in the New Orleans Public Library’s Louisiana Division & City Archives (Everard and Wainwright 2005) lists holdings not referenced online. The division has numerous documents relating to the battle, area plantations, civil proceedings, and other records from a variety of sources such as the National Archives and courthouses. Records include: Index to Compiled Service Records of Volunteer Soldiers Who Served During the War of 1812 in Organizations from Louisiana (mf M229); General...
Society of the War of 1812 Register (mf929.3 R337, also GenR929.3 G325r); American Forces at Chalmette: Veterans and Descendants of Battle of New Orleans 1814-1815 (de Verges 1966); Bound Records of the General Land Office Relating to Private Land Claims in Louisiana, 1767-1892 (unindexed M1382) and 1805-1896 (M1385); Pintado Papers (1792-1818)-notes by royal surveyors of Louisiana; St. Bernard Parish Civil Records (SARS 12), and microfilm copies of the Louisiana Gazette and New Orleans’ Mercantile Advertiser (1815).

Tulane University Library

Research was conducted in the Louisiana Collection of the Tulane University Library’s Special Collections. Particular attention was given to the Andrew Hynes Papers (1814-1815) Manuscript Collection 32. Digital scans were made of select documents in the collection’s oversized folder and in Folders 1-15. This included items such as letters to Andrew Jackson during the Battles of New Orleans, roster of officers, and a map of the battlefield. Digital images were made of Folder 17 materials, which outlined the provenance and history of the collection.

Research also involved the examination of books in the collection. This included the following:

- Address in the Conduct of Col. Poindexter (Brown 1816)
- Major Howell Tatum’s Journal While Acting Topographical Engineer (1814) to General Jackson, Commanding the Seventh Military District (Tatum 1922)
- Reflexions sur la campagne du General Andre’ Jackson en Louisiana en 1814 (Marigny 1848; 1926:75)
- Battle of New Orleans, Its Real Meaning… (Folk 1935)
- Andrew Jackson An Address (Wilson 1915)
- The Battle of New Orleans: A British View (Rankin 1961)
- Original Papers in the Case of the United States vs. Major General Andrew Jackson (US District Court 1936)

New Orleans Notarial Archive

A research visit to the New Orleans Notarial Archive downtown was useful. The following in-house databases were searched: Plantations, Building Contracts, Plan Gallery, and Attached Plan databases. More information about the Plantations and Plan Gallery databases is below. The Building Contracts database primarily contained contracts for properties in downtown New Orleans. It was searched by keyword; however, no relevant information relating to the project was located. The Attached Plan Database recorded property plans/maps attached to deeds, rather than being single gallery plans. This database was browsed and appears to be cross-referenced with the other databases. No new information was located in this database.

The Plantations Database was searchable by key words. The following plantations were located that were relevant to the project area: Versailles [map], Myrtle Grove [1894 see Soniat], Corinne [1894 see Soniat], Chalmette [1837 French document; no map], and Bienvenu, A/Battleground [1895 separation papers bound in it]. The Versailles map shows the de la Ronde house (see black and white copy). The 1894 large color plan, “Corinne and Myrtle Grove Plantation” depicts the plantation and outbuildings of these plantations, along with the railroad track. C.T. Soniat recorded deed information for the sale of Lot 7 (Part of Corinne Plantation) and other lots being part of Myrtle Grove. The property was being auctioned, which is why the colorful plan was painted. The 1895 separation papers for Bienvenu/Battleground contained a map entitled, “Plan of a Valuable Property Known as the Battleground Plantation Situated in the Parish of St. Bernard Left Bank about 6 miles below N. Orleans”. Ch. G. des Isles was the surveyor. The map shows the narrow linear lots of the plantations east of, and perpendicular to, the Mississippi River. The eastern boundary of these lots is Good Children Road (now East Judge Perez Road). The southern boundary of the plantation lots is Paris Road. On the other side of Paris Road the map shows a large area divided into small squares representing tracts for sale for development. These tracts continue east of Good Children Road. The map also depicts the main houses and small outbuildings extant on two of the long, linear plantation lots.

The Plan Gallery Database is searchable by Image Number from the Plantation Database or by Plantation name. The Plans listed in the database are beautiful scaled watercolor plans of 19th century plantations. They show the property boundaries, internal plantings and hardscapes, the plantation main house, slave quarters, and other outbuildings. The plans were created as legal documents and as advertising tools for properties offered at public auction. A plan was hung in the house prior to and during the auction.
After the auction, the plan was delivered to the Notarial Archives in New Orleans. In the Notarial Archives, as described below, the research was focused on the deed record. Unlike many other cities outside of Louisiana, there are no extant grantor/grantee books for the pre-1827 deed records in New Orleans. The deeds for this period are listed under the city notary who was employed during that period of time. We were unable to look up “Villèrè” or “LaCoste” or the other property owners’ names as we had done at the Conveyance Office (see below). We examined a computerized database at the Notarial Archives that included names of notaries involved with various individuals in the past. Jacques Villèrè used multiple notaries, with Narcisse Brunin, Felix de Armas, Paul Laresche, and Fernando Rodriguez appearing frequently. Brunin’s name was then searched in the Notary Index on the computer database and a note was made of all the occurrences of Villèrè in his listings in the first 20 volumes. Three of the five occurrences were looked up in the deed books under notary Brunin’s name. They were located, but contained no maps. In theory, this process could be repeated for all the notaries for all the property owners’ names in the project area, but it would be very time consuming and would likely produce limited results relative to the effort expended.

University of New Orleans Library

The Louisiana Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library at the University of New Orleans was consulted. Most of its holdings pertinent to the Battle of New Orleans consist of copies of documents and maps. Researchers were therefore most interested in examining the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve Archival Collection (MSS 294) in order to ensure that they had a good understanding of work by previous historians, archeologists, and other scholars. This manuscript collection contained materials related to historical research undertaken by Jerome Greene (1985a-b), Betsy Swanson (1985), and NPS personnel. It includes research notes and copies of primary and secondary documents and maps. Examination of these materials during this project focused on Series I (The New Orleans Campaign of 1814-1815 in Relation to the Chalmette Battlefield) [JELAC 3553]. Box 23, 24, 25, and 27 (oversized) were examined in detail. Series V. (Study of the Military Topography and Sites Associated with the 1814-1815 New Orleans Campaign) [JELAC 3554] was examined as well. Researchers also checked the 1812 map holdings of the collections but observed that they were copies of maps whose originals can be studied better elsewhere.

Louisiana Department of Archives and History

The research library of the Louisiana Secretary of State’s Department of Archives and History in Baton Rouge was visited for this study. This facility has a wealth of information about various Louisiana militia units that participated in the battles of New Orleans. These are summarized in a limited production book by Powell A. Casey (1963). The author (Daniel Elliott) reviewed numerous other obscure published works at that facility.

Published Sources

Contemporary (1815) newspaper articles about the battle were reviewed in the following American newspapers: Alexandria Gazette, American and Commercial Daily Advertiser, Baltimore Patriot, Boston Daily Advertiser, Boston Gazette, Boston Spectator, Burlington Gazette, Carlisle Gazette, City Gazette, Cobbett's Political Register, Columbian Patriot, Commercial Advertiser, Concord Gazette, Courier, Enquirer, Essex Register, Federal

De Grummond (1962) provides an overview of British newspaper accounts of the battle. The present research barely touched on the resources in the 1862 study. A review of the 1815 issues of The Times of London and the Edinburgh Advertiser and The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany (Edinburgh, Scotland) was conducted through Ancestry.com and Fold3.com, and a few references to military events in Louisiana or New Orleans were identified. Other British periodicals that were searched included the New Monthly Magazine (April, 1815), The Naval Chronicle (1815), The Annual Register (1816) and The Annual Register of World Events (1816).

Contemporary histories of the battle included: Carson (1861); Chesterton (1853); Cobbett (1815); Cooke (1835); Cope (1877); Darby (1817); Dixon (1929); Faye (1939); Fididally (1816); Forrest (1926; Rankin 1961); Gleig (1821); Hennet (1917); Hill (1836); Howell (1922); Hudry (LeBreton 1955); Jackson (1814-1815); James (1818); Keane (1882); Kimball (1831); McCarty (1816); Martin (1827; Martin et al. 1882); Marigny (1926); Mayhew (1926); Mitchell (1961); Morgan (1926); Mulins (1815); Niles and others (1815); Nolte (1854); O'Conner (1816); Palmer (1816); Peddie (1815); Russell (1815); Thomson (1816); LaTour (Smith 1999); Stubbs (1815); Surtees (1833); and Le Chevalier de Tousard (Wilkinson 1816).

Many of these sources liberally plagiarized passages from earlier publications and published letters without providing full citations for the information. Others were battle accounts authored by participants in the battles, such as officers Gleig, Forrest, Hill and Latour, who used their personal knowledge and journals to tell the story to the world.

Secondary histories of the battle included: Albright (1990); Arthur (1915); Carter (1971); Casey (1965, 1983); Chidsey (1961); Christian (1965); De Grummond (1961); de Verges (1966); Dixon (1965); Greene (1985a-b); Griffin (1965); Huber (1983); Lossing (1869); Mahon (1965); Meuse (1965); Owlsley (1981); Morris (2005); Pickles (1993); Reilly (1974); Remini (2001); Roosevelt (1882); Rowland (1917); Rowland (1971); Saxon (1921); Seiffert (1891); Skeen (1999); Smith (1904); Vaughan (1993); Watson (1965) and W.P.A. (1938a-b; W.P.A. Federal Writers Project 1941). These authors had the advantage of a rich body of documentation provided by earlier authors.

Biographies of selected battle participants were reviewed and these included: Sam Dale (Claiborne 1860); Edward Codrington (Codrington 1875); Edward Livingston (Hunt 1864); Jean Lafitte (Parsons 1940; De Grummond 1962); and Andrew Jackson (Waldo 1818; Reid and Eaton 1871a; Walker 1859; Frost 1861; Parton 1861, Volume II; Wilson 1915; Remini 2001). Recent local and state histories that were reviewed included: Clark (1970); Coleman (1885); Din (1988); Fortier (1904); Gayarre (1854); Hickey (2002); Kelman (2003); Los Ilenos Heritage and Cultural Society (1997); Piers (1999); Reher (1971); Seebold (2000 [1941]); Villare (1971); and Wall (2002).

Later 19th and early 20th century news articles were consulted in the following newspapers: Daily Herald (1891); Daily Interocean (1894); Dallas Morning News (1904, 1947a-b); Dufour (1952, 1958); Freigh (1906); Harpers Magazine (1865); Kalamazoo Gazette (1899); Miami Herald Record (1919); New Hampshire Patriot (1853); New Orleans Item (1911, 1917); New Orleans Weekly Picayune (1838); Niles Weekly Register (1815); The Electrical World (1908); The Evening Bulletin (1892); The National Provisioner (1908); Times Picayune (1880, 1883, 1887, 1901, 1902, 1909a-b, 1910, 1911a-b, 1922a-f, 1931, 1952; Kent 1920; Samuels 1920); and Tulsa World (1920). Most of these newspapers were accessed via the internet, as discussed below.

Online Research

Archeologists examined a variety of internet/worldwide and archival resources for this project. Online resources included searching for related materials using keyword searches, digital documents, and digital copies of out-of-print books. Online searches also included examining the digital finding aids of numerous archives and repositories. Many books and newspaper articles that are cited in this report were accessed in this manner. Internet sites that were frequently consulted included: google.com; books.google.com; genealogybank.com; ancestry.com; and footnote.com [now fold3.com].

Interviews

The Principal Investigator identified and/or interviewed numerous individuals knowledgeable of the project area and project content. This included Louisiana State Guard officers Colonel Timothy Chastain and historian Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Ryan (retired), as well as avocational soil scientist Ellis Joubert. Archeologists also conferred with FEMA archeologists Jerome Cramer, Jason Emery, Jeffrey Jones, Daphne Owens, and Michael Wilder and others as individuals in the area knowledgeable about the project subject and/or having information about artifacts recovered from the area. Additional such individuals include Ted Birkedal, Bill Hyland, Tim Pickles, and Tommy Ryan. The Principal Investigator made
arrangements with Doug Frueh, Murphy Oil Company, for crew access to the Murphy Oil tracts and the required safety meeting and procedures.

Fieldwork

The main portion of fieldwork was conducted from March 14 through March 25, 2011 with a crew of four archaeologists with the LAMAR Institute. They used a combination of field techniques, including metal detector survey, shovel testing, and ground penetrating radar (GPR). Techniques used were dependent on the conditions at each tract studied. Metal detector brands included two Minelab detectors and one Nautilus. In open areas, a metal detector transect usually covered a two-meter-wide swath and consisted of relatively straight lines (Figure 6). The majority of survey areas were in the woods, where sporadic and frequent palmettos and briar thickets made swinging a metal detector impossible. In these situations transects were not straight lines, but were opportunistically located to take advantage of areas open enough to operate a metal detector. As a result, transects wind through the woods to cover the largest areas possible. Large iron objects that were not likely to be associated with the Battles of New Orleans were not recovered, but were documented in the field via notes and/or photographs. Archeologists investigated four tracts of land. These are referred to in this report as Murphy Oil Tract 1, Murphy Oil Tract 2, the De La Ronde Ruins, and Pakenham Park. The Meraux Airport Tract was originally slated for investigation; however, St. Bernard Parish Government was unable to obtain access to this property. Archeologists, therefore, were forced to restrict their investigations to documenting the Airport Tract remotely, by photographing the tract from its perimeter and studying the topography and land use history of it via maps, plats, LiDAR databases, and historical research.

GPR survey was accomplished with a MALA X3M radar and 500 mhz shielded antenna mounted on a wheeled cart. GPR data was collected on a MALA monitor. GPR files were post processed using GroundVision and GPR-Slice software. GPR radargrams were collected on 50 cm spaced transects and were collected in a single direction. The

![Image of fieldwork](image-url)

Figure 6. Investigating Positive Metal Detector Signals at Pakenham Oaks, Delaronde Plantation (16SB88).
GPR data collection grids for sampled areas are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7. GPR Radargram Layout Plan, Villere Canal.

Figure 8. GPR Radargram Layout for Blocks A, B, and C, De La Ronde Ruin and Pakenham Oaks, 16SB88.
Murphy Oil Tract 1

This tract is currently owned by the Murphy Oil Company. It is bounded on the south by 20 Arpent Canal, on the east by Meraux Canal, on the north by 40 Arpent Canal, and on the west by a row of houses fronting Jacob Drive. The southwestern quadrant of the tract is covered with large dredge spoil piles averaging four to six feet high, making the majority of the area inaccessible to metal detector survey, shovel testing, and GPR survey. The exceptions are the defunct power line corridor, under which no dredge spoil piles were dumped, along with an area south of the woods covered in brambles.

Archeologists conducted metal detector survey in the large wooded section of this tract that did not contain dredge spoil. Archeologists conducted the most intensive metal detector survey on this tract. They also conducted limited ground penetrating radar survey in a sample area. Archeologists excavated some shovel tests on this tract. They also photographed the brick ruins of the alleged pumping station and took laser transit readings of it and the surrounding landscaping features and topography.

Murphy Oil Tract 2

This tract is also currently owned by Murphy Oil Company. It lies adjacent to the east side of Murphy Oil Tract 1. It is bounded on the west by Meraux Canal and on the north by 40 Arpent Canal. The eastern portion is bordered by a high-voltage power line. The southern boundary is 20 Arpent Canal. Hardwoods along with swamp vegetation, such as palmetto palms and cypress trees fill this entire tract. Archeologists focused on the southwestern section of this tract for the metal detector survey and in the woods east of that area.

De La Ronde Ruins

Portions of ruins of the De La Ronde plantation house are located on the median of the divided St. Bernard Highway, west of the Paris Road intersection. The De La Ronde plantation was a key landscaping and tactical feature in the Battles of New Orleans, as described in the historical section of this report. While these dwindling portions of the ruins have been fenced and marked with historical signage, the ruins have not been documented or explored archeologically prior to this project.

Archeologists took laser transit point readings of the ruins (foundations, bases and uppermost portions), immediate surroundings, and topography to create the maps in Part 2 of this report. This will provide a point of reference for future management of the site and allow the ruins to be monitored for erosion and other adverse effects to the structure and other components. Archeologists also conducted a GPR survey of the greenspace west of, and adjacent to, the ruins.

Pakenham Park

This parish park includes a long avenue of aged, historical oak trees south of the De La Ronde plantation house ruins, across the east bound lanes of St. Bernard Highway. The old oak avenue is flanked on the east by a younger line of oaks paralleling the first and creating a second, slightly narrower avenue. The avenues lead north from the Mississippi River to the De La Ronde ruins. Today, the avenues are severely bounded by industrial and commercial complexes. The west side of the park is bounded by Chalmette Refining, LLC. The west side and south side (between the park and the river) is a sprawling, noisy complex of industrial refining equipment and pipes. The east side of the park is bounded by a tall concertina wire fence around the St. Bernard Parish Jail. Archeologists conducted a metal detector survey in a sample area, excavated several shovel tests and conducted a GPR radar survey in two contiguous GPR blocks.

Ruins in Murphy Oil Storage Tank Area

A small, extant portion of brick remains lie within the Murphy Oil refining facility. The oil company required that archeologists be escorted onto the property to look at this ruin. A brief visit was made to the ruin and photographs and a GPS Waypoint was taken. GPS Waypoint D535 was located approximately two meters northeast of the northeastern edge of the ruin.

Meraux Airport Tract

The Meraux Airport Tract was one of two properties identified in the Scope of Work for archeological study. This property is presently owned by Provident Realty Advisors, a development firm in Dallas, Texas. It acquired the tract from the Meraux Foundation. Unfortunately, permission to access this tract was denied and the resulting research is limited to remote GIS technology, cartographic analysis, and historical and archival study. An ongoing disagreement between the St. Bernard Parish Government and Provident Realty Advisors regarding land use in the Chalmette vicinity remains to be resolved completely (Provencher 2011:491; Alexander-Bloch 2011).
Reconnaissance at Villeré, Lacoste and Jumonville Plantations

LAMAR Institute archeologists made brief reconnaissance visits to portions of Villeré, Lacoste and Jumonville plantations during this study. These efforts did not involve any subsurface investigations, except for a limited metal detector inspection of a canal ditch north of the intersection of Ohio Street and Palmisano Avenue.

Laboratory Analysis

All artifacts, digital and paper records from the field project were brought to the LAMAR Institute’s laboratory for processing. Artifacts were cleaned, analyzed, photographed, weighed, measured, and prepared for permanent curation. The collection was surprisingly small and limited in its diversity. Since the survey strategy concentrated on the remote sensing tools, particularly metal detectors, non-metal objects are grossly underrepresented in the dataset. Slightly more than two dozen artifacts are curated in the collection.

Data synthesis and report preparation was supervised by Daniel Elliott, who served as primary report author. Rita Elliott made substantial contributions in the research methods and fieldwork sections of the report by writing sections and she edited the entire manuscript. GIS cartographic analysis was conducted by Daniel Elliott and Matt Luke at various phases during the project. Luke’s primary contribution was the assembly of GIS maps generated by the map overlay research. The assembly of historical maps, charts, plats, sketches, artwork and photographs of the study area were reviewed for any pertinent geographical clues about the battlefields. Key graphic images were geo-referenced using ArcGIS software, Version 10.0 by Luke. He linked these maps to modern aerial and topographic maps of the region. Then Luke, in consultation with Elliott, generated a series of maps for inclusion in the technical report. These maps comprise Part 3 of this report.

Curation

All artifacts, field notes, maps, photographs, digital archives and other research records generated by this project will be permanently curated with the Louisiana Division of Archaeology in Baton Rouge. The collections were prepared for curation, meeting standards set by that facility (Louisiana Division of Archaeology 2011). Copies of the research report and digital files also were deposited with the National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program, Washington, D.C., and the St. Bernard Parish Government, Chalmette, Louisiana.
Chapter 4. History of the Battles of New Orleans

The military struggle for control of the ground downstream from New Orleans in late 1814 and early 1815 was actually a series of battles. The general public, however, likely perceives these as a single military event, which was the final charge by the British on January 8, 1815 where the Americans emerged victorious (Figure 9). Historical scholarship has repeatedly explained the complexity of this military chess game and the present research effort further addresses this complexity. The primary battles included:

- Naval battle on Lake Borgne, December 14, 1814
- Night battle at Lacoste and De La Ronde plantations, December 23/24, 1814
- The artillery duel of January 1, 1815
- The final battle at Chalmette and Rodriguez plantations, January 8, 1815

Overall New Orleans Campaign

Sir Edward Pakenham, Lieutenant General, commander-in-chief
Major General Samuel Gibbs, commanded 1st Division
Major General Lambert, commanded 2nd Division (assumes overall command after January 8)
  7th Fusiliers, Lieutenant Colonel E. Blakeney, 850 men
  43rd Regiment
Major General John Keane, commanded 3rd Division
44th East Essex Regiment of Foot, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Mullins, 600-650 men
95th Rifles, 6 companies—Major Mitchell, 600 men
40th Regiment, Sommersetshire, Lieutenant Colonel H. Thornton, 1,000 men
43rd Regiment, Monmouth (light infantry), Lieutenant Colonel Patrickson, 850 men
1st West India Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel C.W. Whitby, 700-800 men
5th West India Regiment—Lieutenant Colonel A.M.K. Hamilton, 700-800 men
7th West India Regiment [1 black company]—Lieutenant Colonel A.M.K. Hamilton
Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee Warriors, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Nicholls, Royal Marines, unknown number of Native American troops
14th Duchess of York's Light Dragoons, Lieutenant Colonel C.M. Baker, 390 men
3rd Dragoons
21st Royal North British Fusiliers, Lieutenant Colonel W. Patterson, 800-900 men
93rd Highland Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Dale, 1000-1100 men
85th Buck Volunteers, Light Infantry, Lieutenant Colonel William Thornton, Major Gubbins, 402-600 men
4th Regiment Foot, Lieutenant Colonel Francis Brooke, 600-750 men

Order of Battle

The order of battle for the New Orleans campaign varied over time. The British advance force was led by Colonel William Thornton, who arrived on the mainland early on December 23. His troops were followed that evening by additional troops under command of Major General Keane. Lieutenant General Sir Edward Pakenham arrived with additional forces on December 24. Major General Lambert arrived at the front with two regiments of reinforcements in early January. After the British suffered major loss of its top leadership on January 8, General Lambert assumed command of the army. The various regiments and military units that served in the campaign are listed below. These data were derived from numerous primary and secondary sources (James 1818, Vol. 2:355-362; Walker 1859:90,92,193; Chesterton 1853, Volume I:213-214; Gleig 1821:307; (Kimbell 1816:251; Skeen 1999:167-172; Smith 1999:302-303; Thomson 1816:347).
95th Rifle Corps, 6 companies (a demi-battalion), Major Samuel Mitchell, 396-500 men
62nd Regiment (a detachment), 350 men
Royal Engineers, Lieutenant Colonel Burgoyne
Royal Artillery, Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Dickson, 120 men
Rocket Brigade, Sappers, and others, less than 800 men
Royal Marines, 1,500 men
Royal Navy, 2,000 men

British Naval Forces

Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane's Squadron:
Tonnant, 80 guns—Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane
Royal Oak, 74 guns—Rear-Admiral Malcolm
Norge, 74 guns—Captain Dashford
Bedford, 74 guns—Captain Walker
Ramilies, 74 guns—Sir Thomas Hardy
Asia, 74 guns—Captain Skeens
Dictator, 56 guns—Captain Crofton
Diomede, 50 guns—Captain Kippen
Gorgon, 44 guns—Captain R.B. Bowden
Annide, 33 guns—Sir Thomas Trowbridge
Seahorse, 35 guns—Captain James Alexander Gordon
Belle Poule, 38 guns—Captain Baker
Traave, 38 guns—Captain Money
Wever, 38 guns—Captain Sullivan
Alceste, 38 guns—Captain Lawrence
Hydra, 38 guns—Captain Dezey
Fox, 36 guns—Captain Willock
Cadmus, 36 guns—Captain Langford
Thames, 32 guns—Captain C.L. Irby
Dover, 32 guns—Captain Rogers
Bucephalus, 32 guns—Captain D'Aith
Calliope, 16 guns—Captain Codd
Anaconda, 16 guns—Captain Westphall
Borer, 14 guns—Captain Raulins
Manly, 14 guns—Captain Loche
Meteor (bomb), 6 guns—Captain Roberts
Volcano (bomb), 6 guns—Captain Price
Aetna (bomb), 16 guns—Captain Gardner
Pigmy, schooner, 6 guns—Captain Jackson
Jane, cutter
Speedwell, schooner
British Naval Forces (continued)

Norfolk, transport
Golden Fleece, transport
Thames, transport
Diana, transport
Woodman, transport
Active, transport
Cyrus, transport
Elizabeth, transport
Kah, transport
Daniel Woodruffe, transport
George, transport
Royal Oak, prison ship

Theodore Roosevelt (Roosevelt 1882:464) estimates that Major General Keane had 2,310 men under his command in December, 1814. James (1818, Volume 2:355-362) noted that Colonel Thornton’s advance force consisted of 1,688 men in all. The arrival of Major General Keane’s troops at about 10:00PM on December 23rd, brought that number to 2,050 men. Latour (1816) overestimated General Keane’s troop strength at 4,980.

Cheserton (1853, Volume 1:213-214) makes reference to Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee tribesmen who served in the British service in the New Orleans campaign. These Native Americans were commanded by Colonel Edward Nicholls of the Royal Marines. The role of these troops in the various battles is not mentioned in any of the other major sources. Chesterton refers to them as, “our grotesque allies”, although he befriended one Indian woman and her daughter, and he also refers to, “the hordes of runaway negroes who crowded our camp”, who were “numerous and of all ages and marketable promise”.

Americans in New Orleans Theatre

U.S. Army Regulars, 840 men (at Fort St. Charles and city barracks)
44th Regiment, U.S. Army—Captain Baker [Colonel Ross], 331 men
7th Regiment, U.S. Army—Colonel Piatt, Major Peire, 465 men
Artillery—Colonel McRea, Captain Humphries, 22 men (2 six pounders)
Tennessee (dis)mounted militia brigade—General John Coffee, Colonel Dyer
Carroll’s Division, Tennessee militia—General Carroll
Kentucky militia—General Adair, 2,300 men (fewer than 1,000 armed)
Battalion d’Orleans—Major J.B. Plauche (at Bayou St. John)
Carabiniers d’ Orleans Company—Captain Roche
Hulans, Foot Dragoons Company—Captain St. Geme
Francs Company—Captain Hudry
Louisiana Blues Company—Captain Maunsel White
Chasseurs Company—Captain Guibert
Louisiana militia—Governor Claiborne, General David B. Morgan
Free Colored [Mulatto] battalion (on Gentilly road)—Major Daquin
Choctaw troop—Captain Juzan, Chief Pushmataha [unconfirmed]
Mississippi dragoons (troop of horse)—Major Thomas Hind
Feliciana Dragoons (Louisiana militia)
Beale’s Orleans Rifles—Colonel Gibson, Captain Thomas Beale
U.S. Marines detachment, 60 men
Schooner Carolina, U.S. Navy—Commodore Patterson, Captain Henley (destroyed on December 27)
Sloop Louisiana—Lieutenant C.C.B. Thompson

Order of Battle, December 23, 1814

British
Major General Keane—Commanding Officer
21st Regiment, 230 men
93rd Regiment, 140 men
85th Buck Volunteers, Light Infantry—Lieutenant Colonel William Thornton, Major Gubbins, 402-600 men
95th Rifles, 6 companies—Major Mitchell, 396-600 men
4th Regiment, 760 men
Sappers, miners and artillery, 100 men

In the December 23rd engagement the British artillery, according to Ensign Gleig, consisted of 9 field pieces (9 and 6 pounders), 2 howitzers and a mortar. According to James, it included Colonel Thornton’s advanced force carrying two 3-pounders and 30 rocketeers (Gleig 1821:307). Captain Chesterton (1853, Volume 1), an artilleryman detached with the initial invasion force, noted that a brigade of 3 pounders was present and in position on the battlefield on December 23rd.

Americans
Major General Andrew Jackson, Commander of American Forces
44th Regiment, U.S. Army, Captain Baker [Colonel Ross], 331 men
7th Regiment, U.S. Army, Colonel Piatt, Major Peire, 465 men
General John Coffee, Tennessee militia, 700-800 men
Colonel Gibson, Captain Thomas Beale—Orleans Rifles
Governor William C.C. Claiborne, Louisiana militia, about 400 men
General David Morgan, Louisiana militia, 350 men (at English Turn)
Mississippi Dragoons, Major Thomas Hinds
Pushmataha, Choctaw troops [attached to U.S. Army], unconfirmed number
Schooner Carolina, U.S. Navy, Commodore Daniel G. Patterson, Captain Henley, twelve 12-pound carronades and two 12-pounder long guns, crew of 90 men
January 8, 1815

British
Sir Edward Pakenham, Lieutenant General
Major General Samuel Gibbs
Major General Keane
General Lambert (assumes overall command after January 8)
    7th Fusiliers
    43rd Regiment
4th Regiment Foot—Colonel Brook, 600 men
21st Royal North British Fusiliers—Lieutenant Colonel Patterson, 800 men
85th Buck Volunteers, Light Infantry—Lieutenant Colonel William Thornton, Major Gubbins, 600 men (on West Bank)
44th East Essex Foot—Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Mullins, 600 men
    [one black regiment]
Artillery, Sappers and Miners, and others, 500 men
93rd Highland Regiment—Lieutenant Colonel Dale, 1000 men
95th Rifles, 6 companies—Major Mitchell, 600 men
1st West India Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Whitby, 800 men
5th West India Regiment—Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, 800 men
7th West India Regiment—Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton
Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee Warriors—Colonel Edward Nicholls
14th Duchess of York's Light Dragoons—Colonel Baker, 390 men
3rd Dragoons
Royal Artillery, Rocket Brigade, Sappers, Engineers, and others

Americans
Major General Andrew Jackson
General John Coffee, Tennessee militia, 1,200 men
Governor William C.C. Claiborne, General Daniel Morgan, Louisiana militia
General William Carroll, Tennessee militia
General David B. Morgan, Louisiana militia, about 500 men (on West Bank)
General John Adair, Kentucky militia, 2,300 men (fewer than 1,000 armed)
Colonel John Davis, Kentucky militia, about 260 men (on West Bank)
Pushmataha, Choctaw troops
Corvette Louisiana, Commanded by Jean Lafitte, privateer
Figure 9. Jean Hyacinthe’s Battle of New Orleans (1815).
Written Accounts of the battles

American Accounts

In Major General Andrew Jackson’s address to his men on January 21, 1815, he interspersed his summation of the various battle events. Regarding the offensive by the British on December 28, Jackson wrote,

Their batteries of heavy cannon kept up an incessant fire; their rockets illuminated the air; and under their cover, two strong columns threatened our flanks.... how were these menacing appearances met? By shouts of defiance, by a manly countenance, not to be shaken by the roar of his cannon, or by the glare of his firework rockets; by an artillery served with superior skill, and with deadly effect...This animating scene damped the courage of the enemy; he dropped his scaling ladders and fascines, and the threatened attack dwindled into a demonstration (Adams 1824:11).

Regarding the artillery duel of January 1, General Jackson said, “The New year was ushered in with the most tremendous fire his whole artillery could produce: a few hours only, however, were necessary for the brave and skilful men, who directed our own, to dismount his cannon, destroy his batteries, and effectually silence his fire” (Adams 1824:11).

General Jackson summarized the January 8th action on his right flank, “Our right had only a short contest to sustain with a few rash men, who fatally for themselves, forced their entrance into the unfinished redoubt on the river. They were quickly dispossessed” (Adams 1824:12). Jackson also remarked that in their departure from the battlefield, the British were, “leaving their heavy artillery in our power, and many of their wounded to our clemency” (Adams 1824:12). Of the grand finale of January 8, Andrew Jackson wrote of the action on his left flank,

At the dawn of day the batteries opened, and the columns advanced. Knowing that the volunteers from Tennessee, and the militia from Kentucky, were stationed on your left, it was there that they directed their chief attack...Fatal mistake! A fire incessantly kept up, directed with a calmness and unerring aim, strewn the field with the bravest officers and men, of the column which slowly advanced, according to the most approved rules of European tactics, and was cut down by the untutored courage of American militia. Unable to sustain this galling and unceasing fire, some hundreds nearest the entrenchments called for quarter, which was granted—the rest retreating, were rallied at some distance, but only to make them a surer mark for the grape and canister shot of our artillery, which without exaggeration, moved down whole ranks at every discharge; and at length they precipitately retired from the field.

Brigadier General John Coffee described the Night Battle in a letter to his wife, dated January 20, 1815:

I had not closed my letter to you more than one hour on the 23rd Dec. when I recd. orders to march my command to meet the enemy then already landed, and within six miles of New Orleans. I had at that moment only 800 effective men, together with about 600 regulars and Orleans Militia, was the only disposable force in readiness to meet them that night. we marched without loss of time, and about one hour after dark (a fine moon light night) we met the enemy who had encamped, on the bank of the Mississippi in an open level field, the right on the river; the open ground on the left, the order of battle, the regulars and Orleans Militia attacked in front on the bank of the river; and my Brigade moved round on the left and attacked their main columns on the centre, the Battle soon became general, but just before we had formed, an armed schooner of ours had dropped down the river and opened a fire on the enemy which drove them out from the river near a quarter of a mile, where we met them formed in line, my men behaved most gallantly on that occasion, and fired and advanced on the enemy under a heavy fire from more than double their numbers, and drove them back about one quarter of a mile until they took shelter under the levee, or bank of the river; we dropped back in the open field about half a mile, reconnoitred the ground of Battle, carried off our wounded, and lay untill early next morning. General Jackson was at the head of the regulars, and which fought and lay separate from my command, in this affair we had engaged about fourteen hundred men, and the enemy about three thousand, we lost about twenty five men killed, seventy wounded and about seventy five made prisoners the loss of the enemy was upwards of 400 in killed and wounded, and one hundred prisoners in the course of the night General. Carroll with a part of his command came up with us, and in the same night the enemy reed, reinforcements of upwards of two thousand men, seeing their superiority of numbers, we fell back about one mile, and took a strong position.

General Coffee added in a January 30th letter, “On the 23rd of Dec. we fought them in open field, they had three men to our one, and we killed and wounded four men to their one. In all our skirmishes where no advantage of walls or entrenchments on either side we had decided the better of them” (Coffee 1916:264-298). General Coffee described the action in the days following:
Not one day passed without attacks of Pickets on the line, a continued cannonade and bombardment, on the 28th Dec. the 1st and 8th January, they charged us in line, and as often were repulsed the latter day, they lost in killed wounded and prisoners, upwards of three thousand men, their Commander in chief and second in command, both killed and a Major General, Keen, badly wounded, besides all their most valuable officers after the enemy having lost upwards of four thousand men, they decamped and embarked on the night of the 18th Instant, under cover of a very thick fog that is common here what their further intentions are we cannot say but believe they are tired of their company here, and is finally gone thus the famous campaign against Orleans is at rest at present, and has thus far been marked with better fortune to the American arms than anything heretofore known. Our whole loss in all this affair has been about fifty killed, one hundred and twenty wounded, and about one hundred and ten prisoners, all of which we have since got by exchange the prisoners we have taken are sent up the country surely Providence has had a hand in the thing you will very shortly see the official reports.

General Coffee further described,

There never was such victories obtained by an army before, history affords no such records. We have good information that the enemy has lost between four and five thousand men in killed, wounded and prisoners. One General and two Major Generals killed, the fourth deranged, and all Lord Wellington’s valuable field officers destroyed. While on our part our loss in killed is between forty and sixty, and almost double the number wounded. And what is still more strange the enemy always had more men on the field than we had, until we reduced them in battle. On the 23rd of Dec. we fought them in open field, they had three men to our one, and we killed and wounded four men to their one. In all our skirmishes where no advantage of walls or entrenchments on either side we had decided the better of them. But on the 8th of January the grand charge, we had every advantage we could ask, we had a strong bank of earth twelve feet thick and high as a man’s shoulders, on our side and a ditch on the other side with water. The slaughter was shocking. After that day the enemy lost all hopes of success, and made preparations to depart as fast as possible. I think when this information reaches England, we shall have peace and not before (Coffee 1916a:264-298).

A letter from Major General Andrew Jackson to the Secretary of War, written on January 9th, was widely distributed in American newspapers:

Camp, 4 miles below Orleans, 9th January, 1815.
Sir—During the days of the 6th and 7th, the enemy had been actively employed in making preparations for an attack on my lines. With infinite labour they had succeeded on the night of the 7th in getting their boats across from the lake to the river, by widening and deepening the canal on which they had effected their disembarkation. It had not been in my power to impede these operations by a general attack; added to other reasons, the nature of the troops under my command, mostly militia, rendered it too hazardous to attempt extensive offensive movements in an open country, against a numerous and well-disciplined army. Although my forces, as to number, had been increased by the arrival of the Kentucky division, my strength had received very little addition; a small portion only of that detachment being provided with arms. Compelled thus to wait the attack of the enemy, I took every measure to repel it when it should be made, and to defeat the object he had in view. General Morgan, with the Orleans contingent, the Louisiana militia, and a strong detachment of the Kentucky troops, occupied an entrenched camp on the opposite side of the river, protected by strong batteries on the bank, erected and superintended by commodore Patterson.

In my encampment everything was ready for action, when, early on the morning of the 8th, the enemy, after throwing a heavy shower of bombs and Congreve rockets, advanced their columns on my right and left, to storm my entrenchments. I cannot speak sufficiently in praise of the firmness and deliberation with which my whole line received their approach—more could not have been expected from veterans imbued to war.—For an hour; the fire of the small arms was as incessant and severe as can be imagined. The artillery, too, directed by officers who displayed equal skill and courage, did great execution. Yet the columns of the enemy continued to advance with a firmness which reflects upon them the greatest credit. Twice the column which approached me on my left was repulsed by the troops of general Carroll, those of general Coffee, and a division of Kentucky militia, and twice they formed again and renewed the assault. At length, however, cut to pieces, they fled in confusion from the field, leaving it covered with their dead and wounded. The loss which the enemy sustained on this occasion, cannot be estimated at less than 1500 killed, wounded and prisoners. Upwards of 300 have already been delivered over for burial; and my men are still engaged in picking them up within my lines and carrying them to the point where the enemy are to receive them—This is in addition to the dead and wounded whom the enemy have been enabled to carry from the field, during and since the action, and to those who have since died of the wounds they received. We have taken about 500 prisoners, upwards of three hundred of whom are wounded, and a great
part of them mortally. My loss has not exceeded, and I believe has not amounted to ten killed, and as many wounded. The entire destruction of the enemy’s army was now inevitable, had it not been for an unfortunate occurrence which at this moment took place on the other side of the river. Simultaneously with his advance upon my lines, he had thrown over in his boats a considerable force to the other side of the river. These having landed, were hardly enough to advance against the works of general Morgan; and, what is strange and difficult to account for, at the very moment when their entire discomfort was looked for with a confidence approaching to certainty, the Kentucky reinforcements, in whom so much reliance had been placed, ingloriously fled, drawing after them, by their example, the remainder of the forces; and thus yielding to the enemy that most important position. The batteries which had rendered me, for many days, the most important service, though bravely defended, were of course now abandoned; not however until the guns had been spiked.

This unfortunate rout had totally changed the aspect of affairs. The enemy now occupied a position from which they might annoy us without hazard, and by means of which they might have been enabled to defeat, in a great measure, the efforts of our success on this side of the river. It became, therefore, an object of the first consequence to dislodge him as soon as possible. For this object, all the means in my power, which I could with any safety use, were immediately put in preparation. Perhaps, however, it was owing somewhat to another cause that I succeeded even beyond my expectations. In negotiating the terms of a temporary suspension of hostilities to enable the enemy to bury their dead and provide for their wounded, I had required certain propositions to be accorded to as a basis, among which this was one—that although hostilities should cease on this side of the river until 12 o’clock of this day, yet it was not to be understood that they should cease on the other side; but that no reinforcements should be sent across by either army until the expiration of that day. His excellency major general Lambert begged time to consider of those propositions until 10 o’clock of to-day; and in the meantime re-crossed his troops. I cannot tell you with how much eagerness I immediately regained possession of the position he had thus hastily quitted.

The enemy having concentrated his forces may again attempt to drive me from my position by storm. Whenever he does, I have no doubt my men will act with their usual firmness, and sustain a character now become dear to them.

In a follow-up letter, dated January 10, 1815, General Jackson gave a brief report to the Secretary of War from Jackson’s headquarters on the left bank of the Mississippi River, five miles below New Orleans,

Sir—I have the honour to make the following report of the killed, wounded and prisoners taken at the battle of Laron’s plantation, on the left bank of the Mississippi, on the night of the third December, 1814, 7 miles below N. Orleans.

Killed, left on the field of battle. - 100 Wounded, left on the field of battle. - 280 Prisoners taken — 1 major, 2 lieutenants, 1 midshipman, 66 non-commissioned officers and privates, making a grand total of 400.

An unidentified, “Gentleman from New Orleans” provided this account of the battle in January, 1815:

Dear Sir—Knowing the interest you must feel in the movements of the enemy in this quarter, I will now continue my account up to this date. In my last I mentioned a reinforcement daily expected by the enemy, which I now understand was at that time actually received by them at Cat Island, having arrived in a fleet of twenty-one sail, said to be from Portsmouth.—This force is said to consist of 3000 men, and to be commanded by general Lambert, and probably forms the first brigade of their present army.—On the 6th these troops were disembarked at the Bayou Benvenu. The enemy had now remained quiet for three or four days, keeping us in a state of uneasy suspense and fearful uncertainty. During this ominous interval, part of their forces was employed in preparing scaling ladders, and collecting fascines (made of sugar canes) for their intended assault upon our lines, whilst others were digging a canal, communicating with that through which they entered, and extended to the levee, which, on the evening of the 7th, was cut through to admit the river. Through this canal they floated or dragged 24 of their smaller boats, supposed to contain 25 men each, and thus transported about 600 men to the opposite side of the river, some distance below the spot where we had constructed our batteries. These troops, under the command of colonel Thornton, were intended to make a dash at our batteries, and create a diversion on that side of the river, while the main attack was carried on this side.

Accordingly, before day-light on the morning of the 8th, they silently drew out a large force to storm our lines, their columns advancing unperceived in the obscurity of the morning, to within about half a mile of our camp, where they met and drove in our piquet guard. About day-break they advanced with
great vivacity to the entrenchments, led gallantly on by their officers up to the very muzzles of our guns. Some of their men penetrated into our lines, where they were immediately killed or taken prisoners; many fell mounting the breast works; others upon the works themselves, and the ditch in front, was, in many places, literally filled with dead and wounded. The roar of artillery from our lines was incessant, while an unremitting rolling fire was kept up from our muskets. The atmosphere was filled with sheets of fire, and volumes of smoke. For an hour and a quarter the enemy obstinately continued the assault; fresh men constantly arriving to fill up their lines, thinned by our fire. Their determined perseverance and steady valor, were worthy a better cause; nor did their troops falter until almost all the officers who led them on had fallen. They then retreated, leaving from 1500 to 2000 in killed, wounded and prisoners—in this number are included thirty-nine officers. On our side the loss was confined to about 20 men, 7 only of whom were killed. Though our extreme right was attacked with great vivacity, yet the principal assault was made on our left where General Coffee's brigade of riflemen were stationed, and the carnage there was prodigious.

Our men, covered by their breastworks, took steady and deliberate aim, and almost every shot told. The enemy drew out eight regiments to the attack, animated by the presence of their commander in chief, Packenham, and led on by generals Gibbs and Keen (Cobbett 1815:170-172).

Niles' Weekly Register reported,

A letter to the editor of the Register says that when the British were attacked on the evening of the [illegible, 23rd], they were leisurely preparing to cook their suppers. But they got much hotter COFFEE than they expected. This letter speaks confidently of the safety of the place ("before the arrival of the brave spirits from Kentucky) and observes, that though the capture of the enemy is desirable, the protection of the city is infinitely to be preferred; and gives the opinion that Jackson would not risk its safety. It passes the highest eulogisms on the patriotism of the people, and says the mulattoes fight manfully, and that the French show the greatest possible anxiety to beat the enemy. The stores were all shut up, and air idler was not permitted to walk the streets of the city.

Of the battle with the gun-boats we have some intelligence from Havana, brought by a Baltimore vessel arrived in the Delaware. The Dictator 64, Dame to the Havana direct from the neighborhood of New-Orleans, which she left on the 1st or 2d of January. The commander publicly stated, that he had been present at the action with our gunboats. He spoke of the resistance they made as being without parallel. That many of the British were killed by tomahawks while boarding, and that there was a dreadful contest on the deck of every vessel. He acknowledged that there were one hundred Englishmen killed before our flags were struck. We have very little-doubt from this statement, that the capture of these five little boats, carrying five guns in all, and manned with probably less than 150 men, cost the enemy at least two hundred lives, as several of their great barges were torn to pieces and sunk, and perhaps 300 wounded. Better 'stuff' than composed our naval force at New-Orleans never 'cracked a biscuit.' High minded spirits, emulous of the glory of their brethren, and only wanting opportunity to earn the wreath that crowns our Hull's, Decatur's, Jones's, Bainbridge's, Ferry's, Warrington's and Macdonough's, or the double glory of our Blakeley's. Commodore Patterson, who has the command, is one of the best and bravest of men.

The commander of the Dictator further gave his opinion, or rather expressed his fears, that the whole British army might be destroyed or captured. He said they had been led to their place of disembarkation by a Spaniard, and expected to have carried New-Orleans immediately! and that a return to their shipping was difficult, if not impracticable, with the opposition they might reasonable expect.

My own opinion of the affair has been, from the beginning that the British would sustain one of the greatest losses they ever met with, in their attack on New-Orleans. And it will not surprise me (though the reverse may be fact) that the 'soldiers of Wellington' are captives to the 'raw militia' of Tennessee and Kentucky, led and conducted by the inestimable Jackson, Carroll and Coffee, and hundreds of others 'unknown to fame' equally worthy our gratitude and praise. Amen. 'Ho mole it lie.'—that not one shall escape to tell the story!

An anonymous letter from St. Francisville of January 8, relating information obtained from Mr. Kepert in New-Orleans, noted: "that the enemy is in a starving condition. This much is certain, that on the day of the last engagement our troops look a number of prisoners, and on examination of their knapsacks, found rations of horse flesh, say 1-1/4 lb each, which was to last them four days."

On December 26, 1814, General Jackson wrote to Secretary of War Monroe from his "Camp, below New Orleans",

The enemy having by the capture of our gun boats, obtained command of the lakes, were enabled to effect a passage to the Mississippi at a point on the side of New Orleans, and about 9 miles below it.
The moment I received the intelligence, I hastened to attack him in his first position. It was brought on in the night, and resulted very honorably to our arms. The heavy smoke, occasioned by an excessive fire, rendered it necessary that should draw off my troops, after a severe conflict of upwards of an hour.

The attack was made on the night of the 23d—Since then both armies have remained near the battleground making preparations for something more decisive.

The enemy’s force exceeded ours by double, and their loss was proportionally greater. The moment I can spare the time, I will forward you a detailed account. In the mean time, I expect something far more important will take place. I hope to be able to sustain the honor of our arms, and to secure the safety of this country (Niles National Register 1815).

On the morning following, General Jackson wrote to Secretary of War Monroe from his headquarters below New Orleans,

Sir—The loss of our gun boats near the pass of the Rigolets having given the enemy command of lake Borgne, he was enabled to chase his point of attack. It became therefore an object of importance to obstruct the numerous bayous and canals leading a stronger position, about two miles nearer the city. At this position I remained encamped, waiting the arrival of the Kentucky militia and other reinforcement. As the safety of the city will depend on the fate of this army, it must not be incautiously exposed.

In this affair the whole corps under my command deserve the greatest credit. The best compliment I can pay to general Coffee and his brigade is to say, they behaved as they have always done while under my command. The 7th led by major Pierre, and from that lake to the highlands on the Mississippi, 44th commanded by colonel Ross, distinguished This important service was committed, in the first instance, to a detachment from the 7th regiment, afterwards to Col. De Laronde of the Louisiana militia, and lastly, to make all sure, to Major-General Villeré commanding the district between the river and the lakes, and who, being a native of the country, was presumed to be best acquainted with all those passes. Unfortunately, however, a picquet, which the General had established at the mouth of the bayou Bienvenu, and which, notwithstanding my orders, had been left unobstructed, was completely surprised, and the enemy penetrated through a canal leading to his farm, about two leagues below the city, and succeeded in cutting off a company of militia stationed there. This intelligence was communicated to me about 12 o’clock of the 23d. My force at this time, consisted of parts of the 7th and 44th regiments, not exceeding six hundred together the city militia, a part of Gen. Coffee’s brigade of mounted gunmen, and the detached militia from the western division of Tennessee, under the command of Major-General Carroll. These two last were stationed 4 miles above the city.

Apprehending a double attack by the way of Chef-Menteur, I left Gen. Carroll’s force and the militia of the city posted on the Gentilly road; and at 5 o’clock, P.M. marched to meet the enemy, whom I was resolved to attack in his first position, with Major Hind’s dragoons, General Coffee’s brigade, parts of the 7th and 44th regts. The uniformed companies of militia under the command of Maj. Planche, 200 men of color, chiefly from St. Domingo, raised by Col. Savary and acting under the command of Maj. Dagwin, and a detachment of artillery under the direction of Colonel M’Rhea, with two six pounders under the command of Lt. Spots; not exceeding in all 1500. I arrived near the enemy’s encampment about 7, and immediately made my dispositions for the attack. His forces amounting at that time on land at about 3,000, extended half a mile on the river; and in the rear nearly to the wood. Gen. Coffee was ordered to turn their right, while with the residue of the force, I attacked his strongest position on the left near the river. Comm. Patterson having dropped down the river in the schooner Caroline, was directed to open a fire upon their camp, which he executed at about half after seven. This being the signal of attack, Gen. Coffee’s men, with their usual impetuosity, rushed on the enemy’s right, and entered their camp, while our right advanced with equal order.

There can be but little doubt, that we should have succeeded on that occasion with our inferior force in destroying or capturing the enemy, had not a thick fog arise about 8 o’clock, occasioning some confusion among the different corps. Fearing the consequences, under this circumstance, of the prosecution of a night attack with troops then acting together for the first time, I contented myself with lying on the field that night; and at four in the morning assumed a stronger position about two miles near to the city.

At this position I remain encamped, waiting the arrival of the Kentucky militia and other reinforcements. As the safety of the city will depend on the fate of this army, it must not be incautiously exposed.

In this affair, the whole corps under my command deserve the greatest credit. The best compliment I can pay to Gen. Coffee and his brigade, is to say, they behaved as they have always done, while under my command. The 7th, led by Major Pierre,
and the 44th, commanded by Col. Ross, distin-
guished themselves. The battalion of city militia
commanded by Maj. Planche realized my anticipa-
tions, and behaved like veterans, Savary's vol-
unteers manifested great bravery; and the com-
pany of city riflemen having penetrated into the midst
of the enemy's camp were surrounded and fought their
way out with the greatest heroism, bringing with
them a number of prisoners. The two field pieces
were well served by the officer commanding them.

All my officers in the line did their duty, and I
have every reason to be satisfied with the whole of
my field and staff Colonels Butler and Plait, and
Major Chotard, by their intrepidity, saved the ar-
tillery. Col. Haynes was everywhere that danger
or duty called. I was deprived of the services of
one of my aids, Capt. Butler, whom I was obliged
to station to his great regret in town. Capt. Reid,
(my other aid, and Messrs. Livingston, Duplisses,
and Davitaz, who had volunteered their services
faced danger, wherever it was to be met, and
carried my orders with the utmost promptitude.

We made one Major, two subalterns, and sixty three
private, prisoners; and the enemy's loss in killed
and wounded must have been at least ___. My own
loss I have not been able to ascertain with exact-
ness, but suppose it to amount to 100, in killed,
wounded and missing. Among the former I have
to lament the loss of Col. Lauderdale, of Gen.
Coffee's brigade, who fell while bravely fighting.
Colonels Dyer and Gibson of the same corps were
wounded, and Major Ravenaugh taken prisoner.

Col. De Laronde, Major Villere, of the Louisiana
militia, Major Latour of Engineers, having no com-
mand, volunteered their services, as did Drs. Kerr
and Hood, and were of great assistance to me (Essex
Register 1815b:4).

General Jackson wrote on December 29, 1814 from the
headquarters of the 7th Military District in camp below
New Orleans to Secretary of War Monroe providing details
of the action on December 27:

The enemy succeeded on the 27th, in blowing up
the Caroline, (she being becalmed) by means of hot
shot from a land battery which he had erected in
the night. Emboldened by this event, he marched his
whole force the next day, up the level, in the hope
of driving us from our position, and with this view
opened upon us, at the distance of about half a mile,
his bombs and rockets. He was repulsed, however,
with considerable loss—not less, it is believed, than
120 in killed. Ours was inconsiderable, not exceed-
ing half a dozen in killed, and a dozen wounded.

Since then, he has not ventured to repeat his attempt,
though lying close together. There has been frequent
skirmishing between our pickets.

I lament that I have not the means of carrying on
more offensive operations. The Kentucky troops have
not arrived, and my effective force at this point, does
not exceed 5000. Theirs must be at least double—
both prisoners and deserters agreeing in the state-
ment that 7000 landed from their boats (Brannan

General Jackson wrote on January 9, 1815 from his camp
four miles below New Orleans to Secretary of War Monroe
stating:

During the days of the 6th and 7th, the enemy had
been actively employed in making preparations for an-attack on my lines. With infinite labour they had
succeeded on the night of the 7th, in getting their
boats across from the lake to the river, by wid-
ening and deepening the canal on which they had ef-
ected their disembarkation. It had not been in my
power to impede these operations by a general at-
tack: added to other reasons, the nature of the troops
under my command, mostly militia, rendered it too
hazardous to attempt extensive offensive move-
ments in an open country, against a numerous and
well disciplined army. Although my forces, as to
number, had been increased by the arrival of the
Kentucky division, my strength had received very
little addition; a small portion only of that detach-
ment being provided with arms. Compelled thus to
wait the attack of the enemy, I took every measure
to repel it when it should be made, and to defeat
the object he had in view. General Morgan, with
the New Orleans contingent, the Louisiana militia,
and a strong detachment of the Kentucky troops, oc-
cupied an entrenched camp on the opposite side of
the river, protected by strong batteries on the bank,
erected and superintended by commodore Patterson.

In my encampment every thing was ready for action,
when, early in the morning of the 8th, the enemy
after throwing a heavy shower of bombs and con-
greve rockets, advanced their columns on my right
and left, to storm my entrenchments. I cannot speak
sufficiently in praise of the firmness and deliberation
with which my whole line received their approach—
more could not have been expected from veterans
inured to war. For an hour the fire of the small arms
was as incessant and severe as can be imagined.
The artillery, too, directed by officers who displayed
equal skill and courage, did great execution. Yet the columns of the enemy continued to advance with a firmness which reflects upon them the greatest credit. Twice the column which approached me on my left, was repulsed by the troops of general Carroll, those of general Coffee, and a division of the Kentucky militia, and twice they formed again and renewed the assault. At length, however, cut to pieces, they fled in confusion from the field, leaving it covered with their dead and wounded. The loss which the enemy sustained on this occasion, cannot be estimated at less than 1500 in killed, wounded and prisoners. Upwards of three hundred have already been delivered over for burial; and my men are still engaged in picking them up within my lines and carrying them to the point where the enemy are to receive them. This is in addition to the dead and wounded whom the enemy have been enabled to carry from the field, during and since the action, and to those who have since died of the wounds they received. We have taken about 500 prisoners, upwards of 300 of whom are wounded, and a great part of them mortally. My loss has not exceeded, and I believe has not amounted to 10 killed and as many wounded. The entire destruction of the enemy army was now inevitable, had it not been for an unfortunate occurrence which at this moment took place on the other side of the river. Simultaneously with his advance upon my lines, he had thrown over in his boat considerable force to the other side of the river; These having landed, were hardly enough to advance against the works of general Morgan; and what is strange and difficult to account for, at the very moment when their entire discomfort was looked for with a confidence approaching to certainty, the Kentucky reinforcements ingloriously fled, drawing at them, by their example, the remainder of the forces; and thus yielding to the enemy that most fortunate position. The batteries which had rendered me for many days, the most important service, though bravely defended, were of course now abandoned; not, however, until the guns had been spiked.

This unfortunate route had totally changed the aspect of affairs. The enemy now occupied a position from which they might annoy us without hazard, and by means of which, they might have been enabled to defeat, in a great measure, the effect of our success on this side the river. It became, therefore, an object of the first consequence to dislodge him as soon as possible. For this object, all the means in my power, which I could with any safety use, were immediately put in preparation. Perhaps, however, it was somewhat owing to another cause that I succeeded beyond my expectations. In negotiating the terms of temporary suspension of hostilities to enable the enemy to bury their dead and provide for their wounded, I had required certain propositions to be acceded to as a basis; among which, this was one: that although hostilities should cease on this side the river until 12 o'clock of this day, yet it was not to be understood that they should cease on the other side; but that no reinforcements should be sent across by either army until the expiration of that day. This excellency major general Lambert begged time to consider of those propositions until 10 o'clock of to-day, and in the mean time re-crossed his troops. I need not tell you with how much eagerness I immediately regained possession of the position he had thus hastily quitted.

The enemy having concentrated his forces, may again attempt to drive me from my position by storm. Whenever he does, I have no doubt my men will act with their usual firmness, and sustain a character now become dear to them (Braman 1823:457-464).

General Jackson wrote on January 10, 1815 from his camp four miles below New Orleans to Secretary of War Monroe with details on the battle of the previous day:

Early on the morning of the 8th, the enemy having been actively employed the two preceding days in making preparations for a storm, advanced in two strong columns on my right and left. They were received, however, with a firmness which it seems they little expected, and which defeated all their hopes. My men, undisturbed by their approach, which indeed they long anxiously wished for, opened upon them a fire so deliberate and certain, as rendered their scaling ladders and fascines, as well as their more direct implements of warfare, perfectly useless. For upwards of an hour, it was continued with a briskness of, which there have been but few instances, perhaps in any country. In justice to the enemy, it must be said, they withstood it as long as could be expected from the most determined bravery. At length, however, when all prospect of success became hopeless, they fled in confusion from the field, leaving it covered with their dead and wounded. Their loss was immense. I had at first computed it at 1500; but it is since ascertained to have been much greater. Upon information, which is believed to be correct, colonel Haynes, the inspector general, reports it to be in total 2600. His report I enclose you. My loss was inconsiderable, being only seven killed and six wounded. Such a disproportion in loss, when we consider the number and kind of troops engaged, must, I know, excite astonishment, and may not every where be fully credited; yet I am perfectly satisfied that the account is not exaggerated on the one part, nor underrated on the other.

The enemy having hastily Quitted a post which they had gained possession of on the other side of the river, and we having immediately returned to it, both armies at present occupy their former positions. Whether, after the severe losses he has sustained, be
is preparing to return to his shipping, or to make still mightier efforts to attain his first object; I do not pretend to determine. It becomes me to act as though the latter were his intention. One thing, however, seems certain, that if he still calculates on effecting what he has hitherto been unable to accomplish, he must expect considerable reinforcements; as the force with which he landed must undoubtedly be diminished by at least 3000. Besides the loss which he sustained on the night of the 23d ultimo, which is estimated at 400, he cannot have suffered less between that period and the morning of the 18th instant than 3000—having, within that time, been repulsed in two general attempts to drive us from our position, and there having been continual cannonading and skirmishing, during the whole of it. Yet he still able to show a very formidable force.

There is little doubt that the commanding general, Sir Edward Packenham, was killed in the action of the 8th, and that major generals Keane and Gibbs were badly wounded (Brannan 1823:457-464).

General Jackson wrote on January 19, 1815 from camp below New Orleans to Secretary of War Monroe regarding the British departure from the Louisiana mainland:

Last night at 12 o’clock, the enemy precipitate-ly decamped and returned to their boats, leaving behind him, under medical attendance, eighty of his wounded including two officers, 14 places of his heavy artillery, and a quantity of shot, having destroyed much of his powder. Such was the situation of the ground he abandoned, and of that through which he retired, protected by canals, redoubts, entrenchments and swamps on his right, at the river on his left, that I could not, without encountering a risk which true policy did not seem to require, or to authorize, attempt to annoy him much on his retreat. We took only eight prisoners.

Whether it is the purpose of the enemy to abandon the expedition altogether, or renew his efforts at some other point, I do not pretend to determine with positiveness. In my own mind, however, there is but little doubt, that his last exertions have been made in this quarter, at any rate for the present season, and by the next I hope we shall be fully prepared for him. In this belief I am strengthened not only by the prodigious loss he has sustained at the position he has just quitted, but by the failure of his fleet to pass Fort St. Philip.

His loss on this ground, since the debarkation of his troops, as stated by the last prisoners and deserters, and as confirmed by many additional circumstances, must have exceeded four thousand; and was greater in the action of the 8th than was estimated, from the most correct data then in his possession, by the in-spector general, whose report has been forwarded to you. We succeeded, on the 8th, in getting from the enemy about 1000 stand of arms of various descriptions.

Since the action of the 8th, the enemy have been allowed very little respite—my artillery from both sides of the river being constantly employed, till the night, and indeed until the hour of their retreat, in annoying them. No doubt they thought it quite time to quit apposition in which so little rest could be found.

I am advised by major Overton, who commands at fort St. Philip, in letter of the 18th, that the enemy having bombarded his fort for 8 or 9 days from 13 inch mortars without effect, had, on the morning of that day, retired. I have little doubt that he would have been able to have sunk their vessels had they attempted to run by (Brannan 1823:457-464).

General Jackson added a post-note to his letter:

On the 18th our prisoners on shore were delivered us, an exchange having been previously agreed to. Those who are on board the fleet will be delivered at Petit Coquille—after which I shall still have in my hands an excess of several hundred.

20th—Mr. Shields, purser in the navy, has to-day taken 54 prisoners; among them are four officers (Brannan 1823:457-464).

General Jackson concluded his letter with a report of American losses in the campaign, which stated:

Report of the American loss in the several actions below New Orleans.

December 23d, — killed 24; wounded 115; missing 74.—Total 213.

December 28th,—killed 7; wounded 8; missing none.—Total 15.

January 1st,—killed 11; wounded 23; missing none.—Total 34. do. 8th,—do. 13; do. 30; do. 19.—Total 62.
Recapitulation—killed 55; wounded 176; missing 93—Grand total, 324 (Brannan 1823:457-464).

Louisiana Governor William C.C. Claiborne wrote from New Orleans on December 30, 1814 to a senator in congress advising him of the situation following the engagement at Lake Borgne:

In the course of the following week, we heard of the landing of some of the enemy’s forces on the shores of Pearl river; and on the 23d, inst. early in the afternoon, information reached this city, of the arrival of part of them at the house of major general Villere, below; and at the distance of seven miles from this city, and on the same side of the Mississippi:

They had approached the shores of that river through a small creek (bayou Bienvenu) which empties itself into the Lake Borgne, has its head within four miles from the river, where it meets a canal through which fishermen bring their fish to market in small canoes, and from which there is a small portage to the Mississippi. General Jackson, who commands the forces of the United States in this district, immediately marched with the regulars and militia that were in town and some artillery; and was soon after followed by gen. Coffee’s cavalry and a detachment of the militia of Tennessee, under gen. Carroll, who were encamped three miles above.

Towards dark, the vanguard of our army had a brisk engagement with the enemy, in which we had several killed, many wounded and some missing.—We took twenty odd prisoners, and the loss of the enemy in killed and wounded is said to be much more considerable than ours.

During the night gen. Jackson took an advantageous position, and threw up on the next day a strong entrenchment from the river to the Cypress swamp parallel to it, behind which he had lodged his army in considerable safety. We had two armed vessels on the river (the one commanded by com. Patterson, the other by capt. Henly) which on the following day kept a brisk fire on the enemy, and compelled them to retire into the swamp; but in the night between the 25th and 26th, the enemy erected a battery on the shore, from which they fired hot shot on one of our armed vessels, which a strong current and contrary winds kept at anchor. She caught fire, and was abandoned by the crew. On the 27th in the morning the enemy prepared to attack our lines and advanced in close column which the strong fire from our lines compelled to retreat.

On the 28th they were again harassed by the fire of our armed vessels, which compelled them to retreat again into the swamp.

On the 29th three deserters from the enemy came to our camp; no attack was made.

From the prisoners and deserters we have various accounts of the force and designs of the enemy.

The main body of the army that opposes us sailed from Plymouth on the 28th of September last; it consisted of about 3,000 men; they touched at Madierra, Barbadoes and Jamaica. In the latter two islands they took some troops which had before garrisoned the island of Martinico, and two regiments of blacks. There are, it is said, some indians also with them; but this is not credited.

Combining the various accounts we have, the probable result is, that the force of the enemy below the city, is not less than four nor more than seven thousand, and that of this number are from 1000 to 1500 blacks; they are well supplied with arms, ammunition, artillery and provisions. The force of gen. Jackson before the enemy is from six to seven thousand, and is drawn up in lines behind a high and strong entrenchment impenetrable to musketry and the shot of small cannon, at the distance of about 2 miles from the enemy. In front of the entrenchment and along its whole length, is a wet ditch; the right flank covered by the river, and the left by an impenetrable cypress swamp, and the whole front is defended by several pieces of cannon of various calibres.

None even among the most timid entertain any apprehension of the enemy’s ability to force, our lines, and I imagine our present force sufficient to insure our temporary safety at least. We are in hourly expectation of the arrival of gen. Thomas with a large reinforcement from Kentucky, and detachments of militia are approaching the city from several quarters; so that I apprehend not the least danger from the enemy, unless they be strongly reinforced (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:358).

An anonymous letter written from New Orleans on December 30 to an anonymous recipient in Nashville regarding the action of December 23,

Sir—After the action last Friday with the British, Gen. Jackson fell back a short distance, where he strongly and advantageously entrenched himself. Monday the enemy succeeded in destroying one of our schooners,
the Caroline, by means of their artillery, of which they have a few small pieces. Wednesday they made an attempt on our lines, but were repulsed at every point, with a loss, as is said, of 150 men killed. They have subsequently endeavored to entrench themselves in the vicinity of our camp, but have been compelled to retreat to their original position, their force being insufficient apparently to effect any thing, offensively. Our loss in both actions has been inconsiderable. Some few are known to be killed, some to be prisoners. It appears from the report of deserters, that the British calculate on the neutrality of the French and Spaniards; and with a view to realize it, they have liberated every Creole who has fallen into their hands, observing that they did not make war upon them, and that their property should be generally respected. Upon the whole the greatest confidence prevails in our ability to drive away the enemy; and I am sanguine that in a short time they must either surrender to our arms or evacuate the country. The Kentucky troops, 2,500 along, are momentarily expected. Our force will then amount to 10,000, fully equal to the defence of the country at the present moment (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:359).

Colonel Andrew Hyne wrote to Tennessee Governor Blount, on December 30, 1814 regarding the action of December 23:

The British have landed with a large army, and are now within about five miles of the city of New Orleans. We began fighting them on the night of the 23rd instant, and have been at it almost ever since, but the principal mischief has been done by cannonading. General Coffee’s division of the army covered themselves with glory on the night of the 23d. His loss was considerable, among whom were the brave colonel Lauderdale and major Cavanaugh—colonels Dyer and Gibson were wounded. Whatever may be the issue of the pending conflict, rests only with Heaven. We pray to the Almighty that we may not tarnish the reputation of the troops of Tennessee. A detachment is this moment advancing from our lines on the enemy, and our heavy artillery are firing almost constantly on them.

Day before yesterday the brave colonel Henderson and some others were killed by the advance of the enemy’s column on the left wing of our army.

Generals Jackson, Carroll and Coffee are worth more than their weight in gold to the Americans.

Admiral Cochrane is said to be with the army, and perhaps is not more than a mile from us.

This is said to be the army that took the city of Washington.

General Kean is said to be the commander (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:359).

Louisiana Governor Claiborne wrote from New Orleans, December 30, 1814, to Tennessee Governor Blount with details of the action of December 23:

The enemy remains encamped about 7 miles from this city, within full view of our army under the command of general Jackson. The force of the enemy is variously stated, from four to seven thousand. In an attack on the evening of the 23rd inst. he suffered considerably, and, but for the darkness of the night, which cause some little confusion in our ranks, the affair, I am told would have been decisive. We have lost some very brave men, and among the number I am sorry to mention two highly esteemed officers of your state, colonel Henderson of the rifle corps, and colonel Lauderdale of the volunteers. The Tennessee troops equal the high expectations which were formed of them, nor is it possible for men to display more patriotism and firmness in battle, or composure under fatigue and privations. The Louisianians also deserve and will receive the highest approbation. We are united as one man, and a spirit prevails which insures our safety. We may have, and calculate on having some hard fighting; but you need not fear for the result. The general inspires much confidence, and all his troops, regulars, volunteers and militia, are in high spirits, and anxious to be led against the enemy. This will be done in due season; the Kentucky troops are daily expected; until reinforced by them, the general has very prudently determined to maintain his present position—a position which completely covers the city, and from which the enemy cannot dislodge him. The American army is drawn up in a line, extending from the Mississippi to the Cypress Swamp, having in front a wet ditch and an entrenchment impenetrable to musketry or smaller pieces of ordinance—the right flank covered by the river, and the left by the swamp, and the whole defended by several pieces of cannon of various calibres—32, 24, 12 and 6 pounders (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:359).

An extract of a letter from the postmaster at New Orleans to the postmaster in Nashville, dated December 30, provided brief details on the action up to December 27,

You will have heard, I presume, of the landing of the British here, and of an action which took place last Friday in which it is thought they suffered much. Since that time our army has entrenched itself very strongly and advantageously about five miles from town. Last Wednesday the enemy attacked our lines,
but were repulsed with considerable loss; ours tri- flying. Previous to the attack, they succeeded in destroying a schooner belonging to us by means of their artillery, of which they have a few small pieces (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:359).

An extract of a letter from Colonel R. Butler, adjutant general, written from Camp, six miles below New Orleans on December 30, 1814, briefly described events from December 23-28,

I am here surrounded with the din of war—artillery and small arms alternately playing. On the 23rd at night we attacked the enemy; and, as reported by deserters, we killed, wounded and took prisoners about 500. Our loss comparatively very small. Colonels Lauderdale and Henderson have hit the dust and are no more. The latter on the 28th inst. at which time the enemy advanced on us, with a view to storm our works; but they found us too strong to attempt it. We opened our artillery, and a deserrter says we killed 140 men that day—among them sir Beverly Evanston of the 85th. We cannot estimate their force as yet correctly—we are in line spirits. I have no doubt of having the rascals (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:359).

Inspector General H. Hayne wrote from Headquarters on the left bank of the Mississippi, 5 miles below New Orleans on January 13, 1815 to Secretary of War Monroe, in which he provided a brief tally of British losses in the January 8 battle;

Sir—I have the honor to make the following report of the killed, wounded and prisoners, taken at the battle at Mac Praradis [Macarty’s] plantation, on the left bank of the Mississippi, on the morning of the 8th January, 1815, and 5 miles below the city of New Orleans.

Killed 700

Wounded 1400

Prisoners taken, 1 major; 4 capts.; 11 lieutenants, 1 ensign, 483 camp officers and privates, making a grand total of 2600 (The Gleaner 1815:1).

U.S. Senator Eligius Fromentin (Louisiana) related from Washington a collection of battle accounts in a January 28, 1815 letter to a friend in Baltimore,

I hasten to relieve your anxiety about New-Orleans—New Orleans was safe on the 0th December; and I hope is safe now. Take your own time to read the details below, extracted from letters which I received this morning from governor Claiborne, Thomas Urquhart, Richard Relf, John Kitty Smith and James Sterret. All my correspondents agree together about all the material facts; and they all agree likewise with Bron’s and Robertson’s correspondents, so that you may give an entire belief to the following Narration. Strange as it may appear, the enemy were in general Villere’s yard before any body knew that they had even attempted to land. Villere’s son was a prisoner by them in his father’s house; but under some pretence he got leave to go into the yard, made his escape, and was the first to give the news in New Orleans at about two o’clock, P.M. on the 23d December. Our videttes at the mouth of the bayou Bienvenu had been before made prisoners, supposed to have been, betrayed by some fishermen, who were in the habit of bringing fish from the lake through that bayou to the New-Orleans market. General Jackson went immediately to the enemy with what regulars and militia of every description happened to be in New-Orleans, the whole amounting to about 4000. Our army attacked the British at about eight o’clock, and after an engagement of about an hour and a half, the firing ceased on both sides, as if by mutual consent. Our loss is supposed to be about 200 in killed, wounded and missing—that of the enemy is believed to be much more considerable. We took that night seventy odd prisoners. Parmele was found dead on the field of battle—he is the only one whose death has been ascertained. Among the missing, supposed to be prisoners, are George Ogden, George Pollock, John Lynd, Laverty, Nathan Cox, Brundege, Wm. Flowers, Story, and others, whose name are not given. Sterret, Porter and Alexander Smith, (Kitty’s brother) were slightly wounded. They are getting well, and ready for another action.

All the American prisoners are sent on board of their fleet. The Creoles were first ordered to be released on condition of their taking with them a proclamation from the British commanding general to the inhabitants of Louisiana. This they every one refused to do. They were nevertheless released on parole. In the number are, Prieur; Beauregard, Renaud, Roy, Genl. Villere, jun. who, it seems, after he made his escape from his father’s house, put himself at the head of a company of Creole volunteers, formed on a sudden, on the spur of the occasion.

After the night action of the 23d, the hostile armies respectively took a position, ours on Edward Macarty’s plantation, adjoining our old county seat, and threw up breastworks from the river to the swamp, the old mill canal serving as a ditch readymade. The British established their lines on Bienvenu’s plantation, about two miles below, and there fortified themselves, waiting for their artillery.
The two armies remained in the situation above described, and on the 25th, the ship Louisiana, and the schooner Caroline dropped down the river abreast the wings of the enemy, and opened their fire on them. The British suffered considerably from the brisk uninterrupted fire of our two vessels, and were at last compelled to retire to the swamps. But in the night of the 25th and 26th, they erected a battery on the shore, from which they fired hot shot and succeeded in setting fire to the Caroline and blew her up, not however before the brave captain Henley had taken on shore all his guns. Not a man was hurt in consequence of the Caroline blowing up.

On the 27th or 28th (for in that respect our several accounts: are at variance) the enemy advanced in Considerable force with their artillery, and attacked at the same time the whole of our line: but they were repulsed at all points with considerable loss. This action lasted nearly three hours, and severe and incessant cannonading. Our loss in this last affair is about 50 killed and wounded. Major Carmick of the marines has been severely wounded, not dangerously. Since that time to the 30th December, 9 o’clock, P.M. the date of my last letter, nothing has been done but firing during the day from our entrenchments on the works which the British erected in the course of the night.

The ship Louisiana and several other small armed vessels, with the fire from our lines, harass the British constantly, and not unfrequently drive them to the swamps. It appears that general Jackson means at present to keep his strong hold, and to act on the defensive until the arrival of general Hopkins, who was expected on the 31st December with 800 men from Lafourche and Iberville, and of general Adair who was hourly expected with 2,500 men.

Three deserters from the enemy came to our camp on the 29th December:

From them and from the prisoners it is collected, that the force of the enemy amounts from 6 to 8 or 9,000 including about 1,200 black troops, which are represented as not of any considerable use thus far, owing it is supposed to the excessive cold weather; which since the landing of the British has prevailed in Louisiana, to such a degree, that the bayou St. John is froze over; which I believe has never been known before.

All our letters speak in the highest terms of the unanimity, confidence and courage manifested by every description of people in Louisiana. No words can do justice to the bravery of the Tennesseans. The Louisianians are not unworthy of them. From the age of 15 to the age of 75, every man is in one way or other engaged in resisting the common enemy. This is truly a noble mode for Louisiana to repel the calumnies by which she has been assailed from many quarters. A country thus defended cannot be conquered.

Generals Packenham and Keene commanded the army; and admirals Cochrane and Malcolm the navy. It is believed that Lewis Kerr is with the British (Nile’s Weekly Register 1815. Volume 7:359-360).

A St. Francisville merchant wrote on January 1, 1815 to a gentleman in Baltimore with brief news of the action of December 23,

The enemy under the command of major-general Keene, supposed to be the advance guard of lord Hill, made their appearance within seven miles of New-Orleans on Friday, the 23d December, where they were met by general Jackson, with a force of 4000 men: an action immediately ensued, and Jackson succeeded in driving them off the field of battle, after killing and wounding many of them; their force was estimated at 7000 men, they fought like men, but the force under Jackson fought like Devils. The particulars we have not yet ascertained. I must therefore refer you to general Jackson’s official report (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:360).

Niles Weekly Register published an extract of a private letter, written from Camp, near New Orleans, on January 6, 1815, to an unnamed individual in Washington, D.C., which noted,

We all remained perfectly quiet until the morning of the 1st January, when the enemy had advanced within 600 yards of our breast works, under cover of night and a heavy fog, and erected three different batteries, mounting in all 15 guns, from 6½ to 32’s. About 8 o’clock, when the fog cleared off, they commenced a most tremendous fire upon us, but it was amply returned by us, and a heavy cannonading was kept up without the least interval on either side, except that occasioned by the explosion of my magazine in the rear of my battery, and the magazine of my captain in the night, owing to their Congreve rockets. Against 4 o’clock in the afternoon, we had disembowelled all their guns but two. They retreated during the night to their strong hold, about a mile and a quarter from our lines, where they have remained perfectly quiet ever since. On new year’s day we lost about 15 killed and as many badly wounded. That of the enemy, from the accounts of two prisoners taken on that day and three deserters since, must have been much greater. Twice have the enemy tried to storm and carry our batteries, with the firm belief of dining in Orleans the same day, but woefully have they been deceived. All deserters that have come in, agree that
the enemy’s force is from 7 to 9000 strong; but we
generally suppose it to be about six thousand.—The
enemy in killed, wounded, and prisoners, since the
23d, must have lost near one thousand men. Since
our last fight, the Kentucky troops have arrive—
near three thousand men, which makes our force bet-
ter than 8000; so that Orleans, I believe, is pretty
safe (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:361).

A letter from an anonymous author in New Orleans to the
editor of the Philadelphia Gazette, dated January 6, 1815,
gave news of the January 1 engagement,

You will no doubt expect to hear by this day’s mail
of something important having occurred in this
quarter; but nothing decisive has as yet taken place.

On Sunday the 1st inst. The enemy, who had the
preceding night erected a battery in advance of
their lines and near our works, opened a very heavy
fire upon us, and made two bold attempts to force
and turn our left wing, in both of which they were
repulsed with considerable loss, and obliged to re-
tray to their entrenchments, leaving all their guns
on the battery, a considerable quantity of ammu-
nition, working tools, and their dead unburied.

Since then no other attempt has been made on our
lines; but all accounts concur in stating, that they are
fortifying themselves very strongly, with what inten-
tion we know not.

It was reported a few days ago, that several of the en-
emy’s vessels had entered the river and were seriously
alarmed lest they might succeed in passing fort Philip
or Plaquemine, and thus co-operate with the army.

But accounts from there to-day state, that they
had retired. It is also said there is some misunder-
standing between the land and naval commanders,
God grant this may prove propitious to our cause!

We have had a few deserters come in since my last.

I have just learnt that the detachment stationed at
the Chief Mentor road, on lake Borgne, have tak-
en and destroyed an English transport brig, laden
with provisions for the army. This will prove a se-
vere blow to them; for they are said, by the pris-
oners and deserters, to be short of bread—of meat
they find abundance in the country they possess,

The forces under gen. Thomas, say the Kentucky
quota of 2,500, arrived two days ago: but their
arms have not yet come on. It is generally sup-
posed that the want of them (there being none
here to sup reinforcements, by the river; a feature
in the original ply the deficiency) prevents general
Jackson from attacking the enemy. Their arms ap-
pear to have to been shipped in some common
trading boat, and God knows when they may ar-
rive (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:361).

An unidentified officer in the U.S. Navy wrote from Camp,
3 miles below New Orleans, on January 6, 1815, with this
information,

We are entrenched, say from eight to ten thousand
men, between the British lines and the city.—Their
entrenched camp is about four miles from Orleans—
where they are supposed to be 10,000 strong. They
have made several attempts on our works, and were
always handsomely repulsed. I do not think they will
take New Orleans this winter: It is now 14 days since
the first battle—and the whole of these two weeks with
cannonading has been incessant—we have battered
down their advance works as fast as they can erect
them. We have lost from 100 to 200 men, amongst
whom some of our most respectable citizens.

General Jackson behaves well: I think, however, he
exposes himself too much: for should a chance shot
take Aim off, I know not what might be the conse-
quence. And of this there is no little danger—his
head quarters being so near the lines that at least
thirty cannon balls have passed through his house.
The opposing lines are so near that the picket guards
skirmish daily. The enemy is fortifying and entrench-
ing his camp very strongly (Niles’ Weekly Register
1815, Volume 7:361).

Alexander Walker described the British advance from
the Fisherman’s Village on Lake Borgne (Walker
1859:124-126):

Cochrane went ashore at the village to remain and
hurry up the other divisions. The boats which had
entered the bayou were ordered to push forward
with all speed. The sailors stood to their oars, and
the boats swept rapidly up the stream, the banks on
either hand closing in upon them as they advanced,
and gradually contracting their front, until at last
there was only space sufficient for one boat at a time.
Passing into Bayou Mazent, the southern branch
of the Bienvenu, the stream became so narrow that
oars could not be used, and the boats had to be pro-
elled by punting. Finally the front boats took the
ground. The sailors were then ordered to jump out,
and see if a road could be found on the banks of the
bayou, which was practicable for the troops. They
reported that there was a narrow slip of solid land
along the bank of the stream, where a path was dis-
cernible. The troops were then marched ashore in
single file, and the whole brigade stood at rest for
half an hour until General Keane and Rear-Admiral
Malcolm (who had remained in the rear to see that
there were no stragglers), could come up. On their
arrival at the head of the column, a brief consulta-
tion was held, the men were hurriedly inspected, the
column was formed with the deserters and guides in
front, and the engineers sent ahead to cut away the
trees and other obstacles, and bridge the numerous
narrow and deep streams that run into the bayou.

The order to march was then given, and the active
Thornton led his column briskly forward in the nar-
row path along the bayou, from which it would be
dangerous to stray on account of the quagmire. Some
delay was occasioned by the severe labors imposed
upon the engineers in clearing the rank vegetation,
which frequently obstructed the path, and in con-
structing rude bridges across the ditches. The
scenery for some distance continued to present the
same dreary monotony. Soon, however, the ground
began to grow firmer and the path more distinct. The
files were now widened, and the men were ordered
to quicken their steps. With the greatest alacrity they
obeyed their orders, and pushed rapidly through the
low, stunted cypress woods which had succeeded
to the cane-brake. Suddenly the leading files found
themselves emerging into open and cultivated fields.
Extending their front, they advanced rapidly and
joyfully in the direction of an orange grove, through
which several houses could be discerned. Forming his
front into companies, so as to make as wide a sweep
as possible. Thornton, with one company, stole rap-
idly along Villére's Canal, and succeeded, under cov-
er of the grove, in surrounding the principal house.

Major Gabriel Villére, son of the General, had been
directed to guard the approach from the Bienvenu,
and in the execution of his orders, had dispatched
the picket which fared so badly at the Fisherman's
Village. Secure in his outposts, the Major was sitting
on the front gallery of the house, looking towards the
river and quietly enjoying his cigar; whilst his broth-
er Celestin was engaged in cleaning a bowling-piece.
Suddenly the Major observed some men in red coats
running towards the river. Immediately he leaped
from his chair and rushed into the hall, with a view
of escaping by the rear of the house. What were his
horror and dismay to encounter at the back door sev-
eral armed men. One of these was Colonel Thornton,
who with drawn sword, called to the Major to sur-
render. There were no braver men than the Villéres;
their heritage was one of dauntless courage and
chivalry—but resistance under such circumstances
would have been madness. With infinite mortification
the young creole surrendered. Celestin had already
been arrested in the yard. - The two young men were
then confined in one of the rooms, closely guarded,
until General Keane could come up. These events
occurred at half-past ten o'clock, on -the morning of
the 23d of December. Surrounded -and vigilantly
guarded by his captors, Major Villére watched e-
erly for an opportunity to escape. He felt that if he
should remain imprisoned, the calumniators of his
race would find, in the circumstance, some color for
the aspersions of the patriotism and fidelity of the
creoles of Louisiana. To repel so base an inference,
he determined to incur every peril. Springing sud-
ddenly from the group of soldiers, he leaped through
the window of the room in which he was confined,
and throwing down several of the British, who stood
in his way, ran towards a high picket fence which
enclosed the yard; clearing this at a bound, in the
presence of some fifty British soldiers, several of
whom discharged their arms at him, he made for
the woods with that celerity and agility for which
the young creole hunter is so distinguished. The
British immediately started in hot pursuit, scatter-
ing themselves over the field so as to surround the
fugitive. "Catch or kill him," was Thornton's order:

Traversing the field behind the house, Villére plunged
into the cypress forest which girts the swamp, and
ran until the boggy nature of the soil began to im-
pede his progress. He could distinctly hear the voices
of his pursuers rallying one another and pointing out
the course which he had taken. His re-capture now
seemed inevitable, when it occurred to him to climb
a large live-oak and conceal himself in its thick ev-
erygreen branches. As he was about to execute this
design, his attention was attracted by a low whistle or
cry at his feet. He looked down and beheld his favor-
ite setter crouched piteously on the ground, by her
mournful look and action, expressing more strongly
than could the human face or form, her sympathy for
the perils of her master, and her desire to share his
fate. The faithful creature had followed her master in
his flight. What could Villére do with the poor an-
imal? Her presence near the tree would inevitably be-
tray him. There was no other hope of escape. His own
life might not be of so much value, but then the honor
of his family, of a proud lineage, the safety of the city
of his birth, with whose fortunes those of his family
had been so conspicuously associated, the imminent
peril in which Jackson and his soldiers would be
placed by the surprise of the city,—these, and other
considerations, such as should influence and control
a gallant and honorable man, suppressed and over-
whelmed all tender emotions of pity and affection.
The sacrifice had to be made. With a deep sigh and eyes full of tears, the young Creole seized a large stick and striking the poor, fawning, faithful dog, as she covered at his feet, soon dispatched her. Concealing the dead body, he ascended the tree, where he remained until the British had returned to their camp, and the pursuit was relinquished. He then slipped stealthily down, and stealing along the edge of the woods, hurried to a plantation below, where he found his neighbor, Colonel de la Ronde, who hearing of the approach of the British, was hurrying up from Terre aux Boeufs to join Jackson. Obtaining a boat, Villére and De la Ronde rowed across the river and reached in safety the plantation, on the right bank of the Mississippi; of P.S. Dussau de la Croix, one of the Committee of Public Safety of New Orleans. Horses were quickly saddled, and Villére, De la Ronde, and De la Croix, leaping upon them, put spurs to their animals and rode towards the city as rapidly as the swift little Creole ponies could bear them.

Thirty-seven years had passed, and the gallant young Creole hero of this adventure, emaciated by long sickness, and prematurely old, surrounded by a family of gallant sons and lovely daughters, sat in that very gallery, and on the very spot on which he was surprised by the British, and related with graphic distinctness, with kindling eye and voice, hoarse with emotion, the painful sensation, the agonizing remorse which agitated his soul, when compelled to sacrifice his faithful dog to prevent the surprise of his native city and save his own honor; A few weeks after, his worn frame was consigned to the mausoleum, which encloses the mortal remains of many other members of a family, whose name is so highly honored in the annals of Louisiana.

Finishing all his precautions thwarted—having, in fact, observed the fugitives galloping towards the city on the opposite bank of the river, General Keane, who had now reached the head of the column, ordered the troops to be formed in battalion. He then marched them by Villére’s house, and right-wheeled into the road, which, at a distance of about a hundred yards from the river, proceeds directly to the city. Having arrived at the upper line of Villére’s plantation, at a point where the levee suddenly diverges almost at a right angle to the road, he ordered the three regiments, composing the advance, to take position. They were accordingly formed in three close columns in the field, within musket shot of the river. In front, where the advanced posts were stationed, were a fence and ditch. The Rocket company was stationed on the bank of the river to defend the rear of the camp. Outposts and pickets were posted far out in the field, and a strong advance was thrown forward up the river towards the city. Keane and Thornton established their headquarters at Villére’s house. The three small cannon brought up with the advance, were placed in battery in the yard.

It was afternoon before these dispositions were completed. Strong parties had been, in the meantime, sent in every direction to see if any enemy was near. They all reported that there was no sign of a foe. The farmhouses had been abandoned by the whites, and the negroes were unable to give any information of what was going on. Under these circumstances, Colonel Thornton warmly urged General Keane to advance and march into the city, which lay in a defenseless state, about eight miles off, without an obstacle between it and the British army. The troops, this sagacious and enterprising officer declared, were fresh and in excellent spirits, and full of confidence and ardor. But General Keane had been seriously impressed by the representations of the prisoners taken at the Fisherman’s Village, as to Jackson’s force. He was apprehensive that his communications with the fleet might be cut off, and his little army be surrounded by overwhelming numbers. He did not perceive that he was already separated by a wide chasm from his supplies, and the main body of his command, which lay at a distance of forty or fifty miles off.

He, therefore, concluded to delay his advance until the other divisions came up. Fatal error for the British! Thornton was vastly Keane’s superior in sagacity and military skill.

Arriving at Villére’s at eleven o’clock, if Keane had pushed forward, he might have been the first to announce his arrival to the surprised garrison and people of New Orleans. It would be rash to conclude that the bold genius, the inexhaustible resources and dauntless energy of Jackson, would not have supplied some defence, against even a column of regular soldiers, of experienced warriors, equal in number to his own command of raw militia, separated in detached parties, occupying an area of seven or eight miles; but there can be no doubt in the mind of any person, who views the condition of affairs in the city at this juncture, that it would have required a miraculous intervention to have saved it from capture or destruction, if Colonel Thornton’s counsel had prevailed. Without walls or available forts, scattered over so wide a space, the city could only have been defended by a system of street guerrillaism, the consequences of which would have been deplorable and heart-sickening.

It is essential to a clear and correct comprehension of subsequent events, that we should describe the character and situation of the country in which General Keane now found himself established. The position occupied by his army was eight miles below the city,
following the road near the levee. The Mississippi River at this period of the year is higher than the plains on either side, which gently decline from its banks. To prevent its overflow, levees are constructed, usually about seven or eight feet high, varying with the elevation of the plain, which is greater in some places than in others. The land on both sides of the river is of alluvial formation, and runs off into low swamps, which are covered with cypress and other trees. The swamps are relieved by numerous bayous, which find their way to the lake. The lake being lower than the river, the plantations are drained into it through the swamp. The culture of sugar, the only extensive product of South Louisiana, demands a very thorough drainage, and the alluvion is subject to a constant infusion from seepage or transpiration water. To draw off this, and prevent the injurious effects of moisture on the cane, the planters cut numerous ditches every direction, so as to enclose spaces of one or two acres, it being an established fact in cane culture, that the labor and expense of ditching and drainage are the best investments of the planter....At the period to which our sketches refer, the negroes on the plantations lived in small huts, constructed of light wooden frames, filled in with adhesive mud, taken from the bottom of the Mississippi.... The planters’ dwelling-houses in 1814 were usually neat wooden edifices, either in the cottage style, like General Villere’s, the first headquarters of the British army, the whole building being on one floor, with wide galleries in front and rear; or in the chateau style, like Bienvenu’s and Macarte’s, in front of the British camp, which consisted of two stories and an attic, the ground floor being usually paved with brick or marble, and the galleries supported by brick pillars, circling the whole building. These houses were surrounded by trees and shrubbery, so that, at a short distance, they could scarcely be seen. They looked to the river, and were built usually at a distance of a few hundred yards from its bank, with cultivated gardens, or neatly trimmed lawns, shaded by spreading live oaks and pecan trees, and hedged around with a thick growth of orange and lemon trees, extending in front to the road, which follows the levee. The plantations were divided by slight but durable fences of cypress pickets, with ditches on both sides. Their fronts usually averaged a mile or three-quarters on the river, with about the same depth, terminating in the cypress swamp, which extends the whole distance from the mouth of the Mississippi to the highlands, a distance of over two hundred miles, leaving” between it and the river, a narrow neck of solid and cultivable land.

It was this neck which General Keane now occupied. His camp was entirely within Villere’s plantation, and stretched from the head of the canal, near the mansion, to the upper line of the plantation. There were some twelve or fifteen plantations, large and small, over which he must pass to reach the city. A two hours’ march would have accomplished the task. After leaving Villere’s, he would have passed into Lacoste’s, from Lacoste’s to De la Ronde’s, from De la Ronde’s to Bienvenu’s from Bienvenu’s to Chalmette’s. We need not go further, as these five plantations embrace the full extent of the British advance, and of the operations which we are about to describe. The upper line of Chalmette’s is marked by a small canal or ditch, called Rodriguez’ Canal, which was dry the greater part of the year; and only contained a small quantity of water when the river was high. This canal was never passed by a hostile Englishman who did not perish in the act.

The plantations between the Canal Rodriguez and the British camp were under good culture. The crops had just been gathered, and the families had been residing on them a few days before the British arrived.

The rolling season, as it is called, was just over, and the sugar safely stored in the barns and warehouses on the plantations. That portion of the cane, which is retained to be planted for the next crop, was left in the fields, having been cut and piled into mattresses, covered with a slight layer of fodder and dirt, to protect it from the frost—a process called by the planters matlaying. It is a notable coincidence, that the three plantations first named in the preceding enumeration, where most of the events to be described occurred, were owned by gentlemen, who, at the time of the arrival of the British, were actively and efficiently engaged in aiding Jackson to defend the city.

General Villere was in command of the first division of Louisiana militia, employing his influence and talents in rallying the people of the rural districts to the defence of the city, and in organizing various bodies of troops. The services of Colonel De la Ronde were similarly employed, and Major Lacoste, aided by his son (now General Lacoste, Paymaster-General of the State, and long a member of the State Senate), was engaged in forming and disciplining that efficient battalion of free men of color, to which frequent allusion will be made hereafter.

The front view from the British camp was interrupted by the turn in the river, which, at Lacoste’s, declines to the west. The position of Keane was well adapted for defensive, but too narrow and circumscribed for offensive operations. The swamp afforded a secure protection for his right, and for his line of communications with the squadron in the lake. The river protected his left flank from attack by land troops, but not against any armed vessel that might drop down the stream, nor from batteries on the opposite bank. There was the weakness of his position. Had the vessels of war succeeded in coming up the river, and anchored in rear of the camp, this deficiency would have been remedied. But as
it was, having determined not to advance until he was joined by the remainder of his troops, it is quite evident, to even an unmilitary eye, that General Keane had placed his army in a position of great peril and embarrassment (Walker 1859:124-150).

Alexander Walker (1859:151-152) described the events at American headquarters in New Orleans, upon their learning of the British invasion:

Jackson was thus engaged at half-past one o'clock P.M. on the 23d of December, 1814, when his attention was drawn from certain documents he was carefully reading, by the sound of horses galloping down the streets with more rapidity than compared with the order of a city under martial law. The sounds ceased at the door of his headquarters and the sentinel on duty announced the arrival of three gentlemen who desired to see the General immediately, having important intelligence to communicate. 'Show them in,' ordered the General. The visitors proved to be Mr. Dussaut De la Croix, Major Gabriel Villere and Colonel de la Ronde. They were stained with mud and nearly breathless with the rapidity of their ride.

'What news do you bring, gentlemen?' eagerly asked the General.

'Important! highly important!' responded Mr. De la Croix. 'The British have arrived at Villere's plantation, nine miles below the city, and are there encamped. Here is Major Villere, who was captured by them, has escaped, and will now relate his story.' The Major accordingly detailed in a clear and perspicuous manner the occurrences we have related in the preceding chapter; employing his mother tongue, the French language, which De la Croix translated to the General. At the close of Major Villere's narrative, the General drew up his figure, bowed with disease and weakness, to its full height, and with an eye of fire and an emphatic blow upon the table with his clenched fist, exclaimed, By the Eternal, they shall not sleep on our soil! Then courteously inviting his visitors to refresh themselves, and sipping a glass of wine in compliment to them, he turned to his Secretary and aids and remarked: Gentlemen, the British are below, we must fight them to-night.'

Augustin Rousseau, a Louisianan in the New Orleans campaign, wrote a letter to the editor of the Louisiana Courier with his recollection of the initial British presence at Villere's plantation, which was reprinted by Walker (1859:151):

The English came to Mr. Villere's plantation on the 23d December, 1814, between twelve and one o'clock. As well as I can recollect, some officers who preceded the army, took Major Villere prisoner. As I was passing along at the time, I made all haste to give information to Mr. Ducros, who was posted on Mr. Jumonville's plantation. Captain Ducros said to me, 'As you are on horseback, go to the city and let General Jackson know that the English are on Villere's plantation.' I set out immediately, and passed, in spite of the efforts of the English to stop me. I reached Mr. Bienvenu's plantation; my horse being unable to go any further; Mr. Bienvenu, sen., procured for me the horse of a dragoon who was sick in bed at his house, and I went to General Jackson's quarters in the city and gave him the news. A few minutes afterwards, three discharges of cannon gave the alarm, and drums beat to arms through the streets. I remained in the city one or two hours, hunting for a musket, so that I might join one or other of the companies; but no gun could be had. Then, believing that my company had crossed the river in a flat belonging to Mr. Danois, I resolved to descend along the right bank of the river. While on my way, I met Major Villere about two miles below, opposite the widow Bienvenu's plantation. Mr. Villere related in what way he had escaped from the English, and said he had left my company on Mr. Caselard's plantation. We then parted; he pursued his way to town, and I went on to Mr. Caselard's plantation, where I found my company. Mr. Caselard crossed us over in a flat-boat, and we arrived at the left bank as the army was marching along to attack the English.

This does not in the least take from the hardihood and heroism of Major Villere's escape from a band of armed men.

Any one doubting the truth of this statement, may call upon Messrs. Casimir, Lacosta, Marcel, Tierville, Bienvenu, and Mr. Jules Villere, who were members of Captain Ducros' company.

Vincent Otto Nolte (1854:202-226), who was a German merchant in New Orleans at the time of the battle, provides a civilian's version of the New Orleans campaign. Nolte's account was written several decades after the events. His comments pertaining to the use of cotton bales for the American defenses at Line Jackson are very important and probably reliable, since most of the bales that were sacrificed for this purpose belong to him.

By late January, 1815, people in the United States were receiving news from New Orleans in a trickle, although many still had not learned the final outcome of the campaign. Many newspapers carried stories that were weeks, and even months old. Numerous examples are summarized in the following. These are presented in the chronological order of their publication.
A short news article from January 19th contains a brief summary of events through December 24th (Weekly Recorder 1815:231).

On January 21, The Alexandria Gazette, citing a Washington, Mississippi newspaper source, reported that the British had, “advanced within seven miles of the City, were met by our troops at seven o’clock on the evening of the 23rd inst. And were drove back one mile; our army kept the battleground as late as six o’clock on the morning of the 24th, when it was momentarily expected the battle would recommence”. The Major General Thomas commanding the Kentucky troops ordered to New Orleans (Alexandria Gazette 1815:3). Another news article covered events in New Orleans up to December 15. It contained no details of the battle (Sun 1815:2).


A January 25th news article contained secondhand information about events up to December 23 but with no unique battle details (Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser 1815a:3). Another news article contained no details of military events in New Orleans. It ended with this speculation, “If so, the enemy spent his Christmas in New Orleans” (Commercial Advertiser 1815:3).

A January 26th news article repeated information published on January 14 and 21 in the National Intelligencer (Palladium of Liberty 1815:2). Another news article contained a brief description of General Jackson’s preparations of “a ditch and breast work across the neck of land which afforded the only approach to the city” (Federal Gazette 1815:2).

On January 27, the City Gazette newspaper published portions of a letter to the editor of the Richmond Enquirer, dated Nashville, January 3, 1815, which had a brief summary of General Jackson’s victory on December 24th. It stated that “General Jackson, in a general action, completely beat and routed the British, seven miles below New Orleans” (City Gazette 1815:2). Also on January 27 one Boston newspaper article reprinted two letters written at New Orleans. The first was a December 22nd letter from a citizen of New Orleans who noted the American loss at Lake Borgne and the writer noted, “Yesterday the Gens. Coffee and Carroll arrived with 4000 Tennessans, and Gen. Adair will be here tomorrow with 2500 Kentuckians”. The second is a December 23rd anonymous letter and that writer noted at 1 A.M.,

"Before I had time to fold up the letter I wrote to you to-day, the alarm gun was sounded, and I forthwith repaired to the tented field. The enemy without being discovered, made the river at Gen. Villaray’s plantation today, about 12 or 1 o’clock. They have not, it is supposed, all yet debarked—The entry was made up a bayou, into which a canal from Villaray’s plantation empties. Gen. Jackson, with Gen. Coffee’s men, the 7th regiment, a part of the 44th, some of the town militia, and some other troops, arrived about 7 o’clock, supported by the schr. Caroline. We commenced the engagement about half past 7, which continued pretty hot until about a quarter past 9, when the firing ceased on the part of the British first. I cannot tell the number of killed or wounded on either side yet. Towards the close of the engagement, our company of riflemen was broken by a charge from the enemy, and has suffered a good deal—Capt. Bealle commanded the right, and myself the left of the company. I had then with me only fifteen men, three of whom were wounded; and I had also eleven prisoners, a part of the army that was at Washington. In this situation, I thought it best to order my men to march towards the swamp, and accordingly marched about half way to town back of the plantations. I have safely delivered the prisoners, and am now at home very much fatigued” (Boston Daily Advertiser 1815:2).

The January 28 edition of the Enquirer published a letter written at New Orleans on December 30th. It began with events of December 23,

"On Friday night, our advanced guard engaged the enemy, and after some success, returned with 69 prisoners; our loss is supposed to be from 1 to 200, the enemy having possession of the ground; th [sic] killed have not been ascertained. Our army is now strongly covered by breast-works, well manned with heavy artillery” (Enquirer 1815a:3).

Also on January 28 a Boston newspaper noted the battle of December 23rd but provided few details. The article also contained very sketchy reports about the January 8th battle and a positive outcome for the Americans, although these were described as rumors (Boston Spectator 1815:226).

On January 30 a Baltimore paper published a letter from Governor Claiborne to Governor Blount, dated December 30, stating that General Jackson had, “taken a strong and very advantageous position, five miles below Orleans—his entrenchment a deep ditch, filled from a cypress swamp with water, and supported by a good artillery—The enemy are two miles below him”. The letter further noted the loss of Colonels Henderson and Lauderdale and Major Kavenough of General Coffee’s brigade, as well as an unidentified Colonel of the rifle corps (Baltimore Patriot 1815:3).

On January 30, a newspaper cited a private letter written by a merchant at St. Francisville, Louisiana. It recounted that, “The enemy under the command of Major General Keene, supposed to be the advance guard of Lord Hill,
made their appearance within 7 miles of New Orleans on Friday the 23d December, where they were met by Gen. Jackson with a force of 1000 men; an action immediately ensued and Jackson, succeeded in driving them off the field of battle after killing and wounding many of them; their force was estimated at 7000 men, they fought like men; but the force under Jackson like DEVILS” (American Commercial Daily Advertiser 1815a:2). Also on January 30, the Independent Chronicle published a snippet of a letter, dated December 25, which gave brief news of the December 23rd battle (Independent Chronicle 1815:1).

A Vermont newspaper repeated the war news of the December 23rd battle (Green Mountain Farmer 1815:3). That same day a Boston newspaper published a summary of war events that contained an undated extract of a letter written by a member of Congress, which discussed the battlefield landscape and its strategic implications. He wrote,

By the map you will see that Lake Borgne is bordered by a swamp about four miles wide on that part which approaches nearest the river Mississippi, at the plantation of Gen. Vilaray, which is seven miles below the city. It seems the whole country rested secure that this swamp was impassable, and hence it was that the British advanced within ten miles of the city. The map, I mean the great map of that country, will also show you, that between the swamp and the river the ground is hard, level and clear, about one mile in width from the British position at the plantation fall up to the city. The battle or battles will of course, and must be fought on perfectly equal ground, and probably must be entirely decided by the bayonet (Boston Gazette 1815:1).

A January 31st newspaper reprinted two of Jackson’s letters written on December 26 and 27 to Secretary of War James Monroe (American and Commercial Daily Advertiser 1815b:3). Also, a Rhode Island newspaper repeated brief war news of December 23. It gave mention of the American naval support including the “ship Louisiana of 20 guns, schooner Caroline of 14 guns, and a gun boat” (Rhode Island American 1815:3).

A New Jersey newspaper contained brief news, attributed to Colonel Hynes, Governor Claiborne and Colonel Butler, covering events up to December 30th. The article reported British losses in the December 23rd action at about 500 men and on December 28th, the loss of 140 men (New Jersey Journal 1815:2). A New Hampshire newspaper cited an article that appeared in the Nashville Tennesee Whig on December 31, which had published an extract of an anonymous letter written from New Orleans at 6 a.m. on December 25. The letter stated, “It is now pretty well ascertained, that instead of 1000, there were at least 3000, landed. Our men engaged, drove them back a mile, and now occupy the battle ground” (Concord Gazette 1815:2).

A New York newspaper related news of the December 23 battle, as recounted by Captain Robinson of the schooner Vidette from the British warship Dictator, a warship of 64 guns, both of whom had been at Havana, Cuba in mid-January”. The Dictator was loading flour for the British troops on the New Orleans expedition. The news article also reported that the Dictator had on board, “about 400 disabled men belonging to the expedition which had made an attempt upon New Orleans” (New York Gazette 1815:2). These were likely soldiers wounded in the December 23rd Night Battle.

A February 7th newspaper article reprinted a January 11th letter written by an anonymous American soldier at “Camp, four miles below New Orleans”, which read, in part,

On Sunday the 8th inst., at the dawn of day they opened their batteries on ours, and their columns were seen advancing with the intention of storming our works. They made the attack on the right and left of our line, with a boldness and intrepidity that astonished every beholder.

The column which attacked the right of our line carried the bastion on the margin of the river; but were only permitted to retain it for a few minutes, and were driven back with great rapidity.

The column which advanced on our left was about four times the number of the one on the levee or margin of the river; and they appeared to have the greatest confidence in storming the breastwork, as they understood that part of the line was only composed of militia but in this they were mistaken. Our brave Tennesseans received the shock undismayed, and laid prostrate on the earth the flower of the British Army.

Five hundred of the enemy were slain and one thousand wounded, besides about six hundred prisoners.

Our loss is nothing compared with theirs. Only about fifteen killed and about forty wounded. Our works shielded us—but had the army succeeded, our destruction would have been inevitable... (Poulson’s American Daily Advertiser 1815b:2).

On February 9, the same newspaper reprinted news from the Baltimore Telegraph, which listed the casualty figures from the January 8th battle at 2,600 British and 13 Americans (7 killed and 6 wounded). This article also described
how cotton bales played an important role in the American defenses, noting, “Nothing forms such an impenetrable barrier as such a defense. A cannon-ball when discharged, either rebounds or buries itself in the impenetrable mass” and “Every shot from the enemy was directed against the fortification, was ineffectual, and, if any injury was done it must have been from the accidental explosion of a bomb, or Congreve rocket”. The article continued, “We understand that the New Orleans cotton, is made up in large square packages, and that the way in which our fortifications were made, was by depositing two of these packs upon the ground, having an aperture just large enough to be covered by another pack when placed upon the top—in this way a cotton wall was built up higher than the head; and leaving loop holes in every direction, sufficient for the musquetry to play” (Poulson's American Daily Advertiser 1815:3).

On February 10, a news article contained an extract of a letter written by a civilian from New Orleans on January 11. The author reported on the final battle, “They found dead on the field about 800 men to bury which they obtained an armistice until 4 p.m. on Monday [January 9]” (Poulson's American Daily Advertiser 1815:3).

On February 15, the Enquirer newspaper cited a letter written from Havana, Cuba by Captain Hubbell, of the schooner William Hull. Hubbell related a British officer’s statement that the British lost 900 in killed, wounded and missing in their first attack on New Orleans, and by January 17, they had lost, “between 4 and 5000 killed, wounded, & c.”. This same article reprinted a letter published in the Petersburgh [Virginia] Courier, which was written by an unidentified American officer from New Orleans on January 19. That officer stated, “They [British] have lost in battle 3000 men, and with sickness, fatigue, &c. &c upwards of 1000 more” (Enquirer 1815:2). Also on February 15, an Essex news article presented an English translation of a letter written in French and dated, New Orleans, January 13. It contained details of engagements from December 23 to January 8 (Essex Register 1815:1, 4). The Reporter newspaper quoted a British captain captured on January 8, as saying, “that for the time the action lasted, it was hotter than he had ever witnessed in Spain or France”, and the writer noted that the captain, “led 60 grenadiers to the charge and of this number, but 5 escaped!” (Reporter 1815:3).

A Carlisle, Pennsylvania news article for February 17 summarized the casualties in the January 8 battle. It listed the American loss at 13, including seven killed and six wounded and the British loss at 2,600, including 700 killed, 1,400 wounded and 500 prisoners (Carlisle Gazette 1815:3).

Two New England newspapers reprinted a January 9th letter by Andrew Jackson to the Secretary of War (New England Palladium 1815:4; Portsmouth Oracle 1815:2).

On March 10, a Burlington, Vermont article drew news from a Boston newspaper that summarized events at New Orleans through December 29. In the Night Battle of December 23, the author noted the loss of Colonels Lauderdale and Major Gibson and the wounding of Colonels Dyer and Gibson. It also noted the loss of two killed and five wounded in the explosion of the schooner Caroline. It gave the casualties of the December 28 action at 140 British losses and for the Americans, 40 killed and wounded (Burlington Gazette 1815:3). By the end of March, 1815, most of America had learned the outcome of the British campaign at New Orleans and news coverage of the story waned.

British Accounts

The best written accounts from the British perspective were made by officers engaged in the campaign. One of the most cited is Reverend Ensign George Robert Gleig's. Gleig published his account of military service in 1821 (Gleig 1821). His account was originally anonymous, identifying the author only as a “subaltern”. Gleig's version contains some of the best information on the events in the New Orleans campaign. Gleig was part of the advance force that landed on the Louisiana mainland on December 23 and he was a participant in most of the engagements that followed. Many of Gleig's statements are quoted later in this report regarding specific areas of the battle and battlefield.

Lieutenant Benson Earle Hill, a Royal Artillery officer who participated in the New Orleans campaign, published his memoirs in 1836 (Hill 1836). Hill's account is greatly embellished with semi-fictional conversations, although many basic facts are outlined in his narrative. Lieutenant Hill described his arrival in Louisiana via Lake Borgne on December 22nd.

A narrow creek, or bayou, had been discovered by the enterprising Lieutenant Peddie, of the Quartermaster General's department, and the services of a guide to these swampy regions were ensured by the powerful aid of gold. The troops destined for the advance were, on the evening of the 22nd, placed in small boats, and, led on by Peddie, after a pull of some miles, entered Bayou Catalan. On the right bank of this narrow stream three huts were found, in which an American piqueur had been placed, which was captured without resistance, or having the power of giving the alarm.
The whole night and the morning of the next day were occupied in making our way up this ditch, for it scarcely deserved a better name; on each side nothing could be seen but lofty reeds, from eight to ten feet high, growing so thickly as to defy penetration into their depths. The Bayou became every moment narrower, and it was with great difficulty that the boats which had landed their troops could pass those still advancing. This extraordinary creek suddenly ceased to be navigable, and, where its utility terminated, the ground was found tolerably firm, and affording better means of landing than we anticipated from the interminable region of morass by which we were surrounded.

About seven o’clock I landed, assisted in getting on shore the light brigade of three-pounders, which had been conveyed up this accursed canal piecemeal, and, directing that it should be immediately carried forward, I set out alone for the advance. The track was rendered perfectly apparent by the cut down reeds, and the planks and ladders placed across the numerous ditches which intersected the ground. Continuing the route, I speedily entered a thick cypress wood, and, although the branches of its noble trees were stripped of their foliage by the season’s change, they had almost the appearance of being in full leaf, from the quantity of a peculiar moss with which they were covered. I afterwards learnt that the fibres of this vegetable production, prepared in a particular way, forms a common substitute for horse-hair, in the stuffing of mattresses and cushions.

Emerging from this forest, I found myself close to a plantation, with numerous buildings of various size and different use. The small but well constructed house of the proprietor stood environed by wretched wooden huts, abodes of the slaves employed on the estate; a large brick sugar-work occupying the rear of the farm nearest to the wood. A double avenue of orange trees, covered with fruity ran through the centre of the manifold and scattered dwellings. This property appertained to a Major-General Villere”, of the Louisiana militia, who had fled at sight of the first red coat, and his house was now occupied as the British head-quarters.

A small detachment of militia had surrendered to our advance guard, but no appearance had yet been manifested towards opposing our march on New Orleans, distant only seven or eight miles from our present position. Pigûets had been thrown out, and, as the various straggling parties arrived from the landing-place, they formed into a compact bivouac, having the Mississippi close to their left, and the cypress wood, at some distance, on their right.

I reported to General Keane the probability that the brigade of three-pounders would be up and fit for action in less than an hour; and, at his request, returned to the landing-place, with directions for expediting some heavier metal, as soon as possible; bearing a letter to Admiral Malcolm, who had remained to superintend the various debarkations. In retracing my steps, I met numerous small parties, and used my best persuasion in urging them to get to the position as speedily as possible, well aware how few in number was our force. On arriving at the admiral’s tent, many and anxious were the inquiries made as to the aspect of affairs in front; I gave an honest, but not a discouraging account, knowing that the ears of canvass walls are more susceptible than those of brick; and the report I made had the effect of facilitating the advance of men, stores, and ammunition.

Perfectly unaware that I should have to return here, I had made no provision for sustaining the inward man: half a biscuit had been my only food, since I had got on board the boat the night before, and I began to wax hungry. Finding that my presence could no longer be useful, I set off at dusk for the front once more, and, during my wearisome walk, found that many of the planks and ladders placed over the ditches had fallen into the streams, and, in some instances, only a solitary piece of timber was left, as the means by which hundreds were to cross. I lost not a moment, on reaching the general’s quarters, to report this fact, and measures were instantly taken to remedy the evil.

I proceeded in quest of my commanding-officer. The bivouac was illuminated by numerous fires, round which our poor worn-out fellows were cooking their rations, after many hours of fast. The very sight of a steaming camp-kettle made me absolutely ravenous: I would have given a week’s pay for a slice of meat. At this juncture it was my good fortune to fall in with some officers of my own corps, whom I found intently occupied in cooking sundry fowls, which they had purchased from the sable henwife of General Villere”. My friend, Captain Deacon, offered to share his pullet with me; eagerly accepting his kindness, I was in the act of devouring a portion of the hastily brandered chick, when a cannonading commenced. We were well assured that it must be on the enemy’s side, as our only guns yet landed were those under the command of my hospitable friend. The brigade was instantly manned, and, with the aid of drag-ropes, advanced at a rapid rate along a road running parallel with the Mississippi. The night was dark, and a dense fog hung earth, but we speedily discovered who were our assailants: a large armed schooner and two gunboats had dropped down the river, and, directed by the lights from our camp, had commenced a destructive and harassing fire. Scarcely had our guns arrived opposite to these
vessels, when a heavy peal of musquetry in front announced that the enemy had attacked our position... The situation of our handful of men was certainly a most desperate one, the enemy having the advantage of being well acquainted with the ground, of which we were perfectly ignorant: the little knowledge of some few at head-quarters was derived only from maps. The guns upon the road were prevented from being brought into action, by the certainty that we should destroy both friend and foe, who were jumbled together in our front. Meantime, in the expectation of supporting the infantry, we advanced or retreated as the confused mass before us permitted.

Close to the river a large bank is formed for the prevention of inundation, and this, termed by the Americans a levee, afforded us some trifling shelter from the schooner and her companions, who so vigorously attacked us in flank...The fire of musquetry was kept up on both sides incessantly; and, for a short time, not only in the front, but on our right, which the enemy had turned: they were, however, driven back upon the cypress wood with great slaughter, and the maintenance of our line in front shortly became our only object...Major Munro directed our guns to be removed out of the range of the schooner; and, about two o’clock, I left the field in his company. We found that the staff had suffered severely; Colonel Stovine, Major Hooper, and Lieutenant Evans, of the quarter-master-general’s department, were under the hands of the surgeons, at the head-quarter house. We joined General Keane, and, as soon as daylight enabled us, visited the scene of last night’s conflict. It was apparent that the Americans had suffered severely; their wounded had been removed, but the dead lay in mute evidence of the fact. These poor fellows presented a strange appearance: their hair, eye-brows, and lashes, were thickly covered with hoar-frost, or rime, their bloodless cheeks vying with its whiteness. Few were dressed in military uniforms, and most of them bore the appearance of farmers or husbandmen. Peace to their ashes! they had nobly died in defending their country. I may safely say, that I felt more on viewing these bodies than I had whilst under fire.

Exhausted by fatigue, soon fell into a sound slumber...The day dragged on most miserably; at the arrival of every boat my inquiries were renewed about “these vile guns,” but nothing satisfactory could I learn. Small parties of troops continued to land, and were immediately sent forward...Soon after sunset our little encampment was enveloped in a heavy fog, which, rising from the morass, was tainted with an oppressive odour; and certainly could hardly be less fatal to existence than the malaria of the Pontine marshes...Early in the morning, to my extreme satisfaction and relief, the long looked for guns were safely got on shore, and every nerve strained to hasten their departure for the camp.

Scarcely had this duty been completed, when a report reached us that Sir Edward Packenham, with General Gibbs, and Colonel Dickson of the Artillery, were on their way up the Bayou. Shortly afterwards, Sir Edward, our new commander-in-chief, attended by some of his staff, landed. A hasty glance at what had now become a considerable depot of warlike stores sufficed, and accompanied by an officer of the navy, as a guide, he left us.

The next boat brought Colonel Dickson, his Brigade-Major Ont, and Colonel Burgoyne, of the Engineers. ...The following morning, Sir Edward Packenham made a reconnaissance of the enemy’s position, and ordered batteries to be constructed on the Levee, intending to quiet our annoying neighbour, the schooner. It appeared that the enemy had been busily employed in strengthening his line of defence, and that a rude battery had been thrown up upon the main road, running parallel with the river; still we all knew that these were trifling obstacles, compared with those so often opposed to British valour; and the occupation of New Orleans was looked on as certain, the moment orders were given to advance.

The house of Monsieur Villére’ scarcely contained sufficient accommodation for the general officers, and, consequently, Colonel Dickson, his brigade major; and myself; were obliged to content ourselves with one of the Negro huts as our present residence; our servants occupying the one adjacent, these miserable sheds thus serving ‘for parlour, for kitchen, and all.’ ...Before nightfall we had placed two ninepounds, four six-pounds, and a couple of howitzers in battery, and a temporary furnace was constructed to heat the shot. I visited the working party the last thing at night, and had the satisfaction of hearing the report to Colonel Dickson that every thing was in readiness for the morning.

At daybreak, on the 27th, the schooner was observed to be in the same position she had occupied, close
in-shore on the opposite side of the river; the range being carefully calculated, the guns, loaded with red-hot shot, commenced a rapid fire upon her; the two first drove her crew to their boats, abandoning her to the fate which appeared inevitable, the third struck her aft, and it was soon obvious that this shot had taken the desired effect, a thick smoke was seen to issue from the hole it had made in her side. To make assurance doubly sure, several guns were fired, and it was now apparent that she was completely on fire. Not a human creature was visible on board; but a large cock was perceived to move from one spar to another, instinctively avoiding the progress of the flames, and occasionally crowing loudly, as he imagined he had found a place of safety. The devouring demon soon consumed her rigging, her masts began to totter, and ultimately fell over side, marking their descent by a shower of brilliant sparks. The powder magazine was at last reached, and the vessel blew up with a loud explosion, her guns discharging at the same moment, and tumbling with heavy plungeo into the river. A loud cheer followed the destruction of this vessel, and now our attention was directed to one of larger size further up the Mississippi; but she, warned by the fate of her companion, wisely got out of reach of our guns, nor could the howitzers do any execution on her, so rapidly did she retire beyond range ...

As soon as sufficient light permitted, on the morning of the 28th, our force, divided into two columns, advanced towards the American lines: General Keane's brigade along the road close to the river, and the other commanded by General Gibbs, by a road which ran parallel with it at some distance to the right, through the cane grounds. A strong picket of the enemy, posted at the house of Monsieur la Ronde, situated between the two roads, was speedily dislodged by the Rocket troop and three-pounder brigade.

Many of the staff were in advance of the columns, and had pushed on to a house, from which a good view of General Jackson's position was commanded; and, doubtless, the building itself would have proved mainly useful to our troops; but this had not escaped the vigilance of the enemy. Scurriedly had we brought our telescopes to bear on their lines, when we discovered that the house was on fire in many places; so, under cover of the smoke, we awaited the arrival of the column. No sooner was the head of it visible, than we were assailed with a heavy fire from the battery on the right of the American line, and protecting the road, as well as the sixteen-gun armed vessel that had so wisely retreated the previous morning. Our nine-pounders, under the command of Captains Mitchell and Carmichael, were brought into action. Colonel Dickson, observing a vast number of horses in the fields on our right, sent me back to head-quarters, to bid the officer of drivers take them under his charge. I was not long in giving these directions, and was riding back very fast to join the colonel, when the wretched little strawberry pony on which I was mounted received a round shot in his chest, which sent me sprawling over his head; down I went on the hard road, as flat as a pancake, sending forth a sound like the noise made by the Irish pavers. The shock was so sudden, that for a moment I knew not whether I belonged to the land of the living, or if my soul had taken flight with a grunt. A sergeant of the 85th kindly lifted me up; no sooner on my legs, than I perceived the first thing I had to do was to take off my saddle and bridle, and appropriate the first horse I could catch to the service of his Britannic majesty. It was not long before I had managed my remount, and proceeded. I found the columns had deployed into line, our guns had suffered severely, and were withdrawn from the road, by the assistance of a body of sailors under the command of Captain Money of the navy, who was severely wounded whilst performing this duty. Sir Edward Packenham, promising the troops speedy satisfaction for this repulse, gave orders to fall back out of the range of the enemy's heavy metal.

A deep ditch, somewhat in advance of our men, served as a sort of rendezvous for numerous officers, both of the navy and army, all of whom were much chagrined at the fate of the day. The Americans kept up an incessant fire, although they could not see our troops; but little mischief was occasioned by these random shots. One exception occurred, however, to the officer who was sitting next to me in our snug trench. He was Captain Collins, of the 1st West India Regiment, who, I suppose, was eager to ascertain if any movements were making by the enemy, for he rose suddenly, intending to look over the parapets on the crest of the ditch; but his head had scarcely reached the proper elevation, when it was taken off by a cannon-shot, and the unfortunate trunk fell rolling over me. I instantly searched his pockets for any property he might possess, as is usual in such cases; and, after making a memorandum of his personal effects, for the benefit of his family or heirs, perceived that he had on a new pair of braces: mine had been broken by my recent tumble from my horse, so I took the liberty of appropriating as much of poor Captain Collins's property to my own use. Taking off my jacket for the purpose of putting them on, I attracted the notice of General Keane, who kindly inquired if I had been hit. On explaining to him my present occupation, he did me the favour to bestow on me the pleasing appellation of the "Robber of the dead"—a title of which I shall presently speak further.

The unfortunate Blacks, forming the West India regiments, suffered most dreadfully from the change of climate and alteration of fare; they were positively not only useless, but absolutely in the way... The troops were ordered to retain the line they now occupied, and no farther demonstration of advance was
made. Close to the left of our line stood the house and plantation of Monsieur Bienvenu. It was an elegant mansion; much of the furniture had been removed, but enough remained to mark the taste of the proprietor. In the hall, which was floored with variegated marble, stood two magnificent globes, and a splendid orrery. One room contained a vast collection of valuable books. On entering a bed-room, lately occupied by a female of the family, as was apparent by the arrangement of toilet, &c. I found that our advance had interrupted the fair one in her study of natural history, a volume of Buffon was lying open on her pillow; and it was evident that her particular attention had been directed to the domestic economy of the baboon and monkey tribe, slips of paper marking the highly-coloured portraits of these charming subjects for a lady's contemplation.

In spite of our sanguine expectation of sleeping that night in New Orleans, evening found us occupying our Negro hut at Villiére's, nor was I sorry that the shades of night concealed our mortification from the prisoners and slaves. As for our allies, the Indians, they had not increased in number; the numerous tribes promised by Colonel Nicholls had not yet appeared, the five or six red skins I have already named still hung about headquarters. The prophet, to avoid censure at the fallacy of his predictions, contrived to get gloriously drunk, nor was the King of the Muscogies in a much more sober state: his majesty had consolated himself for the ill-fortune of the day, by going from hut to hut imploring rum, and asserting that he 'hungered for drink.'...His excellency, the commander-in-chief, deeming it necessary to make his next attack with ordinance of a larger calibre than any yet on shore, we were busily engaged during the day in making out the necessary requisitions to be sent to the fleet, then distant about seventy miles from us. Having despatched those of the greatest importance, the trio, consisting of the colonel, Major Ord, and myself, took dinner; if our scrambling meal deserves to be dignified by such a name.... The last day of the year arrived, and the works in front were so nearly completed that the heavy guns were moved forward towards their intended position. This operation was one of considerable difficulty, and attended with incredible fatigue to our poor fellows: the ground was dreadfully heavy, and intersected by so many ditches, that I feel assured no other troops but British would have succeeded in overcoming such obstacles (Hill 1836:303-342).

On the 22nd the Battalion (which formed part of the advance under Colonel Thornton) embarked in boats, and about two o'clock pushed off to land on the mainland. The place decided on for their disembarkation was at the head of a creek called Bayou Catalan in Lake Borgne. The distance was between thirty and forty miles, and the men were so crowded in the boats that they could not move. They did not reach the entrance to the creek till after dark. As a picquet of the enemy was posted about half a mile up the creek, Captain James Travers, with his company, were placed in small boats and pushed forward. The picquet was stationed at some huts; near these Travers landed, and having moved his men to both ends of the huts, prevented the escape of the picquet, which was secured without a shot being fired. This was admirably effected; and was a most important service. For had this picquet escaped or raised an alarm, the landing would have been opposed. And this would have been a serious check: for on the morning of the 23rd, when the leading boat reached the narrow part of the Bayou it was found impracticable to ascend higher, and the boats being drawn up one after another the men passed over them as a bridge. This of course was a very slow operation, and one which, if opposed, would have been very difficult. The Battalion disembarked about an hour after daylight, having been upwards of sixteen hours cramped in the boats.

As soon as the whole advance were on shore, they marched, Travers' company leading; and to give their force as imposing an appearance as possible, and to scour the country, they advanced with extended files. They moved in this order through a wood which skirted the swamp on this side, and as soon as they had cleared it, came upon a house, surrounded with out-buildings and huts for slaves, belonging to a M. Villeney. The Battalion advancing at the double, took possession of it; and in this and some neighbouring houses took about thirty prisoners, and a good many stand of arms, belonging, as was supposed, to the local militia. Unhappily M. Villeney escaped, and probably gave information to the enemy; this, before the night was over, entailed very disastrous consequences. The Battalion then advanced, and turning to the right, marched for about a mile on the road to New Orleans, and then bivouacked in a green field in quarter distance column.

The road ran near the river's bank which was on the left: and an embankment about three or four feet high was thrown up to keep the overflow of the river from the cultivated ground, here about three-quarters of a mile or a mile broad; beyond this was a strip of wood, the way through which was, in fact, impracticable, the ground under the trees being wet and swampy. The

The 95th Rifle Regiment participated in the New Orleans campaign, particularly in the action on the West Bank. Cope's history of the 95th Rifle Regiment records the regiment's service at New Orleans:
cultivated land was much intersected with wet ditches, and divided by strong wooden palings five feet high.

On arriving at the bivouac Travers' company, which had formed the advanced guard on the march, was pushed forward about a mile to the front, on the main road, as a picquet.

The troops halted somewhat after mid-day; and as the men had been without provisions since the morning before, they began as soon as dismissed to cook. While doing so, between three and four o'clock, firing was heard in the front from the picquet; it turned out to be in consequence of an American officer, attended by some mounted men, riding up to the picquet to reconnoitre. However, the Riflemen saluted him with a few shots, one of which wounded him, and another killed the horse of one of the party, on which they retired, getting off the wounded officer with them.

At nightfall, Captain Hallen's company relieved Travers at the advanced picquet; and the men of the rest of the Battalion, being much fatigued by their uncomfortable night in the boats, their tedious landing, and their march, lay down in bivouack. They had torn down some of the palings dividing the fields, and had made good fires which then burned brightly. While they were thus, as they fancied, secure, a schooner dropped down the Mississippi, and guided by the light of their fires, opened a heavy cannonade upon them with great effect. The men of course were aroused and dispersed; but no shelter could be found, in this dead flat, except by crouching under the embankment by the riverside. Hallen had seen the schooner pass his post and had sent a man off to alarm the Battalion; but the schooner having the current of the river in her favour reached the bivouack before the Rifleman could get there.

While in this state of alarm from the sudden cannonade from the schooner, heavy and continued firing was heard in the front. A body of 5,000 Americans had attacked Hallen's picquet, detaching 1,500 men through the wood to turn the right of the troops. Nobly Hallen kept them at bay; but being himself wounded, and his picquet threatened by such overpowering odds, reinforcements advanced from the Battalion. Meanwhile the enemy made way through the garden of a house on the right, where a picquet of the 85th had been placed; and the night being very dark, a hand to hand right took place. Every deception was practised by the enemy; and having discovered (from prisoners probably made in the melee) the regiments opposed to them, they would call out, 'Come on my brave ninety-fifth (or eighty-fifth),' and then make those who advanced prisoners.

But this ruse was not always successful; more than once they found that instead of making Riflemen prisoners, they had themselves 'caught a Tartar.' On one such occasion an officer and some men of the Battalion made a body of the Yankees prisoners, and when they were desired to lay down their arms, the cowardly officer who commanded them made a stab at the 95th officer with a knife. He was summarily disposed of; for a Rifleman instantly shot him through the body.

Meanwhile the fight continued at Hallen's post. Two battalions came up and fired volleys by word of command as at a drill. Not much to their advantage, for the Riflemen, warned by the words, 'Ready! Present!' took care to lie pretty close before the word 'Fire!' which, having been pronounced and obeyed, they sprang up, and gave them a severe return before they could reload. This continued for some time; but at last, the picquet was obliged to give way before superior numbers. Yet they only retired a little way to get under cover and re-form. Eventually the Riflemen advanced again, attacked their assailants, repulsed them, and regained the post. Hallen, as I have said, was wounded, so was Lieutenant Forbes, who held a separate post, and about forty men were killed or wounded. This defence by Hallen has truly been characterised as 'an affair of posts but rarely equalled, and never surpassed in devoted bravery.'

Had the expedition terminated more favourably, he who makes the foregoing remark goes on to observe, 'it is to be presumed that the brave commander of the company would not have gone unrewarded.' It may be so: this is the presumption; the fact is, that Hallen retired from the Service in 1824 with the rank of Captain, which he had obtained fifteen years before. Thus England rewarded acts of valour performed by all but her superior officers.

When the fire was first heard at Hallen's picquet, Major Mitchell, taking with him twenty or thirty Riflemen, had hurried to the front to reinforce it. On the way, however, he fell in with a body of the enemy, whom, in consequence of the darkness of the night, he could not distinguish, and he and the men with him were made prisoners. Altogether the loss of the Battalion on that night was 6 Sergeants and 17 Riflemen killed; Captain Hallen, Lieutenants Daniel Forbes, (serenely), and W. S. C. Farmer (slightly), 5 Sergeants and 54 Riflemen wounded; and Major Samuel Mitchell, 2 Sergeants, and 39 Riflemen missing. A total (exclusive of officers) of 123, or one-fifth of their whole number.

The loss of the Americans, who were finally driven off about midnight, must have been very great, for the field was strewn with their dead.
Yet still the schooner, and a ship which had joined her, inflicted amazing annoyance on our people. With a brutality happily unknown among European nations, they fired into the houses to which the wounded had been carried. One shot struck a house in which a wounded Rifleman was lying, and knocked away his knapsack, which he was using as a pillow, without doing him any actual injury.

However, this savage warfare was to end. On the night of the 25th a battery was constructed close to the river’s edge, and furnaces erected for heating red-hot shot. At daybreak on the 26th the battery commenced its fire on the schooner. Its crew, whose courage did not equal their cruelty, at once took to their boats and fled; the fourth shot set her on fire, and she soon afterwards blew up. While the ship, warn’d by her fate, and esteeming discretion as the better part of valour, had herself tow’d, as rapidly as possible, out of the range of the little English battery.

In this bivouack the Riflemen continued till the 28th. But it was toilsome work. The outposts were continually fired at; the reliefs waylaid; the officers going round their sentries exposed to chance shots from a concealed marksman. How different this from the courtesies and chivalry of their European enemies, which I have so often had occasion to narrate!

Early on the 28th the army advanced towards New Orleans, the Riflemen leading, by the high road along the river’s bank. They drove in the enemy’s pickets, and proceeded along the road here called ‘Le detour des Anglais’ [English Turn], till, on turning round some houses on the left, they suddenly found themselves in front of a strong work the enemy had thrown up, and from which they opened a cannonade from four guns; while their old enemy the ship, now moored a little in advance of the work, brought a flank fire to bear on them. The Riflemen, leading and extended, did not suffer so much; but the 85th which followed in close formation were mown down by this fire. Some houses were on the right, which might have afforded some temporary cover; but the enemy, by their shells, set them on fire, and the flames added to the confusion. To escape in some measure from the effects of the fire the regiments were deployed to the right, while the Riflemen advancing about a hundred yards got into a ditch, which in a great degree sheltered them. In the afternoon the regiments moved off by wings, so as to present as small a body as possible to the enemy’s fire. The Riflemen, however, did not move off till after dark, nor till some of the Yankees had ventured out of their works ‘in a very triumphant manner.’ But a few shots from the Riflemen immediately produced the conviction among them that it was more advisable to return to the protection of their rampart. This work was a stout parapet, in front of which was a wet ditch or canal. Its extent was about 1,000 yards, and its left touched the river; while its right was defended by the wood.

The army now took up a position about a mile and a half or two miles from this work. The Battalion was placed in a house rather in advance, and on the left of the line. This was exposed, not only to the fire from the work, but also, as it was near the bank, from a redoubt which the enemy had constructed on the opposite side of the river. The men were placed in a sugar house belonging to this farm, the floor of which being sunk below the level of the natural ground afforded some protection. Yet on one occasion at least their cooking utensils were knocked off the fire by shot passing through this house.

So matters continued until the 31st. It was resolved to bring up some of the ships’ guns and to place them in battery against the enemy’s work. Accordingly on the night of the 31st strong working parties were employed in constructing two batteries near it; one with the object of keeping down the flank fire from the ship; the other with the view of breaching the centre of the rampart. The night was dark; the men worked in silence; and before daylight the batteries were completed, and the guns in position.

Early in the morning of January 1, 1815, the troops were moved up, with the object of attacking the enemy’s work. A thick fog favoured their advance, and concealed their movements from the Americans. About nine o’clock the fog rose, and our batteries at once began their fire. This threw the Yankees, who were seen on parade, into utter confusion; and had a charge on the works been made at that moment, no doubt it would have been successful. But unhappily the orders were that the attack was not to be made till the enemy’s fire had been silenced, and his works breached. When, therefore, the Americans saw that nothing took place but a cannonade, their courage returned, and after about twenty minutes they began to return our fire; and gradually increased to a vigorous cannonade, which effectually overpowered our guns, and dismounted some of them. The flank fire too from the battery on the opposite bank of the river, in which they had placed their ship’s guns, was very galling.

After being kept under this fire inactive till between two and three o’clock in the afternoon, the troops were withdrawn and bivouacked on the ground, and some occupied the houses they had held during the last few days. At night the troops were turned out and employed in withdrawing the guns from the batteries in which they had been placed. This was hard work; and some of the guns had to be buried, it being found impossible to remove them.
before daylight. Thus the men had been up, and at hard work, two nights; and in the intervening day had been for many hours under the enemy’s fire, without the chance of fighting them. The loss of the Battalion was, 1 Rifleman killed, and 2 missing.

Things continued in this state till the 7th, the picquets being as before constantly harassed by the enemy.

No other course remained but to carry the enemy’s work by an attack de vive force, and it was decided that this should take place on the 8th. Three companies of the Battalion were to precede the advance of the right column under General Gibbs, consisting of the 4th, 21st and 44th regiments; while the other two companies were in like manner to act with the left column. The Riflemen were to extend along the edge of the canal or ditch in front of the enemy’s rampart, and both parties so extended were to occupy the whole of the bank, or as it might be called, the crest of the glacial. At four o’clock in the morning the troops paraded; and by daylight the Riflemen were in their place. But the 44th Regiment, which had been appointed to carry ladders and fascines to enable the attacking force to cross the ditch, had come without them. Their commanding officer, the Hon. Colonel Mullens, had said loudly the night before when the regiment was detailed for this duty in orders, that ‘his regiment was sent on a forlorn hope’ and ‘was doomed.’ And on the regiment returning to fetch the ladders and fascines, he prudently did not come back to the front with them. The enemy meanwhile opened a furious fire on the troops, specially destructive to the Riflemen who were extended within 100 or 150 yards of the work. One regiment of the right attack, finding itself exposed to this fire, and without the fascines and ladders they had been led to expect, waivered, broke up, and fled to the rear, throwing the regiment which was following in support into confusion.

Sir Edward Pakenham, who commanded, in trying to rally this column was killed; General Gibbs, who commanded it, was mortally wounded; and General Keane, who commanded the left attack, was wounded. This attack succeeded better; and for a time the troops composing it held a redoubt which the enemy had constructed in front of the ditch, and which they had stormed. But in the end they were obliged also to give way. Thus the Riflemen, extended in skirmishing order along the edge of the ditch, were left unsupported, and were obliged to retire as best they could. As their files were extended they presented a less prominent object for the enemy’s guns, and they eventually got away with comparatively small loss. Some of them had got quite to the edge of the ditch, and reported that they could have passed it, but the attacking columns which they expected never came up; and to have entered the enemy’s work without them would, of course, have been certain destruction.

A gallant and successful diversion was made on the right bank of the Mississippi by a column under Colonel Thornton; but as the Battalion did not form part of it, it is not my province, as historian of the Regiment only, farther to notice it.

It was regretted by the Riflemen, that Pakenham, himself a Peninsular soldier, did not employ troops who had seen fighting more prominently in so arduous an operation as storming this work. The 7th and 43rd had arrived just before; beside both these regiments the Riflemen had fought in Spain and Portugal; the latter were especially companions in arms, and they had hailed their advent with delight. Yet these held in reserve, while he advanced comparatively unseasoned troops to the fire of the Americans.

The Battalion retired at last, sorrowful and weary, to its bivouack. It lost 1 Sergeant and 10 Riflemen killed; and Captains James Travers (severely) and Nicholas Travers (slightly), Lieutenants John Reynolds, Sir John Ribton, John Gossett, William Buckhouse, and Robert Barker (severely), 5 Sergeants and 89 Riflemen wounded.

During the night the wounded were removed, and a truce for two days, to enable the dead to be buried and the wounded cared for, was made between General Lambert (who succeeded to the command) and General Jackson who commanded the American force. This truce was effectual, not without difficulty, by Major Harry Smith, Assistant Adjutant-General, who passed and re-passed frequently between the opposing armies.

During this truce every attempt was made by the Yankees to induce our men to desert. The non-commissioned officers were promised commissions, the men land, if they would enter the American service. On one such occasion two Sergeants and a private of the 95th were accosted by an officer of American Artillery, who with such large promises invited them to enter the American service. The Riflemen heard the tempter out; and then, in language perhaps rather forcible than complimentary, assured him that they would rather be privates in their own Corps, than officers with such ‘a set of ragamuffins’ as they saw before them; assuring him that if he did not move off, he should have a taste of their rifles. On that hint, he fled; but getting into the work turned a gun on them and fired, knocking over the private, whom however he only wounded.

A Rifleman on sentry was exposed to the solicitations of another of these gentry. He heard all his generous offers of money, land, and promotion; but pretending
he did not, he begged him to come a little nearer and 'tell him all about it.' The Yankee elated at his success walked up to the post, and when he was well within range, the Rifleman levelled and shot him in the arm. Then walking forward, he led him prisoner to the guard-room; on the way informing him what a real soldier thought of such sneaking attempts on his fidelity.

These attempts were not always unsuccessful, and much desertion took place; but Surratt’s records with natural pride, that as far as he knew not a single instance took place among the Riflemen of the 3rd Battalion.

During this truce an officer of the American army was observed plundering a wounded soldier. This excited the ire of Corporal Scott of the 3rd Battalion, who (with the permission of his officer) took a shot at the marauder, and tumbled him over the man he was plundering.

The last duties having been paid to the dead, and all the wounded that were capable of being moved having been withdrawn, a retreat was effected on the night of the 18th. The fires were trimmed, and the men fell in and marched in silence. The weather had latterly broken up; heavy rains by day, and sometimes thundersnows, were often followed by frost at night. As it was impossible, owing to the narrowness and shallow water of the Bayou Catalan, to embark the troops where they had landed, a road, or an attempt at a road, had been constructed across the marsh, from the great road to New Orleans, along the river’s bank to the shore of Lake Borgne. This extended some miles, and was made of reeds, which it was thought would support the men across the morass; and where it crossed open ditches, as it frequently did, the reeds were laid on boughs of trees brought with great labour from the wood. This road, a bad one at the best, was much injured by the rains, and sunk in with the tramp of the head of the column; so that this night march was very fatiguing, the men often sinking in to the knees, and sometimes in the dark slipping off into the marsh, from whence they were with difficulty rescued (Cope 1877:183-194).

Cope further noted that, “Major James Travers, K.H., died February 5, 1841. The ball received at New Orleans had never been extracted, and is said eventually to have caused his death. He continued, “Lieutenant Backhouse died of his wounds”. Cope wrote, “Their [the 95th Rifle Regiment’s] loss between December 25 and 31 was 1 Rifleman killed; 1 Sergeant and 3 Riflemen wounded; and 1 Rifleman missing” (Cope 1877:183-194).

Ensign Gleig described the initial bombardment by the schooner Carolina on the evening of December 23, upon the surprised British troops (Gleig 1821:288-189):

But about half-past seven o’clock, the attention of several individuals was drawn to a large vessel, which seemed to be stealing up the river till she came opposite to our camp; when her anchor was dropped, and her sails leisurely furled. At first we were doubtful whether she might not be one of our own cruisers which had passed the fort unobserved, and had arrived to render her assistance in our future operations. To satisfy this doubt, she was repeatedly hailed, but returned no answer; when an alarm spreading through the bivouac, all thought of sleep was laid aside. Several musket shots were now fired at her with the design of exacting a reply, of which no notice was taken; till at length having fastened all her sails, and swinging her broadside towards us, we could distinctly hear some one crying out in a commanding voice, ‘Give them this for the honour of America.’ The words were instantly followed by the flashes of her guns, and deadly shower of grape swept down numbers in the camp.

Against this dreadful fire we had nothing whatever to oppose. The artillery which we had landed was too light to bring into competition with an adversary so powerful; and as she had anchored within a short distance of the opposite bank, no musketry could reach her with any precision or effect. A few rockets were discharged, which made beautiful appearance in the air; but the rocket is an uncertain weapon, and these deviated too far from their object to produce even terror among those against whom they were directed. Under these circumstances, as nothing could be done offensively, our sole object was to shelter the men as much as possible from this iron hail. With this view, they were commanded to leave the fires, and to hasten under the dyke. Thither all, accordingly, repaired, without much regard to order and regularity, and laying ourselves along wherever we could find room, we listened in painful silence to the patterning of grapeshot among our huts, and to the shrieks and groans of those who lay wounded beside them.

Captain George L. Chesterton, an artilleryman detached with a “brigade” of three pounders and a detachment of the 93rd Regiment, published his autobiography in 1853 and in it, he detailed his participation in the New Orleans campaign (Chesterton 1853, Volume 1:180). Chesterton, who had a closer vantage point, described the following, “The vessels in the river were...a sloop of war and an armed schooner, which had stealthily dropped down with the stream to astound us by a terrible and unlooked-for explosion. There they lay, pouring in their fire, throughout the next day and night, and greatly harassing our position” (Chesterton 1853, Volume 1:187).

Major Charles R. Forrest, Assistant Quartermaster General in the 34th Regiment of Foot, authored a journal of his service in the New Orleans campaign, which was
later published. Rankin provides a context for Major Forrest’s account (Forrest 1926; Rankin 1961). Major Forrest described the bombardment at “about 8 o’Clock in the Evening a Schooner of the Enemy mounting about 14 Guns, and two Gun Boats which had dropped down the River unobserved by our Piquets on the Bank” (Rankin 1961:31-32).

Ensign Gleig (1821:303-304) also described the British bombardment and destruction of the schooner Carolina on December 26:

With this view nine field-pieces, two howitzers, and one mortar were brought down to the brink I of the stream, as soon as it was dark. Working parties were likewise ordered out, by whom a battery was thrown up opposite to the schooner; and having got all things in readiness, at dawn on the 26th a heavy cannonade was opened upon herewith red-hot shot. It was not long before we could perceive her crew hastening into their boats, while the smoke, which began to rise from her decks, proved that the balls had taken effect. She was, in fact, on fire, and being abandoned without, resistance in little more than an hour, she blew up. In itself the sight was a fine one, but was peculiarly gratifying, for we could not but experience something like satiated revenge at the destruction of a vessel from which we had suffered so much damage. A loud shout accordingly followed the explosion, and the guns were immediately turned against the ship. But the fate of her companion had warned her not to remain till she herself should be attacked. Setting every inch of canvas, and hoisting out her boats, she began to stem the stream at the very instant the schooner took fire, and being impelled forward both by towing and sailing, she succeeded in getting beyond the range of shot before the guns could be brought to bear. One shell, however, was thrown with admirable precision, which falling upon her deck, caused considerable execution; but, excepting this, she escaped without injury, and did not anchor again till she had got too far for pursuit.

On December 27, the British advanced to oppose the Americans, as Ensign Gleig described:

Moving on in this merry mood, we advanced about four or five miles without the smallest check or hindrance; when, at length, we found ourselves in view of the enemy’s army, posted in a very advantageous manner. About forty yards in their front was a canal, which extended from the morass to within a short distance of the high road. Along their line were thrown up breast-works, not indeed completed, but even now formidable. Upon the road, and at several other Points were erected powerful batteries; while the ship, with a large flotilla of gun-boats, flanked the whole position from the river (Gleig 1821:312).

Ensign Gleig details the fighting on the 27th:

When I say that we came in sight of the enemy, I do not mean that he was gradually exposed to us in such a manner, as to leave time for cool examination and reflection. On the right, indeed, he was seen for some time, but on the left, a few houses built at a turning in the road, entirely concealed him; nor was it till they had gained that turning, and beheld the muzzles of his guns pointed towards them, that those who moved in this direction were aware of their proximity to danger. But that danger was indeed near; they were quickly taught; for scarcely had the head of the column passed the houses, when a deadly fire was opened from both the battery and the shipping. That the Americans are excellent shots, as well with artillery as with rifles, we have had frequent cause to acknowledge; but, perhaps, on no occasion did they assert their claim to the title of good artillery-men more effectually than on the present. Scarcely a bullet passed over, or fell short of its mark, but all striking full into the midst of our ranks, occasioned terrible havoc. The shrieks of the wounded, therefore, the crash of firelocks, and the fall of such as were killed, caused at first some little confusion; and what added to the panic, was, that from the houses beside which we stood, bright flames suddenly burst out. The Americans expecting this attack, had filled them with combustibles for the purpose; and directing one or two guns against them, loaded with red-hot shot, in an instant set them on fire. The scene was altogether very sublime. A tremendous cannonade moved down our ranks, and deafened us with its roar; while two large chateaux and their out-buildings, almost scorched us with the flames, and blinded us with the smoke which they emitted.

The infantry, however, was not long suffered to remain thus exposed; but, being ordered to quit the path, and to form line in the fields, the artillery was brought up, and opposed to that of the enemy. Butte contest was in every respect unequal, since their artillery far exceeded ours, both in numerical strength and weight of metal. The consequence was, that in half an hour; two of our field-pieces, and one field-mortar were dismounted; many of the gunners were killed; and the rest, after an ineffectual attempt to silence the fire of the shipping, were obliged to retire. In the mean time, the infantry having formed line, advanced under heavy discharge of round and grape shot, till they were checked by the appearance of the canal. Of its depth, they were of course ignorant, and to attempt its passage without having ascertained whether it could be forded, might have been productive of fatal consequences. A halt was therefore ordered, and the men were commanded to shelter themselves as well as they could from the enemy’s fire. For this purpose, they were hurried into a wet ditch, of sufficient depth to cover the knees, where, leaning
forward, they concealed themselves behind some high rushes which grew upon its brink, and thus escaped many bullets which fell round them in all directions.

Thus fared it with the left of the army, while the right, though less exposed to the cannonade, was not more successful in its object. The same impediment which checked one column, forced the other likewise to pause; and after having driven in an advanced body of the enemy, and endeavoured, without effect, to penetrate through the marsh, it also was commanded to halt. In a word, all thought of attacking was for this day abandoned; and it now only remained to withdraw the troops from their present perilous situation, with as little loss as possible.

The first thing to be done was to remove the dismounted guns. Upon this enterprise, a party of seamen was employed, who, running forward to the spot where they lay, lifted them, in spite of the whole of the enemy’s fire, and bore them off in triumph. As soon as this was effected, regiment after regiment stole away; not in a body, but one by one, under the same discharge which saluted their approach. But are treat, thus conducted, necessarily occupied much time. Noon had therefore long past, before the last corps was brought off; and when we again began to muster, twilight was approaching. We did not, however; retire to our former position; but, having fallen back only about two miles from the canal, where it was supposed that we should be beyond reach of annoyance from the American artillery, we there established ourselves for the night, having suffered less during the day than, from our exposed situation, and the enemy’s heavy fire, might have been expected (Gleig 1821:313-315).

Gleig explained the British actions of December 31 and January 1:

At length, having completed his arrangements, and provided such means as were considered sufficient to ensure success, General Pakenham determined to commence operations without delay. One half of the army was accordingly ordered out on the night of the 31st, and marched to the front, passing the piquets, and halting about three hundred yards from the enemy’s line. Here it was resolved to throw up a chain of works; and here the greater part of this detachment, laying down their firelocks, applied themselves vigorously to their tasks, while the rest stood armed and prepared for their defence.

The night was dark, and our people maintained a profound silence; by which means, not an idea of what was going on existed in the American camp.

Labouring, therefore, with all diligence, six batteries were completed long before dawn, in which were mounted thirty pieces of heavy cannon; when, falling back a little way, this force united itself to the remainder of the infantry, and lay down behind some rushes, in readiness to act, as soon as it should be wanted.

In the erection of these batteries, a circumstance occurred worthy of notice, on account of its singularity. I have already stated, that the whole of this district was covered with the stubble of sugarcane; and might have added, that every storehouse and barn, attached to the different mansions scattered over it, was filled with barrels of sugar. In throwing up these works, the sugar was used instead of earth. Rolling the hogsheads towards the front, they were placed upright in the parapets of the batteries; and it was computed, that sugar to the value of many thousand pounds sterling was thus disposed of. The infantry having retired, and the gunners taken their station, dawn was anxiously expected. But the morning of the 1st of January chanced to be peculiarly gloomy. A thick haze obscured for a long time the rays of the sun, nor could objects be discerned with any accuracy till a late hour.

But, at length, the mist gave way, and the American camp was fully exposed to view. Being at this time only three hundred yards distant, we could perceive all that was going forward with great exactness. The different regiments were upon parade; and being dressed in holiday suits, presented really a fine appearance. Mounted officers were riding backwards and forwards through the ranks, bands were playing, and colours floating in the air; in a word, all seemed jollity and gala; when suddenly our batteries opened, and the face of affairs was instantly changed. The ranks were broken; the different corps dispersing, fled in all directions, while the utmost terror and disorder appeared to prevail. Instead of nicely dressed lines, nothing but confused crowds could now be observed; nor was it without much difficulty that order was finally restored.

While this consternation prevailed among the infantry, their artillery remained silent; but as soon as the former rallied, they also recovered confidence, and answered our salute with great rapidity and precision. A heavy cannonade therefore commenced on both sides, and continued during the whole of the day; till, towards evening, our ammunition began to fail, and our fire in consequence to slacken.

The fire of the Americans, on the other hand, was redoubled: landing a number of guns from the fort, they increased their artillery to a prodigious amount; and directing, at the same time, the whole force of their cannon on the opposite bank, against the flank of our batteries, they soon convinced us,
that all endeavours to surpass them in this mode of fighting, would be useless. Once more, therefore, were we obliged to retire, leaving our heavy guns to their fate; but as no attempt was made by the Americans to secure them, working parties were again sent out after dark, and such as had not been destroyed, were removed (Gleig 1821:318-321).

Ensign Gleig (1821:328-331) portrayed the British attack on January 8 in this light:

... the main body armed and moved forward some way in front of the piquets. There they stood waiting for day-light, and listening with the greatest anxiety for the firing which ought now to be heard on the opposite bank. But this attention was exerted in vain, and day dawned upon them long before they desired its appearance. Nor was Sir Edward Pakenham disappointed in this part of his plan alone. Instead of perceiving every thing in readiness for the assault, he saw his troops in battle array, indeed, but not a ladder or fascine upon the field. The 44th, which was appointed to carry them, had either misunderstood or neglected their orders; and now headed the column of attack, without any means being provided for crossing the enemy’s ditch, or scaling his rampart.

The indignation of poor Pakenham on this occasion may be imagined, but cannot be described. Galloping towards Colonel Mulhens, who led the 44th, he commanded him instantly to return with his regiment for the ladders, but the opportunity of planting them was lost, and though they were brought up, it was only to be scattered over the field by the frightened bearers. For our troops were by this time visible to the enemy. A dreadful fire was accordingly opened upon them, and they were mowed down by hundreds, while they stood waiting for orders.

Seeing that all his well-laid plans were frustrated, Pakenham gave the word to advance, and the other regiments, leaving the 44th with the ladders and fascines behind them, rushed on to the assault. On the left, a detachment of the 95th, 21st, and 4th, stormed a three gun battery and took it. Here they remained for some time in the expectation of support; but none arriving, and a strong column of the enemy forming for its recovery, they determined to anticipate the attack, and pushed on. The battery which they had taken was in advance of the body of the works, being cut off from it by a ditch, across which only a single plank was thrown. Along this plank did these brave men attempt to pass; but being opposed by overpowering numbers, they were repulsed, and the Americans, in turn, forcing their way into the battery, at length succeeded in recapturing it with immense slaughter.

On the right, again, the 21st and 4th being almost cut to pieces and thrown into some confusion by the enemy’s fire, the 93d pushed on and took the lead. Hastening forward, our troops soon reached the ditch; but to scale the parapet without ladders was impossible. Some few, indeed, by mounting one upon another’s shoulders, succeeded in entering the works, but these were instantly overpowered, most of them killed, and the rest taken; while as many as stood without were exposed to a sweeping fire, which cut them down by whole companies. It was in vain that the most obstinate courage was displayed. They fell by the hands of men whom they absolutely did not see; for the Americans, without so much as lifting their faces above the rampart, swung their firelocks by one arm over the wall, and discharged them directly upon their heads. The whole of the guns, likewise, from the opposite bank, kept up a well directed and deadly cannonade upon their flank; and thus were they destroyed without an opportunity being given of displaying their valour; or obtaining so much as revenge.

Poor Pakenham saw how things were going, and did all that a General could do to rally his broken troops. Riding towards the 44th, which had returned to the ground, but in great disorder, he called out for Colonel Mulhens to advance; but that officer had disappeared, and was not to be found. He, therefore, prepared to lead them on himself, and had put himself at their head for that purpose, when he received a slight wound in the knee from a musket ball, which killed his horse. Mounting another, he again headed the 44th, when a second ball took effect more fatally, and he dropped lifeless into the arms of his aide-de-camp.

Nor were General Gibbs and Keane inactive. Riding through the ranks, they strove by all means to encourage the assailants and recall the fugitives; till at length both were wounded, and borne off the field. All was now confusion and dismay. Without leaders, ignorant of what was to be done, the troops first halted and then began to retire; till finally the retreat was changed into a flight, and they quitted the ground in the utmost disorder. But the retreat was covered in gallant style by the reserve. Making a forward motion, the 7th and 43d presented the appearance of a renewed attack; by which the enemy were so much awed, that they did not venture beyond their lines in pursuit of the fugitives.

Lieutenant John Peddie wrote briefly about the campaign while still in the field on the “banks of the Bayou Catalan near New Orleans” on January 24, 1815. Peddie lamented the extreme losses suffered by the British Army noting, “There are now vacant in this Army; 4th Regt, 3 Companies, 21st. Regt. 3 Cos.; 44th, 2 Cos.; 85th, 3 Cos.; 93rd. 3 Cos.; 95th. 2 Cos.—in all 17 Companies” (Rankin 1961:21). Peddie’s most significant contribution to the
history of the New Orleans campaign was his sketch map of the battlefield (Peddie 1815). Peddie had been charged with reconnoitering a route for the invasion force and his sketch map was one product of that effort. Peddie’s map, “Sketch of the Position of the British and American Forces during the Operations against New Orleans from the 23 Dec. 1814 to the 8th Jury. 1815”, and enlargements of portions of Peddie’s map, which depict specific areas under discussion, are presented in Part 2 of this report.

Colonel Alexander Dickson, Royal Artillery, kept a journal of his participation in the New Orleans campaign, which was later published (Dickson 1926). Colonel Dickson served as a staff officer for Major General Pakenham, so his account reflects the perspective of the high command. Given that Generals Pakenham and Keane did not survive the campaign to pen their memoirs, Dickson’s account is rendered all the more important a source. Dickson made sketch maps of two events in the campaign.

The court martial proceedings of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Mullins [Mullens], an officer in the 44th Regiment, provide important insight into the British debacle on January 8 (Mullins 1815). Mullins faced three charges by the court and was acquitted of two of these. In defense of the 2nd charge against him, Mullins stated, “I led my men to the enemy’s ditch”, whereupon, “I lost not less than three-fourths of my officers, and two thirds of my men”. Mullins described the desperate position of his regiment, “The Mississippi is here about 800 yards across and they [Americans] had on the right bank a heavy battery of 12 guns, which enfiladed the whole front of the position in the left”, and, “an advanced Battery in our front, was thrown up during the night, consisting of 6 18-pounders about 800 yards from the Ditch…” (Mullins 1815:74, 108-109).

Mullins was found guilty of the charge that he had failed to establish the ladders and fascines at the Rodriguez ditch, which contributed to the British defeat (Mullins 1815). Lieutenant Colonel Mullins, and the men of the 44th Regiment, was widely blamed by the British military for the British failure on January 8th. This view is echoed in Chesterton (1853, Volume I:209) when he stated, “The entire failure was universally ascribed to Colonel Mullins, and he became the object of general vituperation and disgust. He was shunned and denounced by the whole army and the British press. Nor did his regiment, the 44th, escape the concurrent condemnation.” Thomas Mullins died in 1823.

William Surtees, a soldier in the 3rd Battalion of the Rifle Brigade at New Orleans, published his memoirs of his service (Surtees 1833). Surtees’s account is also discussed by Cope (1877) in his history of the Rifle Brigade.

Newspaper and Magazine Accounts

The British press received much-delayed news from the war front in America. The Times of London reported on February 21, 1815 on “the success of our first operations against New Orleans”. The article portrayed the Battle of December 23 [erroneously listed as the 22nd] as a British victory, despite the loss of “250 men, and some officers”. The article also relayed news of the destruction of the schooner [Carolina], artillery action on January 1, and an artillery attack on January 5. The article contained no news of January 8th. The article stated, “on the 5th of January our artillery was breaking a commanding fort, which the troops expected to storm that night; on the fall of which New Orleans must surrender, as it is incapable of making any defence against the force which was advancing against it. In these attacks, the 85th and 95th regiments were those who suffered most” (The Times 1815a:3). The Times reported on July 15, 1815, “The Court-martial for the trial of the Hon. Lieutenant Colonel Mullens [sic], of the 44th regiment, for charges connected with the failure of the attack on New Orleans was to assemble in Dublin on Monday last” (The Times 1815b:3). The lack of any news stories between February 21 and July 15 in that newspaper indicates that the story was either not considered major news by Great Britain, or it was news that the editors opted not to print. More likely, it was the latter.

In contrast, a Scottish magazine published news about the British defeat. That article concluded with a body count, noting, “The loss of British during these operations was—Killed 386—Wounded 1516—Missing, 552—Total, 2454” (The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany 1815:226-227).

A more thorough review of contemporary newspapers in Great Britain would likely reveal additional accounts of the New Orleans campaign. This preliminary review, however, suggests that this story was not considered a major story by the British press.

Visual Record of the Battle

Artwork

Almost immediately after the New Orleans campaign had ended, artists, illustrators, and cartographers jumped into action to record the events. These earliest renditions offer a near-primary account of the conditions. Many of these early visual depictions were consulted by later authors and illustrators for their published works, often borrowing
heavily from them without paying credit. One early engraving depicting the January 8th battle by John Yeager was derived from an oil painting by artist William Edward West (Yeager 1817). This engraving is reproduced in Part 2 of this report.

An engraving made from a painting by Jean Hyacinthe Lacroix depicting the battle in 1815 was published soon after the war. The original artwork by Lacroix is housed in the New Orleans Museum of Art. Lossing (1869) published an engraving of the January 8th battle, which he attributes to a sketch by Latour, although he was likely in error since the engraving, reproduced in Part 2, is a derivative of Lacroix’s version. Lossing provided this discussion of the engraving, which includes a key to the letters shown on the engraving:

The author of this volume is indebted to the late General Palfrey of New Orleans, who was a participant in the battle, for the privilege of copying Major Latour’s interesting drawing above given. The following explanations, by means of the reference figures, were made in the drawing by Major Latour: American Army — 1. General Jackson and his staff; 2. Major Plache; 3. Captain Humphrey; 4. Beale’s riflemen and a company of the Seventh Regiment; 5. Redoubt on the bank of the river; 6. Captains Dominique You and Beluche, of Major LaCoste’s battalion; 7. Lieutenants Crawley and Rose; 8. Colonel Perry; 9. General Garrigue; 10. Lieutenant Spotts; 11, 12. Divisions of Generals Carroll and Adair; and, farther to the left, General Coffee’s; 13. Cavalry and dragoons; 14, 15. Line of intrenchments; 16. Macartey’s, Jackson’s headquarters; 17. Rodriguez’s house. British Army — A. B. The British Army in two columns; C. The right column making the principal attack, under the command of Pakenham; E. F. Left column, commanded by Colonel Rennie; I. Battery; M. Ruins of Chalmette’s buildings.

Many subsequent versions of Jackson’s victory, too numerous to discuss here, were generated by artists in the decades following the war. As the decades passed the historical accuracy of these scenes undoubtedly declined. The early works by Yeager, West and Lacroix were made within a few months or years of the battle, however, which gives their versions more credence.

### Battle Maps

Numerous original maps of the battlefield of New Orleans have survived. These range from crude field sketches, some made on scraps of paper or scribbled in officer’s field journals, to finely engraved and published maps. Most of the maps were made by Americans, although a few British examples were located. These maps are presented in Part 2 of this report. The Latour maps, which are the most accurate maps available from the New Orleans campaign, were used in the GIS analysis in Part 3.

Lieutenant John Peddie was sent by the British command to reconnoiter a landing site for General Keane’s troops. Peddie prepared a sketch map, entitled, Sketch of the Position of the British and American Forces near New Orleans, which is preserved in the British Public Records Office. A copy of Peddie’s map, entitled, Sketch of the Position of the British and American Forces during the Operations against New Orleans from the 23 Dec. 1814 to the 8th Jany. 1815, which was completed after the New Orleans campaign, is preserved in The Historic New Orleans Collection (Peddie 1815). Peddie’s map (Figure 10) shows details of Jackson’s Line, Bienvenue, De la Ronde, LaCoste, Villeré, and Jumonville plantations, American defenses on the West Bank, and the British Redoubt at the landing site on Bayou Mazant and Villeré Canal, the positions of the schooner Carolina (December 23-27) and the sloop Louisiana (December 27-January 8), and various

![Figure 10. Lieutenant John Peddie’s Reconnaissance Map, 1815 (Courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection).](image-url)
troop positions of both armies. It also shows canals, roads, water courses, and swamps.

Two crude sketch maps were made by Colonel Alexander Dickson in his journal, which show two British artillery positions (Dickson 1961). These are reproduced in Part 2. The upper sketch shows the location of a battery erected on the riverbank by the British during the night of December 25-26, 1814. The lower sketch shows the battery installed by the British along the levee road on the edge of the Chalmette plantation.

An anonymous sketch, which is attributed to British Army engineer J.F. Bourgoine/Burgoine, shows portions of the battlefield. Bourgoine’s sketch is reproduced in Part 2. Burgoyne’s crude sketch contains few details and was apparently hastily drawn.

Captain Thomas Joyes’ map, entitled, Plan Shewing the Disposition of the American Troops When Attacked by the British Army on the Morning of the 8th of January, 1815, is curated by the Filson Club in Louisville, Kentucky. This map was not reviewed for the present study, although a portion of the map including the southern part of Line Jackson is reproduced in Birkedal (2009:488-489, Figure III-42). Captain Joyes was an eye-witness since he commanded a company of Kentucky militia in the New Orleans campaign (Joyes 1784-1881; Smith 1904:197).

By far, the most accurate battle maps were prepared by General Jackson’s chief engineer, Arsene Lacarriere Latour (Smith 1999). Latour completed his account of the battle by August 16, 1815, and it was published in Philadelphia soon afterward in 1816. His published maps were used throughout this study. Manuscript versions of his map were not examined. Scanned versions of the published versions of three of Latour’s maps are included in Part 3 of this report (Figures 29, 32-33). A portion of Latour’s map is shown in Figure 11.

Captain Maunsel White, who commanded a company in the Louisiana Blues, prepared a crude sketch of the battlefield. White’s sketch is reproduced in Part 2. It is dated January 28, 1815. Another crude field sketch of the battle from the American perspective is found in the Andrew Hyne papers, which is shown in Figure 12.

A wide variety of later maps of the study vicinity were examined and are reproduced in Part 2 of this report. Figures 13 and 14 are examples of topographic maps of the study area made in 1890 and 1936, respectively, which illustrate the predominately rural land use in those times.
Chapter 5. Archeological Fieldwork

The original scope of work for this project called for the examination of two land tracts in St. Bernard Parish, the Murphy Oil tract and the Meraux Airport Tract. Survey of the former, which was part of the historic Villéré Plantation, was completed as scheduled. Archeological survey coverage areas of the Murphy Oil Company property are shown in Figure 15. Access to the Meraux Airport Tract, which was part of the historic Rodriguez plantation, was denied by the new land owner and this area was not physically surveyed. To offset the lack of access to this property the research team shifted its focus to other private or non-federally owned property in St. Bernard parish to investigate other parts of the battlefield. These areas were parts of the Jumonville, Villéré, Lacoste, and De La Ronde plantations. In addition, one small area of Orleans Parish on the West Bank of the Mississippi River was reconnitred.

Villeré Plantation

Murphy Oil Tract 1

This tract is currently owned by the Murphy Oil Company. It is bounded on the south by 20 Arpent Canal, on the east by Meraux Canal, on the north by 40 Arpent Canal, and on the west by a row of houses fronting Jacob Drive. As alluded to earlier, the southwestern quadrant of the tract is covered with large dredge spoil piles averaging four to six feet high, making the majority of the area inaccessible to metal detector survey, shovel testing, and GPR survey. The exceptions are the defunct power line corridor, under which no dredge spoil piles were dumped, along with an area south of the woods covered in brambles. Hurricane Katrina completely inundated this vicinity and it deposited a variety of large and small objects across the landscape. In addition, the failure of a petroleum storage tank at the Murphy Oil complex laid a deposit of petro-chemical sludge over portions of this tract. This deposit was most notable on the land immediately east of the Meraux Canal. This area was designated, Murphy Oil Tract 2, and is detailed following this discussion of Murphy Oil Tract 1 (the area west of Meraux Canal).

Archeologists used metal detectors to explore the width of the power line and associated open areas extending off of it. The soils were very compact from past vehicle and likely heavy machinery traffic. Metal detector hits uncovered numerous wire nails and unidentified iron wire. One gray chert flake was observed in excavations. Other hits included aluminum cans and a buried cable. No modern objects were collected during this survey. Archeologists then ran four metal detectors transects in the brambles south of the woods. They covered an area measuring 50 m N-S (GPS Waypoints D464, D471) by 106 m E-W (GPS Waypoints D463, D469). They began at the defunct power line and ran transects east into the brambles. This area contained numerous small C40 cartridges (possibly from pellet guns, or flood detritus). Similar cartridges were found throughout the project area. The brambles area also contained wire nails, unidentifiable iron, spotty random trash such as a computer motherboard, and aluminum cans. Detector readings suggested some buried cables in the area. A few deep readings may be indicative of an area of deep fill, perhaps in the area thought to have contained portions of the Villéré canal running north-south that may have been in-filled. This entire portion of the tract has moist, loamy clay soils and low-growing green vegetation among the dried brambles. A shovel test at Waypoint D465 revealed the following soil profile:

- 0-20 cmbs, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) clay with slight mottles of strong brown (7.5YR5/6) clay
- 20-70 cmbs, Grayish brown (2.5YR5/2) clay with heavy mottles of strong brown (7.5YR5/6) clay; Soils at 63 cm depth were getting wet from slow water seepage into hole.

While an iron reading was picked up by the metal detector here, no iron was located in the 70 cm. The reading may have been the result of iron minerals in the soil, or a very large and deeply buried object such as a cable. Another shovel test was excavated on an iron reading located at GPS Waypoint D466. The soil colors and Munsell readings were the same as the previous shovel test, with Level 1 extending from 0-16 cm depth and Level 2 from 16-48 cm below ground.

Archeologists conducted a ground penetrating radar survey in the bramble area after clearing a wide path through the
vegetation. This was designated as GPR Block G. Two GPR transects were run along this path, which began at the defunct power line and headed east into the brambles and eventually intersected a previous dirt road south of the woods. The GPR transects were 125 meters long. The first transect headed east and the second was a return path heading west, 50 cm south of the first. This GPR sample was taken with the hopes of finding related battlefield features and artifacts, and determining if the canal running east of the ruins extended this far south and was in-filled. The results of this effort were disappointing, however, as the GPR returns were muted, possibly caused by the shallow groundwater.

The southeastern quarter of the tract is a mix of thick dredge spoil piles in the center, bounded on the north by brambles in a former clearing. The southern portion is bounded by 20 Arpent Canal and flanked by an open field with mowed vegetation. Meraux Canal forms the eastern boundary and intersects 20 Arpent Canal. Large pipes from an underground gas pipeline extend above the ground surface in a cluster northwest of the intersection of these two canals. Archaeologists conducted a metal detector survey of the southern portion of this tract, along a flat area having a noticeably lower elevation than the adjacent spoil piles. The crew ran three metal detector transects on a grid east-west axis. Two transects began just east of a deep pool of standing water adjacent to the canal. Transect 1 ran east to the Meraux Canal. Transect 2 was located six meters to the south of the Transect 1 and ran east for half the length of the first. Transect 3 was located approximately 10 meters south of Transect 1, and was nearest to

Figure 11. Portion of Latour Map Showing Key Plantations (Latour 1815). (Map is rotated so that north is to the right.)
The northern half of Murphy Oil Tract 1 lies in woods comprised of hardwoods in addition to swamp vegetation such as cypress, palmetto palms, and briars. This northern portion is intersected by man-made ditches and canals created to drain the area and/or to channel water to other locations. The largest of these is 40 Arpent Canal, which bounds the north edge of the property and runs generally east-west. The Meraux Canal forms the eastern border of the property and runs generally north-south. A historic canal bisects the western one-third of this portion of the tract. The canal generally runs north-south and lies on the east side of extant brick ruins known by oral tradition to be a historic facility for pumping water into and out of agricultural fields. Five corridors transect the woods in the northern half of the tract. The western-most corridor was a cut for a small, now-defunct power line. The eastern-most corridor is a path along the bank of the Meraux Canal. West of this corridor is a wide pipeline corridor. A northern corridor runs east-west and follows the south bank of 40 Arpent Canal. Another east-west corridor is an overgrown path following a storm water drain to the south of this portion of the tract.

Archeologists began work in the northeastern quadrant of this tract, in the wooded strip between Meraux Canal and the wide pipeline corridor. They metal detected the path along the canal, the canal berm (western bank), and the woods west of this path. The northern part of the woods contained a moderate amount of modern debris apparently washed in during storm flooding. The path contained a greater amount of modern artifacts than the remainder of the woods in this section. Path debris included 0.22 shells, shotgun casings, modern coins and jewelry. Archeologists surveyed to the south, uncovering numerous metal detector targets for identification. A non-modern hit included GPS C29, which was a Minéé ball located in the canal berm. This type of ammunition clearly post-dates the War of 1812 period, although its presence at this location does provide clues to the age and stability of the upper soil strata. The survey also uncovered two impacted/melted lead balls nearby. These were located at GPS Waypoint C2. Surveyors tried to discriminate against the 0.22 shells by adjusting the settings on their metal detectors. This proved to be relatively successful, particularly on the Nautilus detector. Several figures in Parts 2 and 3 of this report show locations of items collected from the metal detector survey. Archeologists completed this area of the tract, terminating at the southern end of the woods by the east-west ditch. Like the northern end, the southern end contained a higher

20 Arpent Canal. Transects 2 and 3 were terminated at approximately the same easterly coordinate.

All three transects revealed that the low, flat area consisted of soil deposits 20-30 cm below ground surface containing modern debris such as aluminum cans, pull tabs, and unidentifiable iron fragments. This was discovered through the excavation of numerous metal detector hits. One detector hit was excavated as a shovel test in order to uncover the object and to understand and document soil stratigraphy. This shovel test was located at Waypoint B114. Archeologists uncovered a very large and heavy iron “U” chain link situated 20-40 cm below ground surface. It did not appear to be hand wrought and is likely a relatively modern link associated with the canal, adjacent Murphy Oil property, or infill. The soil profile of the shovel test is as follows. There was a layer of brown (7.5YR4/2) clay extending from 0-19 cm below ground surface. This overlay a mottled stratum consisting of the same type of clay with a strong brown (7.5YR4/6) loamy clay. The clayey soils from both levels appeared to be disturbed and re-deposited, possibly as result of canal dredge fill. Archeologists photographed the chain link and returned it to the shovel test hole. Transects 2 and 3 were terminated after discovering and confirming that the soils in this area were clayey secondary deposition of modern fill (minimally of 20-30 cm thick) that current metal detector technology could not penetrate.
Figure 13. Portion of 1890 Map Showing Bayous North of Battlefield (U.S.G.S. 1890).

Figure 14. Portion of 1936 Chalmette Quad Showing Battlefield (U.S.G.S. 1936).
been churned up by the pipeline construction. Locating such artifacts, even though not in situ, would have nevertheless demonstrated battlefield activity in the area. Since the fill consisted of entirely modern debris at 20 cm or greater depths, metal detector survey was discontinued along the pipeline corridor.

Investigations next focused on the brick ruins area reported to be an early drainage pumping station for agricultural fields. Archaeologists ran metal detector transects east, north, and south of the ruins. The eastern transects followed the dry canal bed and berms on the east side of the ruins, running north to 40 Arpent Canal and south a short distance to an east-west canal. The metal detector transects in the canal thoroughly covered the top and sides of both berms on the canal’s eastern and western banks. Sections of what is now the canal floor was covered by transect. The barren nature of the bottom of the canal resulted in archaeologists sampling it rather than metal detecting the entire floor. This sample covered 42 linear meters (from GPS Waypoint D392-409). Metal detector transects in the canal began at the ruins and ran north to the end of the canal.

The LAMAR Institute crew uncovered impacted lead in the canal berms and 12 molded bullets in a cache, as well as modern cans, pull tabs, and a square iron handle or hardware. Other artifacts in the woods included 0.22 shells, impacted lead, a lead cleaning round, and one buckshot. Metal detector transects conducted in the woods north of the ruins, west of the canal, and immediately east of the defunct power line corridor located the same types of metal artifacts. The wooded area also contains a segment of the canal forking off and into the north side of the ruins, from the canal on the east side. Metal detector survey south of the ruins revealed a denser concentration of metal, including 0.22 caliber shells and casings, thin brass, small lead shot, a copper jacketed bullet, and possible hardware made of iron. Archaeologists noted that this area south of the ruins contained more extensive amounts of buried brick and coal, creating false signals bouncing off of brick. In addition slag deposits in the area tended to result in readings on the detectors. Other than brick, coal, and slag, only one non-metal artifact was observed. This

Figure 15. Murphy Oil Tracts (Survey Coverage Shown in Red).
was a small piece of bottle glass that had a slight green tint to it in the sun.

In order to learn more about the canal and berms, archeologists excavated three shovel tests on a line across and perpendicular to the canal, just southeast of the ruins. The first shovel test was located on the western berm at GPS Waypoint D522. The soil profile was as follows:

- 0-15 cm, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) extremely compact clay
- 15-60 cm, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) extremely compact clay with mottles of strong brown (7.5YR4/6) coarse sandy clay.

The shovel test on the eastern berm was excavated at GPS Waypoint D524. The soil profile consisted of:

- 0-15 cm, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) extremely compact clay
- 15-40 cm, Brown (7.5YR4/2) sandy clay mottled with strong brown (7.5YR4/6) clay
- 40-72 cm, Grayish brown (10YR5/2) very fine silt with slight mottles of strong brown (7.5YR4/6) clay.

The shovel test excavated in the floor of the canal was located at GPS Waypoint D523. Artifacts were located in 0-30 cm of soil and consisted of a brick, wire nail, shotgun shell, and plastic. Soils in that test were as follows:

- 0-10 cm, Black (7.5YR2.5/1) loamy clay
- 10-30 cm, Very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) loamy clay with mottled brown (7.5YR4/4) coarse sand/iron deposits and two small brick fragments
- 30-60 cm, Very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) clay and roots
- 60 cm, Wood (probably a root and not a beam)

Archeologists examined another section of the canal in greater detail, as well. This portion was located north of the ruins, near GPS Waypoints D532 and D533. Here researchers took laser transit readings of two lines bisecting the canal, as well as numerous topographic shots and measurements related to a probed cross-section of the canal (Figures 16-18). Probing of a cross section of the canal bed revealed mottled clay down to 80 cm below ground. The goal of this probing was to locate the 1814 pre-canal expansion surface, but these results were inconclusive. A larger exposure of this canal structure, such as a backhoe trench perpendicular to the canal, is necessary to completely understand its history. Surveyors also shot the location of GPR transects made across the canal, along the eastern canal bank, and along a line west of the canal.

GPR Block D consisted of two radar lines (beginning at FS 6); one running west to east 34 meters and the other located at the probe line (north of the first transect) and running east to west. GPR Block F was another test line consisting of a single 10 m long transect collected along the base of the canal, running from south to north.

GPR Block E measured 4 m north-south by 6 m east-west. It was opportunistically placed in a small, open area on the crest of the east berm of the canal. A GPR plan view map from Block E is shown in Part 2. This image reveals a strong linear anomaly, which is oriented along the berm’s long axis. This radar reflection is likely the result of soil compaction along this section of the berm, probably as a result of foot, animal and vehicular traffic following the canal.

Archeologists examined the wooded area south and southeast of the ruins. They conducted metal detector transects in the woods north of the tree line and the sewer line marked by brick manhole drains. This area was relatively “quiet” with little modern trash or historic artifacts indicated by the metal detectors.

The research team photographed the brick ruins of the alleged pumping station from several angles. The survey team examined the area inside the chain link fence and outside the fence completely with metal detectors. The small wooded section immediately west of the ruins and defunct power line was reconnoitered, and revealed another shallower ditch running north into the “ruins” canal. This shallower ditch may have drained north, based on the current topography. Metal detector survey immediately around the ruins and defunct power line corridor revealed numerous iron hits, many of which were large iron items. None of these large iron items appeared to be military in character.

Three shovel tests were excavated in the power line corridor west of the fenced ruins. This area, in the defunct power line corridor, contained in situ brick partially exposed at the ground surface. These portions of the ruins were not included within the new chain link fence. Shovel tests in the power line corridor were located at GPS Waypoints D525, D526, and D527. The following soil profiles were recorded.

Soils at Waypoint D525 consisted of:

- 0-26 cm, Very dark gray (10YR3/1) compact sandy clay loam and brick fragments
- 26-35 cm, Grayish brown (10YR5/2) sandy clay.

Three bricks or brick fragments extended out of the southern, eastern, and western walls. These may be in situ, or may be a portion of a collapsed wall relating to the in situ brick foundation directly to the south of the shovel test.
Figure 16. Villere Canal, Facing North-Northeast, 2011.

Figure 17. Villere Canal Mapped Segment with GPR Overlay Map
The shovel was terminated at 35 cm depth due to the presence of brick obstructions. Brick was the only artifact type in this shovel test.

Soils at Waypoint D526 were:

0-10 cmbs, Dark grayish brown (10YR4/2) sandy clay with brick fragments and coal
10-70 cmbs, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) clay with slight mottles of strong brown (7.5YR4/6) sandy clay.

Soils at Waypoint D527 consisted of:

0-18 cmbs, Very dark gray (10YR3/1) loamy clay
18-23 cmbs, Very dark gray (10YR3/1) loamy clay with large chunks of coal
23-45 cmbs, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) clay with strong brown (7.5YR4/6) sandy clay mottles

The conspicuous brick ruin on the Murphy Oil Tract 1 is mostly likely a water control feature dating to the later 19th and early 20th centuries. It postdates and, is not directly associated with, the battle period. This feature shares similarities and is on a similar geographical alignment with another brick feature that is located in the heart of the Murphy Oil refinery complex. That other feature is discussed later. Other less obvious brick ruins, such as the intact, exposed brickwork outside (west of) this brick
feature remain of undetermined age or function. Additional archaeological study of the loci is recommended. Despite the fact that the brick water control feature post-dates the battle, it does provide supporting evidence of the significance of the adjacent dry ditch, which likely is the trace of the Villeré Canal—its itself a very important defining battlefield feature.

The north-central portion of the Murphy Oil Tract 1 is a wooded area with fairly dense portions of palmetto thickets and briar patches. Archeologists began examining this area from the path south of the 40 Arpent Canal and heading south into the woods. They started just east of the canal associated with the ruins (much farther to the south) and began two meandering transects in areas accessible to metal detector use. The areas along these transects had little modern debris, except for the occasional aluminum can and wire nail. A shovel test in this area, which was sterile except for coal fragments, revealed the following soil profile:

- 0-8 cmbs, Very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) friable clayey loam
- 8-14 cmbs, Brown (7.5YR4/3) slightly loamy clay
- 14-27 cmbs, Mottled soils from Levels 1 and 2 above with mottles of strong brown (7.5YR4/6) coarse clayey sand and coal
- 27-42 cmbs, Dark gray (7.5YR4/1) clay.

The survey crew accessed the wooded interior of the tract via transects beginning on the pipeline corridor and heading west into the woods. They observed a very symmetrical, circular depression at GPS Waypoint D452 that is quite possibly a well. Metal detector survey around this depression did not locate any hits. Soils in the center of the depression were relatively soft and clayey loam. The depression measured approximately 1.75 m in diameter and was located several meters west of the western edge of the pipeline corridor.

Archeologists also examined the 40 Arpent Canal path running east-west across the northern portion of the tract. They began at Sign Post 16 and headed west, covering the entire width of the path. Metal detector hits in the compact clayey soils included iron, 0.22 caliber shells and aluminum cans. No historical artifacts were observed in the area examined.

Archeological survey of Murphy Oil Tract 1 yielded 15 metal artifacts that may be associated with the New Orleans campaign. These items are listed in Appendix 1 and photographs of selected examples are contained in Appendix 2 of this report. One small cluster of artifacts was identified from the survey data, as shown in Figure 19. Other scattered artifact finds are widely distributed across the tract.

The artifacts included lead balls, lead shot, flattened lead, melted lead, one iron ball, sheet brass, other white metal, cast iron and wrought iron items. The single iron ball possibly represents small grapeshot. It is cast iron, measuring 13 mm in diameter and weighing 7 grams. It also could represent a ball bearing from a piece of late 19th or early 20th century farming equipment.

This artifact pattern represents a minor skirmish at best. This cluster may represent a British picket post along the canal. These artifacts also may be unrelated to the War of 1812. The lead balls and shot may represent hunting activity in the area in the 19th or early 20th centuries. No definitive military items, such as uniforms or military issue weapons or accoutrements were identified in the collection.

Clearly, the archeological survey shows that Murphy Oil Tract 1 and the portion of the Villeré Canal that it contains was not the scene of a major exchange of small arms or artillery fire. This area lay on the periphery of the December 23 battlefield. The Villeré Canal is a major Defining Battlefield Feature, however, since it was a vital transportation route for the British entry and exit to the Battle of New Orleans. Thousands of British troops, boats, artillery, and supplies travelled along the Villeré Canal from Bayou Mazant from December 23, 1814 to January 18, 1815.

**Murphy Oil Tract 2**

This tract is also currently owned by Murphy Oil Company. It lies adjacent to the east side of Murphy Oil Tract 1. It is bounded on the west by Meraux Canal and on the north by 40 Arpent Canal. The eastern portion is bordered by a high-voltage power line. The southern boundary is 20 Arpent Canal. Hardwoods along with swamp vegetation, such as palmetto palms and cypress trees fill this entire tract.

Archeologists focused on the southwestern section of this tract, beginning at the intersection of the two canals and heading north along the east bank of the Meraux Canal. The corridor here measures approximately 28 meters wide, including the flat bank and the adjacent levee. Archeologists began two metal detector transects approximately four meters apart, in the flat bank heading north. These canal bank transects ran 1066 meters north. A 41 m sample section of the levee in this area was metal-detected. Metal detector survey revealed moderate to heavy amounts of modern debris in this area, with the heaviest concentrations nearest to the canal intersections. This debris zone, including aluminum cans, extended 30 and 45 cm below...
ground surface. The debris was located in loose, friable soils mixed with clays. Soils in the flat areas were extremely compact as a result of vehicular traffic along the canal. Since the modern debris field extends up to and most likely beyond the depth that the metal detectors can penetrate, archeologists did not continue to investigate this area.

A second portion of the tract archeologists examined was located in the woods east of, and adjacent to, the first. Archeologists entered the woods to begin metal detector survey transects in an area they initially walked over, which measured 162 m N-S by 54 m E-W (from GPS Waypoints D446-435 N-S and GPS Waypoints D442-450 E-W). Upon entering the woods and recording the waypoints of a ditch aligned generally North-South, archeologists began metal detector transects. They observed a hardened oil/asphalt coating on the ground surface measuring approximately 3-5 cm (or greater) in thickness. This coating covered, minimally, the entire area detailed above and likely much more. This hard coating covered the ground surface, roots of trees, and curved up the tree trunk bases. Leaves and scrub vegetation initially obscured the coating. The origin of this coating is unclear, but it may be related to nearby oil tanks and Hurricane Katrina impacts. The metal detectors were ineffective above this coating and it was impractical (and virtually impossible) to dig through the extremely hard coating with a shovel.

Ruins in Storage Tank Area

One other area of the Murphy Oil Company property was examined for cultural resources. A small, extent portion of brick remains lie within the Murphy Oil refining facility. The oil company required that archeologists be escorted onto the property to look at this ruin. Rita Elliott made a brief escorted visit to the ruin where photographs and a GPS waypoint were taken. GPS Waypoint D535 was located approximately two meters northeast of the northeastern edge of the ruin. The red brick ruin appeared to be a portion of an intentionally inward-sloping wall. An iron rod,
threaded at the top, extended from the upper remains of the rain. A flat iron plate protruded from the brick opening at the base of the rain. An “antique” iron fence encircled the rain and was erected minimally 18 years ago, and possibly at the same time the fence was erected around the De La Ronde ruins on St. Bernard Highway. Researchers located no historical documentation pertaining to this ruin or its protection by the iron fence. The shape of the wall and the large iron hardware associated with it suggest that the ruins were from another historic pumping station similar to the one on the Murphy Oil Tract 1.

Although this brick feature almost certainly post-dates the War of 1812 period its location and verification was important to this study. This brick feature is aligned with the previously described brick feature on Murphy Oil Tract 1. This suggests that both features were constructed along the western side of the same Villère Canal. Thus, the southern brick feature provides a location for the Villère Canal. GIS analysis revealed that this brick structure is in the general vicinity of the main Villère Plantation complex. The main Villère house would have been located east of this position.

**Villère Plantation, Main Complex**

Villère plantation house was an important landscape feature in the 1814-1815 campaign. General Villère’s home served as headquarters for the British leadership. It was also the scene of the first military action on the mainland, where about 30 Louisiana militiamen were captured by the advanced British brigade on December 23rd. The surrounding plantation grounds provided camp sites for the British troops.

Today the former location of the Villère Plantation house is fully developed for industrial use as part of the Murphy Oil Refinery complex. Its potential for archeological study is nil. Numerous photographic and artistic images of the Villère plantation have survived, as well as several written descriptions of the plantation grounds. The LAMAR Institute survey team was able to locate, approximately, the former site of the Villère Plantation based on these documents. While the site itself may be destroyed, the knowledge of its former location is an important advance in establishing the battlefield landscape. Villère Plantation was later known as Corrine Plantation (U.S. Coast Survey 1873; Rogers 1896:232).

Archeologists reconnoitered the area immediately west of the Murphy Oil Refinery complex, which is a moderate density residential neighborhood. Quite possibly some portions of the outlying Villère plantation complex, including battle-related deposits, may survive in this area. No excavations were attempted. Archeologists photographed representative views of this location at the intersection of Ohio St. and Jacobs Drive. Some houses in this area were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent clean-up. Many vacant lots are visible, particularly on the east side of Jacobs Drive. Visual inspection of the ground surface in this vicinity yielded no 19th century artifacts. Ground surface conditions on portions of this area were enhanced by recent roadway repairs.

**Meraux Airport Tract**

The Meraux Airport Tract was one of two properties identified in the Scope of Work for archeological study. This land is located on portions of the former Rodriguez plantation and almost certainly includes portions of the January 8th battlefield. This property is presently owned by Provident Realty Advisors, a development firm in Dallas, Texas. That corporation acquired the tract from the Meraux Foundation. Unfortunately, permission to access this tract was denied and the resulting research is limited to remote GIS technology, cartographic analysis, and historical and archival study.

While the research team was denied access to conduct survey work on the property, this did not keep the team from studying the property using other means. This included remote sensing, visual observation, and analysis of historical maps and photographs, and primary battle accounts. Various measurements of the length and orientation of Line Jackson and the Rodriguez Canal were compared. A composite interpretation of the probable locations of these two battlefield features was then superimposed on modern maps of the study area. (Figure 20).

The area of the intended survey of the Meraux Airport Tract consisted of approximately 8 acres on the southeastern part of the tract. The tract is located along the St. Bernard Highway directly opposite the entrance to the Chalmette National Monument. This property occupied portions of the former Rodriguez and Chalmette plantations.

Previous historical and archeological research in this general vicinity discussed the 20th century land use history of this area, including its use as an airport, a drive-in movie theater, golf putting green, and cattle pasture. No War of 1812 relics or battlefield features were identified by the previous researchers (Irion et al. 1994; Montana et al. 2009). It should be noted, however, that the former study involved no field survey work and the latter employed only systematic shovel testing. Shovel testing has proven to be an ineffective tool for delineating battlefields.
Given the modern land use history of this property, it is unlikely that a controlled metal detector survey of the area would have been effectual. As of the completion of fieldwork for the present study, the Meraux Airport Tract remains in a fallow pasture. A housing complex is nearing completion north of this area and an access road leading to it was bulldozed, immediately east of the study property. Unfortunately, LAMAR Institute researchers were unable to survey the road as it was being built and it is now paved.

Battle maps were superimposed on the modern landscape to determine the likely position of the Jackson Line in the vicinity of the Meraux Airport Tract. This GIS sleuthing demonstrates that the American defenses did extend north of St. Bernard Highway onto the Meraux property. No visible traces of Line Jackson or the Rodriguez Canal, north of the St. Bernard Highway, were observed from the GIS research using modern maps and aerial photographs. The surface of that landscape has been heavily modified by the use of the area as an airport landing strip, golf course and drive-in theater. Although a linear pattern that bears to the northwest is visible in the pasture, it is more likely associated with the airport runway than the War of 1812 defenses. The LAMAR Institute’s GIS analysis revealed that a segment of Line Jackson almost certainly was located on the Meraux Airport Tract. This section of Line Jackson was defended by Kentucky and Tennessee troops. No artillery batteries were present in this area. Battle debris may exist in this locality but none was specifically identified by the present research. This potential battlefield feature remains to be confirmed by archeological field exploration.

De La Ronde Plantation

De La Ronde Ruins

The De La Ronde ruins are a long-recognized historical landmark in St. Bernard Parish. The ruins are recorded in the archeological files as site 16SB88, although archeologists have not conducted any excavations at the site. Historical information gathered regarding these ruins reveals a steady decline in integrity and historic preservation at this historic site.

Portions of ruins of the De La Ronde plantation house are located on the median of the divided St. Bernard Highway, west of the Paris Road intersection. The plantation was a key landscaping and tactical feature in the battles of New Orleans, as described in the historical section of this report. While these dwindling portions of the ruins have been fenced and marked with historical signage, the ruins have not been documented or explored archeologically prior to this project.

The LAMAR Institute team conducted limited research at the De La Ronde ruins and the adjoining Pakenham Oaks allee. This work included topographic mapping, GPR survey, metal detector survey and limited shovel test excavation (Figures 21-26). Topographic mapping was concentrated on the De La Ronde ruins. Archeologists took laser transit points of the ruins (foundations, bases and uppermost portions), immediate surroundings, and topography to create the maps shown in Part 2. This will provide a point of reference for future management of the site and allow the ruins to be monitored for erosion and other adverse effects to the structure and other components.

GPR Block A covered an area 22 m north-south by 50 m east-west at its widest points. Obstacles were limited to two rows of iron posts on the north and south borders, and three small trees within the block. The GPR maps of Block A reveal numerous strong radar anomalies. Many of these can be discounted as road-edge clutter. Since the ruins are flanked by an active divided highway, the edges of this road have experienced considerable disturbance throughout its history. While some of these disturbances could relate to the battle, or the plantation’s operation, these are masked by the abundance of recent soil disturbances in these zones. Other radar anomalies in Block A may have more significant historical meaning. A linear (east-west) anomaly is visible in the center of Block A. This may represent buried architectural elements of the plantation house. These extended approximately 24 m west of the east iron fence that enrones the De La Ronde ruins. This anomaly varies in width but averages about 4 m. Another substantial radar anomaly was identified in the southeastern part of Block A. This is an oval area, approximately 4 m in diameter. This reflection may indicate a well or privy, or possibly some other type of disturbance. The edges of this soil disturbance are too crisp to indicate it is a tree stump hole. Since the written accounts of several battle participants refer to the plantation grounds used as a hospital and burial site, the possibility that disturbances in this vicinity may indicate that purpose. In addition, many smaller radar anomalies are scattered over Block A and some of these may represent important cultural features or buried artifact deposits. These do not form any clearly recognizable pattern, however.

Pakenham Park

This St Bernard Parish park includes a long avenue of aged, historical oak trees south of the de la Ronde plantation house ruins, across the east bound lanes of St. Bernard Highway. The old oak avenue is flanked on the east by a younger line of oaks paralleling the first and creating a
Figure 20. Predicted Location of Jackson Line in Relation to the Meraux Airport Tract.
Figure 21. De La Ronde Ruins (16SB88). View of House Interior from North Wall, Facing South, March 2011.

Figure 22. Two GPR Plan Views of Block A, East of De La Ronde Ruins (16SG88). North is to the right in this view.
Figure 23. De La Ronde Ruins Topography and GPR Map Overlay, 16SB88.

Figure 24. Two GPR Plan Views of Blocks B/C, Pakenham Oaks (16SB88). North is to the left in this view.
Figure 25. Pakenham Oaks Topography and GPR Overlay.
second, slightly narrower avenue. The avenues lead north to the De La Ronde ruins from the Mississippi River. Today, the avenues are severely bounded by industrial and commercial complexes. The west side of the park is bounded by Chalmette Refining, LLC. The west side and south side (between the park and the river) is a sprawling, noisy complex of industrial refining equipment and pipes. The east side of the park is bounded by a tall concertina wire fence around the St. Bernard Parish Jail.

While many historians assume that the oak allee that lead from the river to the De La Ronde house were present during the New Orleans campaign, Latour’s cartographic evidence suggests otherwise. Latour’s maps show a formal garden arrangement in the area south of the main house. This garden is rectangular in outline with its long axis oriented east-west, or perpendicular to the river. Within the garden are circularly geometric shapes suggestive of formal garden walkways and plantings. Most likely the live oaks that form the allee were planted some years after
the War of 1812. By the late 19th century these trees were impressive enough to attract the attention of battlefield tourists, who dubbed them "Pakenham Oaks". A visual inspection of the landscape along this avenue revealed numerous drainage lines that are of modern vintage. Many of the large oak trees have copper cables buried in the ground adjacent to them.

Archeologists conducted a metal detector survey in a sample area measuring 10 m north-south by 50 m east-west. Two initial transects within this area were begun two meters apart on the northern end, using metal detectors. Within the first eight meter length of transect, over two dozen hits were recorded. Archeologists excavated a sample of these which proved to be aluminum pull tabs and bottle caps. Archeologists recalibrated the Nautilus to discriminate the modern aluminum trash, resulting in shallower but hopefully more relevant signals in the clay soils. Metal detector survey resumed within the sample block, but the remaining hits uncovered no historic artifacts.

Surveyors ran additional transects south from the sample block almost to the southern back fence line of the tract. These two transects were just west of the center of the lot. The Nautilus detector was used initially to flag potential historic artifacts. These hits were then tested with the Minelab detector to discriminate against modern shallow iron debris. Archeologists pulled all flags with depth readings of 1 or 2 on the Minelab. Areas beneath remaining flags were dug, but did not contain historic artifacts. Metal detectors revealed that the approximate southern two-thirds of the park contained a large drain field. One iron pipe runs north-south down the center of the tract at this location. A series of "T" iron pipes connects the main pipe to multiple iron grate drains extending all the way to the fence bounding the south side of the property. No historic artifacts were found in the resulting ground disturbance in the areas metal detected. Archeologists used metal detector survey to sample the northwestern corner of the park, which revealed a greater amount of modern, shallow-buried debris.

Three metal detector hits on the Pakenham Park property were investigated by shovel tests in order to better understand the depositional conditions and metal detecting potential. Shovel Tests 1 and 2 (FS 373 and 374) were located within the metal detector sample block. Shovel Test 3 was located in the northwestern corner of the tract.

Shovel Test 1 was excavated to a depth of 40 cm below surface. It contained modern aluminum cans in the upper 15 cm. Historic brick was identified from 15-25 cm below ground. Soils consisted of 0-10 cm, very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) clay loam; 10-15 cm, very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) clay loam with heavy concentration of Rangia shell fill; 15-25 cm, black (7.5YR2.5/1) clay with brick fragments from 15-25 cm and 25-40 cm, black (7.5YR2.5/1) clay. Rangia shells are commonly used as fill material in coastal Louisiana, particularly from the latter decades of the 19th century onward. Dredging operations in Lake Pontchartrain have provided quantities of this shell for fill.

Shovel Test 2 was excavated to a depth of 49 cm below surface. It contained one iron object that was photographed and reburied, and two iron objects that were exposed in the shovel test walls. This test contained a heavy concentration of historic brick fragments from 27-38 cm below ground. Soils consisted of 0-8 cm, dark brown (7.5YR3/2) clay loam; 8-11 cm, Rangia shell fill layer; 11-16 cm, brown (10YR4/3) clay loam with motles of dark brown (7.5YR3/2) clay; and 16-49 cm, dark brown (7.5YR3/2) clay.

Shovel Test 3 was excavated to a depth of 37 cm below surface. It contained one aluminum can at 34 cm below ground and historic brick fragments at 19 cm below ground. Soils in this test were extremely disturbed and consisted of: 0-11 cm, black (7.5YR2.5/1) clay loam; 11-17 cm, very dark gray (7.5YR3/1) clay with a lens of Rangia shell fill; 17-28 cm, dark gray brown (10YR4/2) loamy sand; 28-36 cm, very dark gray brown (10YR3/2) clayey sand; and 36-37 cm, black (7.5YR2.5/1) clay.

Shovel Tests 1 and 2 revealed that the site stratigraphy in the sample block consisted of a modern humus lens beneath the grass, overlying a thin lens of Rangia shells. The shells were a modern fill deposit most likely used to level the property and fill in surface depressions. The shell layer included aluminum pull tabs and bottle caps. Underlying the shell is a lens containing handmade brick and larger pieces of iron. This brick lens appears to be associated with the De La Ronde plantation, either in situ or as re-deposition created by plantation activities during that period. This historic brick layer overlies a clay soil that appears to be subsoil.

Archeologists conducted GPR radar survey in two contiguous GPR blocks in Pakenham Park. Block B consists of the same block and dimensions as the metal detector sample block (50 m x 10 m). Following completion of Block B, archeologists established Block C, which extended off of the southern wall of Block B. Block C also measured 10 m north-south by 50 m east-west. The southern boundary of Block B stopped just short of the drain field and grates beginning to the south and running south to the end of the tract. Together, Blocks B and C sampled a 50 m east-west by 20 m north-south area of Pakenham Park.

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It is clear from initial surface observations and from the GPR survey data that Pakenham Park is riddled with drainages and utility lines. The limited shovel testing also revealed a 20th century filling episode consisting of a layer of Rangia shells (and other modern metal debris) deposited over the area. This fill layer rendered the metal detector survey unreliable. Despite these recent disturbances, the GPR maps provide some interesting clues about the subsurface deposits in this vicinity. A series of plan maps showing the GPR data is presented in Part 2.

The GPR map indicates an extensive, strong radar reflection located along the northwestern portion of the sampled area. It may represent geomorphology associated with the dynamic Mississippi River. It may indicate a major landscape modification associated with the De La Ronde plantation house complex. Or it may represent British military activity and ground disturbance in the area. This anomaly is massive and its meaning, function and origin must await additional exploration.

The limited investigation of Pakenham Park indicates substantial land modification in the 20th century, including the installation of a drainage system and introduction of a thick blanket of fill material. The avenue leading to the former De La Ronde main house may have been “enanced” by these modern efforts. The potential for intact and important archeological evidence from the New Orleans campaign may lie preserved in this park but such deposits were not clearly distinguished by the present survey data. Metal detectors were inadequate due to the abundance of modern metal objects in the introduced fill. GPR survey reveals numerous soil anomalies but their identity will require further investigation. Archeological test excavations may prove fruitful in the park area, but such efforts were beyond the scope of the present study.

Jumonville Plantation

Jumonville Plantation played an important role in the British campaign. Jumonville was located downstream from the most heated military action and for most of the campaign, it served as a camp and hospital for the British. It also was the scene of a skirmish between British troops and General David Morgan’s Louisiana militia on the evening of December 23. This plantation is shown on battlefield maps by Latour (Smith 1999). Several early plats showing the Jumonville Plantation were located by this research. No photographs of the main house at Jumonville are known. This suggests that the main house was in ruins prior to the 20th century. Plats indicate that the main Jumonville Plantation complex was located immediately upstream from a canal (Jumonville Canal) leading to the marshes of Lake Borgne. By 1882, Jumonville Plantation had been purchased by F.B. Fleitas, who also owned the Corrine (Villère) plantation. Following bankruptcy proceedings the federal court awarded the plantations to Gilbert M. Richardson in 1888. Mary C.W. Fleitas filed suit against Jules Meraux to reclaim ownership of the property but the Supreme Court of Louisiana ruled in Meraux’s favor in 1895 (Rogers 1896:232; The Southern Reporter, Volume 16:848-852).

Today the plantation vicinity is marked by the entrance to the “Jumonville Subdivision”, which is a 20th century residential complex. An archeological site, identified as Jumonville Plantation, is recorded in the Louisiana archeological site files but it is recommended as ineligible for listing in the NRHP because of its disturbed condition and lack of integrity. Artifacts collected from that site revealed a mix of 18th through 20th century debris. Jumonville Plantation was later known as Myrtle Grove Plantation (U.S. Coast Survey 1873; Rogers 1896:232).

The next plantation downstream from Jumonville is Pecan Grove—located east of Jumonville Canal. The Pecan Grove Plantation, which was formerly part of Jumonville Plantation, has survived and its grounds display excellent potential for future archeological study (Figure 27). A reconnaissance visit to the property by the Principal Investigator and an in-depth discussion of the property’s history with its current landowners provides a context for this site and its probable association with the 1814-1815 battles (Robert and Gayle Buckley personal communication, July 5, 2011; New Orleans States 1922:14); Times Pleasure 1931, Part 2:13).

Gayle Buckley’s personal research indicates that the Pecan Grove house formerly served as the overseer’s house for the Jumonville plantation. Her research indicates that the house was constructed a decade or more prior to the War of 1812 and would have been a well-established landscape feature at the time of the battle. The house was moved some distance to the north when the St. Bernard Highway was improved in the 1930s. The legal conflict between the former landowner (Mrs. DeBouchel) and the Louisiana Highway Department are detailed in numerous local newspaper articles. The Pecan Grove plantation house, then known as the DeBouchel Estate, was examined and documented in 1982 by Gene Cizek, who listed the home in an inventory of historic standing structures of St. Bernard Parish (Cizek 1982). On the inventory form, however, the date of construction was erroneously listed as “circa 1840”. Pecan Grove plantation displays excellent potential for archeological research, although no subsurface investigations were attempted in the present study.

By January 3, 1815, the British had established a, “Post under Captain de Bath of the 85th Regiment”, on the road
towards English Turn, "about 3 Miles from M. Villeré's house" (Rankin 1961:38). This post would have been located below Jumonville plantation.

Major Forrest noted that the Americans had a fort nearby, noting on January 3, "The Enemy have withdrawn the Guns from a Battery they had on the left bank at Detour des Anglais [English Turn], and removed the Guns to the opposite side, where they have a work with 8 Guns & about 100 Men" (Rankin 1961:39).

**LaCoste Plantation**

The LaCoste plantation was another important landscape feature in the 1814-1815 campaign. It served as headquarters for both British and American armies at various times. The LaCoste plantation house remained standing into the 1950s and it was documented photographically. The house is also visible on a 1940 aerial photograph of the vicinity. Early plats of LaCoste Plantation reveal other features of the plantation plan. Battle maps show details of LaCoste Plantation, and these are supplemented by written accounts of the December 23rd battle, which surrounded the LaCoste plantation complex.

Until about 1950 the battlefield landscape at the LaCoste plantation was remarkably intact. The main house was extant and the plantation fields were still clearly established, as evidenced by the 1940 aerial photograph (USACE 1940). The rural lands containing the LaCoste plantation and its dependencies were radically transformed in the mid 20th century, however, by residential development and the construction of the Chalmette High School campus. The Chalmette High School was greatly impacted by floodwaters of Hurricane Katrina and this area is currently undergoing substantial renovations with FEMA assistance. Concurrent with the LAMAR Institute’s study of the battlefield area, a FEMA historic preservation team explored the archeological potential of portions of the Chalmette High School campus of portions of the former LaCoste plantation (FEMA 2011). These recent findings are incorporated into the present study.

**West Bank**

While the scope of the present study focused on cultural resources in St. Bernard Parish, minor exploration of resources in Orleans Parish also was conducted. LAMAR Institute researchers were alerted to possible surviving battlefield features on the West Bank of the Mississippi River by Swanson’s (1985) research. She described as small park that she suspected contained the remains of earthworks from the January 8, 1815 engagement on the West Bank. This potential site was visited and confirmed by the present study.

This site was described in 1985 by Swanson, but no site form was completed. Because both War of 1812 and Civil War earthworks were constructed in the general vicinity of this site, some confusion persists as to the identity of the ruins. Another military earthwork site (16OR143) is recorded several hundred meters upstream. That site is predominately associated with the Confederacy, although that area may also contain evidence from the War of 1812. A battle transpired during the New Orleans campaign in 1814-1815 and contemporary battlefield maps by Latour depict this location (Smith 1999).

The LAMAR Institute team visited this site, which is located in a park on natural levee of Mississippi River between Patterson and General Meyers Boulevard and west of Woodland Drive. Ground visibility was limited to areas around seven large live oak trees where evidence of recent looting (metal detecting with shovels) was observed. This activity likely occurred within the past month before the project site visit, given the soil conditions. Such looting represents a continuing threat to the cultural resources at this site. The
earthworks here include a large berm (possibly artillery battery) and several, curved linear trenches with adjacent berms. These features are rounded down somewhat and vegetated in grass, but over-all, well preserved. Their orientation is generally perpendicular to the Mississippi River with the berms on the downstream side of the trenches. The earthworks were reconnoitered and GPS waypoints were taken at intervals around the perimeter of each obvious earthwork (Figure 28). These data were then used to create polygons that were superimposed on a modern aerial map of the area, which is shown in Part 2 of this report.

Figure 28. Earthworks Off of Woodland Drive (Shaded in Blue), Orleans Parish (Google Earth 2011).
Chapter 6. Defining Battlefield Features

"Defining Features" of a battlefield are an essential part of modern battlefield analysis. This analytical strategy, which was developed by NPS historian David Lowe, provides a useful means of identifying an ancient battlefield landscape in the modern world (Lowe 2006). A list of defining features is compiled by reviewing "every mention of a location in battle accounts or on historic maps as a contributing resource" and placing as many of these features on modern maps as can be identified. Defining Features are based entirely on the history of the battle, regardless of the integrity of the landscape. A tentative list of defining battlefield features below New Orleans is presented here. These locations were targets for survey and attempts were made to locate and delineate these features as much as possible within the project parameters.

Twenty-three Defining Battlefield Features were identified prior to beginning fieldwork. The present status of these defining features is summarized below:

1. Villeré Plantation (destroyed)
2. Villeré Canal (portions intact)
3. British Encampment (none identified)
4. British Headquarters (Pecan Grove and De La Ronde plantations, intact; Lacoste and Bienvenu plantations, destroyed)
5. Cypress Swamp (remnants exist but greatly diminished from 1815 condition)
6. Lake Borgne (present, largely the same as 1815)
7. Schooner Carolina (not located, likely destroyed)
8. Rodriguez Canal (portions present on Chalmette Unit, extends north of St. Bernard Highway)
9. De La Ronde Plantation/Night Battle (portions present)
10. LaCoste Plantation complex/Night Battle (former location identified, mostly destroyed)
11. Chalmette Plantation (destroyed)
12. Mississippi River (present, but shifted southward from its 1815 position)
13. West Bank (military earthworks identified)
14. American Encampments west of Line Jackson (not identified)
15. American Headquarters (Macarty house destroyed; Rodriguez house identified by Birkedal 2009)
16. American Lines (identified by Birkedal 2009; Cornelison and Cooper 2002)
17. American Artillery Batteries (1-8) (possibly located by Birkedal 2009)
18. British Artillery Batteries (possibly located on Chalmette National Cemetery by Birkedal 2009)
20. British Breastworks (destroyed by Kaiser Aluminum factory complex)
21. American Redoubts (not identified, possibly destroyed or covered by USACE levee construction, portions may exist on Chalmette Unit)
22. River Road (multiple roads identified, including Center Road)
23. Terre Aux Boeuf (St. Bernard settlement beyond study area; located by FEMA 2011).

Additional defining features were identified during the field project that were not identified in the research design. These include:

24. Jumonville Plantation (main plantation complex destroyed but Pecan Grove plantation, formerly part of Jumonville, was identified; areas east of Saxholm Plantation and west of Margaret Drive may contain battle debris from a December 23 skirmish).
25. British Redoubt on Bayou Mazant at Villeré Canal entrance (tentative location identified by GIS analysis, unverified).

Villeré Plantation

The Villeré plantation was a Defining Battlefield Feature on several points. First, it was the location of the first military action that took place on the Louisiana mainland on December 23, when General Villeré's guard of about 30 Louisiana militiamen were surprised and captured by the advanced British brigade (Figures 29-32). British General John Keane established the Villeré house as his headquarters on the evening of December 23. The house later served as headquarters for Lieutenant General Pakenham, commander-in-chief of the New Orleans Campaign. The area was defended by a British reserve guard in the days following. The Villeré plantation grounds also served as a burial site for British dead, including General Pakenham. The Villeré Canal, which passed by the west side of the Villeré...
Figure 29. Portion of Peddie Map Showing Villere and Jumonville Plantations (Peddie 1815).

Figure 30. Villere Plantation House (Arthur 1915:95)
Figure 31. Photograph of Villere House, circa 1930s.

Figure 32. Aerial View of Villere Plantation (USACE 1940).
The main house was a vital transportation route used by the British throughout the campaign. No major fighting took place at the Villere plantation but it was a command point served a vital role in the planning of the military movements in several of the battles.

The first scene of military conflict on the New Orleans battleground was at the Villere plantation. Jacques Philippe Villere owned the Villere Plantation during the Battles of New Orleans. He died in March, 1830 and was buried in St. Louis Cemetery 2 in New Orleans (New Orleans Courier 1830). An 1832 petition by his children and heirs describes the Villere Plantation (C-No. 191):

..that your petitioners, as heirs aforesaid, are joint owners for one undivided half, and the said Gabriel Villere, their brother, for the other undivided half, of a plantation, situated about eight miles below New Orleans, and on the same side of the river; measuring seven arpents and a quarter, or thereabout, front to the river, extending in depth to the lake; bounded, on the upper limit, by land belonging to your petitioners, and on the lower side by land formerly the property of Charles Jamonville de Villiers, and now belonging to Simon Racquelle; that the land or plantation above described is one of the oldest settlements on the Mississippi, and is now a part of the sugar estate belonging jointly to your petitioners, and which, besides said land, is comprised of two other tracts adjoining each other, forming together eleven arpents, twenty-six toises, and eight feet front by eighty arpents in depth, confirmed by Congress. And whereas the tract of seven arpents and a quarter, as above mentioned, has never been registered in the land office, your petitioners respectfully pray that they may be allowed to present their titles to be registered, and adduce, in support of the same, such evidence as the nature of the case admits, and that it may please this honorable board to take their claim into consideration, to order the recording thereof, and report favorably thereon (ASP 1861, Public Lands, Volume 8:374).

Alexander Walker’s account describes the Villere plantation home as being a wooden structure in the “cottage style… the whole building being on one floor, with wide galleries in front and rear…” (Walker 1859:124-126).

A later lithograph made prior to 1883 from a sketch by Joseph Pennell depicts the Villere plantation house as the head-quarters of Packenham (Cable 1882-1883:865).

Royal Artillery officer, Lieutenant Benson Earle Hill, was a participant in the battles of New Orleans and described the Villere Plantation in this way:

Emerging from this forest, I found myself close to a plantation, with numerous buildings of various size and different use. The small but well-constructed house of the proprietor stood surrounded by wretched wooden huts, abodes of the slaves employed on the estate; a large brick sugar-work occupying the rear of the farm nearest to the wood. A double avenue of orange trees, covered with fruit ran through the centre of the manifold and scattered dwellings. This property appertained to a Major-General Villeré, of the Louisiana militia, who had fled at sight of the first red coat, and his house was now occupied as the British head-quarters (Hill 1836).

Hill reported that the Villere’s orange grove consisted of Seville oranges, a bitter orange used in medicines and marmalades. Not to be outdone, Lieutenant Hill was, “determined to turn them still to account, and the first employment I gave to my Negro boy, whose name I found was George, was to boil several dozen of this fine fruit in sugar, thus making a coarse but extremely palatable marmalade. This confection proved so acceptable to the numerous visitors at our hut, that Blacky was directed to collect all the oranges left, and cook them in the same manner” (Hill 1836). Hill went on to say that, “The house of Monsieur Villeré scarcely contained sufficient accommodation for the general officers, and, consequently, Colonel Dickson, his brigade major, and myself, were obliged to content ourselves with one of the Negro huts as our present residence, our servants occupying the one adjacent, these miserable sheds thus serving ‘for parlour, for kitchen, and all’” (Hill 1836).

[General] Villeré was a large slave-holder. At least one British account mentioned that,

numerous slaves belonging to the estate had returned to it, and many of them were busily employed under the direction of the commissaries. These Negroes were all attired in a strange looking and rudely fashioned dress; it was composed of a coarse French blanket, or horse-cloth, with loose sleeves and a hood; their shoes were made of bullock’s hide undressed, with the hair on the outside (Hill 1836).

The British took the Villere Plantation and used it as the headquarters for General Keane and Colonel Thornton’s troops, who built a battery in the yard there for the “three small cannon brought up with the advance” (Walker 1858:124-126). Walker goes on to state that Keane’s “camp was entirely within Villere’s plantation, and stretched from the head of the canal, near the mansion, to the upper line of the plantation (Walker 1858:124-126).

The Villere Plantation continued to be mentioned in historical documents after the battles of New Orleans. By 1891 the Villere plantation was later named the Corrine Plantation, when it was the estate of Mr. F.P. Fleitas (Seifrit 1891:10). The Supreme Court of Louisiana passed final judgment on the case of “Mrs. Mary Corine
Warren Fleitas, Wife of François B. Fleitas, vs. Jules Meraux" in 1895 (Rogers 1896:221-21; The Southern Reporter 1895:484-852). This case involved two plantations, Corrine and Myrtle Grove that had been acquired by F.B. Fleitas in 1877. Fleitas mortgaged the two properties in 1884 to Gilbert M. Richardson. Mrs. Fleitas filed suit against her husband in 1887 for separation of property, and dissolution of the community. The court ruled in her favor. As a result of this judgment the two plantations were seized and sold, and Mrs. Fleitas was the purchaser. The first mortgagee, Gilbert M. Richardson filed suit against Mrs. Fleitas and the resulting lawsuit worked its way through various courts. Meanwhile, Albert L. Richardson sold part of the Myrtle Grove plantation to Jules Meraux and it was this transaction that was the subject of the 1895 Supreme Court case. Corrine plantation was the former Villaré plantation and Myrtle Grove plantation was the former Junonville plantation. Both plantations figured prominently in the 1814-1815 battles of New Orleans. An 1891 description speaks to the Villaré Plantation construction. A Mr. Zacharie provided this commentary to a group of battlefield tourists.

There's the old Villaré place...Back from the road, with the railroad embankment as an additional levee, with rose bower on one side and orchard on the other, stands the group of long, low buildings, each room opening upon the grounds and broad galleries running all around the houses. The main building has needed little repair since the [sic] long ago when plantation carpenters constructed it of choicest timber, with nails and hinges forged by workmen on the place. The doors and shutters are of solid cypress and the large and curiously shaped hinges of wrought iron. The same faithful hinges are on the low doors between the connecting rooms. Wood and iron work are known to be 150 years old, and show little sign of wear or decay...There are virtually no rear rooms in the cozy little mansion, but on the side facing the woods is the long dining-room [sic], which connects with the parlour facing the river...When General Pakenham assumed command he installed himself in the house. The arrangement of the rooms has been little disturbed. In the corner towards the city, facing the river, is the bedroom the general occupied. It is a small room... From the bedroom it is but a step to the cheerful parlor...And then, as now, one of the main charms of the room was the large open fire place, extending some distance into the room (Seiffrith 1891:10).

In December, 1817, the U.S. House of Representatives considered a January 29, 1817 claim by Antoine Bienvenu, Peter Lacoste and Jacques Villaré for damages of slaves removed from their plantations by the British in 1815. The report stated that,

The petitioners complain that when the British forces retreated from the island of Orleans, at the close of the late war, they carried away a considerable number of slaves belonging to them; the restoration of which was, after the ratification of the treaty of peace, demanded by General Jackson, conformably to the first article of that treaty, of the British commanding officer; General Lambert, and by him refused; and they apply to Congress for indemnity for the loss of their property.

Subsequently to the reference of these petitions, a message from the President to the Senate of the United States was, on the 7th of February last, transmitted to that body, with all the documents then in the possession of this Department relating to the subject of these petitions: a printed copy of that message and of those documents is herewith transmitted, which it is respectfully requested may be received as part of this report. [See Foreign Relations, vol. iv. No. 287, page 106.] By them it will be seen that a different construction has been given by the British Government to that part of the first article of the treaty of Ghent which relates to the restitution of slaves captured during the war from that contended for by this Government. That, according to their construction, the British Government have not considered themselves bound to make restitution of any of
the slaves or other property thus taken and carried away; and that the difference of opinion between the two Governments remaining, after all the amicable discussion between them of which the subject was susceptible, a proposal was made, on the part of the United States, on the 17th of September, 1816, that the question should be referred to the arbitration of some friendly Power. To this proposal no answer from the British Government has yet been received. Their attention to it was again invited by the late minister of the United States in England, before he left London, and has been urged anew in the instructions to his successor. (American State Papers 1834a:531).

Two large pecan trees on the Villeré plantation figure into the story of the battle of New Orleans. While a copious amount of myth and fantasy accompany this battlefield feature, nevertheless, it remains an important associated feature on the battlefield because it's story addresses the topic of the burial of the battlefield dead and the geographic location and cultural landscape of the Villeré plantation in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The champion pecan trees, referred to as the Pakenham pecan tree(s) were located on the Villeré property. The earliest mention begins after the death of Lieutenant General Sir Edward Michael Pakenham on January 8, 1815. Pakenham was struck a mortal blow by a cannonball as he attempted to rally the British troops for a second charge against Line Jackson. Gravely wounded, General Pakenham was taken back to a field hospital at De La Ronde's Plantation where he succumbed. His body was then taken back to Villeré's plantation, where he was buried. When the British prepared to depart for England, allegedly Pakenham's body was exhumed and sealed in a coffin or cask and filled with Jamaican rum. His entrails were left buried in Louisiana. Pakenham's corpse was returned to the family graveyard in Scotland where, according to relatives, he was buried and where his remains lie at the present day.

Historian Benson Lossing visited the battlefield as part of his larger study of the War of 1812. Lossing described the battle and he published an illustration of the pecan trees at Villeré Plantation (Lossing 1896:1052). This illustration, which depicts two large trees, is reproduced in Part 2 of this report.

One of the Villeré pecan trees survived into the early 20th century. In 1891 a Mr. Zacharie told tourists visiting the former Villeré Plantation the story of the burial of Major General Edward Pakenham beneath a remarkably pecan tree:

A few yards from the house the visitors found a tree which is a monument in itself. It was once a fruitful pecan tree. Now the tree is stripped of its branches, only a few blasted and battered limbs protrude, and a long gash, which the lightning cut deep into the gnarled trunk explains the reason. Beneath this tree Pakenham's entrails were buried.

After the British retreated from before the murderous rifles of the Americans, they carried their wounded with them. Pakenham was first taken from the field, and his mourning escort laid him to rest under the shade of the tree, where he fell asleep. Colonel Dale, the intrepid commander of the Ninety-third Highlanders, who propose to honor him with a monument, and another officer who like Dale and Pakenham, died at the head of his men, were also picked up by comrades and carried to the rear. It was determined to give them decent burial whatever else betide.

A young colored man named Williamson, who had been found on the place, was pressed into service, and dug a broad grave at the base of the tree, into which the bodies were reverently lowered. Williamson treasured the memory of the event and related the incidents of the day to several generations...Some of the bones of the bodies were unearthed five years ago. They would have been sent to England, only they crumbled into dust as soon as touched. Portions of the belts remained, however, to show the rank of the officers. The tree is still a giant, 12 feet in diameter, and will be allowed to stand (Seiffrin 1891:10).

Mr. Zacharie continued with a description of burial items uncovered over the years there.

Around the pecan tree of many memories was the orchard and garden of the plantation. This space is still devoted to the same purpose. There are orange and persimmon, pecan, and peach and other trees, and at the edge of the orchard, begin the neatly laid out beds of vegetables. Through the center of the cabbage plot runs a ditch dug for drainage and watering purposes. The canal was only made of late years. Once it was overshadowed by trees and formed a convenient and sheltered spot to which the British brought their wounded. Many died there and were buried where they expired. The remains of the departed were disturbed in the digging. Belts and swords were brought up by the spades, and more relics are constantly found. A year ago a sword came back from the grave. Bullets, around which the bodies have turned to dust, are shaken from the sides of the excavations by the flowing water (Seiffrin 1891:10).

A later illustration, entitled, “Villeré's Pecan Tree” appeared in a 1906 newspaper article about this historic pecan tree. The author noted that there had been, "two pecan trees", and that, following the battle,
The field was thick with the dead and mortally wounded... Many were buried where they fell on the field of battle, and so long as General Villére and his descendants lived upon the plantation, this burial ground was never cut again by plow or hoe. Part of the mangled body of General Packenham was buried at the foot of one of these the pecan trees near the house... As the season wore on, the superstitious negroes began to whisper of strange things about the pecan tree that marked the burial spot of half the body of the British general. Dark red stains had appeared upon its trunk, and some there were who said that they came overnight after the interment. And then one day the startling news spread from cabin to cabin that the pecan tree would bear no fruit that season—that a strange blight had killed every bud, the tree was seemingly as vigorous as ever. They began to talk of the tree in whispers, and give it a wide berth after dark, and certain vivid imaginations conjured all kinds of weird sights and sounds within its shadows. When the next year came, the tree was watched with lynx eyes—and when again it became evident that it would bear no fruit, the whole plantation went about with nods and mysterious looks, saying 'Tol' yuh so! I jus’ done tol' yuh so!' Generations came and went before the great tree went the way of all things that grow old, but from that fateful eighth of January, 1815, until the early seventies, that particular pecan trees never bore fruit, that the other only a few feet distant, brought forth in abundance (Anson 1906: 4).

Samuels (1920: 1) repeated a tale that, "the old negroes of the district tell" when she wrote, "Near the group of oaks [referring to the oak allee at De La Ronde plantation] is a towering pecan tree in what was once the Villére yard, under which the general [Pakenham] as buried. And every fall the nuts ripen and drop off, but no one eats them. For every kernel, filled and juicy, is streaked with scarlet, encaulnined by the blood of Pakenham." In an article written later that year, Kent (1920: 1) referred to this tree as the "Pakenham Pecan", which had, "the double distinction of having been struck by lightning and marking the burying spot of General Pakenham—well, of a part of him at any rate—the historic tree continues to turn out its nuts with the 'blood-stained' kernels". Kent observed the Pakenham pecan was, "one of the only truly historical trees in the country. It still stands on the grounds of the old Villére plantation at Chalmette, with half its trunk torn away by a lightning bolt". Kent (1920: 14) noted, "When Pakenham fell, a victim of the bullet of a 'free man of color' from Attakapas, he was laid in state in the old Villére home, while his officers discussed how to take back his body to England for interment in Westminster Abbey". Kent paraphrased from the journal of Lieutenant Harry Smith, who described how Pakenham's "outward husk" was "nailed up at night in a cask of fine Jamaica rum and shipped to England, while the rest of him was buried at the foot of the old pecan tree on Villére plantation".

Variations in the story of Pakenham's mortification abound. One version from a Charleston, South Carolina correspondent indicated that his remains were buried on the plantation of Mr. Austin, in Chester County, South Carolina, after the cask of Jamaican rum containing his remains were mistakenly shipped from England to South Carolina, where, "Reaching there it was sent to a Mr. McMullen, who kept a general stock of groceries, liquors, etc. There a spigot was placed in the barrel", the rum was consumed and then, "the body of a man was found therein". The story continued, "The body was inclosed in a coffin and buried near the store. Mr. Austin now owns the property. He lives a few miles from Rossville, Chester county" (New York Herald-Tribune 1888:5). This news story was widely repeated by the American press. While this story is likely unfounded, it held the fascination of the American public. Chambers noted in his 1922 history of the significance of a large pecan tree on Villére's Plantation, "Pakenham's eviscerated remains, preserved in rum, and were shipped back to England. Such parts as were removed before shipment, were buried at the foot of a pecan tree growing near the battlefield. For years following, the nuts of 'Pakenham's pecan tree' went ungathered by the superstitious, who imagined blood streaks into their meats, witch-like record of a tragic disaster" (Chambers 1922:295).

By 1938 the celebrated tree no longer existed, when the Federal government gave its acknowledgement of the Villére/Pakenham pecan story in its travel guide prepared by the W.P.A. Federal Writer's Project, which described,

At 8 9 m. (L), several hundred yards back from the road, is the former overseer's house of Conisel, the plantation of Jacques Philippe de Villére, first native-born Governor of Louisiana. Under a giant pecan tree, no longer standing, the viscera of Gen. Pakenham, British leader slain in the Battle of New Orleans are said to have been buried... Legend claims that the pecans of the tree ever afterwards were streaked with red. The remainder of his body is said to have been shipped to England preserved in a rum cask, the contents of which veterans of the campaign are supposed to have inadvertently drunk (W.P.A. Federal Writers’ Program 1938b:381).

General James Villére filed a claim for damages to his plantation in 1814 and 1815, which was read before the U.S. House of Representatives in February, 1817, which stated:
That, at the time the State of Louisiana was invaded by the British forces, the petitioner, living near New Orleans, owned and occupied a valuable house, from which his family retired, and which was sometimes occupied by the British forces, and sometimes by the American, during the invasion. During this time, the troops of the United States used a quantity of his wood and some of his fencing, for fuel. At the time the British forces left New Orleans, it was considered prudent and proper by General Jackson to fill up a canal through the plantation of the petitioner; in consequence of which, a part of the plantation, which was planted with sugar cane, was overflowed, and continued so long overflowed, before the news of peace reached that place, that he was prevented from making a crop.

The petitioner prays to be paid the value of such injury as he has sustained, in consequence of the filling up of the canal, and the value of his wood and fencing.

It is difficult to determine, precisely, what are the damages for which the petitioner is entitled to indemnity. The committee, however, after having bestowed some consideration on the subject, are of opinion he should be paid the value of his wood and fencing necessarily used for fuel, a sum sufficient to open the canal, and one year’s rent for such part of his plantation planted in sugar cane as was overflowed by filling up the canal; and therefore report a bill to that effect (American State Papers 1834a:323-326).

The area formerly known as Villeré plantation was known as Meraux, or Merauxville but the early 20th century. Meraux is a relatively new name in the area; however, it encompasses some geography relating to the Battles of New Orleans. In 1902, the Times Picayune reported, “St. Bernard will have a new village, which will doubtless grow into a town within the next five years or so. The title of it will be Merauxville, and it will be distant about five miles below the barracks, in the immediate neighborhood of the refinery which the Record Oil Company will erect. Mr. Jules Meraux and his nephew, Mr. Narcisse Meraux, own the land on the lower side of the refinery site, and both having a keen eye to business investments, have concluded that the opportunity is at hand for the construction of dwelling houses, a demand for which has always existed, but has been enhanced by the influx of capital in the parish, more especially by the establishment of an oil refinery, which is assured. The Record Oil Company will also build cottages for the use of its skilled employees [sic], so that the section in appearance, will soon be converted into a village with quite a number of souls in its very incipience. The exact number of buildings which will be constructed is not known, but to judge from the material which is being transported to Merauxville, the Merauxs do not propose to do things by halves, and when the Record Oil re-inforces them a town will spring up as though by magic” (Times Picayune 1902:17).

In 1906 T.C. Anderson served as president of the Record Oil Company (Freight 1906:79). By 1908 the Record Oil Company was producing gasoline, kerosene and safety oil at its Merauxville refinery (Louisiana State Museum 1908:96). A 1908 trade journal announced that the St. Bernard Oil Refining Company at Merauxville, Louisiana was “planning extensive improvements to their plants” (The National Provisioner 1908:20). That same year the St. Bernard Oil Refining Company at Merauxville awarded a contract to the Commercial Electric Company to install an electric lighting plant at the refinery (The Electrical World 1908:975).

Prior to 1910, however the Record Oil Company appears to have gone defunct and the Indian Oil Refining Company acquired its assets. By 1910, the Indian Oil Refining Company was producing many thousands of barrels of oil in its refinery at Merauxville. In April, 1911, the Indian Oil Refining Company announced that its Merauxville plant would soon be in full operation (Times Picayune 1910a:19; 1911:11). R. L. King was the owner of the Indian Oil Refining Company in 1911. A portion of the Indian Oil Refining Company’s facility was destroyed by fire in early June, 1911, but it continued to operate (New Orleans Item 1911:1). In 1917, the Freeport and Mexican Fuel Oil Corporation was operating a refinery at Merauxville (New Orleans Item 1917:19).

GIS analysis of the battlefield data indicates that the main plantation complex at Villeré plantation has been obliterated by industrial development. This is illustrated in a series of GIS maps of the area (Part 3, Figures 11-14). As late as 1940 one structure remained in the vicinity of the main Villeré plantation complex that was possibly an ante-bellum building. That building, which is visible on the 1940 aerial photograph, was located on the west side of the Villeré Canal. It was not the main house of the Villeré Plantation. Historic map overlays indicate that the west bank of the canal contained a row of buildings that were likely slave quarters. This surviving building may be one of the slave houses, or it may have served another function. Its age is unknown. The main house at Villeré was located on the east side of the Villeré Canal. By 1938 that area was already developed as an oil refinery. The 1940 aerial photograph shows the area where the house was likely to have been located to contain at that time a series of large oil storage tanks. The peripheral areas of the Villeré plantation complex may retain some archeological potential. An area north and east of the intersection of Ohio Street at Jacobs Drive was reconnoitered during this project, but no period artifacts were observed.
on the surface. A majority of the archeological resources at Villère Plantation, including those relating to the New Orleans campaign have been destroyed and any research potential for this area of the battlefield has been severely compromised. A guide compiled by the Federal Writers Project provided additional information about the Villère Plantation, noting, “A large oil storage tank now occupies the site of the plantation home” (United States, Federal Writers Project 1941:495).

British Redoubt on Bayou Mazant

Several offshore military features served as Defining Battlefield Features in the New Orleans Campaign. One that is included in the study area is the British redoubt that was established at the junction of the Bayou Mazant and the Villère Canal (Figure 33). Advanced British military forces under Major General John Keane’s command established a redoubt on Bayou Mazant at its junction with the Villère Canal upon their arrival on December 22, 1814. The location of this fortification is depicted on several contemporary maps, including Latour and Ludlow (Smith 1999). Its suspected location appears to be un molested by modern development, although this location is semi-submerged marshland and not conducive to terrestrial archeological survey. This general area is in an inaccessible wetland and was not physically visited by the survey team.

Villère Canal

A major landscape feature of the Villère plantation, the Villère Canal, was a vital defining battlefield feature. A letter penned in New Orleans during the battles made its way into a Boston newspaper. It described the way the British got its troops into the Villère plantation, via the Villère Canal. “The enemy without being discovered, made the river at Gen. Villaray’s plantation today, about 12 or 1 o’clock. They have not, it is supposed, all yet disembarked—The entry was made up a bayou, into which a canal from Villaray’s plantation empties. Gen. Jackson, with Gen. Coffee’s men, the 7th regiment, a part of the 44th, some of the town militia, and some other troops, arrived about 7 o’clock, supported by the schr. Caroline” (Boston Daily Advertiser 1815:2).

The British landing site in Bayou Mazant and the approach to Villère plantation along Villère’s canal was described by historian William James,

The spot at which the British advance had landed, was about a mile from a cypress wood, or swamp, of nearly a mile and a half in depth, running parallel to the Mississippi; between which and the border of the wood, is a slip of land, from 15 to 1700 yards wide, intersected by strong horizontal railings, and several wet ditches, or canals, and principally planted with sugar canes. Several large houses, with their out-offices and negro-huts, are scattered, at irregular distances, over this tract; along which pass es, near to the levee, or bank of the river, the high road to New Orleans (James 1818, Volume 2:357).

Captain George L. Chesterton described the British landfall on the early morning of December 23,

We jumped ashore on to a low muddy landing, which, gradually widening and becoming firmer, led us by the side of a ditch irregularly connecting this creek with the Mississippi. The river was a short mile from the creek, and rolled on with turbid celerity; but before we reached its banks, the country expanded to the right, and looked cultivable and pleasant. It was at this moment covered with snow, and every intersecting brook was completely frozen over; but the open space was studded with barns and farm residences, with some few houses of better pretensions. The stores were plentifully filled with sugar in hogsheads, and dried sugar-cane abounded. Indeed, at length, sugar lay scattered like sand over the length and breadth of the camp.

Our eyes were gladdened by two trees standing outside a negro hamlet, loaded with oranges of very deep colour (Chesterton 1853, Volume 1:183).

Major Charles Forrest (Rankin 1961:29-31) provided a brief description of the British landing place at “the Entrance of the Canal of Monr. Villère”, where,

The Country presented nothing but an extensive plain, covered with reeds, or Canes above 7 feet high, and very difficult to force a pass through—about a Mile in Our front was a thick Wood, the Bayoue did not admit more than one Boat at a time, the Soldiers therefore were obliged to be passed through the Boats as over a Bridge, an operation which took considerable time.

The Sappers and Miners under Captain Blanchard of the Royal Engineers were sent on to clear a passage for the Troops and to throw temporary Bridges over such Streams as presented themselves in the line of March.

By 10 o’Clock the 85th and 95th had landed an advanced Guard soon after moved on through the Wood to it’s outer Edge, distant about three Quarters of a Mile from the Main Road and River Mississippi, a party was sent forward to take post in the House...
of Monsr. Villeré where they took a Picquet of 30 Men [a company of 3rd Regiment, Louisiana militia], and having thus gained possession of the Main Road the Column advanced and moved along it for about half a Mile towards the Town of New Orleans. It then halted and formed in two contiguous Columns to the left of the Main Road...

The Country through which the Army had hitherto moved was a perfect flat but rather higher near the River than towards the Wood, where the ground was swampy and the Wood nearly impracticable. The extent of the Cultivated ground between the River and Wood varied in breadth from 1000 to 1500 yards and was much intersected by horizontal railings about 5 feet high, and wet ditches or drains. Considerable buildings with large Outhouses and Negro Huts attached were scattered at irregular distances along the tract of cultivated ground, and from most of them a small Canal ran off in a parallel direction with the one by which we had ascended into the Bayoue Catalan.

The Main Road was tolerable good, but simply of the Soil of the Country a rich Mould, would evidently become bad with very little wet weather.—The breadth of the Mississippi is here about 1000 yards; along each bank a mound of Earth is raised about four feet to prevent the River from Overflowing the Country.

Another detailed description of passing through the bayou and into the Villeré Canal is found in Walker’s history,

Passing into Bayou Mazent, the southern branch of the Bienvenu, the stream became so narrow that oars could not be used, and the boats had to be propelled by punting. Finally the front boats took the ground. The sailors were then ordered to jump out, and see if a road could be found on the banks of the bayou, which was practicable for the troops. They reported that there was a narrow slip of solid land along the bank of the stream, where a path was discernible. The troops were then marched ashore in single file, and the whole brigade stood at rest for
half an hour until General Keane and Rear-Admiral Malcolm (who had remained in the rear to see that there were no stragglers), could come up. On their arrival at the head of the column, a brief consultation was held, the men were hurriedly inspected, the column was formed with the deserters and guides in front, and the engineers sent ahead to cut away the trees and other obstacles, and bridge the numerous narrow and deep streams that run into the bayou.

The order to march was then given, and the active Thornton led his column briskly forward in the narrow path along the bayou, from which it would be dangerous to stray on account of the quagmire. Some delay was occasioned by the severe labors imposed upon the engineers in clearing the rank vegetation, which frequently obstructed the path, and in constructing rude bridges across the ditches. The scenery for some distance continued to present the same dreary monotony. Soon, however, the ground began to grow firmer and the path more distinct. The files were now widened, and the men were ordered to quicken their steps. With the greatest alacrity they obeyed their orders, and pushed rapidly through the low, stunted cypress woods which had succeeded to the cane-brake. Suddenly the leading files found themselves emerging into open and cultivated fields. Extending their front, they advanced rapidly and joyfully in the direction of an orange grove, through which several houses could be discerned. Forming his front into companies, so as to make as wide a sweep as possible, Thornton, with one company, stole rapidly along Villeré's Canal, and succeeded, under cover of the grove, in surrounding the principal house (Walker 1859:124-126).

The intense difficulty of moving troops and artillery in boats from the bayou and along the Villeré Canal is replayed in numerous British accounts. Lieutenant Hill wrote,

The whole night and the morning of the next day were occupied in making our way up this ditch [Canal Villeré], for it scarcely deserved a better name; on each side nothing could be seen but lofty reeds, from eight to ten feet high, growing so thickly as to defy penetration into their depths. The Bayou became every moment narrower; and it was with great difficulty that the boats which had landed their troops could pass those still advancing. This extraordinary creek suddenly ceased to be navigable, and, where its utility terminated, the ground was found tolerably firm, and affording better means of landing than we anticipated from the interminable region of morass by which we were surrounded.

About seven o'clock I landed, assisted in getting on shore the light brigade of three-pounders, which had been conveyed up this accursed canal piecemeal, and, directing that it should be immediately carried forward, I set out alone for the advance. The track was rendered perfectly apparent by the cut down reeds, and the planks and ladders placed across the numerous ditches which intersected the ground (Hill 1836).

Additional details of the journal through the Villeré Canal are supplied by Cope's history of the 95th Rifle Regiment. It describes how, "on the morning of the 23rd, when the leading boat reached the narrow part of the Bayou it was found impracticable to ascend higher, and the boats being drawn up one after another the men passed over them as a bridge. This of course was a very slow operation, and one which, if opposed, would have been very difficult. The Battalion disembarked about an hour after daylight, having been upwards of sixteen hours cramped in the boats." The account continues,

As soon as the whole advance were on shore, they marched, Travers' company leading; and to give their force as imposing an appearance as possible, and to scour the country, they advanced with extended files. They moved in this order through a wood which skirted the swamp on this side, and as soon as they had cleared it, came upon a house, surrounded with out-buildings and huts for slaves, belonging to a M. Villeroy. The Battalion advancing at the double, took possession of it (Cope 1877:183-194).

Ensign Gleig described the completion of the engineering work on the Villeré/Pakenham Canal, which was intended as a transportation route for a British force to occupy the West Bank, under command of Colonel Thornton:

The canal, as I have stated, being finished on the 6th, it was resolved to lose no time in making use of it. Boats were accordingly ordered up for the transportation of 1400 men; and Colonel Thornton with the 85th Regiment, the marines, and a party of sailors was appointed to cross the river. But a number of untoward accidents occurred, to spoil a plan of operations as accurately laid down as any in the course of the war. The soil through which the canal was dug, being soft, parts of the bank gave way, and choking up the channel, prevented the heaviest of the boats from getting forward. These again blocked up the passage, so that none of those which were behind, could proceed, and thus, instead of a flotilla for the accommodation of 1400 men, only a number of boats sufficient to contain 350 was enabled to reach their destination. Even these did not arrive at the time appointed. According to the preconcerted plan, Colonel Thornton's detachment was to cross the river immediately after dark. They were to push

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forward, so as to carry all the batteries, and point the guns before day light; when, on the throwing up of a rocket, they were to commence firing upon the enemy’s line, which at the same moment was tube attacked by the main of our army (Gleig 1821:325).

Captain Chesterton (1853, Volume I:205) commented on the construction efforts in the Pakenham Canal,

“When I returned to the camp I found active ‘fatigue parties’ working with incessant toil to widen the brook, or rather ditch, which, rugged and shallow, connected the great river with the creek. Then it was we saw and intensely pitted the unfortunate black regiments. The weather was alternately stormy and frosty, little suited to their livelong service in a burning climate; and now, wading through mud and half-frozen water; they were required to act the part of ‘excavators’. Poor wretches! They worked awkwardly and groaned incessantly, under an occupation which inflicted deadly suffering, and sent numbers to the hospital, and most likely to their graves.

However, at length the channel was reported practicable; and then occurred such a hauling of launches and barges, and such ceaseless efforts to drag them through an insufficient passage, that it was hours before the task was accomplished, and frequently the ultimate practicability of the scheme was doubted. At last a goodly flotilla was afloat in the Mississippi, far inferior, however, to the original design.

Major Charles Forrest noted in his journal that the canal was completed on the evening of January 6 and the following day 47 boats were “brought up the Canal from the Bayoue in readiness to be put into the Mississippi in the night” (Rankin 1961:40).

The detachment under Colonel William Thornton’s command destined for the West Bank consisted of: 85th Regiment (about 300 men), Royal Marines (200 men), Seamen (200 men), and part of the 5th West Indian Regiment (Rankin 1961:39-40).

Ensign Gleig (1821:343-347) describe the British retreat by the same canal upon which they had entered the battleground:

... the whole of the wounded, except such as were too severely hurt to be removed, were embarked upon the canal, and sent off to the fleet.

Next followed the baggage and stores, with the civil officers, commissaries, purveyors, &c. and last of all such of the light artillery as could be withdrawn without trouble, or the risk of discovery. But of the heavy artillery, of which about ten pieces were mounted in front of the bivouac, and upon the bank of the river, no account was taken. They were ship’s guns, of little value, and extremely cumbersome; consequently, their removal, had it been practicable, would scarcely have rewarded the trouble. It was therefore determined to leave them behind; and they were accordingly permitted to retain their stations to the last.

These preparations being continued for some days, on the 17th no part of our force remained in camp except the infantry. Having therefore delayed only till the abandoned guns were rendered unserviceable, on the evening of the 18th it also began its retreat.

...For some time, that is to say, while our route lay along the highroad and beside the brink of the river, the march was agreeable enough; but as soon as we began to enter upon the path through the marsh, all comfort was at an end. Being constructed of materials so slight, and resting upon a foundation so firm, the treading of the first corps unavoidably beat it to pieces; those which followed were therefore compelled to flounder on in the best way they could; and bye time the rear of the column gained the morass, all trace of a way had entirely disappeared. But not only were the reeds torn asunder and sunk by the pressure of those who had gone before, but the bog itself, which at first might have furnished a few spots of firm footing, was trodden into the consistency of mud. The consequence was that every step sunk us to the knees, and frequently higher, near the ditches, indeed, many spots occurred which we had the utmost difficulty in crossing at all; and as the night was dark, there being no moon, nor any light except what the stars supplied, it was difficult to select our steps, or even to follow those who called to us that they were safe on the opposite side. At one of these places I myself beheld an unfortunate wretch gradually sink till he totally disappeared. I saw him flounder in, heard his cry for help, and ran forward with the intention of saving him; but before I had taken a second step I myself sank at once as high as the breast. How I contrived to keep myself from smothering is more than I can tell, for I felt no solid bottom under me, and continued slowly to go deeper and deeper, till the mud reached my arms. Instead of endeavoring to help the poor soldier, of whom nothing could now be seen except the head and hands, I was forced to beg assistance for myself; when a leather canteen strap being thrown to me, I laid hold of it, and was dragged out, just as my fellow sufferer became invisible.

Over roads such as these did we continue our journey during the whole of the night; and in the morning reached a place called Fisherman’s Shouts, upon the margin of the lake. The name is derived from a clump
of mud-built cottages, situated in as complete a desert as the eye of man was ever pained by beholding. They stand close to the water, upon apart of the morass rather more firm than the rest. Not a tree or bush of any description grows near them. As far as the eye could reach, perfect ocean of reeds everywhere presented itself, except on that side where a view of the lake changed without fertilizing the prospect. Were any set of human beings condemned to spend their lives here, I should consider their fate as little superior to that of the solitary captive; but during many months of the year, these huts are wholly unoccupied, being erected, as their name denotes, merely to shelter few fishermen, while the fishing season lasts.

Captain Chesterton (1853, Volume I:212) also described the British retreat from New Orleans,

The Americans continued supine, while we, at our perfect leisure, by means of the sappers and staff corps, labored and successfully, to adapt the banks of the creek, with their reeds and swampy superfluities, to the safe march of our soldiers to the fishermen's huts. The boats meanwhile conveyed as many as they could carry; and thus the entire force was withdrawn from the position before New Orleans.

My friend Speer, with a few artillerymen, remained behind during the night, to keep alive the camp fires, in order to beguile the enemy; and at dawn of day he decamped with his party: and it was only by slow degrees that the Americans at length became aware of our retreat.

The Villeré Canal is considered a Defining Battlefield Feature for its role as the sole transportation route used by the British Army going to and from the New Orleans battle theater. Remarkably intact portions of this canal were identified and mapped in the present study. Swanson (1985) identified the suspected location of the Villeré Canal in her battlefield landscape study. We concur with her location and identification, although this study offers additional information and some minor corrections to her earlier observations.

The Villeré Canal has been extensively altered since 1815. Two major canals, 20 Arpent and 40 Arpent Canals, were constructed perpendicular to the Villeré Canal. The creation of the 40 Arpent Canal significantly curtailed the flow of water into Villeré Canal, turning it into a semi-dry ditch. A large canal, known today as Meraux Canal, was created east of Villeré Canal and that canal remains an active drainage feature. The Meraux Canal presents the appearance of being a more significant and substantial canal than the faint trace of the Villeré Canal but that appearance is deceptive.

The southern section of the Villeré Canal is largely obliterated. As one proceeds southward from the relatively intact sections in the wooded area on the northern part of the Murphy Oil Tract, the canal disappears. The ground surface in this section has been leveled by heavy machinery. There is no trace of the Villeré Canal on the ground surface in the brambles and open area south of the woods and north of 20 Arpent Canal. South of the 20 Arpent Canal, the trace of the Villeré Canal reappears, although it is heavily modified and incorporated into the oil refinery complex. South of St. Bernard Highway, no visible trace of the canal survives as this area has been heavily industrialized. A single brick ruin, however, remains as a testament to the location and former existance of the canal in this vicinity. The ruin is aligned along the route of the canal with the similar brick feature on the Murphy Oil Tract. This ruin is located in the active refinery complex at Murphy Oil and our access to this location was limited and required an escort. While some consider this brick ruin to be a trace of the Villeré home, this interpretation seems unlikely. More likely, its function was probably the same as the pumping station located at the brick ruins in the woods on Murphy Oil Tract I.

During the British Campaign, British troops excavated the southern end of the Villeré Canal in an attempt to reach the Mississippi River. This would have allowed them to float their boats from Lake Borgne to the Mississippi, which would have given them a naval advantage in the approach to New Orleans. The "Pakenham Canal", as is it often referred, also was intended to transport British troops to the West Bank, in hopes of flanking the Americans on that side. As late as 1884, however, the canal remained filled with water. Cable (1884:196) noted, "A narrow continuation of the canal by which the English had come up through the swamp to its head at the rear of Villeré’s plantation was dug, so that their boats could be floated up to the river front close under the back of the levee, and then dragged over its top and launched into the river. The squalid negresses that fish for crawfish along its bank, flowery banks still call it, 'Cannal Packin’ am'.

Darby (1817:66-67) wrote about the prospects for a canal connecting Lake Borgne with the Mississippi River, which would have taken advantage of the extension of the Villeré canal created by the British troops in December 1814 and January 1815:

All observations made, respecting a canal from Bonnet Quarré, will equally apply to one, if made from general Villeret’s or Jumonville’s plantations, below New-Orleans, into lake Borgne, by Bayou Bienvenue...Perhaps, in fact, no situation on the
Mississippi could be more beneficially improved, than the space between Villaret's [Villeré's], and lake Borgne. This place has been rendered remarkable by the advance towards New-Orleans, of the British army in December 1815.

Darby's reference to the improvements refers to Pakenham's Canal, which was a southern extension of the Villère canal that was hastily built for purposes of transporting British troops from Lake Borgne to the West Bank of the Mississippi River. Pakenham's canal was a temporary construction that served poorly for transporting small boats. A transportation canal, as that envisioned by Darby, was never completed.

River hydrology, geomorphology, and topography played an important role in the Battles of New Orleans. General Jackson selected the location for Line Jackson, which was a defensive ditch that ran from the Mississippi River to the cypress swamp paralleling it, because it was at the narrowest width of the Chalmette plain, yet in closest proximity to confront the British troop position aggressively. Geomorphology in the flat swamplands of Louisiana greatly affected soil elevations. For example, the highest elevation on the battlefield was at the De la Ronde plantation, where alluvial deposits from a well-established crevasse extend more than a mile north of the river. Older river levees provided cover for both armies. The British took particular advantage of an older levee by ducking behind it when the U.S. schooner Caroline opened its broadside of artillery on British troops on December 23th.

In mid-May, 1869, floodwaters created a breach in the Mississippi River at the Villère plantation, which was termed, the Villère crevasse (The Charleston Daily News 1869:1). The Charleston newspaper reported, "The crevasse reported several days ago at the Villère plantation below the city has been abandoned as hopeless. The repairs were made by negro soldiers and plantation hands washed away as fast as constructed. The opening is almost eighty feet wide and eight feet deep at last accounts and increasing." While the Villère crevasse is not a battlefield feature, per se, its historical existence may have affected the placement of settlements on the Villère plantation as well as the preservation and soil deposition or erosion on portions of the battlefield following the battle. In late February, 1890, the Mississippi River again burst through at Villère crevasse. The New Orleans newspaper reported, "On Tuesday evening about 3 o'clock the levee in front of Colonel Charles A. Larendra's Villère plantation, about 13 miles below Algiers, gave way under the severe pressure of the water. A new levee was built about two months ago by the state board of engineers and was the one known as the upper Magnolia. It was built on a batterie outside the old levee. It was entirely unprotected from the furies of the river and being new could be easily washed away. This mishap occurred during the storm of some ten days ago. Yesterday morning about 3 o'clock the old levee broke...a break of about 6 feet in width and from 4 to 5 feet deep occurred...The new levee had been built on a batterie and was unprotected from the river. The old levee was on the inside and was not strong, being full of crawfish holes. During the storm he [Captain Sidney P. Lewis, state engineer] had cautioned Colonel Larendra to keep a strict lookout for the levee as it was new and could be washed away easily. It was during this storm that 1500 feet of earthwork gave way, and Colonel Larendra and his neighbors went immediately to work with his men to fortify the old levee. The old levee was made pretty strong and everything assumed a safe appearance. But about 3 o'clock Tuesday evening about 15 feet of the old levee gave way, and by yesterday morning had extended to between 20 and 25 feet wide and about 3 feet deep. Mr. Lewis said that the levee at its highest point was not higher than 3 feet, and the crevasse, could not be deeper than 3 feet, unless it was at a ditch" (Times Picayune 1890a:2).

The following day M.J. Zuntz, owner of Belle Chase Plantation, reported, "Some seventy-five men were working on the gap [at Villère Plantation] and had already succeeded in reducing it to twelve feet and were rapidly closing it. The men expected to finish the work by this morning. Mr. Zuntz found that his plantation had not been injured in any way, nor was Villère place damaged materially. The water as rapidly as it came through the gap, was drained off the place into the swamp behind, and the plantation was not hurt" (Times Picayune 1890b:2).

Two years later in June, 1892 three crevasses were formed in the battlefield vicinity. These were described in a Kentucky newspaper, "The first break occurred at Stoney's near where a crevasse occurred a month ago but now closed. It started a fifty-foot rate, but widened so rapidly that by noon it was one hundred feet wide and ten feet deep and still breaking. The second break was at Villère plantation, a half mile away. Fifty feet was its width. Two hours afterward the levee gave way. The third break is at the Merrick place, a mile below Villère. It is only twenty feet wide, and hopes are entertained of closing it" (The Evening Bulletin 1902:4).
Lacoste Plantation

The Lacoste plantation was a long-operating sugar plantation originally constructed in the 1770s (Figures 34-36). This plantation was the scene of important military action in the War of 1812, particularly the first engagement, known as the Night Battle, which took place on the evening of December 23, 1814. The Lacoste house was used as a headquarters by the British officers during the balance of the campaign. The house and grounds are considered a Defining Battlefield Feature for their role as a core area of the December 23 battle and, afterwards, as a command post where the British military coordinated its campaign.

An advance group of about 1,600 British troops, consisting of the 4th, 85th, 93rd and 95th Regiments and led by Colonel William Thornton, 85th Regiment, landed in St. Bernard Parish at Bayou Mazant on the morning of December 23, 1814. From there the British invaders marched south along the Villère Canal to the Villère plantation, which was located east of Lacoste plantation. The commander, Major General John Keane, arrived by 10 p.m. that evening and established his headquarters at Pierre Lacoste’s plantation. Once the Americans, commanded by Major General Andrew Jackson, learned of the British land invasion they rushed from all quarters to oppose the British. Tennessee mounted militia, commanded by Brigadier General John Coffee, formed the American’s right wing and in the darkness of the night of December 23, they attacked the British at Lacoste plantation. The combat that ensued was intense. The British were caught off-guard and they suffered heavy losses. The Tennessee (dismounted) cavalry, armed with rifles, used deadly accuracy to win success on the battlefield. Although they had the upper hand, General Jackson called for a retreat and the battle ended in a draw. The Americans fell back more than a mile and established their fortified camps.

Several primary accounts of the Night Battle, from both British and American perspectives, have been published. A few specific extracts that pertain to the geography and archeological potential at Lacoste plantation are presented below.

British Ensign George Robert Gleig, who was a junior officer in Major General John Keane’s command, gave this description of the organization of Keane’s forces on December 22nd:

Such was the general aspect of the country which we had entered,—our own position, again, was this. The three regiments turning off from the road into one extensive greenfield, formed three close columns within pistol-shot of the river. Upon our right, but so much in advance as to be of no service to us, was a large house [Lacoste plantation], surrounded by about twenty wooden huts, probably intended for the accommodation of slaves. Towards this house there was a slight rise in the ground, and between it and the camp was a small pond of no great depth. As far to the rear again as the first was to the front, stood another house [Villère plantation], inferior in point of appearance, and skirted by no outbuildings: this was also upon the right; and here General Keane, who accompanied us, fixed his head-quarters: but neither the one nor the other could be employed as a covering redoubt, the flank of the division extending, as it were, between them. A little way in advance, again, where the outposts were stationed, ran a dry ditch and a row of lofty palings [possibly canal dividing De la Ronde and Lacoste plantations]; affording some cover to the front of our line, should it be formed diagonally with the main road. The left likewise was well secured by the river; but the right and the rear were wholly unprotected. Though in occupying this field, therefore, we might have looked very well had the country around us been friendly, it must be confessed that our situation hardly deserved the title of a military position (Gleig 1821:151).

Captain George L. Chesterton, himself an artilleryman in a brigade of three-pounders, described the initial invasion force,

Our force now consisted of what remained, after the operations in the Chesapeake, of the 4th, 21st, 44th and 85th regiments; but this force had been augmented by the 93rd Highland regiment, part of the 95th Rifles, two West India regiments, a detachment of the 14th Light Dragoons, and a fourth company of Artillery, under Major Munro, who assumed command of that arm, and a small detachment of Sappers and Miners (Chesterton 1853, Volume I:180).

Chesterton described his own arrival in camp on December 23rd,

The weather was severely frosty and snow covered the whole surface of our camp. We were consequently too glad to light camp fires, and to court the benefit of their warmth. The three-pounder brigade of guns was divided, and the division to which I was attached occupied a post not far distant from the Mississippi and was considerably to the left of the main body (Chesterton 1853, Volume I:187).

Ensign Gleig described the heated combat on Lacoste Plantation on the night of December 23rd,
Figure 34. Portion of Peddie Map Showing Lacoste Plantation (Peddie 1815).

Figure 35. Lacoste Plantation, Before 1953 (Frances B. Johnston Photograph Collection 1864-1952).
I led my little party in the direction agreed upon, and fortunately falling in with about an equal number of English riflemen, I caused them to take post beside my own men, and turned up to the front. Springing over the paling, we found ourselves almost at once upon the left flank of the enemy; and we lost not a moment in attacking it. But one volley was poured in, and then bayonets, musket-butts, sabres, and even fists, came instantly into play. In the whole course of my military career I remember no scene at all resembling this. We fought with the savage ferocity of bull-dogs; and many a blade which till to-night had not drunk blood became in a few minutes crimsoned enough.

Such a contest could not in the nature of things be of very long continuance. The enemy, astonished at the vigour of our assault, soon began to waver, and their wavering was speedily converted into flight. Nor did we give them a moment’s time to recover from their panic. With loud shouts we continued to press upon them; and amidst the most horrible din and desperate carnage drive them over the field and through the little village of huts [Lacoste slave quarter], of which notice has already been taken as surrounding the mansion on our advanced right. Here we found a number of our own people prisoners, and under a guard of Americans. But the guard fled as we approached, and our countrymen catching up such weapons as came first to hand, joined in the pursuit.

In this spot I halted my party, increased by the late additions to the number of forty; among whom were two gallant young officers of the 95th. We had not yet been joined, as I expected to be joined, by Grey; and feeling that we were at least far enough in advance of our own line, we determined to attempt nothing further except to keep possession of the village [Lacoste slave quarter] should it be attacked. But whilst placing the men in convenient situations, another dark line was pointed out to us considerably to the left of our position. That we might ascertain at once what troops it was composed. I left my brother officers to complete the arrangements which we had begun, and walking down the field, demanded in a loud voice to be informed who they were that kept past in so retired a situation. A voice from the throng made answer that they were Americans, and begged of me not to fire upon my friends. Willing to deceive them still further; I asked to what corps they belonged; the speaker replied that they were the second battalion of the first regiment, and inquired what had become of the first battalion. I told him that it was upon my right, and assuming a tone of authority, commanded him not to move from his
present situation till I should join him with a party of which I was at the head (Gleig 1821:156-157).

The battle lasted until three in the morning of December 23, and Ensign Gleig went on to describe the aftermath:

The night was far spent, and the sound of firing had begun to wax faint, when, checking the ardour of our brave followers, we collected them once more together and fell back into the village. Here likewise considerable numbers from other detachments assembled, and here we learned that the Americans were repulsed on every side. The combat had been long and obstinately contested: it began at eight o'clock in the evening and continued till three in the morning—but the victory was ours. True, it was the reverse of a bloodless one, not fewer than two hundred and fifty of our best men having fallen in the struggle: but even at the expense of such a loss, we could not but account ourselves fortunate in escaping from the snare in which we had confessedly been taken.

To me, however, the announcement of the victory brought no rejoicing, for it was accompanied with the intelligence that my friend was among the killed. I well recollect the circumstances under which these sad news reached me. I was standing with a sword in each hand—my own and that of the officer who had surrendereed to me, and, as the reader may imagine, in no bad humour with myself or with the brave fellows about me, when a brother officer stepping forward abruptly told the tale. It came upon me like a thunderbolt; and casting aside my trophy, I thought only of the loss which I had sustained. Regardless of every other matter I ran to the rear and found Grey lying behind the dung-heap, motionless and cold. A little pool of blood which had coagulated under his head, pointed out the spot where the ball had entered, and the position of his limbs gave proof that he must have died without a struggle. I cannot pretend to describe what were then my sensations, but of whatever nature they might be, little time was given for their indulgence; for the bugle sounding the alarm, I was compelled to leave him as he lay, and to join my corps. Though the alarm proved to be a false one, it had the good effect of bringing all the troops together, by which means a regular line was now, for the first time since the commencement of the action, formed. In this order, having defiled considerably to the left, so as to command the highway, we stood in front of our bivouac till dawn began to appear; when, to avoid the fire of the schooner, we once more moved to the river's bank and lay down. Here, during the whole of the succeeding day, the troops were kept shivering in the cold frosty air; without fires, without provisions, and exhausted with fatigue; nor was it till the return of night that any attempt to extricate them from their comfortless situation could be made.

Whilst others were thus reposing, I stole away with two or three men for the purpose of performing the last sad act of affection which it was possible for me to perform to my friend Grey. As we had completely changed our ground, it was not possible for me at once to discover the spot where he lay; indeed I traversed a large portion of the field before I hit upon it. Whilst thus wandering over the arena of last night's contest, the most shocking and most disgusting spectacles everywhere met my eyes. I have frequently beheld a greater number of dead bodies within as narrow a compass, though these, to speak the truth, were numerous enough, but wounds more disfiguring or more horrible I certainly never witnessed. A man shot through the head or heart lies as if he were in a deep slumber; insomuch that when you gaze upon him you experience little else than pity. But of these, many had met their deaths from bayonet wounds, sabre cuts, or heavy blows from the butt ends of muskets; and the consequence was, that not only were the wounds themselves exceedingly frightful, but the very countenances of the dead exhibited the most savage and ghastly expressions. Friends and foes lay together in small groups of four or six, nor was it difficult to tell almost the very hand by which some of them had fallen. Nay, such had been the deadly closeness of the strife, that in one or two places an English and American soldier might be seen with the bayonet of each fastened in the other's body.

Having searched for some time in vain, I at length discovered my friend lying where during the action we had separated, and where, when the action came to a close, I had at first found him, shot through the temples by a rifle bullet so remarkably small as scarcely to leave any trace of its progress... Lifting him therefore upon a cart, I had him carried down to head-quarter house [Villeré plantation], now converted into a hospital, and having dug for him a grave at the bottom of the garden, I laid him there as a soldier should be laid, arrayed, not in a shroud, but in his uniform (Gleig 1821:159).

An American perspective on the Night Battle is provided by Major A. Latour, Major General Jackson's chief military engineer. Latour described the position of the British forces on December 23rd:

The first division of British troops [General Keane's division], having encamped, or rather bivouacked, as I have already observed, at the angle formed by the road, on the highest part of Villeré's plantation, in irregular order; some on the side: of the levee, and others in the plain, outposts had been stationed at different places, in an oblique line, extending from the boundary between La Ronde's and Lacoste's plantations, running along the negro huts of the latter, on the back
of the dwelling house, as far as a cluster of live oaks, on Villère’s canal, near the wood (Smith 1999:93).

Once the American schooner Carolina began its heavy bombardment of the British troops, the British were thrown into disarray. Many of the British sought cover behind an artificial levee that was located a short distance south of the Lacoste house. The American ground forces took advantage of their confusion and attacked, as Latour described,

At this moment a company of the seventh, commanded by lieutenant M’Klelland, under colonel Piatt, quarter-mater-general, advanced from the gate of LaRonde’s plantation, on the road to the boundary of Lacoste’s, at the distance of fifteen paces, where the detachment was received with a discharge of musketry, from one of the enemy’s Out-posts stationed on the road. Though this outpost of a considerable number of men, & bat gallant company attacked them vigorously, and forced them to retire; and colonel Piatt, with a few men of the detachment, advanced to the ground from which they had just driven the enemy. The latter, having received a reinforcement of two hundred men, and, being now about three hundred strong, returned to resume their former position, and kept up a brisk fire of musketry against the detachment, who as briskly returned it (Smith 1999:95-96).

As the battle progressed, Latour continued his description of the action at Lacoste Plantation,

Plauche’s battalion, now forming the centre, advanced in close column, and displayed under the enemy’s fire, which was then kept up by his whole front, from the bank of the river to Laronde’s garden, forming an angle; or curve, in. the centre. Already had our troops, animated with martial ardour, forced the enemy to give way; and they ‘continued to advance, keeping up an incessant fire the cry of charge! charge! push on with the bayonet! ran from rank to rank on the left, when the enemy thought proper to retire, favoured by the darkness which was increased by the fog, and by the smoke which a light breeze from the south blew in the faces of our men. The artillery had all this time been playing upon the enemy, who made an attempt to seize it; but the fire from the right of the [U.S. Army] 7th regiment, and from the marines, frustrated his intent. At last when the smoke dispersed, the enemy had already retired within the limits of Lacoste’s plantation (Smith 1999:97).

Latour then describes the actions of Coffee’s Tennessee troops at Lacoste.

General Coffee ordered his riflemen to dismount on the edge of the ditch separating the two plantations, where he left about one hundred men to take care of the horses, and have them ready when wanted. The division crossed the boundary line, and pushed forward in a direction perpendicular to that line. Captain Beale’s company, which had advanced near the wood, within a short distance of one of the enemy’s advanced guards, followed the movements of general Coffee, who drew up his division almost on the limits between the grounds of Lacoste and Villère. The detachment of cavalry under the command of major Hinds, not being able to manoeuvre in fields cut up with ditches at very close intervals, remained drawn up on the edge of a ditch in the middle of the plantation. Colonel Coffee’s division extended its front as much as possible, and the general ordered it to advance in silence, and fire without order, taking aim with their utmost skill. Long practice had enabled these riflemen to keep up a very brisk fire, the more destructive, as not a man discharged his piece without doing execution. The division continued to advance, driving the enemy before it, and took its second position in front of Lacoste’s plantation, where was posted the [British] 83th, which, on receiving the first discharge, fell back behind the old levee, towards the camp (Smith 1999:98).

Latour further noted specific fighting in the vicinity of Lacoste’s slave quarter.

About the same time Coffee’s division discovered that several parties of the enemy were posted among Lacoste’s negro huts. On this the general ordered his men to move forward to the right, to drive the enemy from that position, which was soon effected.

The negro huts of Mr. Lacoste’s plantation still exhibit evident proofs of the unerring aim of the gallant Tennesseans of Coffee’s division: in one spot particularly are seen half a dozen marks of their balls in a diameter of four inches, which were probably all fired at the same object (Smith 1999:99).

Although he held the advantage, Major General Jackson opted for a prudent retreat because of increasing foggy weather conditions, as Latour noted, “He [General Jackson] therefore led back his troops to their former position, from the principal entrance to the buildings of Laronde’s plantation, where they remained until four in the morning. General Coffee took his position for the night in front of Laronde’s garden, on the left of the other troops” (Smith 1999:100-101).

Following the arrival of General Pakenham and additional British troops on December 25, General Keane moved his
headquarters from Villé plantation to Lacoste plantation, where he remained until January, when he was mortally wounded in the New Orleans campaign (Dickson, 44-45, cited in Swanson 1985:45).

Secondary accounts of the Battle of New Orleans also provide details about the action at Lacoste plantation. Smith (1904:42-44) noted details of the formation of the Americans:

About nightfall the troops were formed in line of battle, the left composed of a part of Coffee's men, Beale's Rifles, the Mississippi dragoons, and some other mounted riflemen, in all about seven hundred and thirty men, General Coffee in command. Colonel Laronde as guide. Under cover of the darkness, they took position back of the plantation of the latter. The right formed on a perpendicular line from the river to the garden of Laronde's plantation, and on its principal avenue. The artillery occupied the high road, supported by a detachment of marines. On the left of the artillery were stationed the Seventh and Forty-fourth regulars, Plauche's and Daquin's battalions, and a squad of Choctaw Indians, all under the command of Colonel Ross.

The second invading division of the British army, made up of the Twenty-first, Forty-fourth, and Ninety-third Regiments, with a corps of artillery, in all about twenty-five hundred men, was disembarked at the terminus of Villé Canal at half-past seven o'clock in the evening of the twenty-third, just as the roar of the ship's cannon announced the opening of the night battle. At seven o'clock Commodore Patterson had anchored the Carolina in the Mississippi, as requested, in front of the British camp, and but a good musket-shot away. Such was the security felt by the enemy in camp that they stood upon the levee and viewed her as a common boat plying the river. Within thirty minutes she opened upon the enemy a destructive fire which spread consternation and havoc throughout their camp. In half an hour more they were driven out, with many killed and wounded. About eight o'clock the troops on the right, led by Jackson himself, began the attack on the enemy's left. The Seventh and Forty-fourth regulars became hotly engaged along the line, supported by McRae's artillery. Plauche's and Daquin's battalions coming up, the fighting became furious from the road to Laronde's garden. The British were forced back within the limits of Lacoste's plantation, the combatants being often intermingled and fighting hand-to-hand, almost undistinguishable in the darkness of night, made denser by the smoke of battle and the gathering fog.

Meanwhile, Coffee's troops, from the rear of Laronde's plantation, were moved to the boundary limits of Lacoste and Villé, with a view of taking the enemy in the rear. Coffee extended his front and ordered his men to move forward in silence and to fire without orders, taking aim as best they could. They drove the enemy before them, and took a second position in front of Lacoste's plantation. Here was posted the Eighty-fifth Regiment of the British army, which was forced back by the first fire toward their main camp. Captain Beale's Riflemen advanced on the left into the British camp at Villé's, driving the enemy before them and taking some prisoners, but sustained some loss before joining Coffee again. Coffee's division finally took a last position in front of the old levee, near Laronde's boundary, where it harassed the enemy as they fell back, driven by Jackson on the right. By ten o'clock the British had fallen back to their camp in discomfiture, where they were permitted to lay in comparative quiet until morning, except their harassment from the artillery fire of the schooner Carolina.

The map made by U.S. Army Engineer Major Latour of the December 22-23 battle is an important cartographic source. An undated plan, entitled Plan of the Lacoste Plantation Divided into Large Lots depicts the main house, numerous support buildings and a double row of slave dwellings on the upstream side of the house. This arrangement is similar to the plantation layout drawn by Latour. A pen and ink sketch map of the battle theater, which was drawn on January 28, 1815 by Manners White shows the Lacoste plantation house but he provides no details of the support buildings or enslaved quarter. White does note the December 23rd battle location, just upstream from the Lacoste house in his sketch.

Some information is available about the Lacoste property following the battle. In 1821, Leander Lacoste filed claims for losses incurred on his plantation as a result of the New Orleans campaign (American State Papers 1832). The Lacoste plantation survived the War of 1812, the Civil War, and both World Wars, before succumbing sometime around the time of the Korean War in the early 1950s. The area surrounding the plantation home compound remained agricultural land into the second half of the 20th century, as shown in a 1940 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers aerial image of the area (see Parts 2 and 3). Several aerial photographic views of the house and grounds from the 1930s-1940s also have survived. William Hyland stated that the Lacoste house was last occupied by the Lauga family in the 1950s (William Hyland personal communication May 17, 2011). Four photographs of the Lacoste plantation home taken prior to 1952 were located in the Frances B. Johnston Photograph Collection at the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. One example is shown in Part 2 (Frances B. Johnston Photograph Collection 1864-1952). Other documentation on the
Lacoste plantation house was assembled by architect and historian Samuel Wilson (1965) and includes published and unpublished materials presently curated in the offices of Koch and Wilson Architects in New Orleans, and in the Special Collections Library of Tulane University. Wilson photo-documented the Lacoste house prior to its disappearance in the 1950s. He observed 18th and 19th century artifacts at the site. The Chalmette High School was built in 1961 on western portions of the Pierre Lacoste plantation. No archeological sites are recorded in the Lacoste plantation vicinity.

A residential subdivision now sits east of Chalmette High School and Palissiano Avenue. It includes Pecan Drive and cross-streets Ohio and Indiana. This real estate was formerly owned by Mr. J. Palissiano. He was a tomato farmer and most of the land in the vicinity of the present subdivision and Chalmette High School was formerly agricultural tomato fields. Pecan Street was formerly lined with large pecan trees, which were a cash crop for Mr. Palissiano. He lived south of Indiana Street. Around 1949 he subdivided his property and sold it for residential housing (Allen Heffker personal communication June 30, 2011).

Mr. James T. Wolfe, Jr. and his son, James T. Wolfe, III, who formerly lived directly east of the Bobby Nuss Stadium on Pecan Drive, discovered numerous battlefield artifacts at Lacoste plantation when the stadium was constructed on the Chalmette High School campus. Mr. Wolfe donated these relics to the Louisiana State Museum and these items are currently on display at the Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park Museum in Chalmette, Louisiana. The items include a British flintlock pistol, a bayonet, a tomahawk, and several large cannonballs of different sizes. The Wolfs found these relics when the ground surface was deeply disturbed for construction of the stadium bleachers. Most of the recovered items came from the northeastern area of the stadium. Mr. Wolfe is since deceased but this information was related by his immediate neighbor who had firsthand knowledge of these discoveries. Mr. Heffker, a 33-year resident of the neighborhood noted that many other relics were discovered by others during the stadium construction but their current whereabouts are not known (Allen Heffker personal communication June 30, 2011). Mr. Heffker’s statements were corroborated by two newspaper articles (Times Picayune 1966:95). The Chalmette High School stadium, designed to hold 5,000 seats, was constructed by the Richard F. Pittman Construction Company (Times Picayune 1963a:8). The first football game was played in the new Chalmette High School stadium in September, 1962 (Wickers 1962:30).

Unfortunately, the Lacoste house was destroyed prior to the cultural resource legislation of the 1960s and prior to later Section 106 regulations. Consequently the site and plantation grounds were not studied archeologically. GIS analysis of the Lacoste Plantation vicinity indicates that most of the area displays very little potential for intact cultural resources. The area has been urbanized and all surface evidence of the plantation has been obliterated. This is illustrated in a series of GIS map overlays in Part 3, Figures 6-10. One area that may have potential for some surviving battle evidence is a greenspace located west of Dauterive Drive and east of Plaza Drive, north of St. Bernard Highway and south of Judge Perez Parkway. This area was briefly reconnetered by the survey team but no excavation or metal detecting was attempted. This area contains a large amount of metal debris on the surface, which would likely render a metal detector survey ineffective. Remnants of a shallow canal are visible in that area. This area may contain battle evidence but the metal laden topsoil would need to be removed before this evidence can be identified.

De La Ronde Plantation

The De La Ronde plantation is a Defining Battlefield Feature of the New Orleans campaign on several counts (Figures 37-41). First, it was the scene of battle in the December 23 engagement. Following the battle the house was used as a headquarters by British officers for subsequent engagements. It also served as a hospital and burial site for the British dead. The main De La Ronde plantation home ruins have long captured the attention of locals and tourists in St. Bernard Parish.

The De La Ronde plantation resumed operation after the New Orleans campaign. Changes to the plantation plan and modifications to the dwelling were made but these changes are not well documented. Emile Ducros described the home in this manner, “The mansion had two stories of cement-covered brick, containing a total of sixteen rooms. On its four sides were spacious galleries supported by a beautiful colonnade, the whole covered by a sloping roof with vertical windows projecting” (Ducros, in Sebeld 2000:42). Sebeld (2000:43) noted, “The shells of the enemy made a hole in the roof of Versailles Mansion”.

Sebeld (2000:43-44) provides a chain of ownership for the property following the De La Ronde family. From De La Ronde, it passed to Norman Story and then to Armand Heine. Sebeld offered clues to the destruction of the plantation home, “this lovely mansion became the property of a Mr. Luqa, a dairy man, who stalled his animals on the first floor of the mansion and in other ways desecrated the premises. It was during his ownership, subsequent to 1876, that the house caught fire and was destroyed….The walls were still standing, until the storm of September 29th,
Figure 37. Portions of Peddie Map Showing Bienvenue and De La Ronde Plantations (Peddie 1815).

Figure 38. De La Ronde Plantation House, Facing North (Magnier ca. 1885).
Figure 40. Samuel Wilson’s Schematic of De La Ronde House Ground Floor Plan (Black areas were extant in 1949) (Wilson 1965).
two traffic lanes of St. Bernard Highway. An updated site form for 16SB88 was prepared in this study to incorporate the Pakenham Oaks.

Plans for the subdivision of De La Ronde Plantation, to be known as Packenham Place, were described in a New Orleans newspaper in 1921. This plan was presented as a continuation of an earlier dream of the De La Ronde family to create a "Chemin de Paris", "Versaille", and a "Model City" (The New Orleans Item 1921:7). The newspaper report contained several interesting details about the property: "The southern railroad laid tracks through the former yard of the farm house... Mr. Oliver S. Livaudais bought the land from the Southern railroad and divided it into lots and named it Pakingham Place. The newspaper went on to state that, "...Mr. Livaudais will be assisted in disposing of the lots by Captain Ben K. Green and W.C. LeBlanc" (The New Orleans Item 1921:7). The article in the paper described the vision of the developers. "Paris road, or as Monsieur Deloronde called it Chemin de Paris, will be lined with palms. The streets will be lined with homes. The first of these will be built and sold with the lots... The American Sugar Refiner, the largest plant of its kind in the world, is about two miles away, the St. Bernard Cypress Company has a large saw mill near the refinery.

Figure 41. 1940 Aerial Photograph Showing De La Ronde Ruin and Pakenham Oaks (Mississippi River in lower right) (USCOE 1940).
The Sinclair oil refinery is near by. The Chalmette slips are just above the Packenham Ruins. The Southern railroad plans to erect large shops within a few squares of what is to be the front of Pakenham Place” (The New Orleans Item 1921:7). The glowing review in the newspaper continued, “The road from the Orleans parish line to Pakenham Place is one of the best in the country. It is even better than the paved streets in Orleans which lead to the parish line. The speed law is 30 miles an hour” (The New Orleans Item 1921:7). The article also touched on the historical and cultural significance of the property. “The Pakenham Ruins and the oak grove between the crumbled farm house and the river is to be made into a National park... British cannon balls have been found in seven of the large oak trees behind the ruins... The historic Villere Plantation is a half mile below the Pakenham Ruins” (The New Orleans Item 1921:7).

Packenham Place never became a reality, although the area surrounding the De La Ronde ruins was developed in a less planned way. The proposed Pakenham Ruins and oak grove national park never reached fruition either. Meanwhile, the plantation house ruins continued to degrade over the next 90 years to its current state. The impressive oak alley, known variously as the De La Ronde Oaks or Pakenham Oaks, leads from the front yard of the De La Ronde home ruins and southward to an industrial property. It has historical antiquity, although it remains debatable whether this landscape feature existed at the time of the New Orleans campaign. Whether or not it existed is an important topic, but the fact that this piece of geography was part of the December 23 battlefield is unquestionable.

New Orleans newspaper columnist Pie Dufour (1952:40) presented a strong argument that the oak alley at De La Ronde’s plantation did not exist at the time of the battle. He also clarifies the inappropriateness of several more recent “historical” names applied to this plantation. Dufour points out that the planting of the oaks, which is attributed by many to Pierre Denis De La Ronde in 1783, conflicts with historical documentation, since De La Ronde did not acquire the property until 1799. Dufour suggests that the oaks were not planted until the early 19th century. He cites as negative evidence for the existence of the oaks in 1814-1815 the absence of any mention of them by engineer and mapmaker Latour, either in his written account or on any of his detailed battlefield maps (Smith 1999). Dufour points out that the oaks are shown on Zimpel 1834 topographic map, which shows that they were planted several decades prior to that date. It remains debatable whether the oak alley existed at the time of the battle, or if it did, were the trees sufficiently large to offer protection or to obscure the field of fire/viewshed as a battlefield feature? The term, “Versailles”, which many scholars used in describing De La Ronde’s plantation during the battle era, was not applied to the property until 1832. Dufour’s historical information to support his argument was supplied by Samuel Wilson, a noted historic preservationist in New Orleans. Others remained unconvinced by Dufour’s argument and a plaque, honoring the Versaille Oaks, was dedicated on January 23, 1952 (Times Picayune 1952:16).

GIS analysis of the De La Ronde Plantation vicinity indicates the area is likely to contain battle-related evidence. The brick ruins of the De La Ronde Plantation are the most obvious feature relating to the battle. A series of GIS maps showing the De La Ronde area is presented in Part 3, Figures 6-10. Areas with archeological potential include the traffic island containing the De La Ronde ruins and Pakenham Park. The other surrounding areas where the plantation complex was located are largely compromised by urban and industrial development. While these areas may contain deeply buried features, such as wells or cellars, they are unlikely to harbor shallow deposits.

Bienvenu Plantation

Bienvenu Plantation is a Defining Battlefield Feature in the New Orleans campaign primarily for its role as an advance British headquarters and troop staging area. Fighting on January 1 and 8 may have extended onto the Bienvenu plantation grounds, but the core of this fighting occurred further to the west.

On December 23, “The British established their lines on Bienvenu’s plantation, about two miles below, and there fortified themselves, waiting for their artillery” (Niles’ Weekly Register 1815, Volume 7:358). According to Alexander Walker, the Bienvenu Plantation was, "in the chateau style... which consisted of two stories and an attic, the ground floor being usually paved with brick or marble, and the galleries supported by brick pillars, circling the whole building. These houses were surrounded by trees and shrubbery, with brick pillars, circling the whole building. These houses were surrounded by trees and shrubbery, so that, at a short distance, they could scarcely be seen. They looked to the river, and were built usually at a distance of a few hundred yards from its bank, with cultivated gardens, or neatly trimmed lawns, shaded by spreading live oak and pecan trees, and hedged around with a thick growth of orange and lemon trees, extending in front to the road, which follows the levee. The plantations were divided by slight but durable fences of cypress pickets, with ditches on both sides. Their fronts usually averaged a mile or three-quarters on the river, with about the same depth, terminating in the cypress swamp, which extends the whole distance from the mouth of the Mississippi to the highlands, a distance of over two hundred miles, leaving” between it and the river, a narrow neck of solid and cultivable land (Walker 1859:124-126).
Further details of the Bienvenu Plantation reveal an opulence and refinement within the walls of the main house. Lieutenant Hill with the Royal Artillery reported, “It was an elegant mansion; much of the furniture had been removed, but enough remained to mark the taste of the proprietor. In the hall, which was floored with variegated marble, stood two magnificent globes, and a splendid orrery. One room contained a vast collection of valuable books” (Hill 1836:303-342). The Bienvenu Plantation house was destroyed by an artillery bombardment of hot shot during the New Orleans campaign.

Chesterton (1853, Volume 1:190) described the British defenses that were constructed opposite Line Jackson, in which he provides insightful comparison of the construction techniques. He described Line Jackson as a, “broad, impenetrable barrier of cotton bales, protected by an artificial ditch, of good pretensions, interposed to protect them”, and he noted, “we hastily constructed batteries formed principally of casks of sugar, rolled out from their storehouses for an unlooked-for consignment. This novel fortification was strengthened by filling up the interstices with sand-bags, charged with the alluvial deposit, which, by artificial embankment, had acquired consistency.”

Major Forrest (Rankin 1961:35) wrote in his journal for December 28-31, “all exertions were made to get up from the Ships ten Eighteen pounders, and Four Twenty four pounder Caronades with the necessary Ammunition and Stores, these Guns were brought up the Canal to within a quarter of a Mile of the Main Road, and thence on the Carts of the Country, or our 9 pound Limbers to the Battery and dragged by Seamen with incredible labor”. Forrest further noted, “Four 18 pounders were placed in a Battery formed with hogheads of Sugar on the Main Road to fire upon the Ship [sloop Louisiana] if she dropped down.”

In 1951, the Kaiser Aluminum Company constructed a massive aluminum smelter facility on property located immediately downstream from the Chalmette National Cemetery. The local community welcomed the industry as New Orleans Mayor deLesseps Morrison declared, “Kaiser Aluminum’s new plant here is the greatest thing since the Battle of New Orleans in 1815” (Binezewski 2002:1-3). This factory produced aluminum until 1983, when it was closed. A perspective view of the Kaiser Aluminum factory in 1953 is shown in Part 2. Kaiser Aluminum management promised to protect the “Four Oaks” and other large trees in building their facility (Times Picayune 1951:12). Clearly, the Kaiser smelter and its associated improvements adversely impacted major portions of the battlefield landscape.

Archeologists with FEMA conducted a reconnaissance survey on a portion of Bienvenu plantation in 2008, as part of the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort (Wilder 2008). This portion of the battlefield is largely industrialized, and the survey failed to locate any artifacts or archeological sites in the area investigated. The area; however, may yet contain small pockets of archeological deposits that pertain to the battle and the 19th century plantation.

The beginning of the 20th century saw some activity relating to the Bienvenu plantation property. Mr. Roy, of the St. Bernard Police Jury, introduced a resolution in October, 1900, concerning the public road from the Chalmette National Cemetery to Port Chalmette, which read:

Whereas, from the impassable character of the public highway, from the upper line of the Chalmette national cemetery to Port Chalmette, and the fact that the public levee in that locality will be moved back or enlarged on the landside in the near future, it has become imperatively necessary to change the line of the public highway, which, according to law (Revised Statutes of Louisiana, sections 3364 and 3371), should be 25 feet in width clear, and which is actually only about 14 feet wide in front of the Chalmette national cemetery; and in view of the fact that this new line is approved and sanctioned by this body; and whereas, the progressive citizens of this parish have raised by voluntary subscriptions a certain amount of money with which to build the new highway; and whereas, the boundary walls and front or public road railing of the Chalmette national cemetery would obstruct the proposed change of line of said public highway, and that said walls and front railing can be easily moved back, the walls cut off and the front railing re-established at such a distance as not in any manner to interfere with or encroach upon the graves, or in any way destroy or mar the appearance of said cemetery, and in view of the fact that every property owner of the locality has made a grant of 20 feet for building the new highway; be it Resolved, That the secretary of war be, and he is hereby solicited to instruct the superintendent of the said Chalmette national cemetery to make such alterations of said cemetery walls and removal of said front railing so as to admit the contemplated reconstruction of the aforesaid public highway; be it further Resolved, That the secretary of this body be, and is hereby instructed to forward a certified copy of these resolutions to the secretary of war (Times Picayune 1900:3).

GIS analysis of the Bienvenu plantation vicinity indicates that the areas are largely destroyed by industrial and urban development. The Chalmette Vista housing subdivision obliterated areas north of St. Bernard Highway and the former Kaiser Aluminum factory complex destroyed areas south of St. Bernard Highway. No areas were identified by the present research suitable for archeological research.
Chalmet and Rodriguez Plantations

The Chalmette and Rodriguez plantations represent defining battlefield features for several reasons. These two plantations were the scene of the heaviest fighting on January 1 and 8 (Figure 42-45). The British occupied the grounds of the Chalmette Plantation and the American defensive line was on the Rodriguez Plantation. Most of the British casualties from the campaign were suffered in their advance against the American line.

The Chalmette plantation, which gives its name to the battlefield and the city, was owned by the Chalmet family for only a brief period prior to the battle. The plantation had been owned by William Brown. Brown was the Tax Collector for the Port of New Orleans. He was involved in a financial scandal and was forced to abandon his property, after which his assets were seized and sold by the U.S. government (Times Picayune 1883:4). The plantation was sold to M. Chalmette de Ligny, hence the Chalmet plantation (W.P.A. n.d:1). Alexander Walker describes “The upper line of Chalmette’s is marked by a small canal or ditch, called Rodriguez Canal, which was dry the greater part of the year, and only contained a small quantity of water when the river was high” (Walker 1859:124-126).

Major General Jackson established his main line of defense on the west bank of the Rodriguez Canal on the Rodriguez Plantation. These two features were probably two of the most significant features on the entire battlefield. Jackson’s placement of this line, though unsophisticated in its geometry, was a brilliant strategic move, since it prevented the British movement towards New Orleans. This defense was identified as Line Jackson. Line Jackson was defended by a redoubt on its southern end at the levee and by a series of cannon batteries. Another small redoubt was positioned toward the northern end of the line where natural topography required Line Jackson to bend sharply to the northwest. Line Jackson continued for an undetermined distance into the cypress swamps on the northern edge of the Chalmette Plain. These two features, Rodriguez Canal and Line Jackson, are depicted on numerous battle maps and in many written accounts. Portions of both features have been established by archeological study. Nevertheless, confusion remains regarding the physical extent and location of these features. Major Latour’s map shows Line Jackson and the Rodriguez Canal and is considered by many researchers to be the most accurate portrayal of these two features. The line extends for a straight distance of 1,650 yards (1,527 m), and then northwestward for another 183 m (Smith 1999). Latour’s rendition attests that Line Jackson was 1,327 m in total length. Major General Jackson’s (civilian) aide, Edward Livingston, described Line Jackson as 1,527 yards (1400 m) in length.

Livingston noted that General Coffee’s men defended the last 613 yards (561 m) of the line (Hunt 1864). Line Jackson was defended by eight artillery batteries and a parapet at the Mississippi River end of the line. The batteries were identified by number, I-8. Battery 7, commanded by Lieutenant Samuel Spotts, 7th U.S. Regiment, saw the heaviest action in the British attack and was responsible for downing dozens of British troops. Batteries 6 and 8 also saw heated action in the assault (Reid and Eaton 1818:224).

Royal Engineer H.D. Jones surveyed the battlefield several months after the battle and he mapped Line Jackson. Jones showed it extending only 400 yards, then making a right angle to the northwest and continuing for another 100 yards (Irion et al. 1994:48). British Major General Lambert’s January 10, 1815 letter described the American defenses at Line Jackson this way,

On the left bank of the river it was simply a straight line of about a front of 1000 yards with a parapet, the right resting on the river and the left on a wood, which had been impracticable for any body of troops to pass. This line was strengthened by flank works, and had a canal about four feet generally, but not altogether of an equal width: it was supposed to narrow towards their left; about eight heavy guns were in position on this line. The Mississippi is here about eight hundred yards across, and they had on the right bank a heavy battery of twelve guns, which enflamed the whole front of the position on the left bank (Rankin 1961:46).

Benjamin Latrobe noted that some 200 bales of cotton were used in the construction of Line Jackson (Latrobe 1951:73-74; Birkedal 2009:472-475). The cotton was used to strengthen and raise the earthworks. This was a unique fortification technique, which drew remarks from both American and British military participants in the battle. Although the bales were prone to igniting when struck by rockets or hot shrapnel, the proved to be an effective defense against the incoming British fire, as the cotton deflected, deadened, and muffled the impacts.

The 1938 W.P.A. Federal Writers’ Project guide for the Chalmette National Historical Park offers information about the places affiliated with the battle, including the Chalmette and Rodriguez plantations. On the tour, at the location on the highway 5.8 miles from Arabi, the guide states,

Right is a paved drive leading to Chalmette Monument...The road here parallels Jackson’s Line (about 50 yds. To the left) which ran from the river to a point a quarter mile north of the present state highway. A slight depression and elevation, along
Figure 42. Portion of Peddie Map Showing Line Jackson and Advance British Positions (Peddie 1815).

Figure 43. Perspective View of Kaiser Aluminum Factory (in foreground) and Chalmette National cemetery, Monument and Other Features (in background) in 1953. View to West (Binczewski 2002: Figure 2).
Figure 44. Latrobe’s Plan of the Battlefield (Latrobe 1819).

Figure 45. Jackson’s Headquarters [Rodriguez House] (Cable 1884:195).
which a row of moss-hung hackberry trees stands, is the only evidence of the breastwork that was thrown up at this point; the site was chosen because the Rodriguez Canal afforded an advantageous natural defense, and also because the distance between the cypress swamp and the river was the shortest line to be defended in that region. It is interesting to note that the Mississippi River has shifted its eastern bank to a great extent since the Battle of New Orleans, the present length of Jackson's line having been shortened by a 230-yard encroachment of the river. As a result, the sites of Batteries 1, 2, and 3 are now under water. [Note: Subsequent research by Birkedal, Swanson and others have contradicted this interpretation of the river's geomorphological history and its impact on the preservation potential of the battlefield features.] Battery 3, which was captured by the Baratarian artillerymen You and Beluche, is erroneously designated by a marker set up on a tree a short distance from the river. The position of the two other markers pointing out Batteries 4 and 5 is approximately correct. The cypress swamp, which once extended well to the river side of La 1 and in which Coffee and his volunteers defended the left flank during the onslaught of the bulk of the British forces, is no longer in evidence.

The W.P.A. guide continued,

At 6 m. (R) [from Arabi] is a gravel road. Right on this road is Faizendeville, 0.3 m., a Negro settlement occupying the site of the former DeFaizendeville Plantation. A marker 50 yards to the left of the Faizendeville Road, about 300 yards in from La. 1, marks the place where Gen. Pakenham was shot from his horse as he rallied his men to a second charge. Turn (R) on gravel road.

The British position prior to the engagement of Jan. 8, 1815, was taken along the upstream side of the cemetery situated 300 yards east of Faizendeville Road, while on the downstream side were located the twenty-four field pieces that were silenced in the artillery duel of Jan. 1. Roughly paralleling this side of the cemetery may be seen the Confederate Breastworks erected in 1862 as a defense against a second invasion—that of Admiral Farragut and his Federal forces.

At 1.6 m (L) is the Colomb Home (visitors allowed). To the rear are the Four Oaks, to which Pakenham was carried from the field of battle and under which he died. The century-old house is a raised cottage with brick, basement-like ground story, above which is the white painted cypress second floor; there is a wide veranda supported by massive square, brick columns. The remnants of an old slave jail are still standing. Return to La 1.

At 6.1 m (R) is the U.S. National Cemetery, laid out in 1864; it contains the graves of more than 14,000 Union soldiers, more than half of whom are unknown.

At 7.3 m (R) are the ruins of Versailles, the one-time plantation home of Pierre Denis de la Ronde III. Extending from the roadside ruins to the river is a magnificent avenue of giant, moss-festooned live oaks planted in 1762 and popularly known as Pakenham Oaks, through the erroneous supposition that the British leader died beneath them. Part of the bloody battle of December 23 was fought under these trees, and it was from this position that Jackson and his men retreated upstream.

At 7.5 m. is the junction of La 61 (L) (paved). Left at 3.3 m. is Bayou Bienvenue, up which Pakenham brought his invading redcoats for the attack upon New Orleans having anchored his fleet off the Chandeleur Islands, in the Gulf.

At 8.2 m., about 150 yards (R) a marker designates the point from which the schooner "Carolina", poured a broadside into the British camp at 7:30 P.M. on December 23, thus giving the signal for a general attack. (It is interesting to note that the present bank of the Mississippi River is 600 yards south of this point, which in 1815 was close to the levee, thus making it necessary today to look away from the river to find the "Carolina's" former position.) The British camp at the moment of attack was situated about 300 yards north of the marker.

At 8.6 m (L), about a half-mile from the highway amid a cluster of trees is the 125-year-old Lacoste Home; the building was used by the British as headquarters for a battalion of infantry.

At 8.9 m. (L), several hundred yards back from the road, is the former overseer's house of Conseil, the plantation of Jacques Philippe de Villeré, first native-born Governor of Louisiana. Under a giant pecan tree, no longer standing, the viscera of Gen. Pakenham, British leader slain in the Battle of New Orleans are said to have been buried... Legend claims that the pecans of the tree ever afterwards were streaked with red. The remainder of his body is said to have been shipped to England preserved in a rum cask; the contents of which veterans of the campaign are supposed to have inadvertently drunk (W.P.A. Federal Writers' Program 1938b:379-381).

A move to mark the Chalmette battlefield began relatively early. The State of Louisiana, through the efforts of Governors Wickliffe and Walker, authorized the
acquisition of property for a monument at Chalmette in 1850 (Times Picayune 1883:4). The Chalmette Monumental Association, led by President James H. Caldwell, played a key role in effecting the property acquisition. In 1851 the monument committee was composed of General James Walker, General J.D. Plauche, and Judge Charles Gayarre. The property was purchased for $5,000 in 1852 and the grounds for the monument were surveyed in October, 1855 (W.P.A. n.d.; 1; Times Picayune 1855:2). The State of Louisiana appropriated funds for the monument construction in 1852 and work began in 1855. The Civil War erupted before the monument was completed, however, and it began to fall into ruin. The state of Louisiana transferred ownership of the property to the U.S. Government in 1893. According to W.P.A. records, the monument was completed by 1909 (W.P.A. n.d.:3).

A $60,000 W.P.A. Project in the 1930s was used to build, “a concrete road from the highway to the monument, filling in low grounds, planting shrubbery and marking off the old battlefield” (W.P.A. n.d.:3). The project was done in hopes that the area would become a national park.

Ted Birkedal directed NPS excavations at 16SB147 in 1983 and 1984. Birkedal’s excavation project is detailed in 2005 and 2009 reports (Birkedal 2005, 2009) and in reports by other authors (Greene 1985a; Noble and Goodwin 1987). (See “Previous Battlefield Research” section at the beginning of this report for additional details.) Birkedal (2005:1) noted, “Archaeological investigations in 1983 had suggested that the National Park Service’s long-standing reconstruction of the Battle of New Orleans’ geography was in serious error. The southern third of the main battlefield, which has been once thought to have been lost to the Mississippi River’s erosive forces, had apparently survived nearly intact to the landward of the river bank. The Corps of Engineers’ purpose was to confirm these initial findings and obtain a better fix on the locations of significant battle features as well as civilian historical properties that might lie in the path of construction.” Batteries 1 and 2 are either completely destroyed, eroded into the Mississippi River, or lie deeply buried beneath the Mississippi River levee (Birkedal 2009:343-344).

Birkedal (2009:346, 464-470, 390-416, and 474-475) identified the approximate location of Battery 3, based on his archeological excavations. Birkedal considered Battery 3 to be the best candidate on the Chalmette Unit property for a “fixed reference point” for the battlefield. Birkedal’s placement of Battery 3 is supported by Benjamin Latrobe’s 1819 watercolor sketch map of the Rodrguez Estate, where the battery location is marked by a “pond and a Gap” (Latrobe 1819; 1951). Battery 3 was a two-gun emplacement, which held two 24-pounder naval cannons (Smith 1999:122, 148). Birkedal notes that some accounts differentiate between these two gun positions with the south half of the battery (Battery 3) and the north half (Battery 4) (Birkedal 2009:474-475). The suspected location of Battery 3 was explored by Birkedal’s Test Area 3. Birkedal’s excavation plan, showing Test Area 3, is reproduced in Part 2. This map also was used in the GIS analysis to help determine the northern extent of Line Jackson.

Birkedal’s excavation in Test Area 3 also revealed preserved sections of the rampart on Line Jackson (Birkedal 2009:416-459). At one area where his excavations exposed a 7 m long section of vertical cypress palings, the rampart was oriented 34 degrees east of north. Birkedal (2009:484) also noted that NPS archeologist Wilson had identified another section of the rampart palings, as reported in 1963 (Wilson 1963:6). The precise location of Wilson’s discovery remains unclear, but Birkedal noted its location, “several hundred meters to the north of Test Area A”. Birkedal estimates that Wilson’s palings were located between Battery 6 and 7 on Line Jackson.

Birkedal’s success in relocating Battery 3 was nearly stymied by earlier NPS landscaping efforts. In his discussion of Test Area 3, he noted,

The tests at this location encountered a hole or ‘gap’ in the west bank of the Rodriguez Canal that conformed closely to the type of feature that was expected to mark the former location of Battery 3. Nothing in the surface topography of the area indicated the presence of this features because the builders of the National Park Service pathway in the late 1950s had viewed the remnant swale as an impasse to the construction of a level walkway. Consequently, they had gone to great efforts to obliterate the telltale swale by filling it with clean levee sand. Their efforts were in vain, however, for it was the depth of this sand fill that provided the first substantive archaeological clue in the search for Battery 3 (Birkedal 2009:402).

Research by Birkedal and his NPS colleagues have well established defining battlefield features at the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park. These include Battery 3, the Jackson Line, Rodriguez Canal, the Center Road, and Rodriguez plantation house (Major General Andrew Jackson’s headquarters). Birkedal’s research has also tentatively identified defining battlefield features on the adjacent Chalmette National Cemetery property, which includes the advance British Redoubts and the Center Road. The latter feature locations are based on map research and observations of the topography in the cemetery and no archeological excavations have been undertaken there. The Center Road and the British Redoubt would have been located on Chalmette Plantation. Line Jackson, the artillery batteries and the Rodriguez house were located on the Rodriguez Plantation.
GIS analysis of the Chalmette and Rodriguez plantations vicinity indicates high potential for intact cultural resources associated with the New Orleans campaign and particularly the January 1 and 8 engagements. This area is examined in a series of GIS maps in Part 3, Figures 23 and 24. The primary battlefield feature in this zone is Line Jackson. Most of Line Jackson, as well as six of the eight artillery batteries that were positioned along this line, are located on the NPS property on the Chalmette Unit. Batteries 1 and 2 likely lie beneath the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers levee or have been destroyed by river action.

A substantial portion of Line Jackson, approximately 470 meters, extends northeast beyond the St. Bernard Highway. There, at a location approximately 50-60 meters southwest of the intersection of Livingston Avenue and Pirate Drive, the land turned towards the north-northwest and continued for approximately another 150 m. As shown in the projected overlay map (Part 3, Figure 23), most of the portion of Line Jackson located north of the St. Bernard Highway falls on the former Meraux property. A section of the line probably crossed the Meraux Airport Tract. Unfortunately, a large segment of this newly defined section of Line Jackson is currently under development. These recent construction activities have included significant earth moving in the creation of a street and for building site preparations, structural foundations and utilities. Despite these recent losses, the area still may contain deposits associated with the New Orleans campaign and archeological study is warranted if the access to this area can be secured.

Macarty Plantation

The Macarty Plantation was a Defining Battlefield Feature in the New Orleans Campaign. Initially, the Macarty house served as General Andrew Jackson’s headquarters and command post. American troops were encamped over many areas of the Macarty Plantation. The plantation was not the scene of any documented fighting, although British artillery and small arms fire may have landed on the property during the January 1 and 8 engagements. Vincent Nolte, a civilian participant in the battle of New Orleans, later noted that cannonballs from the battle were still embedded in the Macarty house as late as 1838. He noted that the owners had “caused them to be gitt, in the year 1822” (Nolte 1854:202-226). The Federal government acknowledged its obligations for providing restitution for the damages to the Macarty plantation when, in 1822, the U.S. Congress passed an act for the Relief of the Heirs of Edward M’Carty, deceased. That legislation provided for, “2940 dolls [dollars], to be paid to the Heirs of E. M’Carty, &c. in full for Property destroyed during the invasion of Louisiana” (United States Congress 1822:145).

The Macarty Plantation served as General Jackson’s headquarters early in the campaign. As the military campaign progressed, Jackson relocated his headquarters slightly downstream to the Rodriguez house. The Macarty Plantation was owned at that time by Edward Macarty. It no longer exists. The creation of the Chalmette Ship in 1907 led to the destruction of the Macarty Plantation, sometime shortly thereafter (W.P.A. Federal Writers Project 1941).

GIS analysis indicates that most of the main Macarty plantation complex has been destroyed by industrial development. An area of woodland is located immediately west of the Chalmette Unit property boundary and south of St. Bernard Highway and northeast of the Port Slip. That area is poorly drained land but it may harbor archeological evidence from the January 8 battle. This land was not explored in the present study. Also, the pasture north of St. Bernard Highway and east of the former St. Bernard Drive-in Theater may contain battle evidence and troop encampments. Although previous cultural resource (preliminary) assessments of that location by R. Christopher Goodwin Associates and Earthsearch stated that the area had no potential for intact remains, the LAMAR Institute team disputes these opinions. Since the property was unavailable for survey, however, this intellectual debate remains to be settled.

Languille Plantation

Languille Plantation is a Defining Battlefield Feature for its role as an American headquarters and field hospital. It was not the scene of any documented fighting. Languille Plantation was situated on the rear of the battlefield, upstream from Macarty’s Plantation. The Languille plantation house was used as headquarters by General Carroll (Swanson 1985:4).

When J.F. Languille, owner of the plantation, died, he left the plantation to his widow. In 1900, Mrs. J.F. Languille died and Languille Plantation was advertised at auction in September, 1901 (Times Picayune 1901b:18). No remains of Languille Plantation have been identified archeologically or architecturally. This area is largely destroyed by industrial and residential development.

On a possibly related note, the 1938 W.P.A. guide lists a Three Oaks Plantation Home on its sightseeing tour, possibly indicating that Three Oaks remained standing in the 1930s (which may or may not be Languille Plantation, or the former site of that plantation). Three Oaks location was given as 1.2 miles from Arabi (W.P.A. 1838b). Several images of this large home have survived. These include
renditions by Lossing (sketched in 1861) (1869) and Cable (1884:153), as well as an unattributed photograph (Tulane University Special Collections n.d.).

Wilson (1965:24-27) noted that laborers found hundreds of cannonballs during a restoration of the French gardens at the Three Oaks plantation complex, and that a corner of the garden was used to construct an American redoubt during the campaign. Seebold (2000:58) noted that prior to 1941, “one of its [Three Oaks plantation house] massive solid brick columns heavily coated with cement was demolished by a cannon ball” during the battle of New Orleans. Church (1985), who recorded the Three Oaks archeological site also noted that cannonballs had been recovered from the site.

W.P.A. historians noted that “The present [1941] ante-bellum structure [Three Oaks] stands on the site of an earlier dwelling used as a hospital in 1815, after the Battle of New Orleans”, and they also noted that the surviving plantation house, “was fired upon by a Confederate battery”, and that, “a shot from one of Farragut’s gunboats destroyed one of the columns”. They concluded, “cannon balls found lodged in near-by trees have also been traced to this engagement” (W.P.A. Federal Writers Project 1941). Consequently, the W.P.A. historians indicate that the historic mansion at Three Oaks post-dated the War of 1812 and the reported battle debris found there may actually date to the Civil War.

The St. Bernard Drive-Inn Theater opened on this property in 1949 (Times Picayune 1949). Later, a miniature golf course opened on the property in 1960. A reporter quipped in March, 1961, “When you take the children to visit the site of the Battle of New Orleans, you can also take them to play miniature (carpet) golf, opposite Chalmette monument on St. Bernard hwy. Mrs. Fred Appé Edgewood 1-9951, has opened this putt-putt course for the second summer, charges 35 cents by day, 50 cents at night to play miniature golf” (Times Picayune 1961:11).

GIS analysis indicates that the Languille plantation vicinity has been largely compromised by industrial and residential development. No surviving cultural features were identified in this area that relate to the New Orleans campaign. No fighting took place in this vicinity during the January 8 battle, although some British bullets and artillery rounds may have landed in this zone. Officers’ quarters, a field hospital, and troop encampments were located on the plantation but archeological traces of these have been erased.

Jumonville Plantation

The Jumonville Plantation served as a British hospital in the New Orleans campaign. It was also the scene of a poorly documented skirmish between General David Morgan’s Louisiana militia and the newly arrived British troops. It is a Defining Battlefield Feature in the New Orleans campaign for its role as a support facility and a peripheral skirmish site (Figures 46-47).

In 1816, legislation in the U.S. Congress was introduced to pay claims by Antoine Bienvenu, James Villére and Jumonville de Villiers for damages caused in the war. The reimbursement was approved by the House of Representatives but rejected by the Senate (United States Senate 1816:329, 332-333, 367,418-419, 429). The petition of Jumonville de Villiers was re-introduced and rejected in the U.S. Senate in February, 1822. The claim noted,

That during the late invasion of Louisiana by the British, after the enemy had landed near the city of New Orleans, in order to prevent him from bringing up his cannon and other ordinance to the city, General Morgan, commanding the Louisiana militia, caused the levee to be cut through at or near the plantation of the petitioner; on or about the 24th December, 1814, whereby the greater part of the petitioner’s plantation was inundated, and remained so until after the departure of the invading army from the State.

In consequence, the petitioner suffered great losses in the destruction of his sugar cane standing on the plantation, and all of the cane plants in the ground, and in expenses of repairing the levee, appraised at $19,250 by certain citizens of Louisiana (American State Papers 184b:No.587).

By the 20th century, Jumonville was owned by the DeBouchel family. Mrs. DeBouchel, discussed earlier, was obviously a patron of history. Her husband Victor had authored a history of Louisiana (in French) in 1841, and their family operated a sugar plantation in the battlefield vicinity (DeBouchel 1841). In 1931, Judge Meraux failed to sign an injunction protecting the DeBouchel property near Merauxville. Contractors for the Louisiana Highway Commission entered the plantation of Mrs. Victor DeBouchel and completed preliminary grading for a proposed road. Workers had threatened to, “blow up a large pecan tree which will be in the path of the right of way for the highway” (Times Picayune 1931:13).

The final chapter in the DeBouchel pecan tree fight was written in 1932. The Louisiana Supreme Court that year ruled in favor of Mrs. Victor DeBouchel of St. Bernard Parish. According to the Times Picayune, Mrs. DeBouchel

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Figure 46. Undated Early Photograph of Pecan Grove Plantation.

Figure 47. Aerial View of Jumonville Plantation Vicinity (USCOE 1940).
was awarded, “$1226.90 for her three-and-one fourth-acre tract taken by the Highway Commission for construction of the road from Merauxville to Violet. No allowance was made for her ‘mental anguish’ over the arrest of her four sons in connection with the expropriation. (Mrs. DeBouchel sought $2349 for the expropriation of the land and $6074.10 for damages, $1000 of which was for ‘mental anguish.’) The district court allowed her $140 for the land and $40 for damages. The supreme court amended the judgment, giving her $1128.60 for the land and $98.30 for damages to the property” (Times Picayune 1932:4). The DeBouchel pecans were destroyed by the highway and St. Bernard Parish lost another landmark from the War of 1812.

The Louisiana archeological site files contains a site (16SB124) identified as Jumonville Plantation. This site location was recorded by B. Clemensen in April 1983. That site was recommended as ineligible for the NRHP and he downplayed its site significance, stating, “Very little potential, for most of the site has been disturbed by construction” (Clemensen 1983:2). Site 16SB124 is located in Section 2, Township 13S, Range 13E.

GIS analysis of the Jumonville plantation vicinity confirms that most of the main plantation complex has been destroyed by residential development. The main house at Jumonville formerly stood at UTM 216748E, 3314872N. That area is currently a residential neighborhood. The main complex at Jumonville was located west of Jumonville Canal. That canal was tentatively identified, as shown in Part 3, Figures 26-28. Cultural resources at Pecan Grove Plantation (as discussed previously in this report) are likely associated with Jumonville plantation, since that area was formerly part of the Jumonville plantation. Historic maps from the battle-era show buildings and improvements in this vicinity. Historic maps also show two rows of buildings, likely slave quarters, on the east side of the canal. Pecan Grove plantation, which is privately owned, and on the wooded property immediately to the east of it, holds promise for harboring 19th century cultural resources that can be documented and studied through archeological investigation. The skirmish that took place at Jumonville plantation between British troops and General David Morgan’s Louisiana militia is not well defined cartographically. No sketch maps of the engagement were located. Consequently, the extent of the battle on the modern landscape can only be estimated from written accounts.

Previous cultural resource investigations by Coastal Environments at the Saxholm plantation site did not identify any War of 1812 artifacts. Their study was, however, a traditional systematic shovel test survey, which is not the optimal method for delineating battlefields. LAMAR Institute archeologists made a brief reconnaissance surface walkover of a portion of a fallow agricultural field southeast of Saxholm plantation site (immediately west of the residential subdivision on Margaret Drive and north of St. Bernard Highway). That brief investigation failed to locate any cultural material. The area between this reconnoitered area and the area examined by Coastal Environments is a very large agricultural field. This field should be explored in the future for evidence pertaining to the New Orleans campaign.

Battery Bienvenu/Fort Villeré

The submerged cultural resources pertaining to the New Orleans campaign were outside of the scope of the present study. GIS analysis of historic maps and aerial photographs indicates several locations in the marshes and bayous where relevant cultural resources may exist. The nearest to the study area is the British redoubt that was established at the transshipment point where the Bayou Mazant and Villeré canal intersected. No archeological resources are currently identified in this vicinity.

Following the British defeat and departure from the fringes of New Orleans, the Americans established a fort, known as Fort Villeré, at the confluence of Bayou Mazant [later called Bayou Villeré] and Bayou Bienvenu (Latour 1815; Ludow 1815; Smith 1999; Casey 1983:19, 25). The fort was garrisoned by a detachment of Kentucky and Louisiana militia. The Americans planned to mount one 24-pounder and two 18-pounder guns at this fortification as soon as the British withdrew. Fort Villeré evolved into Fort Bienvenue, which survived as a U.S. Army post into the latter 19th century. Civil War-era Battery Bienvenue is recorded as archeological site 16SB84 in the Louisiana archeological site files (Weinstein 1976; Jones 1992; Moreno 2007). The site was deemed eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. The site is located in Section 40, Township 12S, Range 13E. It is known by its Civil War-era and later construction. Its potential War of 1812 component has not been discovered or evaluated.

Roads

Roads were very important in the New Orleans campaign and several of these were Defining Battlefield Features. Roads were vital for the movement of artillery and supplies. The plantations below New Orleans were served by several roads, which paralleled the Mississippi River. Several roadways traverse the battlefield on a course paralleling the route of the Mississippi River. Today these roads include St. Bernard Highway and East Judge Perez Drive. Since the river channel has shifted southward over the decades multiple roads followed the former levees. The
Gently Road was an old, well-established route that was more distant from the Mississippi River than the various river roads. The Gently Road led from the battle vicinity to the Gently Ridge. This route generally followed along the route of Judge Perez Drive/Claiborne Ave.

Judge Perez Drive was named in honor of a noted Democrat but the road had an older French name, Rue Bon En Fants [Good Children Road]. The route of the Mexican and Gulf Railroad corridor closely paralleled this road. A river road followed the crest of the levee along the Mississippi River, although the levees underwent extensive shifts and realignments resulting from the dynamic flow of the river.

Birkedal (2009) identified a road archeologically, which he termed the “Center Road”. That route bisected the January 8th battlefield and was perpendicular to the Rodriguez Canal and Line Jackson. An 1897 newspaper article discussed the repairs to the Chalmette Road in St. Bernard Parish. This route, which ran from “Jackson Barracks to the picturesque burying ground”, was a shell road. The reporter noted that, “a considerable portion of the shellroad was destroyed some years back by United States engineers for levee building. It was found necessary to change the lines of bulwarks, and this necessitated the demolition of the road a distance of at least a quarter of a mile.” The

writer further noted the shell road had been maintained in excellent condition by the Federal government. This responsibility was abandoned, so that by 1897 there were “some deep holes in the shellroad, which are sometimes impassible”. The writer was hopeful that the government would rebuild the shell road noting that, “The representatives in congress, especially Congressman Meyer, have interested themselves in the matter, and are urging the necessity of a good road to Chalmette, such as lead to every other national cemetery in the country.” (Times Picayune 1897:4).

A W.P.A.-era driving tour of St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parish was published in 1938 (W.P.A. Federal Writers’ Project 1938b). This guide provides distance measurements to the tenth of a mile, which are referenced to a zero point in downtown New Orleans. This guide provides details of the road system, as well as unique information on War of 1812 era resources that are no longer extant.

**West Bank**

The archeological resources on the West Bank of the Mississippi River were only lightly researched, since that area was beyond the current project scope (Figure 48). Several

![Part of Peddie Map Showing American Defenses on West Bank](image)

**Figure 48.** Portion of Peddie Map Showing American Defenses on West Bank (Peddie 1815).
battlefield features associated with the New Orleans campaign, which would be considered Defining Battlefield Features, were located on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Orleans Parish (Swanson 1985). These are only touched on in the present discussion and are deserving of a battlefield study in their own right.

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Mullins, an officer in the 44th Regiment, stated during his court-martial proceedings that during the January 8th battle, the Americans, “had on the right bank a heavy battery of 12 guns, which enflamed the whole front of the position in the left” (Mullins 1815:74, 108-109). This withering fire helped incapacitate the British attack on the Americans on the east (left) bank and produced a large number of casualties. This artillery fire only stopped after, “A gallant and successful diversion was made on the right bank of the Mississippi by a column under Colonel Thornton” on January 8th (Hill 1836).

Others noted the strategic position of the American artillery on the West Bank and its importance during the campaign. Had the British movement up the Mississippi River on the West Bank not been checked by the American forces, the British could have easily outflanked General Jackson and taken the City of New Orleans.

The West Bank was dominated by plantations and rural land throughout the first half of the 19th century. The area was largely unchanged from the battle period when the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach visited the battlefield in March, 1825. He described features of Andry’s plantation on the West Bank in his travel memoirs:

On the 19th of March, at nine o’clock, I went with Mr. Haygans, and a Mr. Authur Andry, to his brother Michael Andry’s habitation, about eleven miles distant from the city below, situated on the right bank of the Mississippi. The road carried us over the field of battle, and past the habitation of General Villaret [Viléré]: about two miles farther on, we stopped at the habitation of Junonville, left the carriage and embarked in one of Mr. Andry’s ferry-boats, sent over for us, manned by seven negroes, and crossed the river... We landed at a large field of clover: belonging to Mr. Andry, and through the garden reached his large and handsome mansion-house, two stories high, with a piazza and very broad gallery, which is defended from the heat of the sun by large curtains extended from pillar to pillar. Here Mr. Andry received us.

Not long after our arrival, we went to the sugar-mills, behind the mansion-house, near the negro-quarter. The mill, in which the cylinders lie horizontally, is set in motion by a steam-engine of twelve horse-power, made in Liverpool by Faucett. The juice from the cane flows into the boiling-house, in which there are ten kettles. Mr. Andry directs himself all the operations, and while the mill is at work resides in a small room not far from the engine. He has the reputation of being very severe to his negroes... The garden here was not well kept... Mr. Andry’s garden was surrounded by a thick hedge of orange trees, and contained many magnolias, orange trees, myrtles, jasmines, &c. (Bernhard 1828:80-81).

Archaeological site 16QR143 (McGehee’s Camp site) is a military earthwork located on the West Bank of the Mississippi River in lower Algiers, Orleans Parish (Hays 1996). This site is located in Section 38, Township 13S, Range 24E. Swanson (1985:134) previously concluded that the crenulated earthworks were Confederate defenses and not War of 1812 era. Hays (1996:3) noted, “After some research with historic maps, I have concluded that the earthwork is almost certainly not Morgan’s Line and it is very likely a Civil War earthwork known as McGehee’s Camp [a Confederate camp, ca. 1862]. Hays (1996:3) noted that his fieldwork consisted of, “a walkover survey, the excavation of three shovel tests, and a posthole in the center of the embankment. The only artifact in the shovel tests was a machine cut nail”. Machine cut nails, which were produced after 1790, could indicate either War of 1812 or Civil War era occupation. Hays defined a 130 m linear section of earthworks.

Battery Patterson was an American artillery battery that was commanded by Commodore Thomas Patterson. The battery was constructed in early January, 1815 on the site of a brick kiln. The battery was designed to defend against a British attack from the river and the River Road. Swanson (1985) described earthworks in a small park on the West Bank, which she believed to be the ruins of Battery Patterson. That complex of earthworks was revisited in the present study.

Maritime Resources

Maritime craft were an important defining battlefield feature, albeit impermanent on the landscape because of their mobility. The British had dozens of warships and smaller craft that conveyed the troops to the Louisiana shoreline, but few that were actually present within the primary battle theater. Consequently, the heavy complement of artillery on these ships was not brought to bear in the fighting, so they are not considered defining battlefield features. Two U.S. ships, however, figured prominently in the Battles of New Orleans. The U.S.S. schooner Carolina/Caroline played a key role in the December 23rd Night Battle, when her guns surprised the British and inflicting many casualties. For the next several days the Carolina continued to shower the British troops with grapeshot. On December
27, the British opened fire on the Carolina with hotshot and they succeeded in setting fire to the ship. The crew abandoned the Carolina and she burned at her mooring. At the time she was wrecked, the Carolina was situated on the West Bank and slightly upstream from the British position. Since 1814, however, the Mississippi River channel has migrated substantially south of this position. Consequently, the wreck of the Carolina, if indeed any wreckage has survived, would be most likely located on the East Bank today.

The U.S.S. sloop Louisiana was positioned a short distance upstream from the Carolina and her crew stood ready to be engaged. When the British guns finally began shooting hot shot on the Carolina the wise commander of the Louisiana sailed upstream and safely out of cannon range. This action saved the sloop from destruction. The Louisiana was moored further upstream and on January 8th, the vessel contributed significantly to the withering cannonade against the advancing British. The Louisiana’s artillery also was quite active in the January 1st artillery action. Since the sloop Louisiana survived the battle, the only expected archeological traces of it on the battlefield are artillery shells fired from the ship and artillery and small arms fired at the ship by the British.
Chapter 7. Battlefield Artifacts

As described earlier, the artifact collection resulting from the LAMAR Institute’s field survey was quite small. The artifacts were recovered by metal detector survey on Murphy Oil Company Tract 1. These are detailed in Appendix 1 and selected examples are illustrated in Appendix 2. Their spatial distribution on the landscape is presented on GIS maps in Part 3, Figures 15-17. No indisputable military items are included in this assemblage. The arms-related items include lead balls and lead shot. One possible small iron grapeshot was tentatively identified, but it also may represent a non-military ball bearing. No military uniform parts, weapons or accoutrements were located by the survey team.

The historical record does, however, attest to the former existence of battle-related artifacts on the battlefield. The present historical research identified a variety of artifacts associated with the Battles of New Orleans. As might be expected, over the years curious tourists to the battlefield led to relic discoveries and some of these objects found their way into public ownership. Others remain in private collections. Doubtless many hundreds of objects were collected and subsequently lost without any surviving historical record.

Cannons

The New Orleans campaign involved a wide range of artillery firepower used by both armies. The Americans had an easier task to move large guns from New Orleans into position on the battlefield. The British accomplished this task over a period of weeks and by heroic labor and engineering. The ordnance ranged from 3 pounds to 32 pounds. The British battery that opened fire on January 1 contained many 18 pounders, and most of these were presumably destroyed by the American response. The American guns on the West Bank in Patterson’s battery were spiked by the Americans prior to their abandonment. The 14 to 16 large guns aboard the schooner Carolina sank with the burning ship. Brown (1815:249) noted that the British, “left on the field 16 pieces of cannon, their equipments and an immense quantity of ball”. The ultimate disposition of these pieces of captured ordnance was not researched. Apparently many were taken as souvenirs of the battle by the U.S. Army. Others were apparently left in the field. Despite all these abandoned cannons, it is impossible today to point to one single example and state that, “that cannon saw action in the battle of New Orleans”.

Apparantly numerous unserviceable brass cannons and mortars captured by Major General Andrew Jackson were melted down later to cast a monument to the deceased American hero. The provenance of these cannons remains an unsolved puzzle. Most contemporary documents identify these as weapons captured by Jackson’s army from the Spanish at Pensacola, Florida. The amount of metal required for the monument was more than the amounts cited in period documents. This indicates that additional cannons were required to complete the casting but the identity of these additional cannons was not determined by the present research. As for the four cannons that flank the corners of the Jackson monument, their provenance is less clear. When these cannons were first placed at the Lafayette Square monument site in Washington D.C., as indicated by an 1855 photograph, they were without carriages. Sometime later, either carriages were made to house these cannons, or the original cannons were replaced by more complete specimens.

The monument to Andrew Jackson was commissioned in 1847 and cast by sculptor Clark Mills from bronze cannons captured by Jackson in the War of 1812. The monument was dedicated in 1853 in Lafayette Square, north of the White House in Washington, D.C. In addition to the bronze obtained from melting the cannons, “Four brass cannon, captured at the battle of New Orleans, adorn the base of the monument” (The School Journal 1898:762). A tourist guidebook provided this description of the monument in Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C., “Gen. Andrew Jackson, here presented as the Battle of New Orleans. The bronze was cast from cannon taken in Jackson’s campaigns, and the cannon were contemporary. A replica is in Jackson Square, New Orleans” (Reynolds 1904:16). A contemporary view of these cannons, possibly captured on the battlefield of New Orleans, is shown in Part 2 (Tsuruoka 2011).

The exact provenance of the Jackson cannons is questionable, however, as different sources attribute them to Jackson’s victory over the Spanish at Pensacola. Likewise, the source of the bronze used in casting the statue of Jackson is subject to debate. Some attribute it to cannons captured at New Orleans, while other sources state it was cast from cannons captured at Pensacola. The U.S. House journal [1847] recorded that,

Mr. McClelland (by leave) presented a memorial of the Jackson monument committee, praying that certain brass cannon captured by General Andrew Jackson, at Pensacola, may be delivered to said committee to be used in the construction of the statue.
of General Jackson: and thereupon, Mr. Mcclernand moved that the rules be suspended for the purpose of enabling him to introduce a joint resolution granting the said cannon to the Jackson monument committee...Mr. Mcclernand accordingly introduced his said joint resolution (No. 58) granting certain unserviceable brass cannon to the Jackson monument committee: which was read a first and second time, and the question was stated on ordering the same to be engrossed (House Journal, February 19, 1847:378-9).

After May, 1847, sculptor Mills contracted with the Jackson Monument Committee to, “execute an equestrian statue of Gen. Jackson in bronze, and had, “applied to Congress for some of the brass cannon captured by Gen. Jackson at New Orleans for the purpose of supplying the material for the casting” (Rutledge 2008:146). The following year, the Jackson Monument Committee presented a memorial to Congress praying for “four brass cannon and two brass mortars, weighing 4930 pounds, to be used as material in constructing a monument to General Andrew Jackson”, and further noted that, “the pieces asked for are the ones which were captured by General Jackson in a gallant and brilliant affair at Pensacola in 1814, and that they are now unserviceable” (Wheeler 1848:524). Also in 1848, the House and Senate passed Joint Resolution Number 25, “granting to the Jackson Monument Committee certain brass Guns and Mortars, captured by General Andrew Jackson, and for other purposes”, which specified, “the brass guns and mortars captured by General Andrew Jackson at Pensacola” (Minot 1851:340). House Resolution No. 37 stated,

A resolution granting to the Jackson Monument committee certain brass guns and mortars captured by General Andrew Jackson, and for other purposes: in which Iam directed to ask the concurrence of the House.

The Senate have passed the joint resolution of the House (No. 37) concerning certain portions of the marine and ordnance corps, with amendments: in which, I am directed to ask the concurrence of the House (House Journal August 3, 1848:1157).

In 1850, “The resolution (H. R. 21) granting old brass guns to the Jackson Monument Committee was read the first and second times, by unanimous consent, and considered as in Committee of the Whole; and no amendment being made, it was reported to the Senate” (Journal of the Senate, July 16, 1850:451). The Enquirer newspaper noted that, “The House have passed a bill authorizing the use of brass cannon which were captured by General Jackson, now at Fort Hamilton, New York” (Enquirer 1848:1).

Another cannon story took place around the same time as the Jackson monument cannons. An 1853 newspaper reported, “The National Democrat says that the two old cannons used by General Jackson in the battle of New Orleans, which had been objects of curiosity in the navy yard at Brooklyn, were sold under a general order made during the late administration to sell all the old guns. These guns were highly prized in the navy yard as relics of the memorable 8th of January, 1815, and were objects of much curiosity on account of their singular construction. The officers of the yard appealed twice to the government to spare those two old guns, but the order was irrevocable, and they were sold” (New Hampshire-Patriot 1853:3). The later disposition of these two cannons was not determined by the present research.

Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. contains several objects associated with the battles. The personal collection of James Smithson, which formed the initial nucleus of the Smithsonian Institution’s collection, included pertinent War of 1812 items, “General Jackson’s pistol case and flint-lock pistols, and his uniform coat worn at the battle of New Orleans, are among these relics.” An 1855 museum catalogue described this display in the “Window Opposite Case 23...The military coat worn by General Jackson at the battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. It looks pretty well worn, as if it had seen considerable service. If the English had captured this uniform from the old chief, it is more than probable they would have considered it as neither a booty nor a beauty” (National Institute for the Promotion of Science 1855:31). Major General Jackson’s sword, scabbard, and uniform remain on display in the Division of Military History and Diplomacy, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. The sword’s dimensions are given as 41.5” Height by 5” Width by 3.25” Depth (Smithsonian Institution 2011b-c). It is shown in Part 2.

An 1880 visitor’s guide to the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum described the contents of Case 80 in the Anthropology Hall, which included on the lower shelf, “three pistols (English) from the battlefield of New Orleans”, “musket-lock from the battlefield of New Orleans”, and on the third shelf, a “Sword from the battlefield of New Orleans” (Rhees 1880:86-87). An 1896 Scientific American article on the evolution of firearms included a photoengraving of an “Old Flint Lock Pistol Found on Battle Field of New Orleans”, and described as an “old single shot barrel, muzzle loading pistol”, which was, “found on the battlefield of New Orleans and now in the United States National Museum, Washington” (Prindle
1896:Figure 1, 185). This pistol has a flared, blunderbuss barrel.

NPS Military historian Meuse (1965:10-13) illustrates several edged weapons that were recovered from the battlefield at New Orleans, which were curated at the Smithsonian Institution. One is a British Naval officer’s sword. The other is a Scottish broad sword, used by a soldier in the 93rd Highland Regiment. The current status and location of these objects illustrated by Meuse was not determined by the present study, despite a search of SIRIS system of Smithsonian Institution’s collections.

Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Park

The NPS established a museum at the Chalmette National Monument in 1958 (Dufour 1958:51). The Times Picayune announced that the museum included displays of “some rare specimens of muskets, cannon balls, drums and other equipment of the period” (Times Picayune 1958:68). The park museum was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in August, 2005. For several years following the storm the museum operated in a small trailer on the park grounds. A new museum opened in 2010.

The NPS collection at Chalmette includes several battlefield objects that were donated to the Louisiana State Museum. Probably the single-most informative battle relic is a bayonet made for the Baker Rifle. This specimen had identification markings linking it to the 95th Regiment, composed of 600 riflemen. This bayonet also was associated with the Night Battle and was found by James Wolfe (Meuse 1965:11, Figure 5). As noted in the earlier discussion of the Lacoste plantation, Mr. James T. Wolfe, Jr. and his son, James T. Wolfe, III, discovered numerous battlefield artifacts at Lacoste plantation when the stadium was constructed on the Chalmette High School campus. Mr. Wolfe donated these relics to the Louisiana State Museum but these items are currently on display at the Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park Museum in Chalmette, Louisiana. The items included a British flintlock pistol, a bayonet, a tomahawk, and several large cannonballs of different sizes. Wolfe found these relics during the construction for the stadium located on the high school grounds. Two Times-Picayune newspaper articles, confirm these discoveries. One noted that the artifacts were discovered in 1962 (Times Picayune 1964:22; 1966:95).

Other weaponry has been found by individuals over the years. A “Carbine bore Baker Rifle”, which was “found on the field after the Night battle by Charles Harrod”, was curated at the Louisiana State Museum (Meuse 1965:11, Figure 4). The Louisiana State Museum has a sword in its collection that is reputed to have come from the Pakenham Canal and was found by John Morton (Louisiana State Museum 1910:47). Another weapon in the Louisiana State Museum collection includes an officer’s presentation sword. This sword was awarded to British officer George deLacy Evans for his service in the Battle of Lake Borgne. It measures 94 cm long. [Accession No. 2002.079a-b]. A side knife was found on the Chalmette Battlefield. It is approximately 18 inches long. The knife was given to the Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve by Thomas Rees. [Accession No. 00131]. A “4 Pound Cannon ball, relic of battle of New Orleans, 1815” was donated to the Louisiana State Museum in 1924 or 1925 by Miss Louise A. Lewis (Louisiana State Museum 1922:56). The Louisiana State Museum collection also includes several cannonsballs from the West Bank of the Mississippi River (Aurora Plantation).

The NPS has conducted numerous archeological projects at the Chalmette Unit since the 1950s. The present research team made no attempt to locate every collection from these projects. We expect that materials are scattered in numerous NPS repositories including some objects on display at the Chalmette museum, and artifacts at the Southeast Archeological Center, Tallahassee, and at the Santa Fe Region. Curation statements in several of the more recent studies provide this information, but the disposition of some of the early collections may require additional research to locate. A 1963 newspaper article described the recovery of a six pound cannonball from “beneath the bed of the Rocheville canal on Chalmette battlefield”, which was apparently found during the ill-conceived and inaccurate reconstruction of Line Jackson (Times Picayune 1963b:10).

Battle of New Orleans artifacts also includes textiles. A battle flag that had been in Pittsfield, New Hampshire was given to the Louisiana State Museum in 1910. The flag was fragmentary and no illustration or description was provided, but it was attributed to Andrew Jackson (Kansas City Star 1910:6). A cleaned and restored Louisiana militia battle flag was placed on display at the Chalmette National Military Park in 1983. This flag had been in the possession of the Chalmette Chapter of the U.S. Daughters of 1812 and was donated to the National Park Service (Times Picayune 1983:90).

Private Collections

An unknown percentage of battlefield artifacts have been collected by private individuals who kept these items in their personal collections. This type of behavior happened from the time of the battles and continues to the present.
day. Most of this collector activity is undocumented. A few appear periodically in historical documents.

An 1858 letter to the editor of the Cleveland Leader newspaper described the presentation of a “Canteen which was used by a British soldier at the battle of New Orleans”. The battle relic was presented to the Cleveland City Grays by a Mr. Griggs of Boston, Massachusetts (Cleveland Leader 1858:1).

An Ohio newspaper reported on a theft in Lexington, Indiana in 1879. A cannon reportedly was captured by American troops in the Battle of New Orleans and then taken back to their home. The article contained details about the gun, noting that it had been presented to Mr. McFarland, a battle participant and the founder of Lexington, Indiana. It was a brass six-pounder, “made in Paris, France, in 1792”. During the Civil War the gun, “which was mounted in the Courthouse square” was spiked by Confederate raiders who “battered it with sledge hammers”. The gun was described as follows, “It had two brass loops just over the trunions, and these were broken off. Another touch hole was bored subsequently, and it was remounted. It was shipped to Jeffersonville and “sold for old brass”, but was recovered by the county sheriff around 1878-1879 and returned to its position at the Scott County, Indiana courthouse. As January, 1880, the cannon had been stolen and again recovered (Cincinnati Daily Gazette 1880:1).

The Scott County seat was moved to Scottsburg, Indiana in 1874. The current status of the Scott County 6 pounder, possibly a relic of the New Orleans campaign, has not been determined. It is no longer on display at the Scott County courthouse square. The newspaper’s statement that the cannon was manufactured in France and used by the British is somewhat puzzling, although it certainly may have been a British war prize that was recycled into the British artillery. Indiana had not become a state in 1815 but Mr. McFarland may have been a soldier in the Kentucky militia, which did fight in the New Orleans campaign.

Ironically, one of the earliest battlefield “archaeological” excavations is documented in an 1884 St. Louis Register newspaper article. Dr. P.S. O’Reilly, Corresponding Secretary of the Missouri Historical Society, who donated a 12 pound cannonball to that organization’s museum, related a story of it. He noted that it was one of five 12 pound balls that had secured the coffin of Major General Pakenham’s entrails at Villeré plantation (Times Picayune 1884:4). The myths and facts surrounding the burial of General Pakenham at Villeré plantation was discussed in detail earlier in this report. O’Reilly’s account adds to the mystery. According to Dr. O’Reilly, the cannonball and its mate were encased in “clay cement” that had been placed over the coffin containing the general’s entrails. The coffin was buried beneath a large pecan tree at Villeré plantation. Dr. O’Reilly obtained the cannonball after a visit to the Villeré plantation as a guest of the plantation’s owner, Colonel F.B. Fleitas. O’Reilly provided no details on how, who, or when the grave was disturbed to retrieve the cannonballs (Times Picayune 1884:4). O’Reilly added that while at Villeré plantation he was shown a burial place where, “forty [English] officers alone were laid”.

An 1888 newspaper story described a drum that was used in the New Orleans campaign. This drum was a family heirloom of Horace Thomas, whose father was a captain in a New Orleans military unit. Mr. Thomas intended to exhibit his family’s drum at the 1888 Mechanics’ Fair in San Francisco. The drum, whose current whereabouts was not determined, was briefly described, “It is about 24 inches in length and 16 inches in diameter and is made out of a sycamore log, the center of the log having been bored and chipped out. Both heads are now gone and only one of the hoops—an old hickory one—now remains” (Times Picayune 1888:2).

In 1891, Howard University was intended as an archival repository of materials from the battles of New Orleans. Newspapers reported, “The eighth of January, which was the anniversary of the battle of New Orleans, marked the completion and formal transfer of the Howard Library Annex, or Memorial hall, wherein will be stored the relics and souvenirs of the great struggle, to the Louisiana Historical association” (Daily Herald 1891:1).

Two British cannonballs were discovered in New Orleans in 1894. A newspaper article described, “Relics of the Battle of New Orleans—Two Cannon Balls Unearthed by Workmen Digging a Canal”. Further details were provided:

New Orleans, La., Dec. 10.—Special Telegram.—
While workmen were engaged today in digging a canal from the rear of the city to Lake Ponchartrain they struck a cypress stump at a depth of nine feet in which was imbedded a cannon ball about the size of a man’s fist. Save for rust it was as well preserved as the day it was fired from Pakenham’s cannon at the battle of New-Orleans in 1814. There is no doubt of its authenticity, the stamp of the maker giving conclusive proof. About 200 yards further was found a second stump containing a ball similar to the first. These relics will be presented to the Louisiana State Historical Society (Daily Inter Ocean 1894:1).

An “old fashioned rifle charger used for measuring a charge of powder” that was carried by a relative at the battle was owned by J.W. McClellan, of Ellis County, Texas in 1896. It was described as, “made of the point of
a steer’s horn and highly polished”, and the Dallas newspaper reporter noted that Mr. McClellan, “carries it in his pocket on the 8th of every January” (Dallas Morning News 1896:3).

In 1899, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat reported on the battle relics owned by Judge Joe Kemp, who was described as, “one of the old men of the [Chickasaw] tribe”. Among the items possessed by Kemp was, “the battleflag that the Chickasaws used in the battle of New Orleans when they assisted Andrew Jackson to defeat the English”. The writer described the flag. “It carries the original 18 stars of the Union, and to it are attached still the buckskin thongs that bound it on the flagstaff. On these thongs are still marks of the blood stains of Chickasaw heroes who carried the flag in battle” (Kalamazoo Gazette 1899:7).

A decade later, this same Chickasaw battle flag resurfaced in the news. John T. Duncan, a presumed Chickasaw of Mead, Oklahoma, wrote to New York Mayor Behrman offering, “The business is this: What would the people give to see the old battle flag that was in the fight that General Jackson had in the battle of New Orleans? It was the flag that the chief of the Chickasaws had. They fought on the edge of the swamp. They had the flag, powder horn and tomahawk that the chief had in the fight also the silver medal Jackson gave them for their help in the fight. It has Jackson’s name and the date it was given and the name of the one it was given to. The old flag is shot all to pieces and is as bloody as can be” (Times Picayune 1909b:6).

The same flag returned to public attention in 1920, in an Oklahoma newspaper article. That article included a photograph of the flag. The writer noted,

In the war of 1812, The Chickasaws and Choctaws, who were great admirers of General Andrew Jackson, furnished him with 700 warriors at the battle of New Orleans in 1815 under the leadership of Pushmaaha the great Choctaw chieftain.

The standard bearer at this battle was a brave Chickasaw, Levi Colbert, and after the battle the flag was presented to him. Ten years later, President John Quincy Adams in 1825 had a large silver medal struck and bestowed upon him for his bravery.

Levi Colbert was the principal chief of his nation at the time of their removal west of the Mississippi, and he has many descendants in Oklahoma who are and have been prominent in statehood and territorial affairs since the removal of the tribes to where is now Oklahoma.

In many years this historic flag has been in the custody of Joe Kemp of Tishomingo, a great grandson of Levi Colbert, who also has the silver medal presented by President John Quincy Adams. This much worn flag has recently been donated to the historical museum, and was on display at the annual meeting (Tulsa World 1920:2).

Recent research on the history of this flag and Chickasaw Chief Levi Colbert casts doubt on the relevance of both in the New Orleans campaign (Green 2010:36). This flag is currently curated by the Oklahoma Historical Society. The flag contains 24 stars, however, which would place its date of manufacture several decades after the battle of New Orleans. Although the Chickasaw did perform military service for the United States in the War of 1812, under command of Uriah Blue, their duty in late 1814 and early 1815 was in Alabama and not Louisiana. While it is believable that some Chickasaws came to fight with Jackson at New Orleans, no historical documentation for their presence has been located by the present research. Thus, while the story of the blood-drenched Choctaw/Chickasaw battle flag that saw service on the Chalmette plains makes for an inspiring tale, it is not historical fact.

Other items from the battles of New Orleans appeared throughout the country. The Kansas State Historical Society (1895:59) included in its biennial report, war relics donated to the society. One entry stated, “Shockley, Maj William B. Soldier’s Home, Leavenworth county: An iron ball, 1 ½ inches in diameter, a relic of the battle of New Orleans, January 8, 1815. The ball was found by donor in 1879 in an alluvial deposit, at a depth of 4 ½ feet, while digging a ditch in front of where General Jackson’s line of breastworks of cotton bales was thrown up in preparation for the battle”.

Andrew Jackson’s home in Tennessee, known as the Hermitage, is today a historic interpretive site. Among Jackson’s possessions stored in the home in 1903 was a, “sword used by General Coffee at the battle of New Orleans” and a “cannon sight used at the battle of New Orleans” (Omaha World Herald 1903:11).

Artifacts associated with the battle continued to be discussed through the twentieth century. An exhibition organized for the Carnegie Library in Fort Worth, Texas in 1904 included, a “Rifle, powder horn, letters written from battle of New Orleans”. The items are linked to a Mrs. Ramage (Dallas Morning News 1904:7). The North Carolina Department of Archives and History (1907:43) collection includes, “A cavalryman’s saddle trunk, captured from the British at battle of New Orleans.” It was on loan from Mrs. Josephine Branner, Waynesville, N.C. Relics also appeared in the mid-west.
A British sword adorned with “the royal crest of Great Britain” was “found lying beside a dead British officer after battle”. It was kept by a French family in Louisiana and later presented to Major W. H. Terrell. It was then owned by his son, W.A. Terrell of Fort Worth, Texas in 1916 (Fort Worth Star-Telegram 1916:11).

A powder horn owned by the grandfather of John George of St. Helena Parish, Louisiana and carried by him in the battle on January 8, 1815 was presented to the Louisiana Historical Society in 1927 (Times Picayune 1927:26). The horn was not described.

A Rockford, Illinois newspaper ran an article about a distinctive purse that was carried by Larvel Marsh, an officer in the Royal Fusiliers, who was mortally wounded at New Orleans and died behind the American lines. It was given by the dying officer to Samuel Hefley, an American soldier. His son, Samuel Hefley, Jr. of Bardstown, Kentucky was the owner of the purse in 1903. It was described as, “heart shaped...three inches in length and two and a half inches in width. It is made of stiff red morocco leather, lined with yellow material. In the center is a circular piece of glass about one and a half inches in diameter. Beneath this glass is the gilt monogram ‘L. M’ surrounded by gilt filigree work, hexagon shaped. The book contains two compartments, and fastens with a steel shield shaped clasp” (The Rockford Morning Star 1903:7). A grainy black and white image of this purse is shown in Part 2.

Around 1900, a hunter discovered a British cannon from the battle, which was subsequently lost but rediscovered in 1909, as described in this newspaper article.

In St. Bernard.—A British Cannon in Jackson Battle Field Again Located.

An old muzzle-loading cannon, which did service in the Battle of New Orleans on the side of the British, will probably be one of the most precious relics of this stirring days in the possession of those who are devoting their efforts to the perpetuation of one of the greatest and proudest events in American history. The rust-eaten implement of war, which had been originally found about nine years ago in one of the prairies adjoining Bayou Bienvenu, in the rear of Fort Chalmette, and was lost again by reason of the failure of Mr. Paul Majoue, a resident of the Second Ward, to mark the spot when he came across it in one of his hunting expeditions, is the property of the New Orleans Terminal Company, but in all likelihood it will be turned over to the Daughters of 1776-1815, or some museum.

The cannon is of 3-inch caliber, 4 feet in length and weighs 500 pounds. The year 1812 is inscribed on it, indicating that it was used by General Pakenham’s Army and brought here to aid in subduing Old Hickory. But this was one time in his life that General Pakenham reckoned, without his host. The fieldpiece is, of course, of a primitive type, and rested on a piece of cypress board, mouth-end downward. The muzzle was tightly plugged with a piece of cypress, which was removed and a quantity of manuscript was found in the chamber which crumbled into powder as soon as it was exposed to the air. The cannon is nearly buried, there being only eight inches of it visible, and in order to see it one has to go near it.

The remnant of the Jackson War was rediscovered on Sunday afternoon by Messrs. John Duceing, Alphonse and Jules Corne and Paul Majoue, who constituted a hunting party. While in the prairie back of the Chalmette plains they resolved to institute a search for the old cannon, which they knew was in that section, and their efforts were rewarded after a hunt of comparatively a short duration. But they had to endure considerable hardships, as the land was marshy and full of muskrat holes, and every once in a while some member of the party would almost disappear from sight, as though the earth had swallowed him.

The removal of the cannon from its present location will be a task, for it is practically inaccessible, and it will be difficult to carry it over the prairie land to where it can be placed in a conveyance (Times-Picayune 1909a:8).

The Times Picayune reported in 1954, “C.S. Ingram, BYwater 2071 [telephone number], is advertising to swap five cannon balls, 10 inches in diameter, from the Battle of New Orleans, for building blocks or lumber...(Times Picayune 1954:42). Ingram was quoted as saying, “About 20 years ago I found these old cannon balls in the brush-works where the Battle of New Orleans was fought in 1815 in St. Bernard parish...They were in a trench, now a ditch, back of the old St. Bernard Country Club, which I helped to demolish. The building stood across the highway from Chalmette National Cemetery” (Times Picayune 1954:42).

The Times Picayune reported in 1955 that an Edwin S. Bernissant was advertising to buy an antique cannon and cannon balls. The paper paraphrased Bernissant who said, “Someone was advertising cannon balls for sale about a year ago. All we remember is that whoever it was told us he had dug them up around Chalmette battlefield where they had been used in the Battle of New Orleans” (Times Picayune 1955:25).
A local classified advertisement in 1966 offered, “T.K. Kidds Revolutionary & Civil War Cannon Balls. Reasonable—Closing Collection” (Times Picayune 1976:110). The source of Kidd's collection was not explained. Other battlefield finds from the 1960s include those discovered by the Wolfe's during the construction of the Chalmette High School stadium, which were discussed earlier.

Artifact finds are not limited to the past. There is a recent report of findings of musket balls in the Villere Canal. The finder (Benward Treadway, Jr.) lives in Poydras, Louisiana (Bill Hyland personal communication April 1, 2011). David White, a local resident and War of 1812 re-enactor and interpreter, owns a large solid shot cannonball recovered from the battlefield.

A 2011 internet query of relics from the battles of New Orleans resulted in several finds, including many cannonballs. The Thomas Jayne collection, a private collection at a residence in New Orleans, includes a photograph of a large solid shot cannonball reportedly recovered from the battlefield at New Orleans (Ballen and Hauge 2011). Unfortunately, this photograph contains no scale. Two large solid shot cannonballs, attributed to the “1814 Battle of New Orleans” sold at auction in 2009. A small “thumbnail” photograph of these relics was reviewed but it lacked any scale and thus the ball diameter was not determined. These items sold for $210.00 (Auction Lot #240). Another large cannonball from the battlefield at New Orleans also sold at auction. The item’s description stated, “In overall very good untouched condition with generally smooth lightly patinated russet surfaces: some scattered light pitting and discoloration. A classic early 19th Century 2 Pounder Solid Iron Cannon Ball with generally smooth, chocolate brown, untouched surfaces and moderate pitting. Purported to have come from the Battle of New Orleans and accompanied by various letters of “Provenance” including a letter from the Texas State Library”. The letter from the Texas State Library, dated January 14, 2004, attributes the ball to Lafitte’s battery (Ambrose 2011). Two cannonballs seen on the internet are shown in Part 2 (no scale provided).

A British 1" West Indies Regiment uniform button is currently offered for sale by one Louisiana business (Delery and Delery 2011). This specimen measures 15 mm in diameter and was from an enlisted man’s uniform. This regiment was composed of blacks from the West Indies and they participated in the New Orleans campaign. While the vendor of this artifact did not state that it was collected from the battlefield, this conclusion is reasonable.

The Historic New Orleans Collection organized a museum exhibit entitled, “The Terrible and the Brave: The Battles for New Orleans, 1814-1815”. The exhibit opened in May, 2005, only months before the arrival of Hurricane Katrina, and it ran through January 8, 2006. The devastating storm, while it did not directly affect the museum exhibit, no doubt distracted the public from its proper cultural impact. The exhibit included displays of battlefield relics (or contemporary items with other provenance), including cannonballs, British and American small arms, swords and bayonets. A short documentary film accompanied the exhibit and is available online for public viewing (The Historic New Orleans Collection 2005; Williams 2005). The exhibit included the following objects attributable to the battlefield from private collections: British caronade from Lake Borgne (collection of Anthony A. Fernandez, Jr.); United States Regiment of Rifles brass uniform button excavated from the former De La Ronde plantation (unidentified private collection); sword of Lt. John Leavach, 21st Regiment of Foot, captured in battle (collection of Gary D. Gardner); British Model III Brown Bess musket (later converted for percussion cap), marked for 7th Regiment of Foot (collection of Linda and Robert Melanne); and Nine-pound round shot found on grounds of Aurora Plantation, West Bank (donated to Historic New Orleans Collection by Sylvia Norman Duncan Harry McDonald).

One of the most upsetting relic stories was posted during the course of this project by Louisiana relic collectors. A metal detector enthusiast, who communicates by the name "Cajuncoinhunter", posted an account of a relic hunting trip on the West Bank of the Mississippi River in early March, 2011. Cajuncoinhunter stated that he and his fellow diggers, “hunted an old park which once was part of a LA [Louisiana] plantation many moons ago. It was great meeting up with them and having a small group hunt / get together on the West Bank of the Mississippi River (which is also across the river from the site of the Battle of New Orleans aka Chalmette Battlefields)” (Cajuncoinhunter 2011). Their group found round ball (.50 something caliber), a brass rivet, and many of the metal items that clearly post-date the War of 1812. They posted a video clip of their activities at the park. The LAMAR Institute research team visited this same park as part of the present study (without the knowledge of the antics of Cajuncoinhunter and his cohorts). The team recorded GPS waypoints and took digital photographs of the military earthworks at the site. In addition, the team collected similar data at numerous recent metal detector-looted areas. Undoubtedly, these areas were synonymous with the damage created by Cajuncoinhunter and crew.

Doubtless many other collectors and collections relating to the Battles of New Orleans remain to be identified. Such an undertaking was beyond the scope of the present study. The items mentioned above demonstrate the array of surviving artifacts and their locations throughout the country.
Chapter 8. Interpretation

The Battles of New Orleans have been interpreted to the public through a variety of means. These range from contemporary newspaper accounts that reshaped the newsy tidbits from the war front to in-depth historical analyses by 20th century scholars. The battles have been told and retold in the visual arts, through paintings, sketches, engravings, photographs and moving film. Hollywood weighed into the mix with 1938 and 1959 films on the subject, titled, “The Buccaneer”. The story has also been told through poetry, prose and song, the most widely known example being Johnny Horton’s version of Jimmy Driftwood’s [James Morris’] “The Battle of New Orleans”. Through this process a considerable body of myth and inaccuracies were introduced to the story and some of these myths are so well entrenched that they are established as fact in the American mind. Several stories are repeatedly told, regardless of whether they are verified by facts or not. A few examples include the age of the Pakenham/De La Ronde oak alley, and the burial of General Pakenham. From the beginning, however, some scholars were hungry for verified details of the battle. In more recent years the story has been exposed to additional scrutiny, although several of the myths endure.

Lieutenant General Pakenham had promised his troops “three days of riot and plunder” if their expedition to capture New Orleans was a success (Russell 1815:292). Instead, the “flower” of the British Army endured more than 17 days of hardships on the battlefield and left the shores of Louisiana defeated, greatly reduced in number, and with only a portion of once-proud Pakenham’s mortal remains in a cask of rum.

Most would agree that the British were forced to, “run through the briars and...through the brambles”, and “through the bushes where the rabbits wouldn’t go” (Morris 1958). The pride of the British Army was reduced to a fleeing mass with their top brass eliminated or taken out of commission, and rebuffed by a numerically inferior force.

Battlefield KOCOA Analysis

Once the Defining Battlefield Features were identified and, where possible, marked on modern maps, the research team defined two distinctive geographical areas: the “Study Area” of the battlefield and the “Core Area” of the battlefield. The study area defines the outer limit of the battle. It may include the armies’ starting points, corridors of movement, logistical areas, minor skirmishing, field hospitals and other contributing resources. Within the Study Area is drawn the Core Area. The Core Area is the main area of military conflict where the armies were engaged in hostile fire. The study area boundary and the core area boundary are shown in Figures 49 and 50 and in Part 3 of this report.

The battlefield boundaries were assessed using the KOCOA battlefield analysis. This analysis uses defining features, which are landscape features mentioned in battle accounts or located archeologically. The general battlefield landscape features are categorized as follows:

Key Terrain- Portion of the battlefield, possession of which gives an advantage to the possessor. [Examples: road junctions, canals, high ground]

Observation and Fields of Fire- Any point on the landscape that allows observation of the movements, deployments and activity of the enemy that is not necessarily key terrain. Observation Points offer an opportunity to see over an area and acquire targets, and allow flat-trajectory weapons to be brought to bear on the enemy. [Examples: High ground, sloping approaches to entrenchments]

Cover and Concealment- Landforms or landscape elements that provide protection from fire and hide troop positions from observations [Examples: structures, entrenchments, ravines, walls, ditches, forests, riverbanks]

Obstacles- Landscape elements that hinder movement and affect the ultimate course of the battle. [Examples: rivers, walls, dense vegetation, swamp, fortifications, ditches]

Avenues of Approach and Retreat- Corridors used to transfer troops between the core battle area and outer logistical areas. [Examples: roads, canals, paths, river]

Application of this terminology is outlined in NPS battlefield study manuals. The project study area was refined and defined by the present study. Sub-areas within the study area including Routes of Approach and Retreat, Core Areas of Engagement, and Potential National Register Boundaries (PotNR) were identified. A GIS dataset was created for the battlefield geographical data. The project team developed GIS Layers with digitized polygons and point maps for each of these sub-areas. Polygons include the Study Area, Battle Routes, Core Areas and PotNR.
Point data include artifact finds and/or specific battlefield features.

**Key Terrain**

Key Terrain features on the New Orleans battlefield include the Mississippi River and the cypress swamps. The Mississippi River was used to advantage by the Americans in the deployment of the schooner *Carolina* and the sloop *Louisiana*. The river was an obstacle to the British, impeding their movement to the south. British troops were unable to reach the West Bank (south side) of the Mississippi River until January 7th. The Americans used the river to their advantage from December 23-January 8, or the entire New Orleans campaign. The configuration of the Mississippi River has shifted from its 1814-1815 position. On the East Bank (north side), the river has shifted southward and areas that were near the shore at the time of the battle are now well inland. New land has been created to the south of that shoreline.

**Observation and Fields of Fire**

England is far from New Orleans and the invading force had to travel to the battle by sea. This required a massive fleet, which did not escape the notice of mariners along the southeastern coast of North America. The Americans quickly responded to the rumors and confirmed sightings of British forces in the region and American troops marched from several directions to converge on New Orleans. Fishermen in the Terre-aux-Boeufs section were the first to report sighting British ships on the advance. When word of the British Naval attack on American gunboats in Lake Borgne on December 14th reached General Andrew Jackson, he already was enroute to New Orleans for an inspection tour (McMaster 1895, Volume 6:183).

Once the American and British armies faced off against each other the commanding officers used the plantation dwellings for observation purposes. General Jackson and his staff observed the British movements from the Macarty and Rodriguez houses. The Americans were also able to
observe the British from the *Carolina* and *Louisiana* war ships. The British observed the Americans from the De La Ronde, LaCoste, Villeré and Jumonville plantations.

**Cover and Concealment**

When the British advance forces aboard their small boats moved up Bayou Mazant they were apparently undetected. A small piquet of American troops were surprised and captured without firing a shot. The British were able to move south along Villeré Canal to surround General Villeré’s house and capture his personal guard. The luck of the British soon turned, however, as word of their arrival was quickly relayed to General Jackson in New Orleans. Jackson made a bold and impetuous move and ordered his army to immediately strike the British. The attacking American forces had little time to prepare any formal defenses and the battlefield was highly mobile and dynamic. Drainage ditches and canals for the sugar fields provided useful cover for both sides. These ditches were lined with wooden fences which provided additional protection. As the American riflemen opened up on the British many of the British sought cover behind the Lacoste slave quarters. When the American schooner *Carolina* unleashed its blistering cannon fire, the perplexed British troops ducked behind the relict river levee just south of the Lacoste plantation. Lattour’s map indicates that the slave quarters were situated east of the main house. The Americans advanced to the ditch that divided Lacoste’s and De La Ronde’s plantations.

Heavy smog from the black powder weapon fire and from the natural foggy weather conditions led General Jackson to call off the American advance on August 23, out of fear for his men suffering from “friendly fire” due to poor visibility. Thus, fog and smog were important elements of cover and concealment on the battlefield, which worked in the British favor in that instance. Fog was a major factor affecting the January 1 and January 8 engagements. Patchy fog dotted the battlefield at the onset of the attack on January 8. It did not prevent the American riflemen for hitting their marks, however. The discharge of thousands of rounds of black powder weapons during the two hours of the main gunfire exchange created its own fog. Smoke surrounding the artillery batteries, obscured targets. At Battery 7, for example, constant firing of the artillery continued with deadly results, despite their lack of visibility. Apparently their targets were so numerous and so closely spaced that no visual confirmation was necessary. Several American and British observers remarked on the deadly scenes on the battlefield once the gunsmoke had cleared.

Field roads also provided cover for the troops in the various engagements. Several of the field roads were located on elevated landforms, such as older river levees, and the flanks of these roads offered protection from incoming fire. These roads were oriented parallel to the Mississippi River.

An unlikely type of cover was present in the form of agricultural surplus. The Americans on Line Jackson were concealed behind an earthwork rampart that was enhanced by the addition of about 200 cotton bales (or large cylindrical bags filled with tightly packed cotton). The cotton provided cover, concealment, and some protection from artillery and small arms fire.

**Obstacles**

Obstacles on the battlefield included the Mississippi River, the major cypress swamps on the northern edge of the battlefield, numerous smaller wetlands scattered throughout the battlefield, ditches, canals, and deeply-bedded agricultural fields. As noted, the Mississippi River was an obstacle primarily for the British. General Jackson used the river to his advantage to limit British movements. The British had no large ships on the Mississippi River. British movement on the Mississippi River for most of the campaign was severely restricted. The movement of American ships on the Mississippi River was restricted by British artillery and small arms fire, particularly after December 27.

The cypress swamps form an irregular boundary on the northern side of the battlefield. These swamps gradually merge with the marshes of Lake Borgne and the bayous that feed into Bayou Bienvenu. These swamps were an advantage for the Americans and a disadvantage for the British. They served to create a choke point to arrest the British movement towards New Orleans. Major General Jackson selected a narrow constriction between the cypress swamp and the Mississippi River for the location of his primary defense-Line Jackson. The British troops were unable to move across the cypress swamp to outflank Jackson’s troops to the north. Jackson and his men kept the British in check and prevented them from crossing Line Jackson, which led to an American victory and the preservation of New Orleans. The cypress swamps severely restricted the movements of British and American troops throughout the campaign. The Americans were more accustomed to these swamps, however, and did not see them as obstacles. They used the swamps to their advantage for their encampments and as cover.

Ditches, canals and deeply-bedded agricultural fields were more of a hindrance than an absolute impediment to troop movement. These features would limit the use of cavalry. They also would have slowed the movement of infantry. Roads were necessary for the movement of artillery and bridges and causeways over these various manmade features were necessary.
Lieutenant John Peddie originally identified the De La Ronde Canal as the best landing site for the British military. Upon their arrival on December 23, however, conditions were not suited for a landing at that location and the brigade was forced to land further away from New Orleans, at the Villeré Canal. Two differing reasons for the obstacle at De La Ronde Canal were identified from the historical research. One view indicated that the water was too low at De La Ronde because of the tidal action, noting that Peddie had observed this location at high water and the British troops arrived at low water.

The other explanation involves an order issued by Major General Jackson to the plantation owners below New Orleans. They were instructed to block their canals so that the British would not enjoy free entry onto the mainland. Planters De La Ronde and Lacoste complied with Jackson’s order by having their slaves block the passage with trees and other vegetation, whereas General Villeré ignored the order and left his canal as it was. The British arrived and found De La Ronde and Lacoste’s entry point blocked and they opted for landing at Villeré’s Canal. If this latter explanation is true, it has important implications for the outcome of the battle. Had the British landed further upstream, the approach to New Orleans would have been shortened they would have likely been able to occupy a better offensive position for advancing against the Americans. The locations of the De La Ronde, Lacoste, and Villeré Canals are shown in Part 3, Figures 26-28.

Avenues of Approach and Retreat

The American military’s avenue of approach to the New Orleans battlefield was primarily by road. The Mississippi River was used to a lesser extent to move supplies and ordnance to the battlefield. The British military’s avenue of approach (and retreat) to the New Orleans battlefield was by water, via Bayou Bienvenue, Bayou Mazant and the Villeré Canal. Once the British had established their camps, additional avenues of approach were utilized. The Villeré Canal was modified and extended to the Mississippi River, so that, by January 7, Colonel Thornton’s brigade was able to cross the Mississippi River and extend the campaign to the West Bank. The location of the Villeré Canal is shown in Part 3, Figures 11-17 and 26-27. Roads were used by the British and Americans for infantry movement up and down the river. On the East Bank (north side) of the river several roads were available for this purpose. In the January 8 battle, British troops advanced on, and along the margins of two or more roads.

PotNR Definition

The definition of a Potential National Register boundary (PotNR) would be premature at this juncture. The currently defined Chalmette Unit NRHD does not accurately define the battlefields of the New Orleans campaign. It merely follows the NPS land boundary of the park management unit. The present study was confined in advance to two specific tracts. One tract was on the periphery of the main area of fighting. The second tract was inaccessible due to property owner issues. In spite of these challenges, the project team expanded the coverage and identified several resource areas that were part of the New Orleans campaign. These areas need further definition before a formal PotNR is recommended. Additional archeological survey is recommended for portions of De La Ronde, Lacoste (greenspace east of Plaza Drive, between St. Bernard Highway and Judge Perez Parkway), Villeré (Villeré canal and the greenspace north of Ohio St, east of Jacobs Drive and west of the Murphy Oil Refinery facility), and Jumonville (Pecan Grove plantation, area immediately east of Pecan Grove, and the large agricultural field east of Saxholm plantation site). Archeological information from these loci have the potential to extend the battlefield several miles east and many hundreds of meters north of the current Chalmette Unit NRHD. These resources are not contiguous, however, and major areas of industrial and residential land surround these cultural features.

Battle Casualties

By all accounts the Americans were the victors in the Campaign for New Orleans. After suffering an initial defeat in a naval engagement on Lake Borgne, the Americans rallied their defenses and fended off a superior British invasion force. Neither army was aware that most of the action was fought after peace between the United States and Great Britain had been agreed in Ghent, Belgium. The Battles of New Orleans resulted in skewed casualties.

As with any war battle casualty estimates vary wildly depending on the source of the information. One may expect one’s own losses to be underestimated while overestimating the enemy’s loss. Battlefield conditions often made it difficult to derive an accurate casualty figure, even if that was the intent. The War of 1812 was no different and the battle casualty estimates for the New Orleans Campaign span a wide range. One may expect that a great many of those listed as wounded died from their wounds within a few days, weeks or months. Follow-up statistics for those who lingered in their deaths are generally unavailable for the War of 1812 era.
December 23

The American forces engaged with the British on December 23, 1814 numbered approximately 2,024 men, according to LaTour (1816; Smith 1999). The number of British present in that battle by mid-day was about 1,600, which increased to 2,050 by night.

General Jackson’s estimates of British losses in the December 23 Night Battle, “Killed, left on the field of battle, - 100, Wounded, left on the field of battle, - 280 Prisoners taken—1 major, 2 lieutenants, 1 midshipman, 66 non-commissioned officers and privates, making a grand total of 400” (Cobbett 1815). Jackson described the battle casualties from the December 23 engagement, written on December 27th: “We made one Major, two subalterns, and sixty-three privates, prisoners; and the enemy’s loss in killed and wounded must have been at least ___. My own loss I have not been able to ascertain with exactness, but suppose it to amount to 100, in killed, wounded and missing. Among the former I have to lament the loss of Col. Lauderdale, of Gen. Coffee’s brigade, who fell while bravely fighting. Colonels Dyer and Gibson of the same corps were wounded, and Major Kavanaugh taken prisoner.” (Essex Register 1815:4).

General Coffee made these remarks to his wife regarding casualties suffered by both sides in the Night Battle: “in this affair we had engaged about fourteen hundred men, and the enemy about three thousand, we lost about twenty five men killed, seventy wounded and about seventy five made prisoners the loss of the enemy was upwards of 400 in killed and wounded, and one hundred prisoners in the course of the night.” He continued, “they had three men to our one, and we killed and wounded four men to their one” (Coffee 1916a:265-298). Colonel Butler, American adjutant general, wrote on December 30 about the casualties of December 23°, “On the 23rd at night we attacked the enemy; and, as reported by deserters, we killed, wounded and took prisoners about 500. Our loss comparatively very small. Colonels Lauderdale and Henderson have hit the dirt and are no more” (Niles Weekly Register 1815).

The official return of American casualties on December 23, 1814 was published by James (1818, Volume 2:535-536, Appendix 86), which stated,

Report of the killed, wounded, and missing, of the army under the command of major-general Andrew Jackson, in the action of the 23d of December, 1814, with the enemy.

Killed:—artillerymen, 1; 7th United States’ infantry, 1 lieutenant, 1 sergeant, 1 corporal, 4 privates; 44th ditto, 7 privates; general Coffee’s brigade volunteer mounted gun-men, 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 2 sergeants, 4 privates.—Total, 24.

Wounded:—general staff, 1 colonel; 7th United States’ infantry, 1 captain, 1 ensign, 1 sergeant, 2 corporals, 23 privates; 44th ditto, 2 lieutenants, 3 sergeants, 2 corporals, 19 privates; general Coffee’s brigade, 1 colonel, 2 lieutenant-colonels, 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 1 quarter-master-serjeant, 3 sergeants, 2 corporals, 1 musician, 30 privates; New Orleans volunteer corps, 1 captain, 2 sergeants, 7 privates; volunteers of colour; 1 adjutant and 6 privates.—Total, wounded, 115.

Missing:—general Coffee’s brigade, 1 major, 2 captains, 3 lieutenants, 1 quarter-master; 3 ensigns or cornets, 4 sergeants, 1 corporal, 2 musicians, 57 privates.—Total, missing, 74.

Captain Thomas Beale’s Rifle Company suffered two killed, five wounded (and captured), and 17 others captured in the December 23rd battle (Times Picayune 1901a:3).

The battle casualties from the December 23 action as the official returns were: Americans: 24 killed, 115 wounded, and 74 missing; British: 46 killed, 167 wounded and 64 missing (Roosevelt 1882:468; O’Connor 1816:282). Thomson (1816:348) stated in his history of the war that the total American loss in the action of December 23 was 213 and the British, 400.

Casualties among the British troops in the December 23rd battle were high. Grapeshot fired by gunners aboard the schooner Carolina was extremely effective against the British troops who were encamped at Villére Plantation. Ensign H.R. Gleig, who was present, stated, “The deadly shower of grape swept down numbers in the camp”. Major General Keane reported only a single casualty (Keane 1882:466).

Lieutenant Benson Hill, Royal Artillery gave these unofficial British casualties from the December 23 battle, “Altogether the loss of the Battalion on that night was 6 Sergeants and 17 Riflemen killed; Captain Hallen, Lieutenants Daniel Forbes, (severely), and W. S. C. Farmer (slightly), 5 Sergeants and 54 Riflemen wounded; and Major Samuel Mitchell, 2 Sergeants, and 39 Riflemen missing. A total (exclusive of officers) of 123, or one-fifth of their whole number” (Hill 1836).

William James noted, “The loss of the British, on the 23d and 24th, the details of which are given in the official return [App. No. 84], amounted to 46 killed, 167 wounded, and 62 missing; total 275. The Americans, who, as the British 3-pounders were not brought into use, had only musketry
to contend with, sustained a loss, on the 23d, as particularized in their return [App. No.86], of 24 killed, 115 wounded, and 74 missing; total 213" (James 1818, Volume 2: 362).

Return of casualties in action with the enemy near New Orleans on the 23d and 24th December; 1814.

General staff:--1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major; 1 lieutenant, wounded.

Royal artillery: 2 rank and file, killed; 1 lieutenant, 7 rank and file, wounded.

Royal engineers, sappers and miners: 1 rank and file missing.

4th foot:--1 captain, 1 lieutenant, 1 sergeant, 1 drummer; 1 rank and file, killed; 1 lieutenant, 14 rank and file, wounded.

21st foot:--1 captain, 2 rank and file, killed; 1 sergeant, 2 drummers, 8 rank and file, wounded; 2 rank and file, missing.

85th foot; 2 captains, 11 rank and file, killed; 1 captain, 3 lieutenants, 4 sergeants, 2 drummers, 57 rank and file, wounded; 1 lieutenant, 1 ensign, 1 sergeant, 16 rank and file, missing.

93d foot:--1 rank and file, wounded.

95th foot:--6 sergeants, 17 rank and file, killed; 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 5 sergeants, 54 rank and file, wounded; 1 major; 2 sergeants, 39 rank and file, missing.

Total:--4 captains, 1 lieutenant, 7 sergeants, 1 drummer; 33 rank and file, killed; 1 lieutenant-colonel, 1 major; 2 captains, 8 lieutenants, 10 sergeants, 4 drummers, 141 rank and file, wounded; 1 major, 1 lieutenant, 1 ensign, 3 sergeants, 58 rank and file, missing (Stovin 1815; in James 1818, Volume 2: 532-533, Appendix 84).

Brown (1815:245) noted in his history of the war that a British journal (apparently taken from the corpse of a British officer on January 8) noted that the British losses on the night of December 23 were "224 killed and an immense number wounded". Brown also noted that American losses on that day were about 100 men killed, wounded and prisoners.

December 24

Official casualty returns for the action on December 24 included 58 British and 18 Americans (Gleig 1821:314; Roosevelt 1882:470).

December 27

Captain Edward Codrington (1876:243) estimated on December 27 that the number of British troops killed, wounded or taken prisoner to be above 200. This included about 15 officers. He speculated that the loss by the Americans likely did not exceed this number.

December 28

O’Connor listed the British losses as a result of their advance on December 28 to be about 120 men. He credited American losses at 7 killed and 8 wounded (O’Connor 1816:282). Major Forrest (Rankin 1961:34) listed the British casualties from fighting on December 27/28 to be “only Sixty Men”. Rankin notes that the American casualties in this same action were 15 (8 killed, 7 wounded).

January 1

American casualty estimates for the January 1 action were listed at 34 (11 killed, 23 wounded). No British casualty figures exist for that date, although from January 1-5, British casualties totaled 78 (32 killed, 44 wounded, 2 missing). No significant fighting took place from January 2-5 (Rankin 1961:38; O’Connor 1816:285).

January 8

General Jackson’s estimates of battle casualties, written on January 9, were: “The loss which the enemy sustained on this occasion, cannot be estimated at less than 1500 in killed, wounded and prisoners. Upwards of 300 have already been delivered over for burial; and my men are still engaged in picking them up within my lines and carrying them to the point where the enemy are to receive them—This is in addition to the dead and wounded whom the enemy have been enabled to carry from the field, during and since the action, and to those who have since died of the wounds they received. We have taken about 500 prisoners, upwards of three hundred of whom are wounded, and a great part of them mortally. My loss has not exceeded,
and I believe has not amounted to ten killed, and as many wounded” (Cobbett 1815). Jackson’s casualty estimates, written a few days after the battle were, “They then retreated, leaving from 1500 to 2000 in killed, wounded and prisoners—in this number are included thirty-nine officers. On our side the loss was confined to about 20 men, 7 only of whom were killed” (Cobbett 1815).

O’Connor (1816:287-288) listed the number of British casualties on the left bank of the Mississippi River on January 8 at 2,600, consisting of 700 killed, 1,400 wounded and 500 prisoners. O’Connor listed the estimated American casualties on January 8th, on both sides of the river at 71, which included 13 killed, 39 wounded and 19 missing.

**Overall Casualty Estimates for the New Orleans Campaign**

General Jackson provided a preliminary summary of the losses sustained by both sides, which included, “the loss to the enemy, of their commander-in-chief and one major general killed, another major-general wounded, the most experienced and bravest of their officers, and more than three thousand men killed, wounded and missing; while our ranks, my friends, were thinned by only the loss of seven of our brave companions killed and six disabled by wounds,—Wonderful interposition of heaven! Unexampled even in the history of war!” (Adams 1824:12).

General Coffee estimated the British losses from December 23-January 8 to be, “upwards of four thousand men”, while Coffee estimated the American losses in the land campaign to be, “about fifty killed, one hundred and twenty wounded, and about one hundred and ten prisoners” (Coffee 1916a:264-298).

Thomson (1816:351) gave the total of Americans who were killed, wounded or missing in the New Orleans campaign to be fewer than 500, whereas he estimated the number of British killed, wounded or missing to be about 4,000 men.

The Scottish press reported British losses in the New Orleans campaign. Its numbers were 386 killed, 1,516 wounded, and 552 missing. This amounted to total casualties of 2,454 (The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany 1815:227).

**Disposition of the War Dead**

A persisting mystery to students of the New Orleans campaign is the burial locations of those killed in the battles. To date, no graves, skeletal remains or military cemeteries have been identified on the battlefield. Given the scale of human devastation on the battlefield this lack of information is difficult to fathom. The historical record contains some information about the treatment of the war dead, but no specific burial locations are identified. The New Orleans newspaper reported (Times Picayune 1915:26):

> “At two in the afternoon [January 8, 1815] the enemy demanded a truce to bury the dead that had fallen on both sides. Jackson sent Lieut. Crawley with the proud message that he had no dead to bury and granted them a respite of twenty-four hours”.

An unidentified Kentucky militiaman described the scene immediately following the January 8th battle:

> When we first got a fair view of the field in our front, individuals could be seen in every possible attitude. Some laying quite dead, others mortally wounded, pitching and tumbling about in the agonies of death... some had their heads shot off, some their legs, some their arms. Some were laughing, some crying, some groaning, and some screaming. There was every variety of sight and sound. Among those that were on the ground, however, there were some that were neither dead nor wounded. A great many had thrown themselves down behind piles of slain, for protection. As the firing ceased, these men every now and then jumping up and either running off or coming in and giving themselves up (cited in Owsey 1981:161).

Samuel Mordecu, a non-participant in the battle and one of its earliest battlefield tourists, visited the battlefield on April 22 and 24, 1815 and recorded this description in his diary,

> I discovered the field where the British encampment was formed, by observing a line of small spots among the clover where fires had been kindled. This was the only remaining mark, but as I advanced, the ravages of war were more distinctly marked in the distribution of buildings &c. At one place the ditch still retained a bloody stain & the smell was extremely offensive. I have since learned that the enemy made a breastwork here of hogs of sugar—which probably caused the appearance & smell. The house in which the British headquarters were held, was perforated with cannon balls. Many of these must have been sent from the Caroline & other vessels, which greatly harassed the enemy. I had no difficulty finding Genl. Jackson’s lines. At their extreme right on the river now in it a large mortar remains. All the artillery has been removed from the different batteries. The works extend in a straight line from the river to the swamp—about a mile. After passing these some distance I reached the second lines, similar to the first, and afterwards several batteries, the last one being
at the entrance to the city, where I found a sentry stationed, as it is a permanent work (Mordecai 1815).

Mordecai continued with this diary entry written two days later when he returned to the battlefield with a larger party of battlefield tourists aboard the steamboat Vesuvius,

The spots rendered remarkable by particular events that took place on them were pointed out by gentlemen who were in the lines during the Seige [sic]. The house in which Genl. Jackson established headquarters a few yards in rear of the lines, bore many marks of the enemy’s balls. One remained half buried in a partition wall over his bed. I did not go to that part of the field where the British buried (nominally) the greater number of their dead, being told that the smell still continued very offensive, as many of the bodies were not half covered with earth. The ditch along the levee was the grave of numbers (Mordecai 1815).

British officer Chesterton (1853, Volume I:207-209) mentioned, “the slain having been interred under the safeguard of a flag of truce”, following the January 8th slaughter. He provided a telling remark about the gunshot wounds suffered by the British. He noted, “thanks to their [Americans] use of ‘buck shot’ (some cartridges containing no less than seven small balls, instead of one bullet), most of our [British] wounded speedily recovered”.

Ensign Gleig (1821:336) reviewed the aftermath of the January 8th attack, in which he described the hasty burial of the battlefield dead:

As soon as the whole army was re-united, and the broken regiments had recovered their order, a flag of truce was dispatched with proposals for the burial of the dead. To accomplish this end, a truce of two days was agreed upon, and parties were immediately sent out to collect and bury their fallen comrades. Prompted by curiosity, I mounted my horse, and rode to the front; but of all the sights I ever witnessed, that which met me there was beyond comparison the most shocking, and the most humiliating. Within the small compass of a few hundred yards, we gathered together nearly a thousand bodies, all of them arrayed in British uniforms. Not a single American was among them; all were English; and they were thrown by dozens into shallow holes, scarcely deep enough to furnish them with a slight covering of earth. Nor was this all. An American officer stood by smoking a segar, and apparently counting the slain with a look of savage exultation; and repeating over and over to each individual that approached him, that their loss amounted only to eight men killed, and fourteen wounded.

Brown (1815:249) noted in his history that on January 18, “Seventy of their [British] wounded were mangled to such a degree that it was impossible to remove them. These they recommended to the humanity of the American commander".
Chapter 9. Preservation Recommendations

Villeré Canal

The present study identified intact portions of the Villeré Canal on the Murphy Oil Company tract. The Villeré Canal has the potential for interpretation of the story of the landfall of the British invasion. The more intact segments of this canal may contain archeological evidence of the British engineering effort to widen and deepen the canal for boat traffic. This aspect relates to the January 7, 1815 crossing of the Mississippi River by Colonel Thornton and his brigade. The boats used to make this crossing were moved via the Villeré Canal and its enlargement by the British troops from Bayou Mazant to the Mississippi River. This was a major accomplishment in engineering and hard work completed by British engineers and the unfortunate canal diggers from the West Indian regiments. Archeological investigation from the present study shows that the surviving segments of the Villeré Canal contain only minimal artifact evidence, such as bullets or artillery rounds. This area was not within the Core Area of the engagements. The canal and the road on the east bank of the canal did, however, serve as a vital transportation route for British troops as the arrived, departed, and transferred men, boats and equipment to the battlegrounds. This chapter of the story of the New Orleans Campaign could be interpreted to the public on this property. The property is presently owned by industrial interests but the option for its development as a historical park has not been eliminated.

The surviving portions of Villeré Canal demonstrate some potential for archeological deposits associated with the December 23rd Night Battle, or with some undocumented picket post skirmish from the days following that battle. The bullets and lead shot from this activity form a thin veneer over the area, although a slight cluster of these artifacts was defined by the metal detector survey. The area of the canal where this cluster is located should be explored in the future. Future research should include closer spaced, systematic shovel testing transects combined with systematic close order metal detector transects (5 m intervals or less) and test or trench excavation. An well placed excavation trench oriented perpendicular to the canal would provide an important cross-section of this feature. Information from such a cross-section may substantiate its age and function. Quite possibly artifacts, dating to the battle period or earlier, buried in the base of this canal may be well preserved in an anaerobic environment. Future research should explore this possibility. Future research on the Villeré Canal should search for more archeological evidence to support this area's role in the December 23rd action, as well as its role as a transportation route for British troops entering and exiting the battle theatre. The Villeré Canal is likely eligible for listing in the NRHP, under Criterion D, although more field study is necessary before a nomination can be completed.

De La Ronde Plantation

The brick ruins of the De La Ronde plantation house remain the most visible landscape feature of the Battles of New Orleans. The nearby Pakenham Oaks also are historical but they most likely post date the War of 1812. Both areas offer potential for further archeological study and public interpretation about the battles and the battlefield cultural landscape.

The large plantation house was destroyed by fire in the 1880s and, ever since that time, the ruins have continued to degrade. This is apparent by examining the sequence of images of the De La Ronde ruin in Part 2 of the report. Access to the ruins for historical tourists is currently difficult and dangerous. Heavy vehicle traffic is nearly continuous in both lanes of the St. Bernard Highway. This traffic includes many large trucks heading to the nearby industrial sites. Trains also frequently travel on the railroad line on the south side of St. Bernard Highway, which presents an additional risk to pedestrians and the stability of the ruins. The recent location of the St. Bernard jail complex, south and east of De La Ronde ruin, and an extremely noisy industrial complex, south and west of the ruin, further detract from the historical view shed and ambience. It is not a setting conducive to the enjoyment of history. In addition, parking options for visitation to the ruins and park are quite limited.

The optimal remedy to this situation, closing vehicle traffic in the vicinity of the De La Ronde ruins, is not economically feasible. Consequently, historic preservationists need to apply improvements within less than favorable parameters.

Archeological excavations at the De La Ronde ruins and Pakenham Park would likely yield important information about the plantation and its role in the battles of New Orleans.
Orleans. As for the historical tourism, any excavation project plan would need to carefully consider the safety and logistical concerns of the project’s urban setting. Curious onlookers riding by in their vehicles compound these safety issues. Archeological excavations typically draw public interest. Any excavation project would need to address the management of vehicles and crowds in the project area. This would involve close coordination with the St. Bernard Parish Government and its public safety offices.

Pakenham Park represents the best option in the De La Ronde vicinity for public interpretation. It would certainly be a safer location for signage and public tours than the traffic island that contains the De La Ronde ruins. The potential adverse impact of any signage, kiosks or other improvements in Pakenham Park includes damage to arehological resources. These potential impacts should be identified and addressed in any future historic preservation plan for the battlefield. Since St. Bernard Parish is the current owner of the De La Ronde ruins and Pakenham Park, the responsible management of these resources falls within its purview.

The De La Ronde Ruins and Pakenham Oaks vicinity should be subjected to a close-order systematic shovel testing program. The ruins and oak allees should be explored by small test excavations. Targets identified by the GPR survey in the present study, particularly the large anomaly west of the De La Ronde ruin, should be explored by a test excavation. Any future excavations on the De La Ronde plantation should address the use of this area as a headquarters and hospital complex throughout the New Orleans campaign. Battle debris from the Night Battle of December 23 also may exist in this area. The De La Ronde plantation complex is likely eligible for listing in the NRHP, under Criterion D, although more field study is necessary before a nomination can be completed.

Field Study of the Meraux Airport Tract

The Meraux Airport Tract is highly threatened by development. This property is privately owned and access to survey this area was denied by the landowner. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, real estate developers have sought out new opportunities for development with the added benefit of financial support by the Federal government. In St. Bernard Parish this development has led to conflict with the parish government (The St. Bernard News 2011). Although this tract was originally slated for field investigation as part of the present study, direct access to the property for this purpose was never acquired. Hopefully this situation will change in the future and the remaining property may be studied for its scholarship value.

Residential housing developments in the Battle of New Orleans battlefield are nothing new. A 1950 real estate advertisement appealed to war veterans, offering homes in Chalmette Vista subdivision (Times Picayune 1950:24). Interestingly, the developer who placed this ad was C. Earl Colomb. The Colomb house was a historic landmark described in the W.P.A. tour guide (W.P.A. 1938). Chalmette Vista is located in the heart of the battlefield, north of St. Bernard Highway and northeast of the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte NHP.

If access for archeological study on the Meraux Airport Tract becomes available, an archeological survey of the property should be pursued. Documentary evidence and GIS analysis from the present study indicates that this area has the potential of archeological remnants of Line Jackson, the Rodriguez Canal, General Coffee’s Tennessee militia encampment and battle debris associated with the January 8th battle. It also may contain evidence associated with the January 1 artillery duel and the Choctaw Indian encampment. Later land use, including agricultural cultivation, an airport, a miniature golf course and the St. Bernard Drive-In Theater may have obliterated portions of these resources. Given the current lack of access to the property, the presence or absence of any important archeological resources on this land remains subject to question.

The Meraux Airport Tract may retain resources associated with the battlefield, particularly the potential for archeological resources on the Meraux Airport Tract, as noted, cannot be assessed from the present data. Documentary evidence demonstrates that the January 8 battlefield extended into this vicinity but archeological support for it remains to be proven. As with all properties included in the NRHP, landowner approval and cooperation is essential. Previous surveys in the area, which employed standard systematic shovel testing strategies, were ineffective at location objects related to the War of 1812. If possible, the property should be examined with other survey techniques, particularly, systematic metal detector survey and sampling using remote sensing techniques (such as GPR survey, magnetometry, soil resistivity, etc.). In order for metal detecting to be effective, it may be necessary to prepare sample strips in advance with the aid of heavy equipment such as a smooth blade backhoe, trackhoe, or Graddil. The machinery could remove the upper soil zone, which may contain modern debris, to reveal the battle zone. Any test stripping should only be done under the direct supervision of a qualified archeologist. If warranted by the preliminary results, then additional studies to assess the NRHP potential of the archeological component should be undertaken. This may include multiple test unit excavation, detailed
topographic mapping, and additional remote sensing (such as GPR survey, magnetometry, soil resistivity, etc.). Any future research on the Meraux Airport Tract should focus on the location of battle debris or American entrenchments associated with the January 9th battle. If any intact deposits from the New Orleans Campaign are identified, then a modification to the existing NRHD of the Chalmette Unit may be in order. The Meraux Airport Tract may contain archaeological resources that make it eligible for listing in the NRHP, under Criterion D, although more field study is necessary before a nomination can be completed.

Chalmette Unit National Register District

Presently the Chalmette Unit is the only property in the Battles of New Orleans theatre that is recognized by the Department of Interior as a National Register Historic District. As defined, the boundary conforms to the property owned by the National Park Service and operated as the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park. This boundary is an artificial construct that bears little correspondence to the actual boundaries of the battles. It does incorporate most of the core areas of the January 1 and 8 battlefields. The British troop positions and artillery batteries, however, lie east of this boundary designation.

The Chalmette Unit includes a majority of the Core Area, or “killing zone” of the January 8th battle. Contained within its boundaries are likely graves of many of those killed in the battle, although none have been located. The National Park Service is currently responsible for management of the resources within the Chalmette Unit. Clearly, the NPS management approach in 2011 is greatly improved from that of the 1930s-1960s.

National Register Potential of Other Areas of the Battlefield

Admittedly, the areas immediately east of the Chalmette Unit property are largely compromised for their archaeological and public interpretive values and are not likely to contain some of the key defining battlefield features that once occupied positions in that area of the battlefield. Important vestiges of the battle may exist within the Chalmette National Cemetery but this area is topped with the burials of thousands of Civil War military dead and, consequently, not suitable for archeological excavations.

Although the Chalmette National Cemetery is nearly “off limits” to traditional archeological excavation because of its hallowed ground, it offers potential for non-intrusive remote sensing exploration. This could include ground-based Lidar mapping of the topography and “bare earth” visualizations, and subsurface remote sensing techniques like Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR), Soil Resistivity, Magnetometry, and XRF Mapping. Of these techniques GPR is the only method that offers 3-D imagery of the subsurface. A combination of remote sensing techniques would be the most desirable approach. Lidar mapping and the subsurface data could be merged once it is in digital format. This would allow for the subsurface information to be warped with ground surface contours, if desired. Conversely, the GPR data may provide buried landscape surface information that is unavailable on the present ground surface. The post-Civil War burial zone could be isolated as a soil horizon so that deeper features, including earthworks relating the War of 1812 could be imaged. Lidar mapping data is currently available for the study area but it was collected as airborne data and it lacks the resolution and detail ground-based Lidar collection would offer.

The archeological evidence for the Battles of New Orleans is not confined to National Park Service property. Further to the east of the Chalmette Unit are pockets of historic resources that relate to the battles. These include the De La Ronde Ruins, the Villere Canal and Pecan Grove plantation. These properties are potential “contributing properties” for a contiguous National Register District nomination package. Each of these areas contains unique archeological information that relates to different stages of the New Orleans Campaign. Before a proper NRHP package can be assembled, however, more archeological study is required. The data presented in this report includes several candidates for contributing elements to such a nomination package.

Pecan Grove plantation was visited during the final stages of the present field study. Our present understanding of this historical site does not include any archeological excavation or survey data. Historical research by the landowners attests to the link between Pecan Grove plantation and neighboring Junonville plantation. Pecan Grove offers a large area of greenspace that has the potential to contain artifacts and features associated with the War of 1812 era Junonville plantation, as well as evidence of the engagement that took place in this vicinity between the British troops and General Morgan’s Louisiana militia on December 23, 1814.

Before this potential can be realized and these data properly interpreted to the public, however, an intensive archeological survey of the property should be undertaken. An intensive survey of Pecan Grove should include a traditional close interval shovel test survey (5 m spacing
recommended) and remote sensing techniques, including systematic metal detecting survey. If warranted by the preliminary survey findings, then additional studies to assess the NRHP potential of the archaeological component at Pecan Grove should be undertaken. This may include multiple test unit excavation, detailed topographic mapping, and remote sensing (such as GPR survey, magnetometry, soil resistivity). Any future research at Pecan Grove should focus on the British and American troop positions during the December 23rd skirmish, as well as any evidence for encampments, entrenchments, or hospitals used by the British on the days following that battle.

Other areas may exist within the core area of the battlefields that deserve additional archaeological study. One such area is along both flanks of a canal located west of the Chalmette High School Campus and south of Judge Perez Drive. This area is currently wooded and a large portion of it is used as a parking lot and junk yard for large work trucks and other heavy equipment. Modern metal debris is widespread over this area, which probably would inhibit the use of systematic metal detector survey of this area in its present condition. The LAMAR Institute team made no attempt to survey on this property because of the lack of time and resources. The landowner(s) of this tract were not contacted in this project. This canal is the suspected location of fire fight between the Tennessee troops and the British troops in the Night Battle. The Tennessee riflemen occupied the west side of this canal and the British were on the east. Sampling strategy, such as that described for the Meraux tract, are applicable to this area of the battlefield. Any future research on this canal area should focus questions concerning the Night Battle and the troop positions in that area.

The LAMAR Institute team identified an area of Orleans Parish, opposite from the Chalmette Unit, which is likely associated with the New Orleans campaign. Earthworks are preserved in a small park in this area and battle debris may be present. This location was well beyond the present study area, however, and it was only explored using GIS-based historical map research and surface reconnaissance. This area is suspected to be the location of an engagement in the New Orleans campaign, although this remains to be confirmed by archeological study. Civil War earthworks also were located nearby and these earthworks in the park could date to another era. Future research in this vicinity should include systematic shovel testing survey, systematic metal detecting survey, detailed topographic LiDAR mapping, remote sensing (as described for Meraux Airport Tract), and small test excavation units. Any future research should address the role of this site in the American defenses and defining troop locations and battle action from January 9, 1815. Suspected military earthworks should be sampled by small test units or trenches to confirm, or deny, their military function.

In general, The LAMAR Institute recommends that additional NRHP nominations for relevant cultural resources in the War of 1812 battlefields below New Orleans be pursued and that the existing NRHD status of the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Preserve be augmented to include any adjacent resources that relate to the battles. The present study allows some guidance for this, although more field study is necessary to better define battle-related resources before a NRHP submission is warranted. Such nominations or modification of the existing NRHD boundary should lead American citizens to have a better geographical understanding of the size and scope of the New Orleans Campaign.
Chapter 10. Project Summary

In 2011, the LAMAR Institute completed a battlefield survey of the Battle of New Orleans for the St. Bernard Parish Government and the National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program. This study combined historical and archeological research techniques to better define the battlefield landscape.

Researchers gathered primary source information on the military resources from numerous archives, libraries and research institutes. Review of existing secondary sources about the battles, the participants and historical recognition of the battlefield resources also formed a major part of this study. Archeologists conducted fieldwork on four plantations that were part of the battlefield—Junonville, Villere, Lacoste and De La Ronde. A large tract of the former Villere plantation was systematically surveyed using metal detectors and other survey techniques. Reconnaissance evaluation of the Meraux Airport Tract was attempted, despite the lack of physical access to the property. Fieldwork efforts originally intended for the Meraux Airport Tract were shifted to property owned by St. Bernard Parish on the former De La Ronde plantation. The study included a GIS analysis of the battlefield, which employed National Park Service battlefield survey methodology.

The survey considered the overall battlefield landscape. The present-day landscape is a composite of centuries of growth and development in the study area. The battlefield landscape is one layer of this composite. The study examined the extant versus destroyed portions of the battle landscape. In areas where the actual landscape has been obliterated or so extensively altered to negate its value for interpretation, researchers relied on historical evidence to create the virtual landscape. In some instances, the landscape has been so severely altered that even this virtual landscape cannot be accurately conceived.

In spite of this destruction, this project has shown through GIS study, documentary research, and on-the-ground investigation that elements of the Battles of New Orleans have survived in the form of battlefield landscapes such as canals, roads, plantations, bayous, rivers, and fields of engagement. Likewise, archeological research has helped narrow the search for the specific locations of engagements for several of the battles. Intensive metal detector survey has revealed that the Murphy Oil Tract on the northern part of the Villere plantation was not the scene of the most intense battle engagement but was on the periphery of the action. Key elements relating to British troop movements and access and egress to the battlefields; however, have survived on the Murphy Oil Tract. Research and GIS study strongly suggests that the Meraux Airport Tract likely contains important elements of battlefield engagement, particularly portions of Line Jackson—the primary American defensive line. Efforts should be made as quickly as possible to archeologically investigate this tract and protect it if it proves to be a contributing element to the Battles of New Orleans. This project also presented new information regarding other properties that have the potential to add to the body of data, preservation efforts, and heritage tourism related to the Battles of New Orleans. Visits to these locales, interviews with property owners, and additional research suggest that these locations have much to offer and should be included in future plans to study and understand the battles. This includes Pecan Grove plantation and the De La Ronde ruins.

Undoubtedly, the single greatest threat to the Battles of New Orleans resources lies in development. This threat will increase as St. Bernard Parish continues to rebound from Hurricane Katrina and from a globally sluggish economy. Now is the time to thoroughly locate and identify the surviving resources, find viable means to protect these resources, and create a management plan that will incorporate these resources and the information they contain into heritage tourism opportunities that will benefit the public and the economy of the City of Chalmette and St. Bernard Parish. This ABPP project is a good first step in that direction.
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Widmer, Mary Lou


Widmer, Mary Lou


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Yeager, John

Zimpel, Charles
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Initials/Date ML 2011

The LAMAR Institute
Site: BattleN. Orleans
P.P. C29
Level/Strata/Other
8-10 cm B1
LN.# 1
Initials/Date ML 2011
The LAMAR Institute
Site: Battle N. Orleans

P.P. C33
Level/Strata/Other 3 cm

LN.# 5
Initials/Date ML JRE 2011

The LAMAR Institute

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Site: Battle N. Orleans

P.P. C37
Level/Strata/Other 1-4 cm

LN.# 10
Initials/Date 2011

The LAMAR Institute
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Initials/Date: 2011

The LAMAR Institute
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Initials/Date  ML/RE 2011

The LAMAR Institute
Site: Battle N. Orleans

P.P. C 41

Level/Strata/Other 1-2 cm

LN. # 18

Initials/Date 2011 ML

The LAMAR Institute

The LAMAR Institute
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Level/Strata/Other 0-5
LN. # 19
Initials/Date ML 2011

The LAMAR Institute
Site: BattleN. Orleans
P.P. C38
Level/Strata/Other 5 cm +
LN. # 14
Initials/Date ML 2011
The LAMAR Institute
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