

CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

A Cultural Journey

Through time, residents of this region created a way of life dependent on the land, the river, and each other...

The 18th Century

European soldiers and citizens, and both free and enslaved Africans and American Indians, forged new lives along the French and Spanish colonial border in the New World. American Indian trade first drew Europeans to the region. French and Spanish settlements were strategically placed along water and overland trade routes that extended in all directions. Eventually, settlers built plantations along the banks of Red River and imported more enslaved Africans to work the fertile land. In this setting, Louisiana's complex Creole culture was born.

The 19th Century

The United States acquired the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, opening the region to American immigrants and adding new traditions to the mix of cultures found along Cane River. Cotton agriculture produced unprecedented prosperity for the families that owned the region's plantations. The end of the Civil War brought freedom to thousands of enslaved people, giving them a glimpse of hope for the future. Agriculture remained the dominant livelihood. Sharecropping and tenant farming replaced slave labor, but the basic structure of the plantation system changed little. Social upheaval and economic depression were common for all classes and cultures in the tumultuous years following the war. Despite difficulties, the people and traditions of this region persevered.

The 20th Century

The Great Depression and "Jim Crow" segregation brought economic and social hardship to the residents of the Cane River region. By mid-century, farm machinery transformed the plantation system forever, and former field laborers left their rural homes to seek urban jobs. In the midst of change, residents of the region were inspired to protect elements of the past. Historic preservation and environmental conservation found enthusiastic voices, especially among the women who became the earliest stewards of the region's resources. Cane River people's culture and creativity were celebrated in literature, film, and the arts. Finally, in the last decade of the 20th century, the Cane River region emerged as a nationally renowned heritage tourism destination.

Today

Immerse yourself in the Cane River region's rich history and vibrant living traditions. Take a leisurely drive along the river roads. Explore historic buildings and hike local trails. Spend a night or two relaxing in a bed and breakfast. Shop and dine in the historic heart of Natchitoches. Take a cultural journey...

Within Cane River National Heritage Area, 300 years of history are etched on a rural landscape of plantations, homes, and churches. From colonial exploration and settlement, through the rise and fall of cotton as king, to the emergence of a nationally renowned heritage tourism destination, the Cane River region has an American story to tell.

Architectural Heritage

From modest to high-style, the Cane River region boasts an array of historic properties recognized for social significance as well as architectural character. The region includes six National Historic Landmarks and the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District. Along Cane River Lake, Creole plantations dot the landscape. In Natchitoches, Creole townhouses sit among Queen Anne and Victorian residences, shotgun homes, and 20th-century bungalows.



Creative Women

For three centuries, Cane River women have courageously pushed aside society's limitations. Marie Thérèse Coincoin, a former slave, owned and managed her own plantation. Kate Chopin wrote 19th century fiction on issues about which women dared not speak. Cammie Henry established an artist colony, and her friend Caroline Dormon saved Louisiana's longleaf pines. Clementine Hunter painted memories of a world she saw changing swiftly. Be inspired to follow in their footsteps.



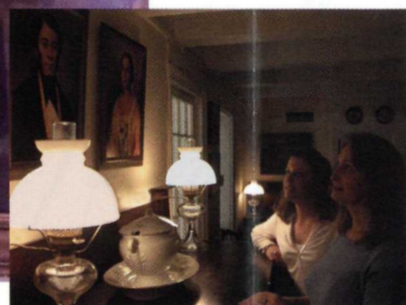
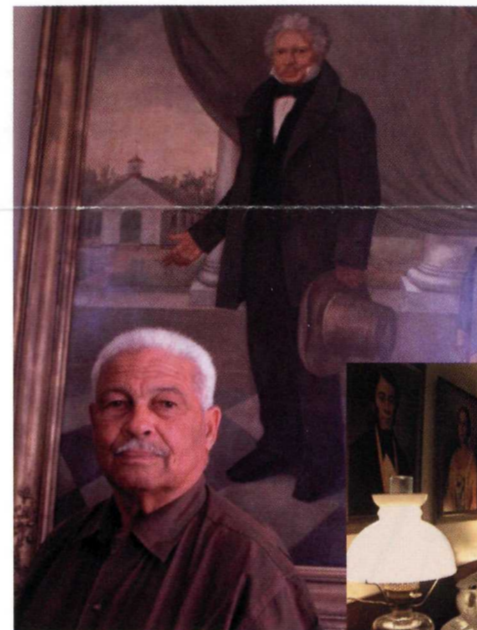
COURTESY OF CAMMIE G. HENRY RESEARCH CENTER, NSU



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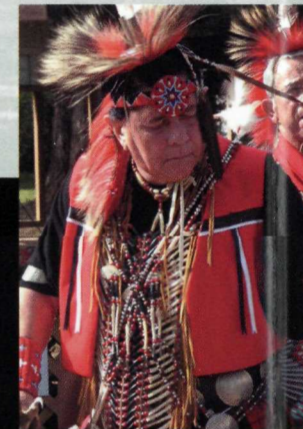


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Community Celebrations

Spring. Summer. Fall. Winter. Enjoy fantastic festivals and historic house tours in every season of the year. Local festivals highlight Louisiana's culture, music, food, flowers, and traditional and contemporary arts and crafts. Annual house tours give you a glimpse of the region's finest homes of the past and present. Wrap up the year at the famous Natchitoches Christmas Festival, a holiday lights extravaganza held annually since 1926.



SONNY CARTER

Cane River Creoles

The Isle Brevelle community has been the home and heart of Louisiana's Cane River Creoles since the late 1700s. This community provides the region with stories of family, community, and cultural renaissance. In places like the Badin-Roque House, Melrose Plantation, and St. Augustine Catholic Church and Cemetery, you will gain a new appreciation of the complexity of culture in our nation.



COURTESY OF CREOLE HERITAGE CENTER, NSU

Exploring the Outdoors

Hiking. Fishing. Stargazing. Birding. From the region's many waterways to Louisiana's pine uplands and darkest star-filled skies, it is easy to find the right outdoor experience for every individual or family. Kisatchie National Forest, the Red River National Wildlife Refuge, Briarwood Nature Preserve, and Cane River Lake are only a few of the places you might want to explore.



SONNY CARTER



Colonial and Military History

The Cane River region holds the stories of French and Spanish colonial trade and settlement, our nation's Westward expansion, the Civil War's devastating Red River campaign, and U.S. Army training for engagement in World War II. Many remnants of these activities are still visible on the Cane River landscape.



COURTESY OF THE TENNARIS FAMILY

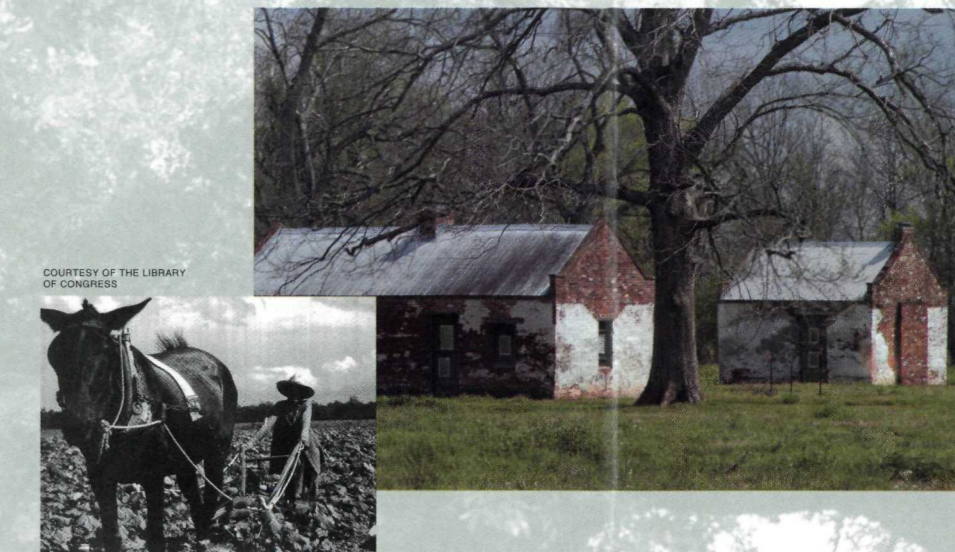
Information

For information about Cane River National Heritage Area please visit www.caneriverheritage.org or www.nps.gov/crha

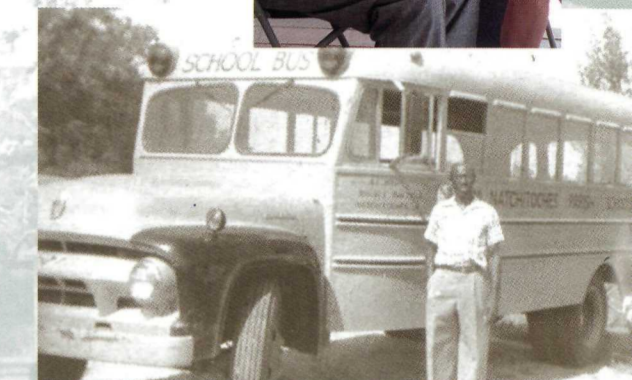
For tourist information please call 1-800-259-1714 or visit www.natchitoches.net

Plantation History

Plantation agriculture shaped the economy and the lives of generations of people in the Cane River region. Its impact is visible across the landscape. Historic plantation homes and outbuildings set the scene for the story of working plantations from the 18th to the 21st centuries. The enslavement of Africans and later practices such as tenant farming and sharecropping are part of this story. So, too, are the long histories of the families who owned the plantations.



COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



COURTESY OF THE WADE FAMILY

The Whole Story

History is not always pleasant to recount. As we build our present, we should be mindful of our past... Injustice is part of history, but so are stories of perseverance, hope, community, and success. This area's national park, three state parks, and privately owned historic sites depict aspects of the difficult times that shaped this place. Explore the real America in the Cane River region.

MAP GUIDE

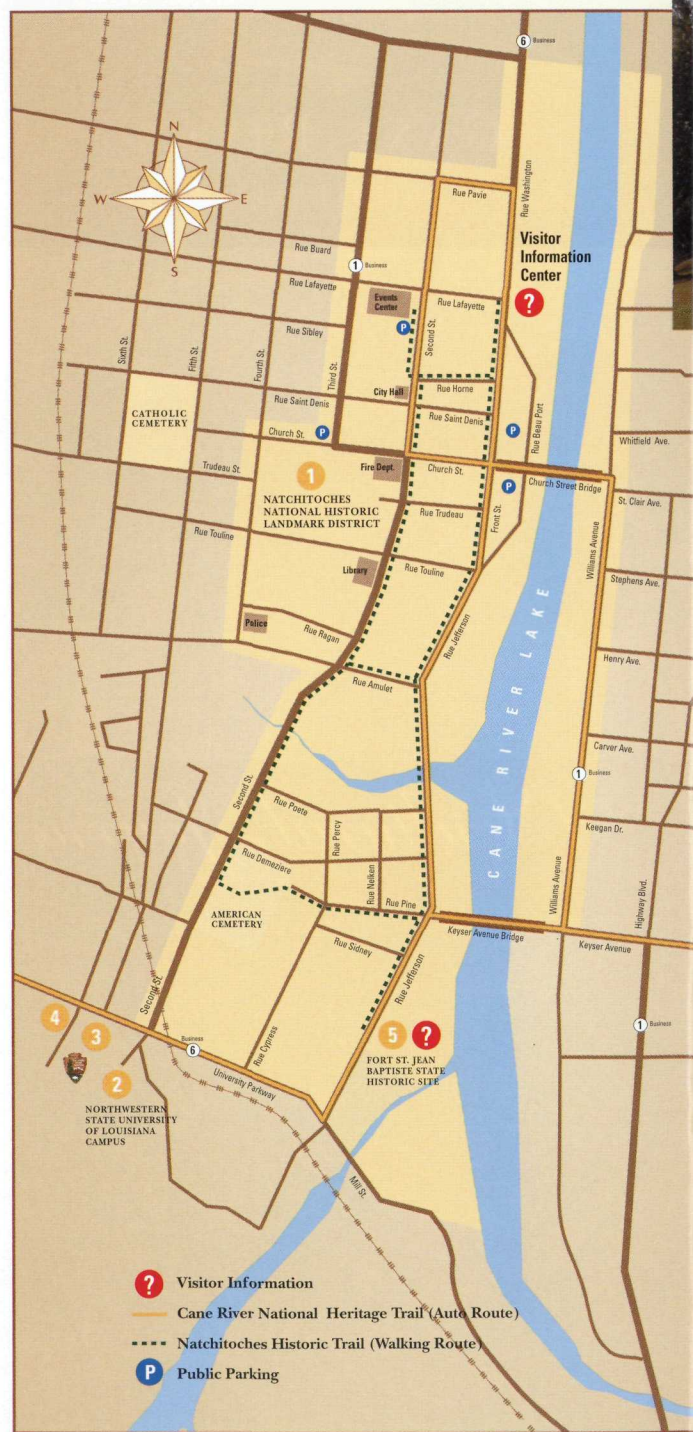
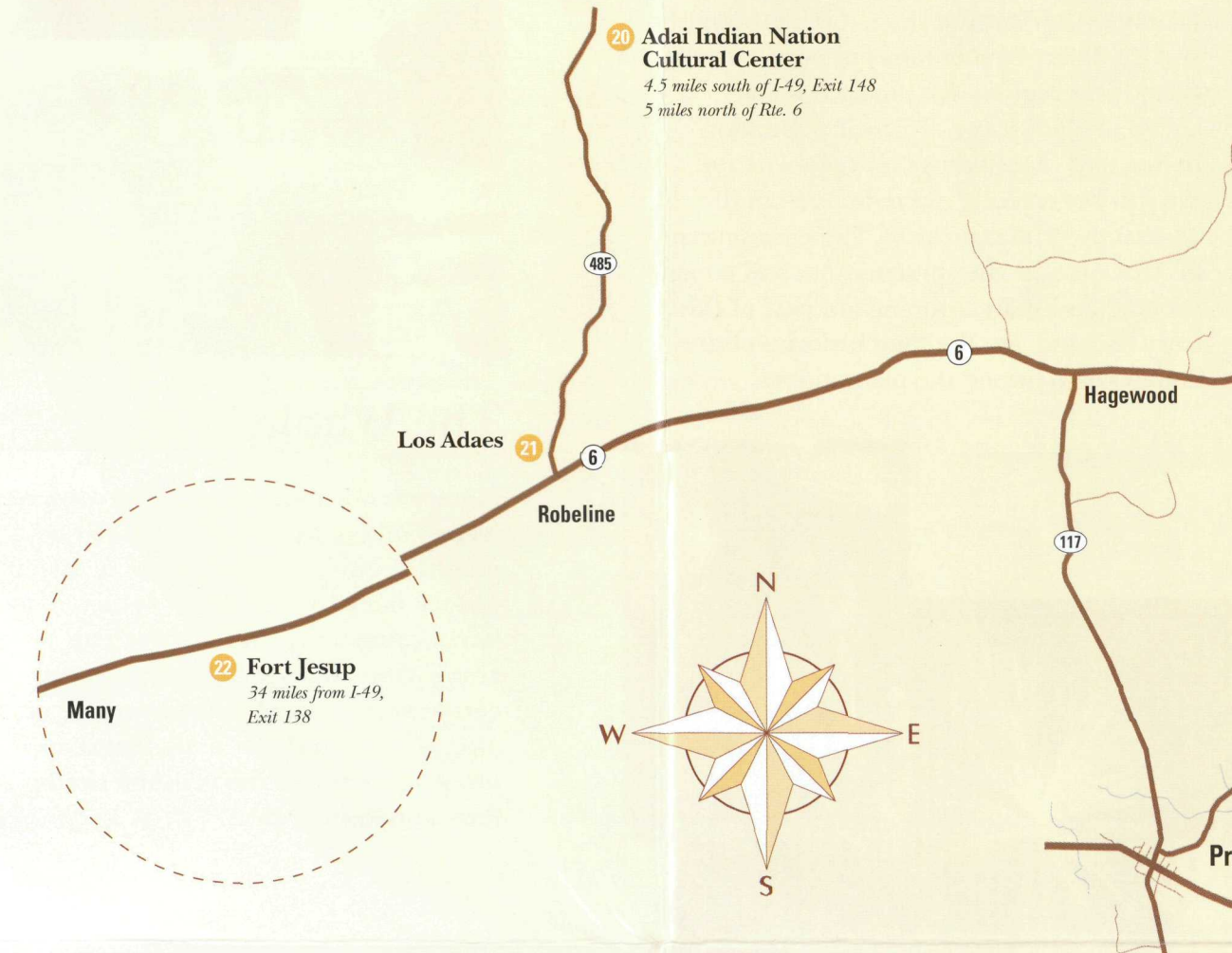


A Cultural Journey

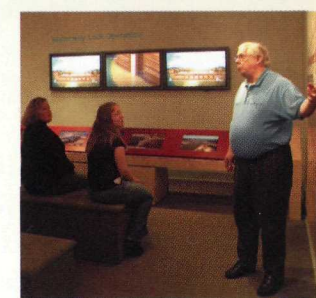
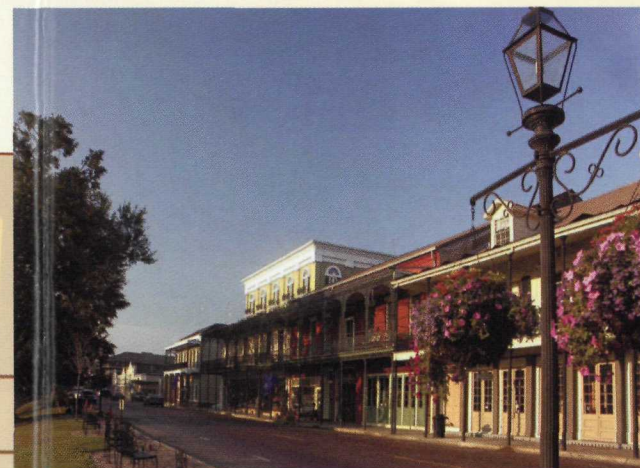


CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Experience the stories of this region as you travel the Cane River National Heritage Trail. The highways and byways of the Cane River region will engage you whether your interest is in historic plantations, military history, Creole culture and cuisine, or the scenic beauty of the area's lakes, rivers, and forests.



- 1 Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District**
Natchitoches, the oldest permanent settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory, was established as a French trade outpost in 1714. The National Historic Landmark District, which fronts Cane River Lake, includes many historic homes, churches, and commercial structures.
- 2 Northwestern State University of Louisiana**
- 3 National Center for Preservation Technology and Training**
- 4 Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts**



- 5 Fort St. Jean Baptist State Historic Site**
The fort tells the stories of 18th-century French colonial life. Re-enactors guide tours through a replica of the French fort, and a visitor center recounts the area's colonial history. Open daily, admission charged.
- 6 Grand Ecore Visitor Center**
The facility, overlooking beautiful Red River, features exhibits on the natural and cultural history of the region. The site contains remnants of Civil War earthworks. Open daily.
- 7 Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery**
The facility sits on the site of a historic Caddo village. The hatchery raises sport and endangered species. An aquarium includes native aquatic species and historic displays. Open daily.



8 Oaklawn Plantation
National Register of Historic Places
Oaklawn's picturesque main house, constructed in the 1830s, sits at the head of the third longest oak allée in Louisiana. Privately owned.



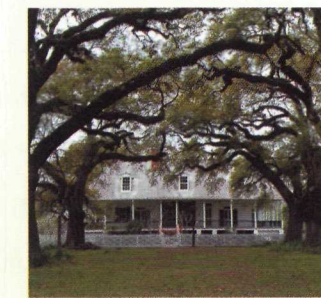
9 Cherokee Plantation
National Register of Historic Places
The 1830s plantation is named for the Cherokee roses at its front gate. The elegant main house is typical of early Louisiana plantations. Privately owned.



10 Beau Fort Plantation
National Register of Historic Places
Built in the early 19th century, Beau Fort reflects Creole construction techniques as well as the lifestyles of early French planters. Privately owned.



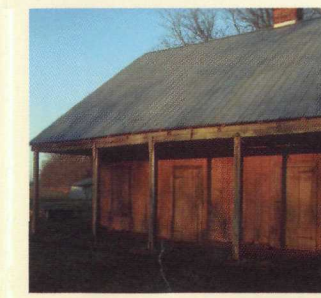
11 St. Charles Chapel
The chapel is a mission church to St. Augustine Catholic Church. It represents the only known instance in the United States of a white mission congregation sponsored by a church whose members were primarily people of color.



12 Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Oakland Unit
National Historic Landmark
Oakland is the most complete Creole plantation in the South. The historic agricultural landscape holds the main house, the plantation store, and 27 additional outbuildings. Together these resources tell the story of a plantation from 1785 to 1960. Open daily.



13 Melrose Plantation
National Historic Landmark
This legendary plantation was established by a family of "gens de couleur libre" (free people of color) around the time of the Louisiana Purchase. A 20th-century artist colony, Melrose was also the catalyst for Clementine Hunter. Open daily, admission charged.



14 Badin-Roque House
National Register of Historic Places
This bousillage house offers a view of Cane River Creole frontier life. It is one of a handful of structures remaining in the U.S. built in the style known as *poteaux en terre* (posts in the ground). Tours by appointment.



15 St. Augustine Catholic Church and Cemetery
Founded in 1803, St. Augustine is the first Roman Catholic church established by and for people of color in the U.S. This is the third church on the site. Cane River Creole patriarch Augustin Metoyer established the church. His portrait hangs inside.



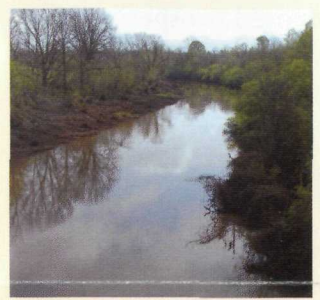
16 Magnolia Plantation Home
National Historic Landmark
The plantation house is the area's largest. The original house was constructed in the 1830s, burned by the Union Army in 1864 and rebuilt in the 1890s. Open daily, admission charged.



17 Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Magnolia Unit
National Historic Landmark
The plantation outbuildings comprise the agricultural and industrial portion of an extensive Creole cotton plantation. The plantation store, the quarters, the overseer's house, the blacksmith shop, and the cotton press tell the stories of the working life of a plantation. Open daily.



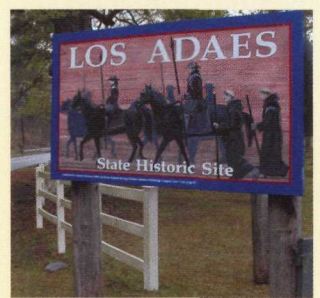
18 Kate Chopin House
National Historic Landmark
This Creole cottage was the home of Kate Chopin, 19th-century feminist author. The property also includes the Bayou Folk Museum, with a blacksmith shop and an early doctor's office. Open daily, admission charged.



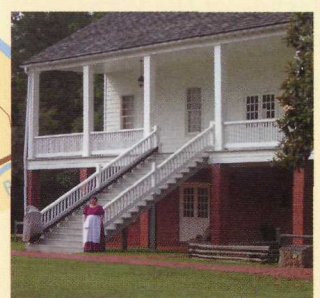
19 Monette's Ferry
The Civil War battle of Monette's Ferry, Red River Campaign, was fought here in April of 1864. Union troops pushed through Confederate lines on their retreat south to Alexandria.



20 Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center
The history of the Adai Indians is linked with Spanish settlement in this region. The center features exhibits on historic and contemporary American Indian culture, dance performances, and a live buffalo herd. Open daily, admission charged.



21 Los Adaes
State Historic Site
National Historic Landmark
This is the site of an 18th-century Spanish mission and presidio. Built in an effort to cease French expansion, it served as the capital of Spanish Texas for over 50 years. Open daily.



22 Fort Jesup
State Historic Site
National Historic Landmark
Zachary Taylor was the first commander of Fort Jesup, the American fort built in 1822. The fort was a gateway for Westward expansion and the staging ground for U.S. troops in the U.S.-Mexican War. Open daily, admission charged.

Scale 0 1 2 Miles