

Chalmette Battlefield

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Jean Lafitte National Historical Park
and Preserve
Louisiana



Detail from *Battle of New Orleans, 1815*, by Jean Hyacinthe de Laclotte, an engineer in Jackson's army.

NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART, GIFT OF EDGAR WILLIAM AND BERNICE CHRYSLER GARBISCH

Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson's stunning victory over experienced British troops in the Battle of New Orleans on January 8, 1815, was the greatest American land victory of the War of 1812. Although the Treaty of Ghent, ending the war, was signed in Belgium on December 24, 1814, it was not ratified by the United States until February 1815, so fighting continued. This battle preserved America's claim to the Louisiana Territory, prompted migration and settlement along the Mississippi River, and renewed American pride and unity. It also made Jackson a national hero.

The War of 1812 was fought to secure US maritime rights, reduce British influence over American Indians on the western frontier, and pave the way for the US annexation of Canada. Neither side had much success in the early days of the war.

September 1814. During the second, the British invaded Washington and burned the White House and the Capitol, but Fort McHenry in Baltimore held off British ships, ending this attack. The third began in late December when British Maj. Gen. Sir Edward M. Pakenham led a 10,000-man army overland from Lake Borgne to attack New Orleans. The capture of this important port was 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 US westward expansion.

Defending New Orleans were about 5,000 regular US troops, state militiamen, and volunteer soldiers, including Jean Lafitte's Baratarian pirates. On December 23, when British troops landed nine miles downriver from New Orleans, Jackson halted their advance in a fierce night attack. The Americans then withdrew behind the banks of the Rodriguez Canal.

The Rodriguez Canal bordered one side of the Chalmette plantation, running between the Mississippi River and a cypress swamp. Jackson's plan was to force the British to march through the stubble of harvested sugarcane fields toward his troops. The Americans enlarged the canal and filled it with water, built a shoulder-high mud rampart thick enough to withstand cannon fire, and waited for the British to attack.

Pakenham tested the Americans' nerve and firepower with a reconnaissance on December 28 and again on January 1. When these efforts failed, he knew he must either withdraw, risking an American attack from the rear, or assault Jackson's rampart. Relying on good leadership and his experienced soldiers, he chose to attack.

On January 8, 1815, Pakenham sent 7,000 soldiers head on against the American position. The British concentrated their attack on the rampart's ends, assuming those were the weakest points, but the fire from Jackson's artillery and small arms tore through their ranks with devastating effect.

As the British assault against the American rampart near the swamp began to falter, the 93rd Highlanders were ordered to march diagonally across the battlefield from their position near the Mississippi River. The regiment was exposed to raking fire and suffered heavy casualties. Pakenham rode forward to rally his men and was mortally wounded. Many other high-ranking officers, including Maj. Gen. Samuel Gibbs and Maj. Gen. John Keane, were killed or wounded. Although a

Maj. Gen. Sir Edward M. Pakenham, commander of the British army at Chalmette, was sitting for this portrait when he was summoned to command the Louisiana expedition. He was killed at New Orleans and the painting was never finished.



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

Great Britain, battling Napoleon's armies in Europe, could spare few troops to fight in the US; most were sent to defend Canada. America had few victories, most of which were at sea. When Napoleon was defeated in the spring of 1814, the War of 1812 changed dramatically. Thousands of battle-tested British troops sailed for the United States for a three-pronged attack that included a full-scale invasion from Montreal; skirmishes and raids on Washington, DC, and Baltimore; and an attack on New Orleans.

The first advance ended when the British lost the Battle of Lake Champlain in Sep-



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, commanding US forces at Chalmette, vowed to drive the British, whom he called "the common enemy of mankind," from American soil. His victory at New Orleans launched him on the road to the White House.

small force continued a brave advance, Gen. John Lambert, the surviving British commander, ordered a retreat.

The Battle of New Orleans lasted less than two hours, with the major fighting confined to about 30 minutes. More than 2,000 British troops were dead, wounded, or taken prisoner; American casualties numbered fewer than 20. Within days the British withdrew, ending the Louisiana campaign.



COURTESY EASTERN NATIONAL

Chalmette Monument
The cornerstone of this shaft honoring the American victory at New Orleans was laid in January 1840, within days after Andrew Jackson visited the field on the 25th anniversary of the battle.

The State of Louisiana began construction in 1855, and the monument was completed in 1908.



COURTESY EASTERN NATIONAL

Malus-Beauregard House
Built nearly 20 years after the Battle of New Orleans, the house is named for its first and last owners, Madeleine Pannetier Malus and Judge René Beaure-

gard. Today's restoration reflects the Greek Revival style of a mid-1800s home.



COURTESY EASTERN NATIONAL

Chalmette National Cemetery
Established in May 1864 as a final resting place for Union soldiers who died in Louisiana during the Civil War, the cemetery also contains the remains of veterans of the Spanish-

American War, World Wars I and II, and Vietnam. Four Americans who fought in the War of 1812 are buried here, but only one of them fought in the Battle of New Orleans.

Touring Chalmette Battlefield

The Battlefield Tour

Start at the visitor center to see displays, maps, interactive exhibits and films that explain the importance of Louisiana and the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. Outside exhibits, along the walkways to the batteries, the Malus-Beauregard House, and the 1.5-mile Battlefield Tour Loop Road, tell more stories about the people and the land before, during, and after the battle. Check at the visitor center for tours and program schedules. Special programs for groups can be arranged in advance.

American Line of Defense On January 8, 1815, eight artillery batteries, a mud rampart, and Rodriguez Canal provided the main line of defense for American troops defending New Orleans from British invasion. The Battle of New Orleans pitted Americans, who were outnumbered and less experienced, against war-hardened British veterans. Outdoor exhibits along the rampart and Rodriguez Canal describe American troops, their weapons, the 1815 landscape, and the last major battle of the War of 1812.

British Strategy Maj. Gen. Sir Edward M. Pakenham's goal was to capture the port of New Orleans and gain control of the Mississippi River. Outdoor exhibits along the Battlefield Tour Loop Road explain the British battle plan that called for attacks along the river, against the American rampart near the swamp, and on the west bank. Other exhibits explain the British artillery batteries, the roads and ditches used for the assault, and the ill-fated march of the 93rd Highlanders across the battlefield.



Chalmette Battlefield is one of six sites (shown in green) in Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve.

After the Battle Outdoor exhibits near Chalmette Monument, between the Malus-Beauregard House and the river, and along the Battlefield Tour Loop Road tell stories of the land and the people who lived here following the battle, including the development of a thriving free African American community.

Chalmette National Cemetery Drive in from St. Bernard Highway or use the walkway that connects the Battlefield Tour Loop Road to the cemetery (a parking area is located along the Battlefield Tour Loop Road).

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to a visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Regulations Pets are prohibited in Chalmette National Cemetery. • Relic hunting and the possession of metal detectors on park property are forbidden. • Organized games and recreation activities not consistent with the park's

historical character are not permitted.

- For firearms regulations check the park website.

More Information

Jean Lafitte
National Historical Park and Preserve
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www.nps.gov/jela

Chalmette Battlefield is part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities visit www.nps.gov.

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For Your Safety Watch for and avoid small mounds of dirt. Biting fire ants may live there.

American battery site (no longer exists) is on west bank of Mississippi River.