

TOUR OF HISTORIC SAINT BERNARD PARISH

DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

This narrative was originally prepared for a tour of St. Bernard Parish by the Louisiana Historical Society in November of 1983. The Louisiana Historical Society was founded in New Orleans in the 1830s and is one of the oldest historical societies in the United States. For many years, it published *The Louisiana Historical Quarterly* which was a nationally respected scholarly publication in its day. Frank Fernandez, the first official historian of St. Bernard Parish, felt that it was important to prepare a written narrative to distribute to Historical Society members participating in the tour, hence the reason for first producing this piece. Mr. Fernandez and Mr. Hyland co-authored the original tour narrative. Unfortunately, the original copy of the tour narrative and other copies stored in St. Bernard were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. New Orleans residents who had participated in the 1983 tour and saved the narrative shared a copy with William Hyland in 2006. The narrative was, by 2006, dated and required significant revisions. The following tour has been substantially rewritten by William Hyland and presented for use in August 2012. This work is preparatory to completing a more comprehensive history of St. Bernard Parish. It is also intended to provide potential tour guides with a body of historic research woven into an interpretive narrative about St. Bernard Parish. Perhaps most importantly, this narrative will also be useful to St. Bernard Parish schools, providing educators with an opportunity to expose the student population of St. Bernard to the visible, physical manifestations of our history as represented in these parish landmarks and historic areas.

SAINT BERNARD CIVIL PARISH

St. Bernard Parish is New Orleans' eastern neighbor, fronting the Mississippi River and extending eastward to wetland areas and barrier islands bordering the Gulf of Mexico. There are no incorporated municipalities within St. Bernard Civil Parish. Spanish colonists from the Canary Islands, called *Islenos* or Islanders, were settled in Louisiana to halt British colonial encroachment west of the Mississippi River between 1778 and 1783. *Islenos* were settled in modern day eastern St. Bernard Parish between 1779 and 1783 in three successive increments. The settlement was known between 1780 and 1784 as *Tierra de Bueyes*, *La Concepcion*, *San Bernardo de Nueva Galvez* and *San Bernardo*. *San Bernardo* was named in honor of Governor Bernardo de Galvez and his patron saint, Saint Bernard de Clairvaux. The French name *La Terre-aux-Boeufs* was first given to the region during its initial exploration by Iberville in 1698-1699.

Governor Galvez commissioned Pierre Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville to settle a large contingent of *Isleno* families below New Orleans in 1778. Marigny donated to King Charles III of Spain a huge parcel of property for colonization by *Islenos* on April 29th, 1779 behind the area he worked as an indigo plantation. This area extended from the rear of what later would become the Poydras Plantation to the Biloxi Marsh and Delacroix Island wetland areas. The King of Spain appointed Marigny the founding commandant of the Post of *La Concepcion*, later St. Bernard Post, on February 17th, 1780. Thus it was in

1780 that St. Bernard first separated from the direct governmental supervision of New Orleans with a distinct territorial jurisdiction and community identity.

The original American incorporated Parish of St. Bernard, established by act of the Louisiana Territorial Legislature in 1807, was confined exclusively to “the settlements along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs” or the Spanish *Poblacion de San Bernardo*, a later name for the *Puesto* [post] *de San Bernardo*. These posts or settlements [*poblacions*] were popularly known as *parroquias* or parishes because the Spanish Government established ecclesiastical parishes in each civil jurisdiction. The civil jurisdiction almost always derived its name from the ecclesiastical parish. Shortly after Louisiana attained statehood in 1812, sugar planters along the downriver east bank of the Mississippi River of Orleans Parish grew very vocal about paying elevated property taxes to the City of New Orleans and moved to annex this section of New Orleans to St. Bernard Parish which finally occurred in 1817. Consequently, an area comprising present day Violet, Meraux, Chalmette and most of Arabi was joined to St. Bernard two years following the Battle of New Orleans. This corridor along the Mississippi was settled by French concessionaires between almost 20 to 60 years before the establishment of the *Poblacion de San Bernardo*.

The Battle of New Orleans, fought January 8th, 1815, is the most significant single event in the history of St. Bernard Parish, though when fought, the battle took place in Orleans Parish. The ramifications of this battle and larger military campaign, which ended the War of 1812, were global. American ownership of the Mississippi Valley was secured, thereby guarantying the future westward expansion of the United States. Ultimately, that expansion determined the United States’ destiny as an economic titan and global power. The victory attained by American forces on the plantation of Ignace Francois Martin de Lino de Chalmet [Chalmette] was transcendent on many fronts. It was the first time in this nation that western Europeans and their descendants, Native Americans, African slaves and Free African Americans coalesced into a cohesive force which repelled a threat to their homeland from a foreign foe. An argument can be made that the societal definition of modern America can be traced in part to the Battle of New Orleans.

Many ethnic groups including the Native Americans, French, Africans, Spaniards, Sicilian Italians and Filipinos have made a profound impact on the lifestyle and development of St. Bernard Parish. Together, these diverse ethnicities have forged a community/cultural identity distinct within a region renowned for its cultural diversity. Hurricane Katrina was a cataclysmic event in the historic development of St. Bernard which has reshaped the parish. Katrina could not destroy the traditional resilience of its residents which has sustained St. Bernard Parish through more than two centuries of catastrophes posed by war, flooding of the Mississippi, epidemics, multitudinous hurricanes, economic depressions and other disasters.

SAN BERNARDO SCENIC BYWAY

The San Bernardo Scenic Byway was established in 1997 as a result of the efforts of the St. Bernard Parish Tourist Commission. It winds through St. Bernard Parish and includes St. Bernard Highway (Hwy. 46), Bayou Road, Florissant Highway, Yscloskey Highway, Hopedale Highway and Delacroix Highway.

Scenic byways are designated by the Federal Government upon recommendations gathered by state governments throughout the United States. This designation denotes a roadway through areas which represent a singular natural, cultural and/or historic presence. St. Bernard Highway was the first modern road in 20th century St. Bernard Parish, paralleling the Mississippi River. Bayou Road was established along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs in the 18th century by the Spanish Government to provide *Isleno* colonists ingress and egress to and from their farms. Florissant Highway lies atop a plantation road established by Louis Reggio to allow access to his sugar cane fields. The other roads and the Mexican Gulf Railroad line were established to provide access to sugar plantations, Delacroix Island and Proctor's Landing, later known as Shell Beach, an important resort community for the New Orleans area which was founded before the Civil War in the middle 19th century.

TOUR STOPS AND LOCALITIES

1. **Arabi, Louisiana**
 - a. **Old Arabi National Register Historic District**
 - b. **Friscoville Avenue National Register Historic District**
 - c. **First Ward Justice Courthouse and Jail, 1911**
 - d. **St. Bernard Parish Visitor Information Center, 2010**
 - e. **Le Beau House, ca. 1854 – 1857**
 - f. **Cavaroc House, 1840**
 - g. **Former Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant**
2. **Chalmette Battlefield**, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, 1815, 1939
Chalmette National Cemetery, 1864
3. Chalmette, **St. Bernard Parish Courthouse**, 1936 – 1939
4. Chalmette, **Denis de La Ronde [Delaronde] Ruins**, ca. 1805; **Delaronde Oaks [Pakenham Oaks]**, ca. 1821
5. Chalmette, **Site of Lacoste Plantation**, partial site of Night Battle, December 23rd, 1814
6. **Villere Plantation** [Valero Oil Refinery], site of British Expeditionary Force headquarters and invasion route, December 1814 – 1815
7. Meraux, **Site of Jumonville Plantation**, British Expeditionary Force hospital, 1814 – 1815
8. Meraux, **Pecan Grove Plantation**, late 18th century
9. Meraux, **Docville Farm and oak alley**, 19th century – early 20th century

10. Violet, **Violet Freshwater Diversion Facility, Borgnemouth Fishing Village**, 20th century
11. Site of **Poydras Plantation** and **1922 Crevasse**, source of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs
12. Eastern St. Bernard, **Sebastopol Plantation**, ca. 1830
13. Eastern St. Bernard, **St. Bernard Village**, 1779
14. St. Bernard Village, **Historic St. Bernard Parish Courthouse**, 1914 – 1916
15. St. Bernard Village, **Los Islenos Museum Complex**, 1790 – 2010
 - a. Louis Alfred Ducros M.D. Historical Museum and Research Library, ca. 1800
 - b. Los Islenos Museum, ca. 1840; rebuilt 2009 – 2010
 - c. Los Islenos Center, 2000; rebuilt 2009 – 2010
 - d. Los Islenos Historic Village and nature trails, 1997 – 2011
16. Eastern St. Bernard, **Creedmoor Plantation**, ca. 1840
17. Eastern St. Bernard, **Toca Village**, late 18th century
18. Eastern St. Bernard, **Magnolia Plantation**, ca. 1794
19. Eastern St. Bernard, **Saint Bernard Catholic Church and Cemetery**, 1785 – 1787
20. Eastern St. Bernard, **Kenilworth Plantation**, 1816 – 1819
21. Eastern St. Bernard, **Site of Contreras Plantation**, birthplace of Pierre Gustave Toutant de Beaugard, 1818
22. Eastern St. Bernard, **Verret Village**, post Civil War Freedmen's Settlement, ca. 1870
23. Eastern St. Bernard, **Site of Reggio Plantation, Florissant, Alluvial City, Yscloskey, New Shell Beach and Hopedale [La Chinche]**, late 18th and 19th century
24. Eastern St. Bernard, **Hurricane Katrina Memorial at New Shell Beach, Mississippi River Gulf Outlet [MRGO]**, distant view of **Fort Proctor**, 2006/ 1956/1856
25. Eastern St. Bernard, **Reggio historically called Bencheque**, an 18th century Isleno settlement, **Woodlake [Montelacre]** and **Delacroix Island**, historically called **La Isla** or **The Island**; late 18th century – 19th century

TOUR STOP NO. 1 ARABI, LOUISIANA

Arabi, originally named Stock Landing, Louisiana, is the westernmost community in St. Bernard Parish and forms the western boundary of the parish with the City of New Orleans. Shortly after the Civil War, several property owners in that section of New Orleans situated between Jackson Barracks and Fishermen's Canal (the 1817 boundary of St. Bernard and New Orleans), roughly present day Aycock Street, subdivided large tracts of land for residential and commercial development. In 1869, the Louisiana Stock Dealers and Butchers Association of New Orleans located its plant on a parcel of property which was bisected by the Orleans – St. Bernard parish boundary line. Because health ordinances adopted by the City of New Orleans prohibited the operation of slaughterhouses within the corporate limits of Orleans Parish, the Louisiana Legislature adopted legislation which moved the western boundary of St. Bernard to the downriver property line of Jackson Barracks in 1875. The western boundary line designated in the 1875 legislation has remained intact to the present.

A small village evolved around the slaughterhouse in the 1870s and 1880s which derived its unpretentious place name from the live stock landing associated with the slaughterhouse. In 1882, the Arabi Post Office was established on North Peters Street in a building owned by the Slaughterhouse Company. A public contest in the area to be served by the facility was held to select a name for the post office. The 1882 revolt of Arabi Pasha in Egypt was highly publicized throughout Europe and the United States at that moment. Because of the anti British sentiment still prevalent in St. Bernard, the winning name in the contest was Arabi. Arabi appears to have replaced Stock Landing as the name of the village sometime in the very early 1900s. The name Stocklanding appears to have been completely discarded in the 1920s. Many quaint Eastlake, Italianate and other style buildings line the streets of Arabi today.

The Crescent City Live-Stock Landing and Slaughterhouse Company purchased a complex of wooden buildings as its first east bank facility in 1871 from the Louisiana Stock Dealers and Butchers Association of New Orleans. In 1896, these structures were largely replaced with a brick masonry multi-storied buttressed Gothic Revival building facing Esteban Street and visible from North Peters Street. The Slaughterhouse Company infused money and brought about development to a St. Bernard which was still reeling from the Civil War and Reconstruction. The "Blood Canal" was an unpleasant, stinking result of the Slaughterhouse in St. Bernard. The canal ran toward the wetlands from the slaughtering floor and drained away the blood of butchered animals. Marion Roy Ducros once remarked to her father, William Frederick Roy, that the stench from the canal was unbearable. His response was "that stench is the economic lifeblood of this community" and nothing more was uttered.

The two-story masonry building which stood at the corner of North Peters and Esteban Streets was originally two one-story structures. These buildings became the home of the first locally owned bank in St. Bernard Parish, the St. Bernard Bank, founded in 1905 by a group of local businessmen led by Joseph Maumus. A small one-story structure facing North Peters Street, also masonry, adjoining the bank

building, served as the first Arabi Post Office. This complex of buildings was purchased by a developer in the 1980s planning to restore the entire complex. A fire ravaged the structures in 1983 and restoration plans were never implemented. The deterioration of the complex continued until 1992, when a water spout from the Mississippi River touched down on Esteban Street and obliterated the ruins of the slaughterhouse complex. The site remains largely undeveloped today. The Crescent City Live- Stock Landing and Slaughterhouse Company obtained a monopoly on all slaughtered beef and swine from the Louisiana Legislature during Reconstruction and became the principal object in the “Slaughterhouse Cases” which figured in legally defining monopolies.

The record of western European colonization of the majority of area now known as Arabi is traceable to 1721 when Henri Le Blanc de La Croix received a land grant which extended from Mehle Avenue to the Chalmette Slip. He was appointed keeper of the Royal warehouses of the King in Louisiana. Le Blanc was an absentee land holder who appears never to have been domiciled on this parcel of land. Pierre Rigaud de Vaudreuil, a later governor of French colonial Louisiana, acquired the tract and developed it as an indigo plantation. The Marquis de Vaudreuil sold the property to Antoine Bienvenu in 1749 and the Bienvenu heirs subdivided the tract after the death of his widow, Marie Marthe Chauvin de Vince in 1800. Antoine Bienvenu and Marie Marthe Chauvin de Vince were the progenitors of a large family of sugar planters, elected officials and leaders who spread throughout southern Louisiana in the 19th century.

OLD ARABI NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Old Arabi National Register Historic District is bounded by North Peters Street, Jackson Barracks, portions of Mehle Avenue and extends almost to St. Claude Avenue along Angela Avenue. The district preserves a typical 19th century dense streetscape traditional to New Orleans. Buildings are built close together and represent a range of styles from Eastlake, Italianate, Edwardian to Arts-and-Crafts shotgun houses and cottages. Angela de Lesseps Daboval subdivided the adjoining tracts she inherited from her parents in 1868 and opened Angela Avenue which was named in her honor. Henri Daboval, her son, constructed the two-story side hall wooden townhouse located at 340 Angela Avenue about 1900. Other significant homes along the avenue are 347 Angela Avenue, an Edwardian raised cottage; 650 Angela Avenue, an Eastlake one-story two bay shotgun single; 718 Angela Avenue, another Eastlake two bay shotgun single; and 331 Angela Avenue, an Eastlake two bay shotgun camel back meticulously restored by Albert J. Cousin. The most significant historic house standing on Mehle Avenue is the Edwin M. Roy Jr. home at 550 Mehle Avenue. The home was built by local businessman Jacob Reichert in 1907 and was restored by his grandson, the current owner, in 1980 – 1981. *The St. Bernard Voice* office, 234 Mehle Avenue, is reputed to have been a lighthouse facing the Mississippi River on North Peters Street illuminating the Slaughterhouse river landing. It was moved to the property by William F. Roy, founder of *The St. Bernard Voice*, in 1912 during a setback of the river levee. Mehle Avenue was named for William Mehle, a commission merchant associated with the Slaughterhouse Company who reigned as Rex, King of Carnival, in New Orleans in 1879.

FRISCOVILLE AVENUE NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

Friscoville Realty Company purchased the former Le Beau property, known locally as Eclipse Plantation, from Louis Edouard Le Beau in 1905. The realty company, under the direction of local businessmen, began the subdivision of the property and opened Friscoville Avenue in 1906. Outbuildings from the Le Beau property were relocated to Friscoville Avenue using teams of mules. A row of slave cabins was placed along the avenue in the 400 block, structural additions were completed enlarging and modernizing the homes and they were resold. The home at 420 Friscoville Avenue, corner Bienvenue Street, was moved to Friscoville Avenue from the vicinity of Paris Road and River Road in 1906-07 as well. The dormers presently on the roof of the structure came from the Edmond Macarty Home, Andrew Jackson's headquarters during the Battle of New Orleans which stood where the Chalmette Slip is today. The Macarty House was demolished in 1907 just as the center hall cottage was being moved to Friscoville Avenue. Perpendicular to 420 Friscoville is the wooden frame Dittmar House, 341 Friscoville Avenue, corner Bienvenue Street. The home was built for Charles Dittmar by the Metropolitan Building Company, J.C. Diboll, President in 1907 for a total cost \$6,400.00. This raised center hall villa featured crystal gas and electric lighting fixtures, decorative plaster work, mirrored wooden mantels, pocket doors, an attached kitchen and interior bathroom. Other significant structures along Friscoville Avenue include the Sidney Nunez Home, 520 Friscoville Avenue ca. 1910; I.J.G. Janssen Home, a Spanish Revival style home at 825 Friscoville Avenue built about 1930; and the former Joseph Maumus High School, 700 Friscoville Avenue designed in the Spanish Revival Style by architect William Burk and constructed as the first public high school in St. Bernard Parish. Three 20th century sheriffs of St. Bernard Parish lived along Friscoville Avenue which was regarded as the "silk-stocking" residential thoroughfare in St. Bernard Parish in the early 20th century. The Jai-Alai Gambling Casino, the Riverview and other casinos were constructed near Friscoville Avenue and North Peters Street. These casinos became major employers in St. Bernard before and during the Great Depression. A series of Congressional hearings held by Senator Estes Kefauver brought the gaming industry to an end in St. Bernard Parish in the early 1950s. Many St. Bernard residents formerly employed by the gaming industry relocated to Las Vegas to participate in the rebirth of that community as a major gaming industry- entertainment destination.

FIRST WARD JUSTICE COURTHOUSE AND JAIL

The First Ward Justice Courthouse and Jail was completed in 1911 and served as a satellite courthouse and jail facility for the historic St. Bernard Parish Courthouse and jail in St. Bernard Village. The building faces Hernandez Street between Pontalba and Bienvenue streets and was constructed of poured concrete by contractor J.C. Bourg. Business and attendant occasional crime in Stock Landing necessitated the construction of the facility. The St. Bernard Village courthouse was quite a distance from Stock Landing which made it difficult to contain criminals. Parish Coroner Louis Alfred Ducros, M.D. performed autopsies occasionally in the First Ward Courthouse in the 1920s and 1930s, borrowing kitchen aprons from his sister-in-law who lived on Friscoville Avenue across the street from the building. Dr. Ducros always returned the aprons, having boiled them in bleach water, which were promptly burned by his adoring sister-in-law! The structure served as a volunteer fire station and a mechanic

shop for St. Bernard Parish Government until it burned in the 1970s. Former Police Juror Alvin W. “Buddy” Guillot restored the ruined jail in 1985 and opened it as a small museum, tourist information center and Road Department office. The Arabi Lions Club leased the facility from St. Bernard Parish Government in 1992 and maintained it until Hurricane Katrina in 2005. FEMA funding is presently subsidizing the restoration of the facility.

ST. BERNARD PARISH VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

The St. Bernard Parish Visitor Information Center is housed in the Aycock Street Barn located at 409 Aycock Street. The center opened in this location in December 2010 and has steadily served an increasing demand for tourist information. The Aycock Street Barn is also the site of the St. Bernard Seafood and Farmers Market.

LE BEAU HOUSE

The Le Beau House was constructed between 1852 and the death of its builder, Francois Barthelemy Le Beau, in 1854. The rear of Le Beau faces Bienvenue Street near the corner of Friscoville Avenue. Le Beau acquired the first portion of the property from Numa and Gustave Treme in 1850 with a complex of 18th century structures including a raised principal house and outbuildings. He purchased the remainder of the tract in 1851. Le Beau built a remarkable home which represents a hybrid of Creole vernacular design principles and very bold, simple Greek- Revival architectural details. His widow, Sylvanie Fuselier de la Claire lived in the home until her death in 1879. The Le Beau children sold the house in 1905. The house is two stories and of brick-between-posts construction, perhaps one of the latest examples of this building style in Louisiana. The structure contains roughly 10,000 square feet and is believed to be the largest plantation house remaining in metropolitan New Orleans. Prior to a disastrous fire in 1985, most of the original interior and exterior mill work, plaster ornamental ceiling medallions, plaster work, doors, window sashes and cast-and-wrought-iron balustrades remained intact. A beautiful wooden staircase on the rear gallery of Le Beau connected the first floor, second floor and attic. A wooden spiral staircase led from the attic to the cupola which surmounted the roof, providing a memorable view of the Mississippi River and New Orleans. Unlike Creole houses, a 13 foot wide center hall divided each floor. Then, unlike Anglo-American houses, four rooms each opening into the other, flanked each side of the center hall on the first and second floors. The double parlors and public rooms opening into the center hall on the first floor had beautiful black and gold veined Egyptian marble mantels in a restrained Rococo Revival style with very large gold leaf framed pier mirrors hanging on the chimney breasts above the mantels. There was no evidence of gas lighting fixtures. Large wrought iron hooks protruded from the ceiling medallions on both the first and second floors. Photographic documentation exists of much of the ornamental plaster work throughout Le Beau prior to the 1985 fire. Le Beau House was a hotel, gambling casino and home for the Francioni family following acquisition by the Friscoville Realty Company and later gaming entrepreneur Joe Brown. Community leader and banker Joseph Maumus Meraux purchased Le Beau House in 1967. The Arlene and Joseph Meraux

Charitable Foundation own Le Beau presently. The Meraux Foundation hired respected restoration architect Robert J. Cangelosi, Koch and Wilson Architects, to structurally stabilize Le Beau in 2004. Without almost \$1,000,000 expended by the Meraux Foundation, Le Beau would have been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Le Beau House burned again in November 2013. The landmark was totally destroyed in the second fire.

CAVAROC HOUSE, DOMINO SUGAR REFINERY

Cavaroc House is located at 7417 North Peters Street on the grounds of Domino Sugar Refinery. The house was constructed for the Widow Paul Darcantel by contractor Jean Louis Isnard according to plans developed in 1844 by renowned 19th century architect James Dakin. Paul Darcantel and later, his widow, operated one of several dozen brick yards on the east bank of the Mississippi below New Orleans, extending almost to the western boundary of the Chalmette Monument property. The city was experiencing such a construction boom that these brick yards could barely meet supply demands from the late 1830s through the end of the 19th century. The building derives its name from a later owner, Pierre Charles Cavaroc, who lived in the house from 1860 until 1886. Mr. Cavaroc was a successful businessman involved in insurance, the Slaughterhouse Company and other enterprises. His brother-in-law, Frederic Roy, purchased the downriver adjacent tract which he operated as the Roy Brickyard. Roy donated bricks to construct St. Maurice Catholic Church and served as a member of the City Council of New Orleans and, later, the St. Bernard Parish Police Jury. Ultimately, these properties and others contiguous extending downriver to the Chalmette Slip, were sold to the American Sugar Refining Corporation beginning in 1906. Cavaroc House served as the offices for the American Sugar Refinery for almost 80 years. This elegant Greek- Revival style masonry building has a center hall with four large rooms on each floor. A stair hall extends the width of the building on each floor, housing an exceptional winding staircase, carved and finished to look like rosewood. The staircase winds from the first floor to the attic. Cavaroc House is currently owned by Domino Sugar Refinery. The sugar refinery, when completed in 1910, was the largest refinery of its kind in the world. The industrial structures associated with the sugar refinery are in excellent repair and represent fine examples of early 20th century industrial design.

FORMER FORD MOTOR COMPANY ASSEMBLY PLANT

Henry Ford established an automobile assembly plant in Arabi in the early 1920s. Today the facility is owned by Hayes Drayage and Storage and located at 7200 North Peters Street. Automobile parts were shipped down the Mississippi River and unloaded on a wharf, still extant, which serviced the plant. Railroad lines led to the rear of the plant and were used to ship assembled automobiles throughout the region. The plant continued in operation until the early 1960s and was an important employer. The structure is another example of excellent early 20th century industrial design.

**TOUR STOP NO. 2 CHALMETTE BATTLEFIELD, JEAN LAFITTE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, 1815, 1939,
1978 – CHALMETTE NATIONAL CEMETERY, 1864**

The Chalmette Battlefield, located at 8606 St. Bernard Highway in Chalmette, Louisiana, is a unit of the Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve. It is the site of the Battle of New Orleans fought January 8th, 1815. This battle was part of the last campaign in the War of 1812, styled by many historians as “America’s second war for independence.” This decisive battle determined America’s continued ownership of the Mississippi Valley and allowed virtually unimpeded the westward expansion of the nation. The Battle of New Orleans is, therefore, an event of global significance and the single most important historical event in the history of St. Bernard Parish.

The United States Congress passed legislation in 1939 establishing the Chalmette Battlefield as Louisiana’s first national park. At first, the park was confined to the tract purchased by the State of Louisiana in the 19th century to construct the Chalmette Battlefield Monument. Several years prior to the sesquicentennial of the Battle of New Orleans in 1965 the National Park Service acquired the tract situated between the Monument parcel and the Chalmette National Cemetery where Fazendeville stood. Fazendeville was demolished, its residents were relocated to the surrounding area, the present concrete tour road was completed and a replica rampart was finished before the anniversary celebration was observed January 8th, 1965.

Fazendeville was a freedmen’s settlement established by Jean Pierre Fazende, a descendant of the free people of color community. Fazende inherited a parcel of the former Chalmette Plantation in 1857 which he utilized for the construction of a settlement to house newly freed slaves in the area following the American Civil War. He was a formally educated grocer and businessman, fluent in French and English who harbored great concern about the future of freed slaves. The community was a linear village, extending along the downriver (eastern) side of Fazendeville Road. Battleground Baptist Church, small wooden dwelling houses, a school house and community store were among the buildings constructed. Fazendeville residents established a closely knit functional community whose residents became well respected for their work skills and forthright honesty. Ellen Cemetery in Chalmette near Paris Road was established for the interment of Fazendeville families.

Construction of the Chalmette Monument began in 1855 and was interrupted by the Civil War. The Daughters of 1776 – 1812 was organized in 1892 by a group of ladies descended from soldiers who fought in the American Revolutionary War largely under the command of Governor Bernardo de Galvez and the Battle of New Orleans. The Daughters consistently lobbied elected officials throughout Louisiana in the late 1800s and finally succeeded in obtaining a Congressional appropriation in 1907 to complete construction of the Chalmette Monument in time for the Centennial Anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans in 1915. The monument was dedicated January 8th, 1915 thus concluding a construction period which lasted 60 years. The Daughters of 1776 – 1812 was reorganized into the Chalmette Chapter of the United States Daughters of 1812 in the 1930s. The Chalmette Chapter of the Daughters of 1812 continued to crusade for the development of the Monument and the formal establishment of a national park by Congress until 1939. The Daughters of 1812 maintained an overseer’s house at the

Chalmette Monument and retained an overseer to provide grounds maintenance until the establishment of the Chalmette National Historical Park. Additional Congressional legislation incorporated the Chalmette Battlefield into the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve as its Chalmette Unit in 1978.

The present visitor's center at the Chalmette Battlefield, completed in 2010, replaced a structure completed in 1984 which was ruined by winds and a storm surge generated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. A well done interactive interpretive exhibition presents the history of the Battle of New Orleans very effectively in the new visitor's center. The Malus – Beauregard House had served as the original visitors' center for the Chalmette Battlefield. The home was constructed in the 1830s, remodeled about 1860 and was also flooded by Hurricane Katrina. It has been repaired and houses a small interpretive exhibition. Renowned preservation architect Samuel J. Wilson, a founding partner in the firm of Koch and Wilson Architects, restored the Malus-Beauregard home for use as the Chalmette Battlefield visitors' center in the early 1960s in preparation for the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. The two story brick masonry dwelling had two wings added during the 19th century, one in brick and the other wooden. Those wings and the main house had become virtual ruins by the 1950s. The determination was made during restoration to remove the wings from the original house and retain the beautifully proportioned colonnades on the north and south facades of the building. The house presents a Creole vernacular floor plan with room entering room on each floor and no hallways. Wilson prepared a definitively documented historic structures report projecting, through the use of elevations, the Malus-Beauregard house as it looked when originally constructed by the Widow Guillaume Malus in addition to renovations by subsequent owners through the Rene Beauregard ownership. The house originally had brick columns on its first floor facades and turned wooden colonettes on its second floor facades. The hipped roof features a graceful cant to accommodate the later addition of colonnades. The attrition of historic structures in St. Bernard Parish over the last seventy-five years has made the Malus-Beauregard house one of the important surviving landmarks in St. Bernard Parish.

A reconstruction of the earthen rampart erected by General Andrew Jackson at the Chalmette Battlefield to repulse the onslaught of the British attack remains in place. The replica rampart was built in the 1960s prior to the 1965 anniversary observance of the Battle of New Orleans.

The Chalmette National Cemetery adjoins the eastern boundary of the Chalmette Battlefield and was established by an Act of Congress in 1864. Its original purpose was to provide burial plots for soldiers and veterans of the Union Army which occupied New Orleans and the surrounding region in 1862 and reestablished Federal jurisdiction over the area. Soldiers who fought in the American Civil War, Spanish – American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict and Vietnam are interred in the cemetery. Four veterans of the War of 1812 were reinterred in the cemetery in the early 20th century. Confederate soldiers and sympathizers who had been interred in the Chalmette National Cemetery were reinterred in Cypress Grove Cemetery in the early 1900s. A handsome monument commemorating the “Grand Army of the Republic” bearing the haunting Latin inscription *Dum tacent clamant* – **They cry out in their sleep** – is a visual centerpiece of the cemetery. The former cemetery superintendent's residence serves as the office for the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Park.

Chalmette Battlefield and community derive its name from Louisiana native Ignace Francois Martin Delino [de Lino] de Chalmet. In old Norman French which was predominantly spoken in colonial Louisiana, final consonants were sounded. Hence, the spelling of Chalmet evolved to Chalmette in the 19th century to reflect the written phonetic use in standardized modern French. Born in New Orleans in 1755, he was the son of Louis Xavier Delino de Chalmet and Marie Magdelaine Broutin. He married Victoire Vaugine and fathered a family consisting of two sons and several daughters. Chalmet fought under the command of Governor Bernardo de Galvez in the American Revolution in the Battle of Mobile in 1780. He served in the Spanish military as captain of militia and infantry captain for almost 20 years beginning in 1775. He retired from the service of Spain in 1796 having served as commandant of the Arkansas Post in the 1780s and early 1790s. Arkansas, even by the simple standards of 18th century New Orleans, was exceedingly remote. His wife tired of the remoteness and wished to provide her children with better educational opportunities. They returned to New Orleans and purchased in 1805 the indigo plantation at *Pointe St. Antoine* which became the downriver parcel of the Chalmette Plantation when the Battle of New Orleans was fought. Chalmet purchased the upriver tract adjacent to his plantation in 1813 and thus was not very long in possession of his consolidated estate when the British invaded St. Bernard in 1814. He was an early planter of sugar cane following the successful granulation of sugar in the late 1780s. Chalmet was a kind and indulgent parent and friend who believed in education. Affectionately known as *le Gros* (the fat one) because of his love of fine food and wine, he was occupied harvesting, grinding and refining sugar cane when the British invaded. His home and plantation were destroyed in the Battle of New Orleans. His sole surviving son was one of the few fatalities suffered by the Americans in the Battle of New Orleans. He had retreated to his New Orleans townhouse on Bourbon Street in December 1814 shortly before the British Expeditionary Force landed in the region. When he received official news in February 1815 that his creditors were foreclosing on his properties, recognizing that the battle had destroyed his plantation and ruined his finances, he suffered a stroke and died instantly February 10th, 1815 according to oral tradition among the Chalmet family descendants. He was interred in St. Louis Cemetery No. One, the oldest burial ground remaining in New Orleans. The tomb is still visible in the cemetery. The Chalmette heirs sold the devastated plantation to Denis de La Ronde who in turn sold the property to developers Hilaire and Michel de St. Amand, free people of color. The St. Amands subdivided the plantation into multiple one arpent tracts fronting the Mississippi. Chalmet, a veteran of the American Revolution, sacrificed his property, family and life in defense of his home against the British who had long coveted Louisiana and, most importantly, control of the Mississippi Valley.

The colonial history of the battlefield is traceable to the brothers Jean Marest Dupuy and Pierre Marest de La Tour who received the land grants at *Pointe St. Antoine* (the French colonial name for the Chalmette community) which became the property of Juan Rodriguez and the upper portion of Chalmet's plantation about 1723. Marest de La Tour planted one of the first crops of indigo in Louisiana in 1723 at what would become the site of the Battle of New Orleans. Marest Dupuy and succeeding property owners operated a lumber mill on the other upriver property which became the Rodriguez tract. Rene Beluche's father, Renato [Rene, Sr.] Beluche purchased this property in 1780 and the young child spent time on this plantation. Renato operated a lumber mill and used slaves trained as millwrights to operate the mill. The junior Rene later joined the ranks of Jean Lafitte and helped to direct

the artillery of the Baratarian privateers against the British during the Battle of New Orleans. Following the Battle of New Orleans, Beluche participated in the liberation of Venezuela from European rule as a lieutenant of Simon Bolivar. One later 18th century owner, Espiritu Liotau, even operated a ship yard on the property, using frontage along the Mississippi River.

TOUR STOP NO. 3 ST. BERNARD PARISH COURTHOUSE, 1936 – 1939

The St. Bernard Parish Courthouse, located at 1101 West St. Bernard Highway in Chalmette, was constructed as a Works Progress Administration project between 1936 and 1939. Solis Seiferth, partner in the firm of Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth, developed and supervised the design and implementation of plans for the construction of a new courthouse for St. Bernard Parish in Chalmette. The same firm designed the present skyscraper capitol for the State of Louisiana in Baton Rouge. Mr. Seiferth, an accomplished collector of antiquities, stated that the Grand Temple of Mesopotamia was the inspiration for the design of the St. Bernard Parish Courthouse in Chalmette. He felt that the Mesopotamian temple was the best designed structure in Antiquity. The building is in the Art-Deco style, built of poured concrete faced with lime stone. The entrance lobby features a beautiful double-curving staircase with an Art-Deco style polished stainless steel balustrade. The principal court room located on the second floor has a two-story high ceiling, is wood paneled and features bas-relief wooden panels carved by Enrique Alferez, a well known artist who began working in this region in the 1930s under contract to the Works Progress Administration. This court room was reputed to be the largest in Louisiana when it was completed in 1939. Hurricane Katrina flooded the courthouse for the first time in its history in 2005. About eighteen inches of water inundated the first floor lobby, offices and court rooms. FEMA is funding the restoration which began in 2010.

TOUR STOP NO. 4 THE DENIS de La RONDE RUINS AND OAK ALLEY

Pierre Denis de La Ronde purchased the property which became the Delaronde Plantation in 1799. The ruins of the Denis de La Ronde house stand atop the median of St. Bernard Highway at the intersection of Montesquieu Street. The house was constructed about 1805, built entirely of brick and comprised two stories. The house was surrounded by a gallery and surmounted with a hipped roof. It was beautifully appointed with mahogany furniture, silver and crystal. The formal rooms of the house were covered with hand painted wall paper. Major General Sir Edward Pakenham, commanding general of the British Expeditionary Force, designated the Delaronde house as a temporary headquarters and hospital for the British invaders. Pakenham expired in the Delaronde House January 8th, 1815. Today, it is the only house that stood on the battlefield in 1815 of which there are visible remnants. It is important to note that while the Chalmette Battlefield is the site of Major General Andrew Jackson's earthen rampart which repulsed the principal British assault January 8th, 1815, the entirety of modern-day St. Bernard Parish from Jackson Barracks to its easternmost reaches was consumed in support of activities of the British and American armies, so that all of what is today St. Bernard Parish was an extended battlefield in 1814 – 1815.

The grand alley of live oak trees opposite the Denis de La Ronde Ruins situated between the St. Bernard Parish Prison and Chalmette Refining property popularly known as the “Pakenham Oaks” was never seen by Pakenham. Detailed maps of the battlefield drawn by General Jackson’s chief engineer, Arsene Lacarriere Latour, show the Delaronde House surrounded by formal parterre gardens in the style of the 18th century. The oaks were planted in the early 1820s. Developer Daniel Warburg acquired the Delaronde Plantation in 1832, subdivided the tract and opened the “Versailles Development.” The Denis de La Ronde family never applied the name Versailles to their plantation. Warburg named the principal thoroughfare of his development *Chemin de Paris* or Paris Road and gave the Chalmette Community many of its street names in the 1830s. Both the ruins and oak alley were acquired by St. Bernard Parish from the Norfolk Southern Railway System.

Pierre Denis de La Ronde was born in New Orleans in 1762. He was the son of Pierre Denis de La Ronde and Marie Magdelaine Broutin, widow by first marriage of Louis Xavier Delino de Chalmet. His older half brother was Ignace Martin de Lino de Chalmet. His sister, Louise Denis de La Ronde, married Andres Almonester y Roxas and gave birth to Micaela Almonester, later the Baroness of Pontalba. Pierre Denis de La Ronde entered the service of Spain in 1778. He fought in every battle of the Galvez Expedition during the American Revolution serving under the command of Governor Galvez at Manchac and Baton Rouge in 1779, Mobile in 1780 and Pensacola in 1781. He succeeded his first cousin, Pierre Phillippe de Marigny, as the second commandant of the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* in 1788, having assisted Marigny in laying out the settlement along the banks of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs between 1779 and 1783. He left that position in 1802 to accept an appointment to the *Cabildo*, the governing authority of Louisiana. By 1815, Denis de La Ronde had assumed the rank of colonel commanding the Third Regiment of Louisiana Militia. He had belonged to the regiment when originally constituted by Spain in 1792 as the Volunteers of the Mississippi. The Volunteers of the Mississippi was a regiment raised by the Spanish colonial government to protect the Lower Coast below New Orleans, an area encompassing St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. Members of the Third Regiment fought in the December 23rd, 1814 Night Battle which raged over the plantations of Denis de La Ronde, Lacoste and Villere. Many militia men were taken prisoner by the British. Pierre Denis de La Ronde served in the first Constitutional Convention of Louisiana in 1812 and was major general in command of the Louisiana Militia when he died in 1824. He was interred in St. Louis Cemetery No. Two in New Orleans.

An earlier 18th century owner of the tract, Louis Bore (father of Etienne Bore), succeeded in granulating sugar on the site in 1764. Bore was unable to perfect the process because of his partnership with plantation co-owner Jean Balthazar de Ponfrac de Mazant who was identified as a leader of the insurrection against Spanish rule in Louisiana in 1768. The property was confiscated by the Spanish authorities and auctioned to Spanish military officer Bartolome Macnamara in 1770. An early plan of the plantation executed by Surveyor General Louis Andry depicts a principal house located far distant the levee of the Mississippi River. The Mississippi River in the 18th century made a sharp turn to the north east at this plantation, forming *Pointe St. Antoine*. The course of the river evolved throughout the 19th century, accreting land on the east bank and filling in the channel east of what is today Paris Road.

TOUR STOP NO. 5 LACOSTE PLANTATION SITE

The home of Pierre Lacoste stood on the campus of Chalmette High School, 1100 East Judge Perez Drive, near an ancient live oak tree not far from Palmisano Boulevard. In 1815, the Mississippi River levee ran perpendicularly through the Chalmette High School stadium and football field so that the Lacoste house stood close to the course of the river at that time. The Mississippi built batture land between the Lacoste House front lawn and the present bank of the Mississippi River, west of St. Bernard Highway, throughout the 19th century. As a consequence, the stretch of St. Bernard Highway between roughly Rosetta Street and Jumonville Estates was mid stream Mississippi River in 1815. The house was one story raised on brick arches and continued in existence to the early 1950s. It was demolished by the St. Bernard Parish Water Board because it was structurally unsound and posed a threat to public safety.

The plantation had belonged to the Ursuline Nuns in the middle 18th century. Crops were raised on the property to sustain the nuns and students attending the convent school. Lumber harvested from the plantation was an important source of revenue which subsidized educational programs and maintenance of the Ursuline Convent. The Ursuline Nuns educated the daughters of indigo planters, Free People of Color and Native Americans. The Ursuline Order remained in possession of this large plantation from the 1720s until 1778.

Major General Andrew Jackson received news from Gabriel Villere that the British had captured his father's plantation below the City of New Orleans early on the morning of December 23rd, 1814 through a translator, Francois Dusau de La Croix, who was fluent in English and French. Consequently, Jackson mustered American forces and marched instantly on the British encampment below Chalmet's Plantation. The skirmish known as the "Night Battle" ensued after sunset on December 23rd, involving fierce hand-to-hand combat between American and British armed forces on the plantations of Delaronde, Lacoste and Villere. The British were so utterly stunned by the American surprise attack that they delayed their march on New Orleans, enabling the Americans to hastily construct a line of defense on the Juan Rodriguez Plantation canal, the upper boundary of the Chalmet Plantation. Pierre Lacoste's plantation formed the epicenter of that decisive combat the night of December 23rd.

Pierre Robin Lacoste was born in New Orleans in 1771. He married Pelagie Dreux and became an officer in the Spanish military. Lacoste also planted sugar cane and developed an important sugar plantation in St. Bernard Parish during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. He commanded a regiment of free people of color which distinguished itself during the Battle of New Orleans. Lacoste continued to own his St. Bernard plantation well into the 1830s.

TOUR STOP NO. 6 VILLERE PLANTATION SITE, BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND INVASION ROUTE

Jacques Philippe Villere, the first governor of Louisiana born in the state and the only St. Bernard Parish resident to occupy the office, owned and resided on a plantation which is today the Valero Oil Refinery, 2500 East St. Bernard Highway in Meraux, Louisiana. Villere Plantation served as the principal

headquarters for the British Expeditionary Force invading Louisiana. The house was one story with a gallery (porch) encircling the structure and a hipped roof, very typical of Louisiana Creole vernacular design. There were many outbuildings including pigeoniers, barns, slave cabins, slave hospital, kitchen and sugar mill. The plantation was called *Conseil* by the Villere family. A small segment of brick house ruins still remain deeply embedded within the oil refinery.

The British reached the Villere plantation house early in the morning of December 23rd, 1814. The invading army had traveled through Lake Borgne to Bayou Bienvenue, thence Bayou Mazant to the Villere Canal. A stretch of the canal remains visible in the forest behind the oil refinery between the 40 Arpent and 20 Arpent canals. Jacques Villere was major general commanding the Louisiana State Militia and had vacated the house with his wife and the majority of his family. His sons Gabriel and Caliste had remained behind in the home. Gabriel was narrowly able to escape and succeeded in warning Jackson about the British encampment on his family's plantation. He crossed the Mississippi River in a pirogue and landed at the Delacroix Plantation proceeding with Francois Dusuau de La Croix to New Orleans to warn Jackson of the threatening British presence at the Villere Plantation. Caliste was an adolescent who was kept prisoner by the British for the duration of the occupation of the plantation.

Jacques Villere's losses were quite considerable, as were all the property owners in the territory occupied by the British. Villere was born in Louisiana in 1761, the son of Joseph Roy Villere and Louise de La Chaise. After his father's untimely death following the firm establishment of Spanish colonial government in 1769, Jacques was sent to St. Domingue (modern-day Haiti) and France where he trained as an officer in the French military. He returned to Louisiana in 1784 and married Jeanne Henriette Fazende. He remained in Louisiana until his death in 1830. Jacques Villere was a delegate from New Orleans to the first constitutional convention of Louisiana in 1812. He worked assiduously with General Jackson throughout the British invasion, greatly aided by his son-in-law, Hugues de La Vergne and Francois Dusuau de La Croix, both of whom spoke English fluently and acted as translators for Villere. Villere was elected governor of the State of Louisiana in 1816 succeeding Governor William C. C. Claiborne and served one term ending in 1820. He is buried in St. Louis No. Two Cemetery in New Orleans. Gabriel Villere owned the plantation after his father's death. A later owner, Paulin Fleitas, married Corinne Jumonville. The plantation was then renamed *Corinne* for Corinne Jumonville Fleitas. Oil refineries have been operated on the site of the Villere Plantation since the early 20th century.

**TOUR STOP NO. 7 JUMONVILLE PLANTATION, BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE HOSPITAL,
1814 – 1815**

The site of the Jumonville Plantation is occupied by Jumonville Estates and several streets on either side of the development. The house site most probably lies in the northwest corner of Jumonville Estates which is accessed from East St. Bernard Highway in Meraux. The plantation belonged to Charles Coulon Jumonville de Villiers at the time of the Battle of New Orleans. Soon after landing on the east bank of the Mississippi River below the City of New Orleans, the British designated the Jumonville House and

outbuildings as the principal hospital facility for the British Army. This plantation is the easternmost property which is known to have had a direct involvement with the Battle of New Orleans.

No record has survived documenting the exterior appearance of the Jumonville principal dwelling house. However, a series of maps dating to the 18th and 19th centuries depict an extensive collection of buildings on the property. An early 18th century owner of the property was Bertrand Jaffre, *dit* La Liberte. He constructed ships in French colonial New Orleans, milled lumber and produced tar and pitch. His other property was in Slidell in St. Tammany Parish and faced a bayou known as Bayou Liberte (Liberty) in his honor.

Jumonville de Villiers was born in New Orleans in 1764. His uncle, Louis Coulon de Villiers, captured George Washington at the beginning of the Seven Years War (French and Indian War) at Fort Necessity near modern day Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was the only battle which Washington formally conceded defeat. Jumonville entered the military service of Spain in 1777 and fought in every battle of the Galvez Expedition during the American Revolution. After the Louisiana Purchase, Jumonville busied himself completely with the production of sugar, constantly improving the plantation downriver from New Orleans he had purchased in 1795. Jumonville de Villiers married Aimee Beaumont de Livaudais and fathered a large family. He died in 1831 and is buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. Two in New Orleans. His heirs sold the plantation in 1831.

TOUR STOP NO. 8 PECAN GROVE PLANTATION

Pecan Grove house is located at No. 10 Pecan Grove Lane in Meraux, near the intersection of East St. Bernard Highway and Archbishop Hannan Boulevard. The house was moved to its present location by the de Bouchel family who owned the property for more than a century. Pecan Grove is a raised *maison de maitre* (master house) of brick-between-posts construction which has much of its historic fabric intact. Wrap-around or box mantels, door surrounds, mill work and flooring attest to the antiquity of the dwelling. The construction techniques and several other features suggest a construction date in the late 18th century. St. Bernard Highway was opened through Pecan Grove, passing uncomfortably near the rear of Pecan Grove. The de Bouchel family altered the gabled roof to a hipped roof and extended the gallery (porch) on two sides of the building after moving the house several hundred feet behind its original location to preserve their privacy in the 1920s.

Rodolphe Joseph Ducros and two of his sons, Rodolphe Joseph and Edouard purchased what would become Pecan Grove in 1816 from Charles Coulon Jumonville de Villiers. Pierre Adolphe Ducros, another son of Rodolphe Joseph Ducros and Lucie de Reggio, acquired the property in 1832. It was Pierre Adolphe Ducros according to family tradition who gave the plantation its name. He was born in 1798, the son of Rodolphe Joseph Ducros and Marie Lucie de Reggio. He married Adele Denis de La Ronde and, after her death, Agathe Fernet. As a member of the Third Regiment of Louisiana Militia during the Battle of New Orleans, Ducros was stationed at Fishermen's Village, a Filipino settlement at the mouth of Bayou Bienvenue and Lake Borgne. He and his father were taken prisoner by the British and they purportedly advised their captors that thousands of Americans awaited the arrival of the

British in New Orleans and at English Turn. This embellishment is believed to have discouraged the British from advancing more rapidly to capture New Orleans according to the oral tradition of the Ducros family. Ducros was a successful sugar planter who served in the Louisiana House of Representatives representing St. Bernard Parish from 1824 – 1840. He also served for a time as quartermaster general of the Louisiana State Militia. Ducros escorted the Marquis de Lafayette through the extended battlefield area associated with the Battle of New Orleans in 1825. He died at Pecan Grove in 1861 and is buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. Three in New Orleans.

The heirs of Pierre Adolphe Ducros sold Pecan Grove to Pierre Adolphe Ducros, Jr. and Pierre Victor Ducros in 1879. Pierre Victor Ducros became the sole owner of Pecan Grove later in 1879 and entered into a partnership with Victor de Bouchel in 1880. De Bouchel later acquired sole ownership of Pecan Grove. He was the son of an accomplished educator, also named Victor de Bouchel, who composed an early history of Louisiana and resided on part of the subdivided Chalmet Plantation. The de Bouchel family owned most of Pecan Grove Plantation until the 1980s. Judge and Mrs. Robert Buckley together with several partners purchased the Pecan Grove house and surrounding acreage in 1985 from the de Bouchel family. Judge and Mrs. Buckley became sole owners of the house in 1990. The Buckley family has meticulously respected the historic fabric of the house and successfully worked to preserve the building. Particularly difficult for Judge and Mrs. Buckley was the recovery from Hurricane Katrina which inundated this raised dwelling with four feet of flood water. Thanks to their meticulous care, Pecan Grove came through the catastrophe of Katrina with most of its historic fabric intact.

TOUR STOP NO. 9 DOCVILLE FARM AND OAK ALLEY

Docville Farm, located at 5124 East St. Bernard Highway in Meraux, belongs to the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation. Docville was the estate of Louis A. Meraux, M.D., sheriff of St. Bernard Parish from 1924 until his death in 1938. He was born in Plaquemines Parish, the son of Jules Meraux and Valentine Corne in 1881. Louis “Doc” Meraux was graduated from Tulane University Medical School and conducted post graduate medical studies at Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Meraux had medical residencies in New Orleans Charity Hospital, New Orleans Hotel Dieu Hospital and Guy Hospital in London, England. He served in the Medical Corps of the United States Army as captain during the Mexican Border Dispute in 1914 and was stationed at Jackson Barracks during World War I. Ever colorful and articulate, Dr. Meraux was a visionary leader who used the office of sheriff to realize many of his goals. He believed emphatically in education and made the development of a modern public school system a priority during his tenure in office. By the time of Dr. Meraux’s death in 1938, St. Bernard Parish enjoyed a public school system which was completely modern for its time and second to none in Louisiana. It can be argued that he and his wife, Anita Maumus, were the founders of public education in 20th century St. Bernard Parish. Dr. Meraux also envisioned the future growth of St. Bernard in its western section. This resulted in the relocation of the legal seat of St. Bernard Parish from St. Bernard Village to Chalmette. Although he died before the completion of the WPA funded new St. Bernard Parish Courthouse in 1939, Dr. Meraux worked tirelessly on the designs and plans with the assistance of his chief deputy sheriff, Celestine F. “Dutch” Rowley, who succeeded him as sheriff. Having

spent time in Europe, Dr. Meraux was a great believer in public enhancements such as landscape. This induced him to cause the planting of both sides of St. Bernard Highway from the old courthouse in St. Bernard Village to the new Chalmette courthouse with live oaks. The intact stretch of those oaks can be enjoyed today along St. Bernard Highway at Docville. A group of predominantly Sicilian Italian farmers planted the trees in 1937 – 1938. Meraux Community derives its name from the Meraux family. Dr. Meraux brought St. Bernard forward from its 18th and early 19th century origin into 20th century Louisiana and should be remembered as the father of modern-day St. Bernard Parish.

Anita Maumus Meraux was also a pioneer in public service. She was elected to serve on the St. Bernard Parish School Board, served as its president and was the first woman in the State of Louisiana to serve as a school board president. She helped to found the New Orleans Spring Fiesta in 1938. Mrs. Meraux was an ardent collector of antique furniture, silver, crystal and porcelain and imparted her love of history and antiques to her only child, Joseph Maumus Meraux.

Dr. Meraux also nurtured his passion for history through his development of Docville Farm. He purchased sections of the Story Plantation in the 1920s and began planning the future of the properties. Ultimately he amassed a collection of barns and dwellings from plantations throughout St. Bernard Parish. The principal farm house was reputed to have been the overseer's home from the Story Plantation. Dr. Meraux thoroughly modernized the interior and exterior of the house and conducted much of his political activity from this home. There he entertained Governor Huey Long, an intimate friend, United States senators and congressmen, mayors of the City of New Orleans and many others. During his lifetime, there was an extensive citrus orchard on the property which was a great source of joy and pride to him. A large pecan tree orchard has replaced citrus. There were horses, horse barns, livestock, vegetable crops and everything imaginable which figured in the agricultural lifestyle of St. Bernard Parish. Dr. Meraux had moved several slave cabins from Plaquemines Parish to the property and was planning to move the magnificent Orange Grove Plantation house, a brick three-story Gothic Revival home from Braithwaite on barges up the Mississippi River to Docville. This house fell victim to demolition by neglect and was demolished in 1982.

Story Plantation was amassed in the early 19th century by Benjamin Story and his son, Henry Clement Story. Henry Clement Story married Marie Amelie de Lesseps and fathered a large family. Benjamin Saxon Story, a child of Henry Clement Story, fought in the Confederate Army and retired to the Story "Saxonholm" Plantation after the Civil War. The Story Plantation stretched for more than a mile facing the Mississippi River and had a depth of approximately three miles. It was the largest plantation in 19th century St. Bernard Parish. The main house was raised, of brick-between-post construction, one story with a hipped roof. An alley of live oaks led from the Mississippi to the home. An article printed in *The Daily Picayune* in 1904 when the house burned stated that the dwelling had been built about 1804 and consisted of 16 rooms. Vestiges of the oak alley are visible today on the "Sinclair Tract" of the Meraux Foundation property. Other buildings included a brick sugar mill, brick slave quarters, slave chapel, barns, chicken coups, a saw mill, grist mill and pump house covering a steam powered drainage pump

which drained excess water from the sugar cane fields. The Mississippi River crevassed at Story Plantation in 1882 creating significant damage. The property was eventually subdivided and sold in several parcels following the destruction of the Story Home, a renowned for its elegant beauty. Another of Henry Clement Story's sons, Sidney Story, became a New Orleans city councilman and promulgated the ordinance which established the Red Light District in New Orleans, called by many "Storyville." A great-grandson of Henry Clement Story, de Lesseps Story "Chep" Morrison, distinguished himself as mayor of New Orleans from 1946 until 1962. The colonial history of this property traces in part to Jacques Chaperon who, in addition to other colonists, received land grants in 1720s from present-day Arabi to Meraux Community. The Chaperon grant was one of several awarded by French colonial officials which were combined to establish the Story "Saxonholm" Plantation in the 19th century.

TOUR STOP NO. 10 VIOLET, VIOLET FRESHWATER DIVERSION FACILITY, BORGNEMOUTH FISHING VILLAGE

Violet derives its modern name from Violet Blair, wife of Albert C. Janin, whom he met and married in Washington, D.C. in 1874. Janin was born in St. Bernard Parish, the son of jurist Louis Janin who had purchased the Delaronde Plantation house and operated a school. Albert followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a practicing attorney. He was educated in Europe and became an accomplished linguist. He became the driving force behind opening the Ship Island Canal in the 1870s. The canal later became known as the Mississippi, Mexican and Gulf Canal and the Lake Borgne Canal. Today this waterway is called the Violet Canal. Its original purpose was to link the Port of New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico through Lake Borgne, allowing maritime commerce to bypass the mouth of the river which remained impassable frequently during annual spring floods because of the tremendous current spilling torrents of flood water into the Gulf of Mexico. It was also designed to facilitate the pattern of commerce which had linked the Mississippi Gulf Coast and Mobile to New Orleans through the Mississippi Sound, Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain since the earliest days of French colonial Louisiana. Although Janin was financially unable to complete construction of what would become the Violet Canal, he continued to own land in St. Bernard Parish. Violet Blair was a member of the elite Blair family in Washington D.C. Her family home, facing Lafayette Square in Washington, is known today as Blair House. Through her mother, Mary Jesup, she inherited an interest in Mammoth Cave, Kentucky.

Borgnemouth was the original name of the community known as Violet. The settlement arose from the management of Borgnemouth Realty Company, organized by a group of businessmen under the direction of Oliver S. Livaudais. An important fishing village developed on both sides of the Violet Canal in the very early 1900s. Borgnemouth ultimately became known as Violet from the post office that served the community, just as happened in Arabi. The original houses were all wooden, many board and batten. Brick locks allowed passage back and forth from the canal into the Mississippi. Brick ruins of the locks are still visible on the Mississippi River batture. A chapel of St. Bernard Church was constructed in 1908 and placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Lourdes in addition to a raised wooden school house, fish processing factories, a grocery store, movie theatre and other amenities. Lourdes Church functioned as the principal church for St. Bernard ecclesiastical parish after the 1852 St.

Bernard Church burned in 1916. Violet became one of the most important hubs of business in St. Bernard Parish in the 1910s through the 1940s.

St. Bernard Parish experienced a huge influx of Italian immigrants from Sicily in the latter half of the 19th century. Following the Civil War, sugar cane production in the area near New Orleans along the Mississippi River declined. Many of the old plantations were subdivided into smaller tracts and sold as farm land to Sicilian immigrants most of whom had traditionally been farmers. Families with surnames such as Mumphrey or Mumfrey (Manfre), Allo, Gallo, Ingargiola, Licciardi, Randazzo, Gebbia, Livaccari, Caserta, Bilogna, Nicosia, Bonomo and Sartalamacchia purchased parcels of former plantations in what would become Violet and adjacent communities in St. Bernard Parish. The Sicilians made Creole tomatoes famous and restored St. Bernard's position as a principal producer of vegetables and citrus for the New Orleans market in the early 20th century.

The "Violet Siphon" was constructed at St. Bernard Highway and the Violet Canal in 1978 and became one of the first, if not the first, fresh water diversion facility in Louisiana. Its purpose was to divert fresh water from the Mississippi River into the wetland habitat between Violet and Lake Borgne which had been compromised by salt water intrusion. Violet Canal has evolved into the "safe harbor" for the fleet of commercial fishing vessels in St. Bernard Parish.

Merrick Cemetery was formally established earlier in the 20th century by Borgnemouth Realty Company to accommodate the African American residents whose families had been burying their dead there in a slave cemetery since the 18th century. There were many slave cemeteries located on plantations throughout St. Bernard Parish. While none of the slave burials are visible today, Merrick Cemetery is the only slave cemetery still in use in St. Bernard today. True Love Cemetery at Sebastopol Plantation remained in limited use through the 1970s. The location of the slave cemetery at Creedmoor Plantation has been forgotten. However, the Creedmoor slave cemetery remained in use into the early 20th century.

Magloire Guichard, Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives during the Battle of New Orleans, owned the property during the War of 1812 which he worked as a sugar cane plantation. Claude Dupre owned the plantation earlier in the colonial period. He and his wife, Jeanne Lerable, operated an indigo plantation and lumber mill. The canal used by Dupre connected the Mississippi River to bayous leading into Lake Borgne. This waterway was widened and deepened to establish the Violet Canal in the 1870s and 80s. Claude Jousset de La Loire received part of what became later the Dupre-Guichard Plantation as a land grant in 1723 in recognition of his birth in Mobile as the first surviving male child of European colonists in Louisiana.

TOUR STOP NO. 11 POYDRAS PLANTATION AND 1922 CREVASSE, SOURCE OF BAYOU TERRE-AUX-BOEUFs

Poydras Plantation derives its name from statesman, businessman, planter and developer Julien de Lallande Poydras. He was born in Brittany, France in 1746 and entered the French Navy during his early

youth. Poydras was taken prisoner by the British and then immigrated to the French colony of St. Domingue, today Haiti. From there he settled in New Orleans around 1768. Poydras served as a delegate to the United States House of Representatives representing the Territory of Orleans between 1809 and 1811. He was elected president of the first State Constitutional Convention which erected the Territory of Orleans into the State of Louisiana in 1812. He became an important businessman in colonial Louisiana who gained the trust of many in the colony. Jean and Bertrand Gravier worked with Poydras early in the development of the *arrabal de Santa Maria*, later known as the *faubourg Ste. Marie* or Suburb St. Mary, the central business district of New Orleans. The 1788 plan of *faubourg Ste. Marie* shows Poydras Street as the principal thoroughfare of the development. Poydras was similarly involved in other real estate developments in the early 19th century. He was a published author of poetry in colonial Louisiana. Poydras never married and ultimately became interested in education and philanthropy. He left bequests to establish a high school in Pointe Coupee Parish and the Poydras Female Orphan Asylum in New Orleans in addition to other legacies which helped to support institutions such as Charity Hospital in New Orleans upon his death in 1824. Julien Poydras experimented with the cultivation of sugar cane and worked to perfect techniques associated with the cultivation of cane and the granulation of sugar. He owned two large sugar plantations in Louisiana, one in Pointe Coupee and the other in what became St. Bernard Parish.

Poydras owned his St. Bernard plantation by 1812. It contained a raised, one story principal dwelling house, sugar mill, kitchen, slave hospital, barns and dozens of other outbuildings including slave cabins. The St. Bernard plantation belonging to the Succession of Julien Poydras was described in 1830 as consisting of twenty-six arpents of frontage facing the Mississippi River by forty-four arpents in depth, bounded by the property downriver of Benjamin Morgan, upriver by the Ducros brothers and in the rear by Eulalie Mandeville, free woman of color. Eulalie was the natural daughter of Pierre de Marigny and one of his slaves, Maria Teresa, a Congo African. She was freed by him shortly after her birth in 1782. More than 900 square arpents was planted in sugar cane. Eighty-seven slaves worked the Poydras Plantation.

Colonial period ownership originates with Pierre Gaspard de Rochemore, *Ordonnateur* of Louisiana, who was in possession of the tract by 1759. The original property fronted the Mississippi River at the mouth of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and extended to the easternmost wetland areas of modern St. Bernard Parish. Rochemore became embroiled in the political intrigues and controversies which marred the final days of the French colonial presence in the 1760s immediately prior to Spain establishing control. His wife later sold the property.

Antoine Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville acquired this property in 1772 and bequeathed it to his son, Pierre Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville in 1779. Pierre in turn donated the gigantic parcel behind the river frontage, extending to the wetlands bordering the Mississippi Sound, to the King of Spain for the colonization of colonists from the Canary Islands in 1779 by notarial act before Andres Almonester. The portion which Marigny reserved for the continued cultivation of indigo evolved into the sugar plantation of Julien Poydras. Pierre Marigny functioned as the first commandant of St. Bernard from this property. He sold this plantation to his mother, Francoise Delille Dupard, the widow Mandeville, in 1788. She resided on this plantation until her death in 1798 and reared there her free mulatto granddaughter,

Eulalie Mandeville. Louis Brognier de Clouet acquired the property in 1798 from the Succession of the Widow de Mandeville.

Brognier de Clouet was born in New Orleans in 1766. The King of Spain appointed him commander of the Volunteers of the Mississippi succeeding Pierre Marigny in 1800. He functioned as the last commandant of the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* from 1802 until the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France and finally the United States in December 1803. His father, Alexandre de Clouet de Piettre arrived in Louisiana in the mid 18th century and led French efforts to colonize the Attakapas region in southwest Louisiana.

Criminal activity of whites and runaway slaves living along secluded, largely inaccessible ridges in the wetlands increased use of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs Road by *Isleno* farmers. Terre-aux-Boeufs Road connected the farms of the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* to the Mississippi River Road. *Isleno* farmers traveled to New Orleans in ox drawn carts to sell produce and poultry using this road or short cuts along ridges through the wetlands. Following Brognier de Clouet's closure of the road through his property with a gigantic cypress log in 1799, the *Isleno* farmers partnered with attorney and Cabildo Clerk Antonio Mendez and other sugar planters along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs in a law suit to reopen the road. The suit was filed in 1800 and was litigated for several years. In utter frustration, a group of *Isleno* farmers weary of the peril posed by travelling through criminal infested wetlands to reach the Mississippi River Road with their crops burned many of Brognier de Clouet's plantation fences and outbuildings while reopening the Terre-aux-Boeufs Road in 1802. The litigation was unresolved at the time of Louisiana's transfer to American governmental administration in 1803. When Brognier de Clouet advertised the sale of this plantation in 1804 in the *Moniteur de la Louisiane*, it was described as one of the most beautiful and significant plantations along the Mississippi River near New Orleans.

Brognier de Clouet emerged as a great advocate of Spain during the early American period in Louisiana. He was commissioned by King Ferdinand VII of Spain to establish what developed into the City of Cienfuegos in Cuba in 1817. Ironically, many *Islenos* from St. Bernard, Barataria and Valenzuela joined French refugees from St. Domingue (Haiti) to found Cienfuegos under the command of Brognier de Clouet. Jean de Lassize purchased the plantation from Brognier de Clouet and was in possession of the tract when the Territorial Legislature incorporated the Parish of St. Bernard in 1807, though St. Bernard's westernmost boundary began at the rear boundary line of the plantation. Louis Brognier de Clouet died in Spain while serving as a delegate to the Spanish Parliament in 1848.

Poydras Plantation was not developed as a plantation before the 1750s because the property was bisected by Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs, perhaps the most important distributive branch of the Mississippi River below New Orleans. The force of the river current during severe flooding was uncontrollable by early 18th century levees. Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs had been the main channel of the Mississippi River about 2,500 years ago. The Biloxi Marsh Area was the remnant of the bird's foot delta established by the Mississippi when it flowed through the channel which evolved into Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. Early attempts to construct levees across the mouth of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs proved unsuccessful. A series a regular *crevasses* or levee failures and subsequent disastrous flooding was first recorded in 1788. Floods in 1793 and subsequent years at, on average, about ten year intervals throughout the 19th

century regularly inflicted hardship on the area presently known as Eastern St. Bernard Parish, extending from Violet to the Terre-aux-Boeufs settlements. The floods of 1912, 1922 and finally The Great Flood of 1927 severely damaged St. Bernard in the early 20th century. The Great Flood of 1927 marked the last time the levee collapsed and flooded the parish. This last *crevasse* was manmade, the result of dynamiting the levee at adjacent Caernarvon to save New Orleans from flooding. The last natural *crevasse* of the Mississippi River levee at Poydras occurred in 1922. Today, a beautiful lake, several hundred feet wide and delineated by a row of 200 year old live oaks visible from Saro Lane in Poydras is the physical scar remaining from the 1922 flood.

TOUR STOP NO. 12 SEBASTOPOL PLANTATION

Sebastopol Plantation faces Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and is located at 721 Bayou Road in St. Bernard. The house is a raised, one-story wood frame house with a gabled roof. Pedro Marin de Argote constructed the dwelling, known as a *maison de maitre* or master house, about 1830. The structure contains four large rooms and two smaller rooms used for storage known as *cabinets*. A loggia, now enclosed, extended across the rear of the house connecting the *cabinets*. Sebastopol home and plantation were given its name in the 1850s by a later owner of the property, Ignacy [Ignatius] Szymanski. The name recalled the ultimately stunning defeat suffered by the Russian Empire in the Siege of Sevastopol, 1854 – 1855, during the Crimean War.

Pedro Marin was born in the vicinity of Seville, Spain and arrived in Louisiana in the 1770s. He became postmaster general of Louisiana during the Spanish colonial period. Marin married Pelagie Sophie de Reggio and fathered a large family. Evariste Wogan owned Sebastopol in partnership with Marin. The plantation consisted of a brick sugar mill, pigeonier, kitchen, slave quarters row and slave hospital. The tract extended on both sides of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. Marin occupied Sebastopol (Sebastopol is the archaic spelling of Sevastopol) until his death. The Citizen's Bank of Louisiana had established a bank branch in Sebastopol principally for the convenience of Terre-aux-Boeufs sugar planters by 1836. Marin, following the precedent set by other planters, purchased a collection of land grants awarded by the Spanish Government to Canary islander colonists as they were settled in the *Puesto or Poblacion de San Bernardo*. As sugar planters assembled original land grants along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs into larger estates, *Isleno* families ultimately migrated to the easternmost reaches of St. Bernard Parish. The *Islenos* living in the most remote areas pursued subsistence livelihoods by the end of the 19th century.

Polish Army General Ignatius Szymanski was born in Poland in 1806. He fought determinedly against the Russians in the 1830 – 1831 Rising. He descended from a family of Polish freedom fighters and was the son of a veteran of the American Revolution. He arrived in New Orleans in 1835 and married Charlotte Lacoste. He was an early member of the Boston Club in New Orleans. Szymanski accepted a Confederate commission as colonel commanding the Chalmette Regiment during the American Civil War. Although no children were born to his marriage with Charlotte Lacoste, he had several children from his relationship with Elise Romain, free woman of color. Elise Romain and her children from Szymanski resided at Sebastopol. One son, Jean, worked the plantation. Although Sebastopol's acreage

was considerably smaller than the larger sugar estates facing the Mississippi, the yield of sugar was often greater than that produced on the larger plantations. After the Civil War, Szymanski's natural children settled in Mexico where they became prominent business persons. Szymanski died in New Orleans in 1874. Sebastopol was sold by Szymanski in 1855 to Louis A. Marchand and Henri Lauve.

Rosa Blanche Nunez, the wife of Raoul Victor Ducros, purchased Sebastopol in the 1870s and continued her ownership of the property through most of the 1890s. R. V. Ducros served as sheriff and president of the St. Bernard Parish Police Jury in the 1870s. His political involvement, which began during Reconstruction, became virtually all-consuming, so much so that Rosa Nunez not only reared and educated her family but eventually assumed much of the responsibility for managing Sebastopol. She was an alumna of the Ursuline Convent school and believed in education. Her eldest child, Louis Alfred Ducros, lost a sister to yellow fever while living at Sebastopol and he decided to pursue an education in medicine. Young Ducros built a new room on the side of Sebastopol which today serves as a kitchen. Ducros used the room as his study and bedroom. He traveled almost daily aboard the Mexican Gulf Railroad from Sebastopol to New Orleans where he attended Tulane Medical School. He signed two panes of glass with a diamond ring in the front French doors of Sebastopol during a party held in honor of his graduation from medical school in 1896.

John Russell purchased Sebastopol in the early 20th century and subdivided this plantation, Little Gem Plantation and Poydras Plantation. Roland Bergeron Sr. purchased Sebastopol house and surrounding acreage in the 1920s. He and his wife, Adele de St. Germain, reared their two children there. Roland Joseph "R.J." Bergeron, Jr. and Maude Bergeron both grew to maturity at Sebastopol. Maude contracted polio during her early childhood. She triumphed over her physical disability to become a highly respected educator in St. Bernard Parish. Maude's love of Sebastopol caused her to gradually undertake a phased restoration of the house and pigeonier. She succeeded in placing Sebastopol on the National Register of Historic Places in the 1980s. The house was the first privately owned property entered into the National Register of Historic Places in St. Bernard Parish. Maude was assisted in her restoration efforts by James Lewis, also a respected educator, longtime friend and, later in life, Maude's first and only husband. Following Hurricane Katrina, Jim Lewis and his wife at the end of his life, Alberta Retif, undertook a major restoration of Sebastopol consulting with respected preservation architect and founder of Tulane University's Preservation Studies Studio, Eugene D. Cizek, Ph.D., FAIA. Jim and Alberta, both now deceased, worked closely with Dr. Cizek and Parish Historian William Hyland to complete a restoration which emphasized the exposure and retention of intact historic building fabric, such as revealing original wooden ceilings and wooden flooring throughout the house. Evidence of exterior and interior historic colors in Sebastopol enabled the revival of a historic color scheme which is found throughout the historic home today.

TOUR STOP NO. 13 ST. BERNARD VILLAGE

St. Bernard Village in the 21st century extends along Bayou Road and the adjoining Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs from properties immediately west of Gina Drive and Deborah Drive to the historic western or

upper bayou boundary of Creedmoor Plantation. This settlement retains the land grant pattern established by the Spanish Government during the period of colonization by Canary Islanders between 1779 and 1780. Canary Islanders were recruited by the Spanish Government to settle Louisiana in the 1770s. They were encouraged to bring their families to the province and obligated to serve in the Spanish Militia. In recompense for their enlistment, they were awarded land grants, houses were built for each family, an annual stipend was paid to the head of each family and the recruits received agricultural equipment, live stock and almost everything necessary to establish their presence in Louisiana. Descendants of the Serpas, Estopinal, Esteves and other families continue to occupy grants which, in one or two instances, were awarded to their direct ancestors in St. Bernard Village during the 1770s and 1780s. The grants ranged in size from one half of an arpent to three arpents frontage on Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs by a depth of 40 arpents. The grants were seldom awarded to encompass both banks of the bayou. This established a linear settlement along both banks of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. The precedent for this type of linear settlement was established in Louisiana by the French when they settled colonists along the Mississippi River earlier in the 18th century in places such as the *Premiere Cote des Allemands* (First German Coast) and *Pointe Coupee* (modern day Pointe Coupee Parish along False River). The *Isleno* colonists and their descendants were tenacious in remaining where they originally settled and in their pursuit of farming.

The colonists who arrived here principally from Tenerife and Gran Canaria were farmers who, in their homeland, had cultivated grapes for wine production, tomatoes, citrus, potatoes and sugar cane in addition to other crops. Their descendants have preserved this farming tradition to the present day in St. Bernard Village, although they plant crops which are suited to this environment and deeply rooted in the cultural identity of Louisiana. Citrus was first cultivated in Louisiana, as best we know, by the Jesuit Order in the early 18th century before the arrival of *Islenos*. Pierre Clement Laussat, the official sent by Napoleon to administer Louisiana in the name of the French Republic, commented in 1803 that most of the poultry sold in New Orleans was raised by the *Islenos* of St. Bernard. C. C. Robin and Berquin du Vallon, French travelers to New Orleans about 1800, noted in their memoirs the crops raised by *Isleno* farmers of St. Bernard included corn, potatoes and various varieties of beans. Crops cultivated later in the 19th century by *Islenos* included okra, greens, tomatoes and eggplant.

The first temporary houses, according to oral tradition, were built of posts-in-earth and covered with mud-and-moss, palmettos or wooden planks. Descriptions of several these structures survived in early 19th century legal documents. The Spanish Government eventually constructed classic Creole cottages for each of the families occupying land grants in the 1780s. Local contractor Francois (Francisco) Chauvin de Lery and a crew of slave laborers constructed dwellings of mud-and-moss between posts, covered with wooden clapboard and roofed with cypress shingles. The houses had two bay facades with two rooms and one window in each room. The houses had gabled roofs and porches (galleries) in the front and rear of the building. Kitchens were housed in separate buildings detached from the main houses. This style of home was built repeatedly in St. Bernard, with slight variations such as enclosing the rear porches, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Only immediately before World War I did newer building styles begin to manifest themselves in eastern St. Bernard Parish. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, most of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century structures have vanished.

Governor Bernardo de Galvez settled colonists from the Canary Islands in Louisiana between 1778 and 1783. The St. Bernard Post was named in honor of Galvez and his patron saint in 1784 as a testament to the esteem the Islenos had for the young governor. Galvez was the fourth governor of Spanish Louisiana from 1777 to 1784. He was born in 1746 in Macharaviaya in Andalusia near Malaga, the son of Matias de Galvez and Josefa de Madrid. He began his Spanish military service in 1762. He fought tribes of Native Americans in current day Mexico and Texas in the 1760s before returning to Spain in 1772. Upon his arrival in Louisiana, Galvez perpetuated the wise Spanish policy of administrative tolerance in the colony by ingratiating himself with the French speaking Creole population. His excellent command of French was a great asset of which he made good use. Galvez married Felicite de Saint Maxent, widow of Jean Baptiste Destrehan, the daughter of prominent businessman and planter Gilbert Antoine de Saint Maxent. She was a native of New Orleans and had been educated by the Ursuline Nuns. In support of Galvez, Gilbert Saint Maxent personally loaned money to the Continental Congress during the American Revolution through Oliver Pollack, a Spanish citizen who was an expatriate of Great Britain, having fled from Ireland.

Galvez instantly began to implement Spanish policies designed to develop Louisiana as a *barrera* or barrier to British colonial encroachment west of the Mississippi. This resulted in the recruitment of colonists from the Canary Islands and the Spanish mainland from Malaga. The *Malaguenos* founded *Nueva Iberia* (New Iberia) in 1779. Canary Islanders were settled along Bayou Lafourche, Bayou des Familles in Baratavia, Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and at the confluence of Bayou Manchac and the Amite River near Baton Rouge. The final colonization thrust, subsidized by the Spanish Crown, entailed the colonization of the most significant contingent of Acadian colonists along the Mississippi River, Bayou Lafourche and Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs after Galvez departed Louisiana. Galvez organized and commanded the Galvez Expedition from 1779 to 1781. All colonists capable of bearing arms followed Galvez in his campaign which eradicated the British colonial presence along what would become the Gulf Coast of the United States. Other results of this campaign included a successful redefinition of Louisiana's Creole cultural identity to include a significant Spanish influence. Subsequent to his service in Louisiana, Galvez was named Captain General of Cuba and Viceroy of New Spain. He died suddenly at the age of 40 in Mexico City in 1786. This unsung hero of the American Revolution not only commanded the Galvez Expedition, but directly aided George Washington and the Continental Army by providing money, ammunition, medicine and other essentials. Spain and Galvez will, in the future, garner the recognition which is deserved for these pivotal contributions to the birth of the United States of America.

Pierre Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville was commissioned by the King of Spain to settle colonists from the Canary Islands along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs in 1778. The settlement process began in 1779 and he was appointed the first commandant of what would become the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* February 17th, 1780. Galvez had originally surveyed the Terre-aux-Boeufs site with Marigny, his brother-in-law, in 1778. Pierre's father, Antoine Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville, died in 1779 and had bequeathed the Terre-aux-Boeufs tract to Pierre in his last will and testament. The act of donation by Pedro de Marigny to the King of Spain passed before Andres Almonester April 29, 1779 describes the tract as four leagues below New Orleans on the same side of the Mississippi River. The act states "that

the donor, having received information that the King, through Governor General Bernardo de Galvez ..., is interested in settling this area with colonists and possessing extensive high ground which is vacant (undeveloped), donates those lands, which extend to lakes emptying into the sea without reservation for that purpose. It is understood that these donated lands shall commence immediately behind the plantation currently cultivated by the donor of which he retains ownership..." The donation instrument establishes that the land donated by Marigny was "vacant," meaning that there were no buildings or other improvements nor additional neighboring property owners behind the Mississippi River frontage.

Pierre or Pedro de Marigny was born in New Orleans in 1751. His paternal grandfather, Francois Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville, known as the Sieur de Mandeville, had arrived in Louisiana in 1700 and was the first lineal ancestor to reside in the province. He was born in Montreal, Nouvelle France (today Canada) in the 1685 and was related by familial alliance to the Le Moyne family. He was posted to New Orleans in 1724 as *Major de Place* or commander of troops and died in 1728. Pierre de Marigny was educated in France and served as a musketeer in the French army under the command of Francois Turgot, Governor of French Guyana. He returned to Louisiana in 1768 and subsequently married Jeanne Marie Destrehan in 1772. Marigny participated in every battle of the Galvez Expedition from Fort Bute of Manchac and Baton Rouge in 1779, to Mobile in 1780 and Pensacola, where he served as aide-de-camp to Governor Galvez in 1781. During the Spanish Dominion, no French Creole would achieve greater prominence than Pedro de Marigny, whom Governor Manuel Gayoso de Lemos described as the "richest, most prominent and one of the persons most addicted to the Spanish cause in these provinces."

As commandant, Marigny functioned in the capacity of notary public, recording all acts pertaining to immovable property, slaves and mortgages. Testaments were also recorded by Marigny and succeeding commandants, who exercised judicial jurisdiction over minor civil cases and criminal cases. The powers and responsibilities of the offices, established later by the American Government, of sheriff and tax collector, were also vested in the office of commandant. The commandants of San Bernardo convened public meetings and auctions in the front yard of St. Bernard Catholic Church. This would happen later in history at the St. Bernard Parish Courthouse. It was in 1780 that St. Bernard first officially separated from the direct governmental supervision of New Orleans and attained its civil autonomy.

Responsibility for the civil administration of San Bernardo was relinquished by Marigny to his kinsman, Pierre Denis de La Ronde, in 1788. Marigny remained as military commandant of the post until he was appointed founding commanding officer of the Volunteers of the Mississippi in 1792. Marigny also served as an ad-interim member of the Cabildo. Governor Gayoso appointed Marigny to the command of the Battalion of New Orleans with the rank of colonel in 1798. Marigny died suddenly in 1800 and was interred with his wife, parents and grandparents in the St. Louis Cathedral.

TOUR STOP NO. 14 HISTORIC ST. BERNARD PARISH COURTHOUSE

The Historic St. Bernard Parish Courthouse is located at 1201 Bayou Road in St. Bernard Village. Three courthouses have stood on this site since 1848. The property upon which the courthouse is constructed

was sold to St. Bernard Parish in 1848 by Vicente Nunez, son of Estevan Nunez de Villavicencio who was born in the Canary Islands in Santa Cruz de Tenerife during 1771. Nunez, a prominent businessman and planter, sold the property for the sum of \$1.00 to finally establish a central, permanent courthouse. Prior to 1848, court had been held in the original office structure of the commandant of the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* on the grounds of St. Bernard Catholic Church or, perhaps, in the home of the parish judge. The La Tourrette Map of 1844 clearly indicates that the earlier and perhaps first St. Bernard Courthouse was located on the property allocated by the Spanish Government for St. Bernard Church and Cemetery. The 1848 location in St. Bernard Village was chosen for the seat of government in St. Bernard Parish because it was in the geographic center of population and land area in the mid 19th century. The population center did not begin to shift westward to Chalmette until World War II. The majority of St. Bernard residents lived from Poydras east throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. Although it has been written that there was a temporary courthouse at Violet prior to 1848, the documentation to support this assertion has not been located by this author. The first two courthouses in St. Bernard Village were wooden, as was the Mississippi Club located in Stock Landing (Arabi), the temporary home of the courthouse during Reconstruction and for some time thereafter again in the 1880s. Harmon Turner was commissioned to build a new wooden courthouse following the fire of 1884. It featured a hipped roof and front gallery (porch) with wooden box columns and was raised about six feet above the ground. This courthouse stood until it was replaced by the present three-story structure between 1914 and 1916. The disaster created by the 1915 Hurricane, a storm more powerful than Katrina, delayed full occupancy of the then new courthouse. The restrained Beaux- Arts style courthouse was designed by the architectural firm of Toledano and Wogan from New Orleans. Because of a history of floods and fire, the poured concrete structure was built raised above a partially in-ground basement and designed to be 80 percent fire proof. The court room was in the center of the building and has a coved ceiling two stories high. Decorative plaster work adorns the courtroom. The courthouse was moved from this location in 1939 to Chalmette. The building was then rededicated as St. Bernard School, ultimately becoming St. Bernard High School. It functioned as St. Bernard High School until 1966 when it was relocated close by to a property facing Torres Drive in St. Bernard. The structure then functioned as P.G.T. Beauregard High School and later Beauregard Middle School until Hurricane Katrina struck St. Bernard Parish in 2005. Camp Hope, a facility which housed volunteers who had come to help rebuild St. Bernard Parish in the aftermath of Katrina, was operated from the outbuildings surrounding the historic courthouse from 2007 through 2009. The historic courthouse was restored using FEMA funding between 2010 and 2012.

TOUR STOP NO. 15 LOS ISLENOS MUSEUM COMPLEX

Los Islenos Museum Complex is located in St. Bernard Village at 1345 – 1357 Bayou Road. The Museum Complex includes historic structures and several parcels of land acquired by donation to St. Bernard Parish from the Molero and Ducros families. Frank Fernandez was appointed the first official historian of St. Bernard Parish in 1967. Shortly after the founding of The St. Bernard Historical Society in 1968, Fernandez actively sought the donation of a property in which to establish a museum dedicated to presenting the history of St. Bernard Parish.

Rosa Mathilde Ducros Tennant answered Fernandez's call and offered two properties for consideration in St. Bernard Village. One property was known as the "Half-way House," a two-story wooden frame Gothic Revival structure situated at the corner of Bayou Road and Armstrong Lane. Earl Desselles, Thomas Reed and other engineers examined the "Half-way House" and found it structurally unsound, completely infested with termites and rot and, tragically, unable to be restored. The "Half-way House" had been an important landmark in St. Bernard Parish, serving as a community store, gathering place and dance hall. It was demolished about 1973. Fernandez then inspected the old Louis Alfred Ducros, M.D. home situated on property adjacent to the "Half-way House." The building was of *brique-entre-poteaux* or brick-between-posts construction. The building was in need of extensive repair, but was structurally sound.

Mrs. Tennant donated the Ducros home to St. Bernard Parish in 1971 in memory of her father, Louis Alfred Ducros, M.D. Dr. Ducros was appointed coroner of St. Bernard Parish in 1902 and served uninterrupted successive terms in that office for 43 years until his death in 1945. He had held elective office longer than any other person in Louisiana when he died. The St. Bernard Parish Police Jury repaired the building and opened it to the public as a branch of the St. Bernard Parish Public Library and local history museum in 1974.

Frank Fernandez participated in the historic pilgrimage of Canary Island descendants to the Canary Islands in 1977. This was the first time Louisiana *Islenos* had returned to their Canarian homeland since their arrival in the Mississippi Delta between 1778 and 1783. Mr. Fernandez discussed the potential donation of Molero family property adjoining Ducros with Louise Molero O'Toole, another member of the Canarian descendants' delegation representing St. Bernard Parish during the 1977 trip. Marie Louise Molero O'Toole and her sister, Mabel Isabel Molero Quatroty, donated the property adjoining the Ducros family tracts to Los Islenos Heritage and Cultural Society in 1980. The Society in turn donated the property to St. Bernard Parish later in 1980.

Mrs. O'Toole and Mrs. Quatroty donated the home in memory of their parents, community leader and prominent businessman Manuel Molero and his wife, Camille Silvera. Manuel Molero was born in Bencheque in the 1880s and became fabulously wealthy through his hard work and acute business acumen. He founded Dealcroix Corporation, a land holding company in the 1920s. Molero supported many philanthropic works in St. Bernard Parish. He believed in education and encouraged the development of churches and schools.

The acquisition of Los Islenos Museum ultimately led to the establishment of Los Islenos Museum Complex which has evolved over more than 40 years, through the successful partnership between St. Bernard Parish Government and Los Islenos Society, into a museum complex containing nine structures, two nature trails, a small cypress swamp and acreage extending from Bayou Road to Louisiana Highway 46 (Judge Perez Extension). Historic structures forming Los Islenos Historic Village are the Estopinal House and kitchen, ca. 1790; Esteves House, ca. 1890; Cresap – Caserta House, 1910, and the Coconut Island Barroom, ca. 1920. Los Islenos Center is available for rent for events to the public. All of the historic structures in the Isleno historic village were moved to the Museum Complex by Los Islenos

Society. A separate tour narrative has been developed for Los Islenos Museum Complex and is incorporated with this tour.

TOUR STOP NO. 16 CREEDMOOR PLANTATION

Creedmoor Plantation is located facing Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs at 1800 Bayou Road. It is the boundary between St. Bernard Village on its western (upper bayou) boundary and Toca Village on its eastern (lower bayou) boundary. It shares a common heritage with all of the sugar estates along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs in that the tract was assembled from smaller parcels which had been granted to colonists from the Canaries in the late 18th century. Much of Creedmoor's 19th century acreage remains intact. The main house, several outbuildings, drainage pump house ruins and the brick ruins of the sugar mill all stand on the property. Creedmoor Canal drained the plantation and connected Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs to the 40 Arpent Canal and ultimately Lake Lery, near Delacroix Island. As *Islenos* settled Delacroix in the 19th century, hunters, commercial fishermen and moss-gatherers often traversed Creedmoor Canal during periods when mud roads leading to and from the "Island" were impassable due to flooding or extended periods of torrential rain. *Islenos* would access the Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs Road and proceed to the Mississippi River Road at Poydras Plantation from whence they could reach the French Market in New Orleans.

Creedmoor House is a raised, center hall villa in the Greek-Revival style. It dates to about 1840 and was probably built by either Laurent Millaudon or Richard Richardson who owned the property by 1842. Large double parlors connected by pocket doors enter into the center hall to the right of the main entrance. Two large rooms are located on the left side of the center hall. The home originally had two *cabinet* rooms and an enclosed, glazed loggia connecting the *cabinets*. The kitchen and dining room building was attached to the main house with a breezeway which was later screen-enclosed and finally glazed. The original dining room is today the kitchen and the old kitchen is a work room. Beneath the kitchen is a basement which houses a cast-iron boiler. John Russell, an owner in the early 20th century, enlarged the loggia to establish a large dining area at the rear of the center hall. Russell also added an Arts-and-Crafts style staircase in one of the cabinets leading to the attic area which was finished for additional bedrooms. He also added Arts-and-Crafts style archways opening spaces between the front double parlor and the other room facing Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. Interesting early Arts-and-Crafts style lighting fixtures combined with other features throughout the home create an alluring, albeit eclectic, atmosphere in Creedmoor, reflective of more than a century-and-a-half of layered historic ownership of this important landmark.

Jean Joseph Coiron purchased an assemblage of *Isleno* land grants in the 1810s to establish what later became Creedmoor Plantation. Coiron was born in the Island of Martinique in 1771 and died in 1833. He arrived in Louisiana, fought in the Battle of New Orleans and experimented with the cultivation of ribbon sugar cane, a species of sugar cane which was more cold weather tolerant. Coiron's experimentation with the introduction of ribbon cane changed and enhanced sugar production in Louisiana. Coiron conducted extensive business with banker and businessman Laurent Millaudon who

later acquired the plantation. Renowned for his excessive thrift, Millaudon became the target of satirical jokes and ditties. A succession of owners followed throughout the 19th century including Richard Richardson, a planter from the east coast of Georgia and South Carolina who was a partner of Stephen R. Proctor and Raoul Victor Ducros, a member of a family of sugar planters, officials and attorneys who bought and sold many plantations along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. The Andrew Armbruster family acquired Creedmoor in the early 20th century from John Russell. Andrea Armbruster Gilbert and Valerie Armbruster Bobear inherited the property the property from their parents. Dr. Norman “Sut” Gilbert and his wife, Andrea “Andy” Armbruster, lived in and beautifully maintained Creedmoor for decades. Following Hurricane Katrina, Creedmoor co-owner Louis Pomes has undertaken a careful, phased restoration of the main house largely using income derived from the production of Hollywood movies filmed on site.

TOUR STOP NO. 17 TOCA VILLAGE

Toca Village’s western (upper bayou) boundary begins at Creedmoor Plantation and extends to the western (upper bayou) boundary of the Southern Natural Gas Plant on its easternmost side. Demolition by neglect and Hurricane Katrina destroyed many of the old houses and other structures in Toca Village. This village is a continuation of the land use pattern, still visible in St. Bernard Village, established by Spanish officials when the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* was laid out between 1779 and 1783 as a linear settlement. The Estopinal family was first settled here, in Toca, when Diego Ventura Estupinan, later written Estopinal, arrived with Maria Artiles, his wife, and family. The Spanish Government built a mud-and-moss between posts home on the land grant which was moved to Los Islenos Museum Complex by Los Islenos Society in 1999. This house later became the childhood home Albert Estopinal, an *Isleno* descendant who would occupy many elected offices including the offices of Sheriff of St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana Lieutenant Governor and United States Congressman. Estopinal was a veteran of the Civil War and remained active in veterans’ affairs throughout his adult life. One of the remaining historic homes in Toca Village is the early 20th century Edwardian style Adam Estopinal house. This comfortable home is located at 2012 Bayou Road. It was purchased by Donald and Catherine Serpas and was restored by them before and after Hurricane Katrina. The home of Philippe (Felipe) Toca still stands in Toca Village as well. Located at 2215 Bayou Road, the building has been rehabilitated and includes some acreage.

Philippe or Felipe Toca was born in New Orleans in 1809, the son of Jose Alonzo de Toca and Isabel Delille. His father was a native of Santander in Spain and his mother was born in New Orleans. Philippe began his professional life as an educator. He was fluent in Spanish, French and English. He fought a duel with Plaquemines Parish Judge Gilbert Leonard over the Presidential election of 1844 and killed Judge Leonard. The Toca family was related through the Delille family to the to the Juan Perez family, originally of St. Bernard Parish, some of whom settled in the 19th century in Plaquemines Parish. The best known descendants of Juan Perez were 20th century political titan Leander H. Perez and Orleans Parish District Attorney John R. Perez. Toca was elected recorder or clerk of court in St. Bernard Parish and served in that capacity until his death. He became perhaps the dominant figure in the political hierarchy of post Civil War St. Bernard. Very little took place in St. Bernard without Toca’s involvement

and blessing. Toca married Marie Amelie Crevon and fathered a large family whose descendants still reside in St. Bernard and the Metropolitan New Orleans Area. He died in 1884, completely immersed in providing political leadership to St. Bernard.

TOUR STOP NO. 18 MAGNOLIA PLANTATION

Magnolia Plantation, originally known as Magnolia Grove, located at 2525 Bayou Road, St. Bernard, is probably the oldest standing structure in St. Bernard Parish. Magnolia is a one-story raised Creole plantation house consisting originally of six rooms and two *cabinets*. A gallery surrounds three sides of the dwelling and the rear loggia was flanked by the *cabinet* rooms. A highly pitched hipped roof covers Magnolia. Brick pillars which surround the house on the front and side galleries replaced 19th century wooden box columns in the 1930s. Magnolia is of *bousillage-entre-poteaux* or mud-and-moss between posts construction. Although the interior was modified in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Magnolia maintains significant early historic building fabric. There are beaded cypress beams and ceilings throughout the home. The interior reflects a history of ownership which spans two centuries. Ancient magnolias and live oaks surround Magnolia.

Antonio Mendez, clerk of the Cabildo in New Orleans, and his partner, Manuel Solis, purchased multiple land grants awarded to *Isleno* colonists in the late 1780s to assemble the plantation later known as Magnolia. Mendez was born in Havana, Cuba in 1750 and practiced law in New Orleans. He married Felicite Ducre and sired several children whose descendants still reside in this region. Manuel Solis and Antonio Mendez probably constructed Magnolia during their partnership. The house is mentioned in several notarial acts in 1794 and 1795. Antonio Mendez was a principal functionary in the Cabildo. Governor William C. C. Claiborne later appointed him parish judge of St. Bernard Parish. Ultimately, Claiborne became suspicious of Mendez after he learned of efforts by Mendez, in support of certain Spanish operatives, to restore Spanish rule in Louisiana. Mendez was removed as parish judge of St. Bernard Parish by Governor Claiborne, but remained active in support of the community. He served as a *marguillier* or warden of St. Bernard Church for many years. Antonio Mendez died in 1829.

Samuel Boyer Davis was the owner of Magnolia in the early 19th century. He was born in Delaware in 1776 and orphaned when his father died of injuries resulting from his captivity as a British prisoner of war during the American Revolutionary War. The younger Davis entered the French Navy early in his youth, sailing to French colonies throughout the Caribbean. He arrived in New Orleans in 1799 and befriended the charismatic Irish merchant and real estate speculator, Daniel Clark. Irish expatriates frequently settled in Spain and throughout the Spanish Empire where they often prospered in mercantile endeavors. Davis and Clark became intimate friends and when Clark needed a close friend to rear his daughter, Myra, Davis was chosen for the task. Davis was appointed harbor master of New Orleans in 1804 and fought in the War of 1812 in Delaware, repulsing a British naval bombardment of Lewes along the Atlantic coast of Delaware. Davis reared Myra as his own child after Daniel Clark's death during her very early childhood. Myra spent part of her childhood at Magnolia.

Later in life, Myra Davis discovered that she was truly the daughter of Daniel Clark and initiated protracted litigation as Myra Clark Gaines, the wife of General Edmund Pendleton Gaines. After almost 50 years, Myra Clark Gaines was finally acknowledged as the daughter and heir of Daniel Clark. The litigation over Clark's estate continued after her death for almost six decades and involved the legitimacy of title to vast expanses of land in New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, including Delacroix Island. Myra Clark Davis died in New Orleans in 1885 and became celebrated as the courageous litigant who pursued court battles through every court in the United States including the Supreme Court. The Gaines litigation lasted longer than any other series of suits in 19th century America.

Samuel Davis sold Magnolia Grove Plantation in 1817 and returned to Delaware where he established a residence in addition to a home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He died in 1855. Pierre Jacques Florentin Jorda purchased Magnolia in 1827 from the Bank of the United States of America and William Riffin, a resident of Baltimore, Maryland for \$107,000. The plantation complex consisted of 19 arpents frontage on both banks of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs by 40 arpents in depth on each side of the bayou; the principal house, out buildings, sugar mill, slave cabins, lumber mill and 34 slaves. The Jorda family continued to own Magnolia throughout much of the remainder of the 19th century. Pierre Jorda was the son of Jayme Jorda, a native of Seville, Spain and Helene de Reggio. The Reggio family established a dynasty of sugar plantations in Louisiana which extended from St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes to southwest Louisiana. Pierre Jorda married Felicie Denis de La Ronde and fathered a large family who planted sugar and became involved in the political leadership of St. Bernard Parish. Parish Assessor Anthony "Tony" Leon's wife, Ruth Robinson, inherited Magnolia. Charles "Bud" Leon, a well respected community leader and businessman, lived in Magnolia until his death shortly before Katrina. Hurricane Katrina flooded Magnolia for the first time in its history. Gloria Appe Leon, "Bud" Leon's widow, and family restored Magnolia following Hurricane Katrina.

TOUR STOP NO. 19 SAINT BERNARD CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CEMETERY

St. Bernard Catholic Church and Cemetery is located at 2805 Bayou Road, about a quarter of a mile below Magnolia Plantation facing Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. St. Bernard Catholic Church, canonically erected in 1785, was the first church established downriver from New Orleans in the Mississippi River corridor. It was built to serve the *Isleno* colonists and other residents of *Tierra de Bueyes*, alternately known as *San Bernardo*. The church and cemetery site was selected because it was situated in the geographic center of the original *Poblacion de San Bernardo*. Construction of the church began in 1787 and was completed in 1791. Francisco Delery was the contractor who built the church using African and Louisiana born slave laborers. The first pastor was Mariano de Brunete, a Spanish Capuchin priest. Prior to 1785, Isleno residents of St. Bernard traveled to the Parish Church of Saint Louis in New Orleans to receive the Holy Sacraments.

Father Agustin Lamar succeeded Father Brunete as pastor of St. Bernard Catholic Church in 1787. It was during his pastorate that the first St. Bernard Church was constructed. Jose Messa, a native of Icod de los Vinos in Tenerife, became the first recorded interment in St. Bernard Catholic Cemetery in 1787. The

cemetery was popularly known as Terre-aux-Boeufs Cemetery. The 1787 – 1791 church remained in use until 1852. Father Tirso de Peleagonzalo, the fourth pastor of St. Bernard, reported a total population of 619 inhabitants in the settlement, most of whom were *Islenos*. He described the poor finances of the ecclesiastical parish, the difficulty in receiving support from the congregation and described the church building as greatly deteriorated structurally. Despite Father Peleagonzalo's dire report, the church remained in use for fifty years afterwards. In 1838, the church was described as a "neat little affair... The building is in a handsome enclosure, planted with trees and grass..." The second church, constructed during the pastorate of Jean or Juan Caretta, was a larger wooden frame structure built in the Greek- Revival style. Father Antoine Doutré remodeled St. Bernard Church during his pastorate in the 1880s. The 1852 church remained in use until it burned in 1916. The present St. Bernard Church was constructed by Father Louis Balechou in 1924 – 1925 during his pastorate at Our Lady of Lourdes in Violet. Father Balechou, a veteran of the French Army in World War I, personally subsidized much of the construction of the new church building. St. Bernard Church moved to Violet after the 1916 fire and operated from the mission chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes.

St. Bernard Church was the center of life in colonial St. Bernard. The local militia was mustered regularly in the front yard of the church. Mass meetings of the St. Bernard settlement were convened on the grounds surrounding the church or inside St. Bernard Church with residents spilling out into the surrounding grounds. Governmental edicts and a variety of public notices including slave manumissions were posted on the doors of the church. Community fiestas marking religious holidays were also celebrated on the church grounds. A prominent 19th century chronicler of Louisiana's history wrote of St. Bernard Catholic Church that "the history of this church may be said to be the history of the [civil] parish." Former Parish Historian Frank Fernandez and his elder brother, retired educator Anthony A. Fernandez, Sr. both described the church and cemetery as "sacred ground" to the people of St. Bernard Parish.

Archaeological survey work indicates that perhaps the original St. Bernard Cemetery was established adjoining the original St. Bernard Catholic Church. The brick foundation remnants of another structure behind the church, probably the first St. Bernard Parish Courthouse, were also documented in the archaeological survey undertaken by Jill-Karen Yacubik, Earth Search, Inc. The parishioners of St. Bernard Catholic Church performed significant repairs and improvements to the church and cemetery in 1813 including the construction of a bridge across Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs to the cemetery. St. Bernard Cemetery contains an important collection of early 19th century tombs in addition to late 19th and early 20th century coping graves. The cemetery has been damaged in hurricanes during the last two centuries. The 1947 Hurricane was particularly devastating to St. Bernard Cemetery. One can view the beautiful 19th century granite, slate and marble tomb stones which Father Clemens Schneider meticulously pieced together and repaired following the 1947 Hurricane. Students from Tulane University's Preservation Studies Studio documented 13 graves in St. Bernard Cemetery in 2003 by completing sets of Historic American Building Survey (HABS) drawings. Hurricane Katrina flooded the cemetery in 2005. Several of the newer, 20th century tombs yielded coffins which floated into the surrounding area. Remarkably, the 19th century tombs did not fail during Katrina. Today, St. Bernard Cemetery is the oldest cemetery in the

New Orleans Metropolitan Area, predating St. Louis Cemetery No. One, established in 1789, by two years.

TOUR STOP NO. 20 KENILWORTH PLANTATION

Perhaps the most strikingly beautiful plantation vista in St. Bernard is presented by Kenilworth Plantation, located at 2931 Bayou Road. Kenilworth is a two-story brick masonry structure completely surrounded by a gallery or porch on both floors. The first floor gallery is surrounded by square, truncated pillars, typical of the Caribbean but unusual in Louisiana. The second floor gallery is delineated by turned, cypress colonettes. The first floor is of solid brick construction covered with plaster while the second floor is of *brique-entre-poteaux* or brick-between-posts construction covered with beaded wooden weather boards. This practice was followed to reduce the overall weight of structures in colonial Louisiana. The interior and exterior of Kenilworth has been altered by a succession of owners. The dormers with stained glass sashes were added by Albert Estopinal after the 1915 Hurricane as was the center entrance door on the first floor. Kenilworth is surmounted by a beautiful double-pitched, hipped roof with a mortised-and tenoned Norman truss system. The roof structure is very important and the subject of favorable comment by architectural historians. There is nothing visible in the construction of the house to suggest that it was built in multiple phases. Although it has been written that Kenilworth dates to 1759, nothing in the 1779 donation to the King of Spain or subsequent documentation suggests or establishes so early a construction date.

Jean Chauveau followed the precedent set by other sugar planters in purchasing between 1816 and 1819 thirty different tracts of land from Canary Islander colonists or their successors who had received the properties as land grants from the Spanish Government in the 18th century. Chauveau had come to Louisiana in the late 18th century from St. Domingue. He fought in the Battle of New Orleans, settled along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and, in all probability, constructed Kenilworth between 1816 and 1819. Chauveau co-habited with a free woman of color, Constance Vivant, who lived with him in the plantation. Chauveau extensively mortgaged and lost what would become Kenilworth before his death in 1825.

The creditors of Jean Chauveau and Vincent Rilleux sold Kenilworth to Durham Tudor Hall in 1828 who, in turn sold the property to Antoine Bienvenu and several sons in 1828. Thus began the ownership of the Bienvenu family which lasted more than 40 years. This Bienvenu was a direct descendant of the original Antoine Bienvenu who purchased Governor Vaudreuil's plantation in what would become Arabi in 1749. Antoine Bienvenu, Jr. had resided in Kenilworth with his wife, Marie Felicite Aspasia de Morant and their children when an inventory of his succession was taken in 1833. The plantation belonged to the "Bienvenu brothers" and the furnishings of the house, including mahogany furniture, silver, crystal, table linens, bed linens, draperies formed part of the succession. The Antoine Bienvenus owned 13 slaves, agricultural equipment and other assets which amounted to \$18,249.33 ½ . The Bienvenu family sold Kenilworth in 1871. A succession of owners followed until 1887 when Albert Estopinal purchased Kenilworth.

Albert Estopinal has, incredibly and regretfully, become a somewhat obscure figure in the history of St. Bernard Parish. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Estopinal was utterly synonymous with St. Bernard Parish. He was a veteran of the Confederate Army who began his career in politics during Reconstruction. Estopinal grew to maturity speaking Spanish, French, Creole and ultimately English. He lived primarily in Toca Village until he purchased Kenilworth. He was elected sheriff of St. Bernard Parish, police juror and president of the St. Bernard Parish Police Jury, state senator representing St. Bernard Parish, lieutenant governor of Louisiana and United States congressman representing the First Congressional District of Louisiana. Estopinal remained active in the Confederate Veterans Association as well as functioning as a tireless advocate for the people of his native parish. He died in 1919 while serving in Congress and was buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. Three in New Orleans. The Estopinal family sold Kenilworth in 1914, though they continued to occupy the home for several years thereafter.

Kenilworth changed hands several times subsequently until it was purchased by Valentino Acosta, D.D.S. in 1964. Dr. Acosta and his wife, Mary Jane Blanchard Acosta, repaired and restored Kenilworth with great passion. The Acostas reared their family in Kenilworth, always graciously sharing this important St. Bernard landmark with the community. Mary Acosta restored Kenilworth following Hurricane Katrina which flooded the first floor of the house. This was the first time a hurricane flooded Kenilworth. Mrs. Acosta recently enrolled Kenilworth in the National Register of Historic Places.

TOUR STOP NO. 21 CONTRERAS PLANTATION

Contreras Plantation is situated along Bayou Road with frontage stretching along both banks of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs, about a mile down the bayou from Kenilworth Plantation. A concrete cinder-block structure designed by engineer Earl Desselles and subsidized by the late Judge Leander H. Perez marks the site of the Contreras plantation house which burned, according to oral tradition, in the 1930s. An image of Contreras house, published in *The Times-Democrat*, shows a one-story raised Creole vernacular style home with a front gallery (porch) surmounted by a double pitched, hipped roof. St. Bernard native son Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (1818 – 1893) always claimed Contreras as his place of birth. Contreras was purchased by Beauregard's parents, Jacques Toutant and Judith Helene de Reggio. As is the case with almost every other plantation along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs, Contreras was pieced together by purchasing a collection of parcels of property which had originally been granted to colonists from the Canaries by the Spanish Government. Beauregard's mother promised, according to family oral tradition, to name the sugar plantation after her son's first victory in battle. The West Point Academy alumnus had his first victory in battle during the Mexican – American War at Contreras. He spoke French, Spanish, English and Italian fluently. It was said that he spoke English without a trace of a French accent.

Beauregard was appointed superintendent of West Point immediately before the outbreak of the American Civil War. He declined the West Point appointment to accept a commission in the Confederate Army. Beauregard fired the very first shots in the Civil War when he began the

bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor commencing the military role for which he is most remembered. Before the Civil War, Beauregard was an officer in the Army Corps of Engineers. He served as superintendent of construction of the United States Customhouse on Canal Street, supervised the construction of the Tower at Proctor's Landing (Fort Proctor) as well as major repairs to the United States Mint facing Esplanade Avenue and fortifications throughout the Gulf Coast region. He was also an unsuccessful candidate for the office of mayor of New Orleans. After the Civil War, Beauregard returned to New Orleans where he engaged in several business enterprises including the Louisiana Lottery. Beauregard had the habit of having lunch at Antoine's Restaurant almost daily. One day, while gathered with friends and kinsmen he was reading *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orleans* and noted the front page headline about the massacre of George Custer. Beauregard raised his eyebrows and commented in a very matter-of-fact way "you see gentlemen, there is eternal justice!" as he turned the paper towards them to view. He maintained a lifelong passion for architecture, designing his daughter's granite tomb in Metairie Cemetery. Beauregard died in New Orleans and is buried in the Army of Tennessee Monument in Metairie Cemetery. Godchaux Sugar Company purchased Contreras in the 19th century and owned it for more than a century. Local attorney and businessman Glenn Diaz owns Contreras today.

TOUR STOP NO. 22 VERRET VILLAGE

Immediately adjacent to the eastern or lower bayou property line of Contreras is Verret Village. It faces Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and Bayou Road. The settlement derives its name from Martial Verret, a white planter who had both white and black families. After the Civil War, according to oral tradition, Verret helped to establish a freedmen's village on the parcels of land he owned in the vicinity. The cemetery belonging to the First Baptist Church in Verrett is a resting place for freed slaves and their descendants. The Reverend Samuel Smith, a former slave of Richard Proctor who worked on Proctor's plantation at what would become Shell Beach, founded the church after the Civil War. Smith enlisted in the Grand Army of the Republic (Union Army) and fought against the Confederacy. Once while in combat, according to his grandson, he received a vision from God that he would be spared death in battle in order to found a church in St. Bernard after the Civil War. The Reverend Smith returned to St. Bernard after the Civil War to found the First Baptist Church in Verrett. Today, his direct descendant, the Reverend Raymond A. Smith, presides over the First Baptist Church of Verrett as its pastor. Samuel Smith served as one of the first black police jurors in Reconstruction Era St. Bernard Parish. The Reverend Smith delivered the invocation during the dedication of the Chalmette Monument in 1915. He was universally respected by all communities in St. Bernard Parish. *Islenos* received grants of land in Verrett Village in the 1780s. Felix Marrero received a land grant there in 1782 after relocating from the Barataria settlement and, later in the 18th century, constructed a *bousillage-entre-poteaux* or mud-and-moss between posts dwelling which stood on the property in a ruined condition until the middle 1980s. Marrero was the son of Antonio Gomez Marrero and Barbara Perez, all natives of Tenerife. The Marrero family originated in Portugal and settled in the Canaries in the 1500s.

TOUR STOP NO. 23 SITE OF REGGIO PLANTATION, FLORISSANT, ALLUVIAL CITY, YSCLOSKEY, NEW SHELL BEACH AND HOPEDALE [LA CHINCHE]

Louis de Reggio established a sugar plantation near the confluence of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and Bayou La Loutre in the late 18th century by purchasing lands formerly granted to *Isleno* colonists. Reggio was born in New Orleans in 1759, the son of Francois Marie de Reggio and Helene Fleuriau. He served in the Spanish military in Louisiana, having fought under the command of Governor Galvez in the battles of Fort Bute de Manchac and Baton Rouge in 1779. He also served in the Company of Distinguished Carabineer Militia for more than 26 years. Reggio married Judith Olivier de Vezin. Her brother, Nicolas Olivier de Vezin, assembled a collection of Canarian land grants to establish a large sugar plantation on the western or upper bayou boundary of the Reggio Plantation. Louis Reggio died in 1850 and his son, Auguste de Reggio continued in possession of the plantation. The Reggio house was a substantial building, constructed on a brick foundation. No known historic images or oral traditions have survived about the appearance of the home or when the home disappeared. There was a railroad stop at Reggio Plantation in the 19th and early 20th centuries which was well remembered by the Islenos living at Bencheque. Eventually, the plantation came to be called Florissant. The Reggios opened a road through the center of the plantation which was later developed as a toll road by the Doullut family to provide additional access to the resort community of Shell Beach. Today Florissant Highway runs along the course of the old plantation road established more than 200 years ago.

Hurricane Katrina destroyed Florissant Community in 2005. While a handful of people have returned to the settlement, it remains largely decimated. Florissant was settled primarily following Hurricane Flossie in 1956. This hurricane virtually destroyed Shell Beach for a second time in less than a decade. The 1947 Hurricane had washed away Shell Beach nine years prior. The Federal Government paid to relocate Shell Beach residents farther inland to an area which was presumed to be safer. By 2005, the toll of coastal erosion was so catastrophic that Florissant was as exposed or perhaps more exposed than Shell Beach was in 1956.

Beyond Florissant, proceeding easterly along Florissant Highway (LA Highway No.46) are the communities of Alluvial City, Yscloskey and New Shell Beach. These three communities were carved out the plantation belonging to Stephen R. Proctor in the mid 19th century. Developers in the early 20th century opened Alluvial City as a community with very rich farm soil. The disastrous 1915 Hurricane discouraged development, subjecting the community to catastrophic flooding. Gradually, commercial fishermen and trappers primarily of Canarian-Spanish descent began establishing homes in this area. Yscloskey also began to develop at this time and was also adversely affected by the 1915 Hurricane. Shell Beach and New Shell Beach evolved from the old resort community of Proctor's Landing, situated along the shores of Lake Borgne near the mouth of Bayou Yscloskey. The Mexican Gulf Railroad traveled more or less parallel to Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs until it reached the Reggio Plantation when it turned easterly following Bayou La Loutre and Bayou Yscloskey to Lake Borgne. Proctor's Landing, Proctorville or Shell Beach, as the hamlet was known, became a favorite resort for New Orleans residents wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of the largest city in the 19th century South. Canary Islanders had begun settling in the area in the 1860s. Anita Olivier Morrison remembered fondly traveling to Shell Beach with her uncle, Cesaire Olivier, and staying in the large wooden hotels built on pilings near and partially

over Lake Borgne. She particularly enjoyed the bath houses and the local *Islenos*, all of whom knew her Uncle Cesaire and were eager to take her fishing. The little girl, in the 1880s, never forgot seine fishing in a bathing suit with the Campo, Gonzales, Molero, Nunez and Robin families and could not wait to vacation at Lake Borgne in the summer, fall and spring for several weekends. Never had she seen so many fish nor did she ever enjoy fish quite so well as when she could consume those she helped to catch! The simplicity and comfort presented by Shell Beach was a stark contrast to the patrician society she was born into in New Orleans.

After the relocation of former Shell Beach residents to Florissant, New Shell Beach was established. Proctor's Landing development has introduced large, luxury "fishing camps" to the locale. Some of these "camps" cost between \$200,000 and \$600,000. Hurricane Katrina swept many of these "camps" off their foundations out to Lake Borgne and the Gulf of Mexico. Across Bayou Yscloskey is Fort Beauregard Estates with "camps" which are often more elaborate than those in Proctor's Landing.

The oldest surviving structure in Yscloskey is the Louis Molero home, located at 2217 Yscloskey Highway. The old Yscloskey wooden one-room school house was incorporated into this home. Five generations of the Molero family have lived in this house. It was built about 1910 and served, for a period of time, as a boarding house. The catastrophic storm surge generated by Katrina floated the house off its foundation and carried it about 500 feet behind where it had stood originally. Louis Molero, III and his family decided to save the house. They returned it to its original location and raised the structure more than 20 feet above the ground. The Molero family home restoration is a testament to the indomitable sense of community and resilience which characterizes the *Isleno* identity.

On property adjacent to the Molero home on its southern side is a Native American mound between 700 and 1,000 years old. Native Americans began inhabiting these wetlands shortly after they were formed between 2,500 and 3,500 years ago. Hundreds of pre-historic Native American middens and burial mounds were found in the St. Bernard wetlands in the 1930s. Coastal erosion is destroying these vestiges of the earliest human habitation of the land mass we recognize as St. Bernard Parish. Evidence of coastal erosion is obvious throughout the easternmost reaches of St. Bernard. Trembling prairie and salt water marsh occupy area which, less than a century ago, contained arable fields cultivated in sugar cane.

Hopedale, located along banks of Bayou La Loutre facing Hopedale Highway, was originally called *La Chinche* by the *Islenos* because of the gnats which were and still are a great nuisance. Residents in *La Chinche* in the 1840s included Joseph Ruiz, Diego Alonzo and the Chaplain family. Joseph Ruiz established a sugar plantation, constructing a steam powered sugar mill, which continued in operation throughout the 19th century. The sugar mill chimney stood along Bayou La Loutre until it was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Title to these lands appears to have been granted originally to Gilbert du Mottier, the Marquis de Lafayette by the United States Congress in the 1820s.

East of Hopedale, accessible only by water, is Saint Malo, a collection of Native American mounds facing Bayou St. Malo near Lake Borgne. Pre-historic Native Americans constructed the mounds more than 2,000 years ago. They are covered with gigantic live oak trees and yucca plants today. Runaway slaves,

called *marons* [French] or *cimarrones* [Spanish] occupied these mounds and ridges throughout St. Bernard's easternmost wetland areas in the 18th and 19th centuries. Criminal white people joined ranks with the runaway slaves to establish an area notorious for its danger. Saint Malo derives its name from Saint Malo, a runaway slave who had belonged to Antoine Bienvenu and formed a band of runaway slaves that utterly terrorized the *Cote d'Enbas* or Lower Coast, an area along the Mississippi River below New Orleans encompassing modern day St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes.

Filipinos later established a presence at St. Malo in the 18th and 19th centuries. By the early 19th century, Filipinos had built villages at several locations along the shores of Lake Borgne. The first Filipino settlers were sailors who had escaped from Spanish ships. Another large fishing village was located at the mouth of Bayou Bienvenue and Lake Borgne. The Filipino communities were self contained entities, governed by traditions established in the Philippine Islands. Dried shrimp and fish were produced by the Filipinos for sale in New Orleans. Ultimately, there was intermarriage between the Filipino and Canary Islands descendants' community.

Shell Beach – Yscloskey – Alluvial City property traces its title back to Pierre Thomas, a free man of color who served in the Galvez Expedition and was awarded this property, from Lake Borgne to Bayou La Loutre, as a land grant in recompense for his military service by Governor Estevan Miro in 1788. Pierre Denis de La Ronde also received a land grant from the Spanish Government adjoining this grant on its western boundary. The Thomas grant was described in an 1822 act of sale as “running on each side of the said bayou Ysclosy [*sic*], commonly called Belloxi [*sic*]...” This establishes that Biloxi was the popularly used alternate name for Ysclosy, now Yscloskey, obviously a Native American name in origin and not connected to the eastern Europeans who arrived in Louisiana largely in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Stephen Royer Proctor began purchasing what became the Proctor Plantation in 1822. Proctor was a native of South Carolina who descended from French Huguenot settlers who helped to found Charleston. Proctor had become a planter in Georgia before migrating west to Louisiana in the years following the Battle of New Orleans. The Proctors sold land to the United States Government to construct the Tower at Proctor's Landing, now known as Fort Proctor or Fort Beauregard. They also founded the community of Proctor's Landing near the confluence of Bayou Yscloskey and Lake Borgne. This settlement evolved into Shell Beach. One of their children, Stephen Richard Proctor married Elodie Toutant Beauregard, a sibling of Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard. The Proctor Plantation had a lumber mill, brick yard, sugar mill, grist mill, slave hospital, barns, chicken coups, multiple wells for fresh water, slave chapel, several kitchens, and a principal dwelling. The Widow S. R. Proctor is listed in the *1870 United States Census* as owning real estate worth \$50,000 and \$4,000 of personal property. Proctors were one of the wealthiest families in pre and post Civil War St. Bernard Parish. Martial de St. Germain served as an overseer on the Proctor plantation before the Civil War. Many Islenos with surnames such as Molero, Alfonso, Menesses, Nunez, Malarin (Melerine) and Gonzales living in Bencheque worked the Proctor lumber mill.

TOUR STOP NO. 24 HURRICANE KATRINA MEMORIAL, MISSISSIPPI RIVER GULF OUTLET, FORT PROCTOR

The Hurricane Katrina Memorial is located in New Shell Beach where Yscloskey Highway dead ends at the Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet Canal. The monument consists of a large granite tablet with the names of almost 140 St. Bernard Parish residents who lost their lives during Hurricane Katrina and a stainless steel crucifix rising out of the MRGO designed and fabricated by Katrina survivor Vincent LaBruzzo. The site for the monument was selected by former Parish President Henry J. “Junior” Rodriguez because of the deadly flooding caused by Katrina funneling salt water through the MRGO. The MRGO was authorized by Congress in 1956. Construction work began about 1959 and was largely completed in 1963. It is believed that flooding caused by Hurricane Betsy in 1965 was also channeled into urbanized St. Bernard Parish and New Orleans by the MRGO. When finished, the MRGO stretched 76 miles from the Mississippi Sound to the Gulf Intracoastal Canal in eastern New Orleans. The Gagnon family authorized construction of the granite memorial and crucifix on property owned by the Doullut Succession. The monument was completed and dedicated on August 29th, 2006, the first anniversary of Hurricane Katrina striking St. Bernard Parish. Hundreds of current and former St. Bernard residents, public officials and the press attended the dedication ceremony.

Distant across the trembling prairie or marsh is a vista of Fort Proctor rising out of the wetlands. Originally called the Tower at Proctor’s Landing, construction of the fortification began in 1856 and was interrupted by the Civil War. Brick veneer covers walls of poured shell-crete, a predecessor to modern concrete. Rolled iron girders were an important design innovation in Fort Proctor. Granite surfaced gun emplacements were to be placed on the roof of the fortification, which was deemed obsolete after the Civil War and never completed. Pierre Gustave Toutant Beuregard served as superintendent of the construction project for the Corps of Engineers. Fort Proctor was listed in the National register of Historic Places in 1978. Because the British Army evacuated Louisiana through Bayou Yscloskey and Lake Borgne in January 1815, Fort Proctor became the last of three 19th century fortifications constructed in the vicinity of Lake Borgne to guard against potential future invasions. The United States Government built an anti-aircraft training base at Shell Beach during World War II. The facility was named the Shell Beach Anti-Aircraft Training Base and remained in service from 1942 through 1945. More than 100,000 troops from the United States and Russia and other allied countries trained at this facility. Mae Deogracias Nunez remembered witnessing the incongruous spectacle of Russian troops marching along Shell Beach Highway wearing fur coats in July! She also recalled “everybody had red silk curtains and the ladies red silk slippers in those days because the fishermen would retrieve red silk parachutes which had floated targets over Lake Borgne.” *Isleno* thrift knew no bounds! Coastal erosion is rapidly obliterating the final ruined vestiges of this important World War II era installation.

TOUR STOP NO. 25 REGGIO COMMUNITY, HISTORICALLY NAMED BENCHEQUE; WOODLAKE [MONTE LACRE]; DELACROIX ISLAND, ORIGINALLY NAMED LA YSLA

REGGIO COMMUNITY/BENCHEQUE

A community existed along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs and Delacroix Highway which had, later in the 20th century, popularly been called Reggio, immediately adjacent to the southeast boundary line of the Reggio Plantation and extending along the bayou to Woodlake. These geographic boundaries were established in the late 18th century. It was virtually obliterated by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This community is correctly named *Bencheque*, the name still used in legal property descriptions. *Bencheque* is the name of a mountain near Icod de los Vinos in Tenerife. This place name derives from the *Guanches*, the aboriginal inhabitants of Tenerife. This is the only known place name in the United States which derives its origin from the Canary Islands. *Isleno* colonists principally from Tenerife and La Gomera were settled here in 1782 and 1783. The Barataria settlement on the west bank of the Mississippi River had been flooded by the Mississippi River and was severely damaged. The residents of Barataria petitioned the colonial government to be relocated and the vast majority was resettled in *San Bernardo*. A small contingent was sent to *Valenzuela*, the settlement along Bayou Lafourche beginning near Donaldsonville.

The families of Felix Marrero, that settled in present-day Verret and Christoval Luis Molero, who were settled farther down Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs, were among the families relocated to *San Bernardo*, who arrived there November 1st, 1782 on All Saints Day. They were joined by other families in 1783 from Tenerife and La Gomera the following year in 1783. Juan de Acosta, Diego Luis Alfonso, Francisco Alfonso, Salvador Gonzales, Antonio Menesses and Antonio de Armas were among the families who were settled in what was first officially called the *Quinto Poblacion* or Fifth Settlement. Estevan Nunez de Villavicencio and his mother, the Widow Josefa Suarez Nunez, were relocated to *San Bernardo* from Galvez-town about this time. Estevan Nunez is the progenitor of the Nunez family in St. Bernard Parish. The *Islenos* pursued farming in this settlement as in the remainder of the original *Poblacion de San Bernardo*. The *Isleno* farmers of Bencheque became particularly renowned for cultivating garlic, a tradition which persisted well into the 20th century under the stewardship of Leon Nunez, Alec Nunez and other farmers. The *Islenos* from Tenerife also brought with them the tradition of domesticating oxen for use as drayage and working farm livestock. Horses were in short supply in Tenerife and the other islands belonging to the Canarian archipelago, hence the tradition of using oxen.

Beautiful wooded areas, *cheniers* or oak tree covered ridges remaining from the Mississippi River and cypress swamps adjoined *Bencheque* in the 18th and 19th centuries. The *Islenos* also raised poultry and livestock, including swine and goats. A series of severe hurricanes in the 19th and 20th centuries began to systematically compromise the wetland areas in the vicinity. *Islenos* from *Bencheque*, in addition to those Canary Islands descendants who were displaced from the sugar plantations following the Civil War, began an outward migration first to Delacroix Island, then to Shell Beach (Proctorville or Proctor's Landing), *El Canal* (Violet), Yscloskey, Alluvial City and *La Chinche* (Hopedale). *Benchequanos* not only farmed, but also helped to establish hunting, trapping of fur-bearing animals and moss gathering as successful subsistence livelihoods which were pursued by the *Islenos* particularly after the Civil War.

WOODLAKE

Woodlake, alternately known in French as *Bois du Lac* and in the *Isleno* Spanish dialect as *Monte Lacre* forms the easternmost extremity of lands along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs granted to Canary Islands colonists. *Monte* in Spanish means a forest or wooded area and *lacre* is a Hispanized version of the French *lac*. There were no lakes or *lagos* in the Canaries, hence the adaptation of the French word for lake. The “wooded” areas which once surrounded Wood Lake have been destroyed by coastal erosion. Only a tiny tongue of land remains hugging each side of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs at Woodlake. Trembling prairie or open water lies behind the miniscule ridge of land particularly since Katrina. Isleno colonists were briefly joined by Acadian colonists here at Woodlake. The Acadians sold early in the 1790s to sugar planters who began purchasing land grants for consolidation into larger estates. Manuel Solis, in conjunction with his partner, Antonio Mendez, granulated sugar at their Woodlake plantation in 1787, thus founding the sugar industry in Louisiana.

Manuel Solis was identified as an *Isleno* by Pierre Clement de Laussat in his 1803 memoir:

“M. de Miro [Spanish Governor Esteban Miro] received some islanders [Canary Islanders] sent by Spain in 1783. They brought plantings of sugarcane which they up picked in Havana on the way. They were peasants given to small farm cultivation. Solis, one of their number, observed that war had priced tafia [a crude rum or whiskey made from sugarcane] prohibitively in New Orleans, and he used the product of his cane to manufacture some, which he sold for fifty to sixty piastres-fortes. However, in peacetime, his manufacturing fell off...”

The Solis family originated in the Iberian Peninsula and migrated to the Caribbean region sometime in the 17th or 18th centuries. Manuel Solis lived in Cuba and, in some accounts, Santo Domingo, before coming permanently to reside in Louisiana. His descendants married into the Estopinal and Perez families, in addition to many other families residing below New Orleans in the Mississippi River region. The Solis House stood, in a condition of disrepair, until the 1970s when it was burned. The building was raised four to five feet above ground and was of *bousillage* or mud-and-moss between posts construction. It had a gabled roof and had evolved into an important landmark.

Adjoining the Solis Plantation was the sugar plantation of Estevan Nunez de Villavicencio, born in Santa Cruz de Tenerife in 1771. Nunez had come to Louisiana with his parents, Manuel Nunez de Villavicencio and Josefa Suarez and siblings aboard the *Santissimo Sacramento* in 1778. This vessel carried the first Canarian colonists to Louisiana. They were settled in Galveztown, the post established on the border between British West Florida and Louisiana at the confluence of Bayou Manchac and the Amite River. This community was plagued by flooding caused by the Mississippi River and epidemics. The majority of Galveztown colonists were relocated to Baton Rouge where they founded Spanish Town. Estevan Nunez and his mother had relocated to the *Poblacion de San Bernardo* by 1790. Nunez married Sebastiana Delgado and fathered a family of eleven children, eight sons and three daughters. By the date of his death in 1828, he was in possession of this tract. He had formed a partnership with his sons earlier in the 1820s. The plantation was described in the inventory as having 13 arpents frontage on each bank of Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs by 40 arpents in depth, bounded by the property of Amedee

Reggio above (formerly Solis) and the Succession of Pedro Hernandez, worked as a sugar plantation. Buildings included a principal dwelling house [*maison principale*], another smaller dwelling, a barn, a kitchen, chicken coup and Negro cabins. Approximately 18 arpents was planted in sugarcane mixed with some corn. The appraisers listed 17 adult and child slaves who worked the plantation. Listed assets of the succession amounted to \$10,687. The Nunez Succession also owned land on the opposite side of the Pedro Hernandez tract. Descendants of Estevan Nunez and Sebastiana Delgado include Esteve E. Nunez, sheriff of St. Bernard Parish from 1879 until his death in 1909 and former State Senator Samuel B. Nunez who served several terms as president of the Senate of Louisiana in the 1980s and 1990s. Esteve or "E.E." Nunez served longer in the office of sheriff of St. Bernard Parish than any of his predecessors or successors.

Felix Marrero owned another tract, adjacent on the upper bayou side to the Nunez property, which he also worked as a sugar plantation. The neighboring property on the lower bayou side was Miguel Fischer d'Avigny. This property had belonged to Lorenzo Wiltz in 1792 who consolidated, by purchase from *Isleno* colonists, several land grants into a sugar plantation. Marrero was born in Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the 1760s and settled in the *Poblacion de San Bernardo*. He and his brother, Vizente, became the progenitors of the Marrero family in Louisiana. The Marrero plantation at Woodlake also had a dwelling house and outbuildings including slave cabins. Felix Marrero served on the Board of Wardens of St. Bernard Catholic Church and delivered an important deposition which was part of a body of testimony used to have the United States Congress confirm ownership of property throughout Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. Marrero's descendants included Antonio Marrero who was St. Bernard Parish's delegate to the Louisiana Secession Convention of 1861 and Louis Marrero, who left St. Bernard during Reconstruction to settle in Jefferson Parish. Marrero became a long term sheriff of Jefferson Parish and founded the west bank community of Marrero. Still another descendant of Felix Marrero, Jack Antonio Stephens, served 28 years as sheriff of St. Bernard Parish from 1984 to 2012.

DELACROIX ISLAND

Delacroix Island is the easternmost hamlet located along Delacroix Highway fronting Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs in St. Bernard Parish. Delacroix's westernmost boundary historically adjoins Woodlake and extends to *El fin el Mundo*. Delacroix Highway dead-ends in the place known as *El fin el Mundo* or The End of the World, where a stream connects Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs to lagoons adjoining Reggio, Florissant and Alluvial City. The place name *La Ysla* (The Island) first appears in New Orleans notarial records from the 1790s. The Island later had the name Delacroix appended to it from the surname of a family which owned the property for much of the 19th century. Beginning in the 1840s, *Isleno* families of hunters and moss gatherers began to live at Delacroix. The hamlet was then surrounded by *cheniers* or ridges covered with live oak trees, cypress swamps and mounds built by prehistoric Native Americans. The first structures were built of wooden planks covered and roofed with palmettos or round huts built of mud and palmetto leaves. This was the one of the most remote areas of St. Bernard Parish, and unlike Alluvial City, Yscloskey and Shell Beach, only accessible by a mud road or water. Many an elderly *Islero* or *Isledo* [*sic, Isleno* dialect] recalled walking with his or her mother or grandmother to Reggio

Plantation to catch the Shell Beach train to New Orleans prior to World War I. This remoteness nurtured an environment which clung to the ancient Spanish cultural identity of the original colonists from the Canaries.

Its' charming wooden shotgun cottages evolved in the early 20th century as trapping and commercial fishing became important economically not only to the region and state, but nationally as well. Juan Rubert (Roberts), a native of Malgrate on the Mediterranean Coast of Catalunya in Spain is generally accredited with having built the first wooden trawl sloops in St. Bernard Parish in the 1850s. After the Civil War, he owned several sloops with which he fished the waters in the vicinity of the Island. After 1915, the residents of Delacroix widened and deepened Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs, enjoyed the benefit of a public elementary school, tiny grocery stores and a mission chapel. Delacroix Island also had barrooms and dance halls where entire families recreated. Nevertheless, the community remained without running water, residential telephone service, electrical and gas services until the mid-20th century.

Pauline Stephanie Esnould de Livaudais, the widow of Daniel Hypolite du Suau, Comtesse de La Croix, donated property at Delacroix Island in 1893 for the establishment of a mission chapel to St. Bernard Catholic Church, a community school and cemetery. She was a granddaughter of Pierre Phillippe de Marigny who was born in New Orleans, but lived most of her adult life and died in Paris, France. Her husband, Hypolite, tragically drowned during a fishing expedition at Delacroix Island in 1875. The Comtesse de La Croix's husband had inherited the property from his father, Francois du Suau de La Croix. Dusau or du Suau de La Croix was born in 1771 in the French colony of St. Domingue, today known as Haiti. His family originated in the French Alps where the Chateau de La Croix still stands, owned by the descendants of this family. St. Domingue was the wealthiest French colony in the Americas because of the production of sugar and coffee. A slavery based society ultimately destroyed the French colonial presence, causing Francois Dusau de La Croix to settle in New Orleans in 1793. Dusau de La Croix purchased a plantation on the west bank of the Mississippi River above Jesuit Bend (Lower Coast Algiers) and became a sugar planter. His role, with Gabriel Villere, in alerting General Jackson to the British invasion of St. Bernard was pivotal to the ultimate American victory. He became an intimate friend of the flamboyant Irish entrepreneur, Daniel Clark, who died in 1813. Dusau became a testamentary executor of the Clark Succession and purchased the property at *La Ysla* along Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs shortly thereafter. For a short period, the plantation was cultivated in sugar cane. As Dusau became more involved in the business world, serving as president of the Louisiana State Bank, a director of the Planters' Bank of Louisiana and president of the State Insurance Company, the Terre-aux-Boeufs plantation became a fallow asset. As Canary Islander descendants began to settle there in the 1840s and 1850s, Dusau allowed it to transpire. This property and Dusau had personally become involved in litigation filed by Myra Clark Gaines in the 1840s. The Gaines litigation plagued Dusau at the time of his death in 1857. The *Islenos* were finally sent into possession of the lands they had inhabited uninterruptedly by the Comtesse du Suau de La Croix and Myra Clark Gaines in the 1880s and 1890s.

Daniel Clark had acquired the property in the early 19th century. The property was originally awarded as a land grant to Miguel Fischer d'Avigny by Governor Esteban Miro in 1788. The plantation extended 10 arpents fronting Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs on each side of the bayou. Delacroix became a bastion of the

Spanish linguistic and cultural presence in Louisiana because of a constant migration of Spanish settlers who settled there in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These immigrants were attracted to the Island because of the established presence of the Canarian Descendants' Community. Two native sons of Delacroix Island particularly distinguished themselves in this community. Melvyn J. Perez served as a judge in the 34th Judicial District in St. Bernard Parish. Fluent in both his native Spanish and English, Melvyn became an advocate for the people of St. Bernard. Irvan J. Perez, Melvyn's cousin, became renowned nationally and internationally as folk artist and a person committed to the preservation of the heritage and culture of the *Islenos* of St. Bernard. His interest in *decimas*, archaic folk ballads which recorded much of the *Isleno* identity, brought him the opportunity to perform them at Carnegie Hall as well as in the Canary Islands.

EPILOGUE

St. Bernard Parish has faced many challenges during its existence. It was colonized in order to protect New Orleans and Louisiana from British colonial expansion. The people of St. Bernard Parish, particularly the *Islenos*, endured the brunt of the British invasion of Louisiana in 1814 which culminated in the Battle of New Orleans January 8th, 1815. The Battle of New Orleans, which took place in what is today St. Bernard Parish, was a determining factor in the destiny of the United States. The British and American armed forces destroyed St. Bernard, forever changing its face. Floods of the Mississippi River beginning in 1788, hurricanes, the Civil War, Reconstruction, political upheavals and economic depressions have all detrimentally affected St. Bernard. Still, after more than two centuries, St. Bernard Parish survives to celebrate a new day.

The *Islenos'* love of St. Bernard, which they founded in the late 18th century, is a pivotal element in this diverse local history which is unsurpassed and unparalleled. French indigo planters and African slaves joined the Native Americans in populating this parish in the early 18th century. Runaway slaves, Filipino fishermen and dangerous criminals inhabited the most remote wetland areas of St. Bernard in the 18th and 19th centuries, juxtaposed against the wealth and comparative elegance, for time and place, of indigo and sugar planters residing along the Mississippi River and Bayou Terre-aux-Boeufs. *Emigres* fleeing the slave revolutions in St. Domingue, today Haiti, settled throughout St. Bernard in the 19th century. Free people of color contributed to the economy and development of St. Bernard. The Mexican Gulf Railroad, in the 1830s, became one of the earliest rail lines in the South. The birth of the sugar industry in Louisiana and several evolutionary innovations in the development of sugar cane cultivation and processing occurred in St. Bernard Parish. Its 20th century history was distinguished by its sons and daughters participating in two world war efforts. Prohibition era boot-legging and gambling casinos became important to the economic vitality of St. Bernard in the 1920s and 1930s, employing thousands of parish residents. Large industrial plants and refineries replaced gaming, agriculture and commercial fishing as principal employers in the middle 20th century. Throughout this constant change and upheaval, St. Bernard Parish has remained steadfast.

This work is designed to relate the history of St. Bernard Parish to existing, physical landmarks and historic places throughout the parish. It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive, much less definitive, history of St. Bernard. That history is still in the making and will be forthcoming.

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