

Chalmette

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK • LOUISIANA

ADMINISTRATION

Chalmette National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Box 429, Arabi, LA 70032, is in immediate charge.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has basic responsibilities for water, fish, wildlife, mineral, land, park, and recreational resources. Indian and Territorial affairs are other major concerns of America's "Department of Natural Resources." The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Gen. Andrew Jackson's stunning victory over crack British troops at Chalmette plantation on January 8, 1815, was the greatest land victory of the War of 1812. Commonly called the Battle of New Orleans—the last battle of the last war between England and the United States—it preserved America's claim to the Louisiana Territory, prevented the Mississippi River from becoming America's fixed western boundary, and restored American military pride. It also made Jackson a national hero.

In early December 1814 a British force of 7,500 veteran soldiers under Gen. Sir Edward Pakenham marched overland from Lake Borgne to attack New Orleans, the key to the trans-Appalachian region. This was the last of three major offensives launched against the United States in 1814. The previous two—one on Lake Champlain, the other in Chesapeake Bay—had failed, leaving the capture of the important gulf coast city Britain's main hope for exacting a favorable peace settlement from the Americans. By controlling the mouth of the Mississippi River, England could seriously threaten the economic well-being of the entire Mississippi Valley and hamper U.S. westward expansion.

On December 23, when the British columns were within 7 miles of the city, General Jackson's militia halted their advance in a fierce night attack that caught the British off guard. Falling

back to Chalmette plantation, Jackson threw up a defensive line along the banks of the dry, narrow Rodriguez Canal. Pakenham tried unsuccessfully to dislodge the Americans with artillery. On January 8, 1815, the British commander sent 5,400 seasoned soldiers head-on against the American line, but the withering fire from Jackson's artillery and infantry tore through their ranks with devastating effect. Two other assaults also failed. In less than 30 minutes the British suffered 2,000 casualties; the American loss was 13. The defense of New Orleans was over, and Jackson's victory assured the future of Louisiana.

ABOUT YOUR VISIT

Chalmette National Historical Park is in St. Bernard Parish on the east bank of the Mississippi River, 6 miles from the heart of New Orleans. From Canal Street follow the main thoroughfare that begins at Rampart Street and merges into St. Claude Avenue, then into St. Bernard Highway, which passes directly in front of the park.

The visitor center, located in the Beauregard House, contains exhibits and an audio-visual program explaining the importance of Louisiana and the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The American Line. On the left of the road between the park entrance and the monument lies a restored section of the American defense line, where Andrew Jackson's 4,000 militia stood against British General Pakenham's 5,400 seasoned soldiers. In 1815, the line was about 1 mile long, with its right anchored to the Mississippi River and its left resting on an impassable swamp. It was built of fence rails, posts, wooden kegs, and mud. The futile British attacks against this position cost them 2,000 casualties, including Pakenham himself, and reduced their Louisiana campaign to a heart-rending test of human endurance and bitter retreat.

The Beauregard House. This beautiful plantation home of the 1830-50 period is a remarkable example of French-Louisiana architecture. Quiet and serene, its solitary splendor somehow captures the hospitable warmth and inner glow characteristic of the culture that produced it. It has been restored as the park visitor center.

The National Cemetery. Chalmette National Cemetery was established in May 1864, on land where, in 1815, the British formed for their attack on the American position. The first people buried here were men who died in the many Civil War hospitals located in this area. Veterans of the Spanish-American War and World Wars I and II, and Vietnam soldiers killed in action, are also buried here. Interestingly, only four American veterans of the War of 1812 have been reinterred at Chalmette. The single British burial is associated with World War II.

CHALMETTE TODAY

Chalmette was designated a national historical park on August 10, 1939. The 100-foot monument commemorating the Battle of New Orleans was begun by Louisiana in 1855; the Federal Government completed the shaft after acquiring the grounds in 1907. Today the park contains 141 acres which include the more important portion of the American line and the now inactive Chalmette National Cemetery.

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