

The Battle for New Orleans
at
Chalmette Battlefield

New Orleans in 1814-1815

- Thriving city on the Mississippi River
- Mississippi controlled trade up and down the river
- Residents were a mixture of Creoles, Freemen of Color, Military Men and Indians who lived nearby
- Cultural Center of the Deep South

War on Lake Borgne

- British were on ships on Lake Borgne down river from New Orleans.
- The *Louisiana* was attacked on December 14, 1814 and the British defeated the American sailors.
- The British felt secure that they could take New Orleans without much of a fight.

English Turn

- A curve in the Mississippi River below New Orleans in what is now St. Bernard Parish.
- British encountered settlers in this area who told them that there was a great American fleet just a little farther down river.
- British hesitated and decided to wait to sail any further towards the city.
- Their first fatal mistake.

Weather Conditions

- The weather was very cold and fog was a determining factor in both the British and American strategies.
- Jackson said, “Wait until we look them in their eyes.” (as the song says)
- Pakenham said, “This will be a 15 minute battle. They are not trained military men.”

The Ursuline Nuns

- In their convent on Chartres Street in the city of New Orleans, the Ursuline nuns made a promise to the Mother of Jesus in her persona of Our Lady of Prompt Succor. They promised if General Jackson (who was not Catholic) defeated the British, they would have a Mass celebrated every year on the anniversary of the victory. They prayed the entire night.

The Citizens of New Orleans

- The Women and children made bandages that they felt would be needed in what they felt would be a long battle.
- They also prayed in their homes as the Ursuline nuns were praying in their convent.
- (Note: The Ursuline nuns have kept a daily journal since first coming to New Orleans in 1785.

The British Regiment

- It is said that the British Regiment that fought on the plains of Chalmette usually wore kilts when they went into battle. They did not wear their kilts in this battle because they had heard about the mosquitoes and other “critters.” They have never gone to battle again with their kilts.
- Usually there are fewer mosquitoes when it is cold.

The Pirate Jean Lafitte

- Jean Lafitte had been a fixture in Louisiana and the New Orleans/Barataria area for some time before this battle.
- It is said he courted the daughter of the LA American Governor William C.C. Claiborne.
- We do know that the ladies purchased “bounty” or “goods” from Lafitte and his brother Dominique You (probably stolen)

Jean Lafitte (continued)

- Lafitte was approached by a British representative and offered a significant amount of money to give the British information on the American forces and their plans.
- We do not know why he did not take the bribe but it may be due to the love for Governor Claiborne's daughter.

Jean Lafitte (continued)

- Jean Lafitte went to Governor Claiborne with the information that the British were going to attack New Orleans and that they were coming up the Mississippi River.
- Claiborne informed General Andrew Jackson and Jackson began gathering a group of men from the area – some gentlemen planters who had never fought before but wanted to protect their land and their business interest.

General Andrew Jackson

- The group also consisted of Freemen of Color, Indians, Kentucky, and Tennessee militia men and men who had fought on the plains as well as fighting wild animals. Many of them had no formal training in war but were sharpshooters who could kill a Grizzly from behind a tree at 500 yards. This would help General Jackson's forces when the battle took place. The U.S. Marines were also on that battlefield.

Was there a connection?

- It was a well known fact at the time of the battle that Governor Claiborne, Jean Lafitte, and Edward Livingston, a local businessman, did not have any love for each other. However, all three of them would come together to act as a single unit for the sake of Louisiana and the Queen City of the South.
- Oddly, there was only one reason why they worked together.

Johnny Horton's Song

- I believe that all of you have the words to the famous “Battle of New Orleans” song that Johnny Horton recorded and basically gives an overview of what happened on the plains of Chalmette that was the plantation of Ignace deLino de Chalmette. Much of his property was devastated during the battle. The Malus-Beauregard Home that is on the property now was not there at the time of the battle.

Deaths during the Battle

- Amazingly, the American forces only suffered a few deaths where as the British forces suffered massive losses, including their General Pakenham, who was killed on the field and they transported to the plantation of Pierre Denys delaRonde, whose ruins still stand in the middle of a major highway, where he was cut into pieces and placed in a barrel, pickled and transported back to England.

Significance of the Battle

- Because of the victory at Chalmette over the forces of the greatest country of that time, the young United States of America was now viewed as a world power and from 1815 until the present day Great Britain and the United States of America have been at peace. We look forward to January 8, 2015, the Bicentennial of the Battle for New Orleans at Chalmette.