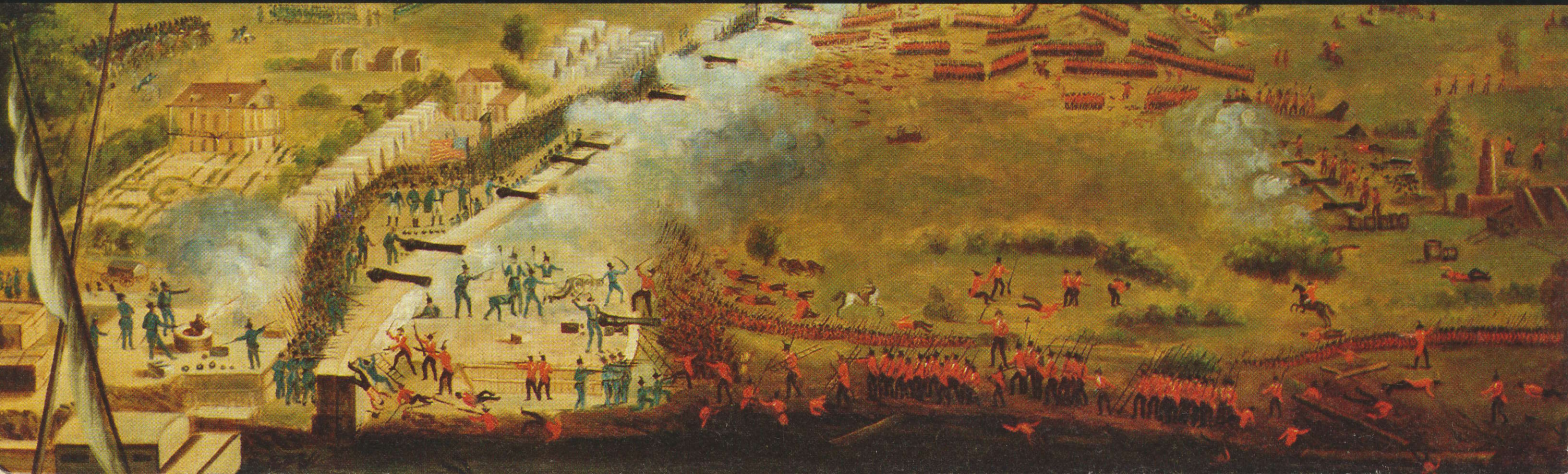


Chalmette

National Historical Park
Louisiana

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Gen. Andrew Jackson's stunning victory over crack British troops at Chalmette plantation on January 8, 1815, was the greatest American land victory of the War of 1812. Commonly called the Battle of New Orleans—the last battle of the last war ever fought between England and the United States—it preserved America's claim to the Louisiana Purchase, prompted a wave of migration and settlement along the Mississippi River, and

Maj. Gen. Sir Edward 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

restored American pride and unity. It also made Jackson a national hero.

The War of 1812 was fought to vindicate America's maritime rights, secure the western frontier from provocative British influence with the Indians, and pave the way for the annexation of Canada. It was pursued half-heartedly by both sides, and with little success for either. England, battling Napoleon's armies in Europe, could spare few troops to fight in the United States and did little more than help to defend Canada. American victories were few, and these mostly at sea. When England defeated Napoleon in the spring of 1814, the character of the American war changed dramatically. Thousands of battle-tested British soldiers sailed for the United States, and invasion thrusts were planned via Lake Champlain, the Chesapeake Bay, and, later, the Gulf coast.

The first thrust ended when Comm. Thomas McDonough defeated the British fleet in

the Battle of Lake Champlain in September 1814. The second was turned back about the same time at Fort Mchenry, the main defense of Baltimore, but not before the British had burned the White House and the Capitol at Washington. The third began in late December when 36-year-old 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 U.S. westward expansion.

Defending New Orleans were about 5,000 militia and volunteer soldiers (including a contingent of Jean Lafitte's Baratarians) under 47-year-old Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson. On December 23, when Pakenham's troops were within 14.5 kilometers (9 miles) of the city, Jackson halted their advance in a fierce night attack that caught the British off guard. The Americans then withdrew behind the banks of the Rodriguez Canal.

The Rodriguez Canal formed the boundary between the Chalmette and Macarty plantations and marked the most narrow strip of dry land between the Mississippi River and an impassable cypress swamp. The stubbled sugar cane fields provided an excellent field of fire for American artillery and small arms. Jackson's men widened and deepened the canal and partially filled it with water. Behind it they built a mud rampart shoulder-high and thick enough to withstand a cannon shot. Then they waited for the British to attack.

Pakenham tried to dislodge the Americans on December 28 with an infantry attack and again on January 1 with artillery fire. When these efforts failed, he knew he must either withdraw, risking the demoralization of his men and an American attack, or assault Jackson's line, trusting to good leadership

and the general superiority of the British soldier. Instinctively, he chose to attack.

On January 8, 1815, Pakenham sent 5,400 soldiers head on against the American positions. The withering fire from Jackson's artillery and small arms tore through their ranks with devastating effect. Gen. Samuel Gibbs' brigade came under tremendous fire from Gen. John Coffee's Tennesseans holding



Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson, commanding U.S. 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.

National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC

the American left flank near the swamp, and many of the British officers, including Gibbs, were killed. Gen. John Keane, attempting to come to Gibbs' aid, ordered the 93rd Highlanders to march diagonally across the field from near the river. This movement exposed the regiment to a raking fire from the American line that inflicted frightful casualties, including Keane himself. Pakenham rode forward to rally his men for another attack and was mortally wounded. Col. Robert Rennie's British units nearest the river actually gained the top of the mud rampart before being repulsed.

The Battle of New Orleans lasted less than 2 hours, with the major fighting confined to about 30 minutes. British casualties exceeded 2,000; the Americans reported only 13. On January 18 the British retreated to Lake Borgne, ending the Louisiana campaign and ensuring the United States of a bright future for the lower Mississippi Valley.



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. Not until 1855, how-

ever, did the State of Louisiana begin actual construction. The monument was completed in 1908, a year after it was ceded to the United States.



Beauregard House

This beautiful example of French-Louisiana architecture was built some 18 years after the Battle of New Orleans and is named for its last private owner, Judge René Beauregard. Never associated with a plantation, the

house served as a country residence for a succession of wealthy people in the 19th century. It now serves as the park visitor center.



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; only one of them, however, took part in the Battle of New Orleans.

Photos courtesy Eastern National Park & Monument Association

The Battlefield Tour

For Your Safety This park, like any historical or natural environment, contains certain inherent hazards which could spoil your visit. Be especially alert to avoid fire ant mounds and their biting inhabitants. Exercise caution and common sense.

Begin your tour at the visitor center in the Beauregard House, where exhibits and an audio-visual program explain the importance of Louisiana and the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. A beautiful view of the Mississippi River and the New Orleans skyline is available from the levee in front of the Beauregard House. Access to Chalmette National Cemetery is via footpath from Tour Stop 5 or by vehicle from St. Bernard Highway .8 kilometer (.5 mile) east of the park entrance. Check at the visitor center for a schedule of the park's interpretive programs. Special services for groups may be arranged in advance by calling the visitor center or writing the unit manager, whose address is St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, LA 70043.

A 2.4-kilometer (1.5-mile) tour road begins at the park entrance and contains 6 stops interpreting important features of the battlefield. A brief description of each stop is provided below and keyed by number to the map.

1 Here, along this portion of the Mud Rampart near the cypress swamp, Tennessee volunteers under Gens. John Coffee and William Carroll held the left flank of Jackson's line. The accurate fire of Coffee's "Dirty Shirts," standing in mud and cold water and supported by cannon in Batteries 7 and 8, helped turn back the assaults of Gibbs' brigade on the morning of the battle.

2 Batteries 5 and 6 also helped to stop Gibbs' advancing column on January 8. The cannon in Battery 5 are reproductions of the two 6-pounders located here the day of the battle. Light blue was the regulation color

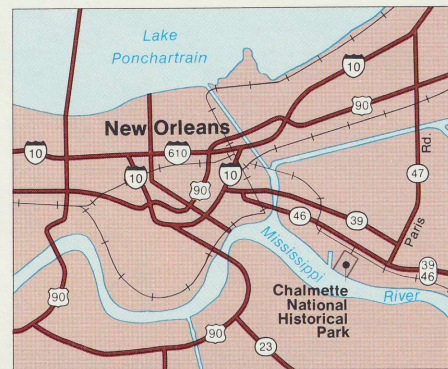
for American artillery carriages during the War of 1812.

3 Seeing Gibbs' assault falter near the cypress swamp, Gen. John Keane, commanding part of the British reserves, led the 93rd Highlanders across these fields, exposing them to a broadside fire from the American line. This resulted in heavy casualties, including Keane and Col. Robert Dale of the 93rd.

4 The gun displayed here is a 6-pounder cast in 1800 and is used to interpret the role of the British artillery in the New Orleans campaign. Hampered by ineffective positions and inadequate ammunition, the British cannons were not an important factor during the battle. None of the British batteries were originally located this close to the American line.

5 From here you have a panoramic view of the battlefield from the British perspective. On the far left, Rennie's attack reached and briefly overran the American rampart. On the right, Gibbs' men met disaster near the edge of the swamp. And in the center of the field the Highlanders were mowed down by a murderous artillery and small-arms fire. General Pakenham rode past here to inspire his troops for new assaults.

6 Pakenham's arrival at the front line of battle indicated the desperate condition of the British army. While attempting to rally his men and lead another attack near this point, he was fatally shot in the spine by an American rifleman.



About Your Visit Chalmette National Historical Park, a unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, is located in St. Bernard Parish on the east bank of the Mississippi River, 9.6 kilometers (6 miles) from the heart of New Orleans. From Canal Street, follow the main thoroughfare that begins at North Rampart Street and merges into St. Claude Avenue, then into St. Bernard Highway (La. 46), which passes directly in front of the park. From I-10, take the Chalmette exit (La. 47) south to St. Bernard Highway and turn right. There is no public transportation to the park.

A small family picnic area is provided in the southwest corner of the park. Organized games and recreational activities inconsistent with the historical character of the park are not permitted. St. Bernard State Park, 16 kilometers (10 miles) east of Chalmette on La. 39, maintains a modern campground with hookups. Food and lodging are available in New Orleans and nearby communities.



0 100 Meters 200 300
0 100 Feet 300

Unpaved road

Trail

Reconstructed
artillery battery
Artillery battery site
Handicap access

Mud Rampart

A reconstruction of part of the main American defense line built prior to the battle. With the Rodriguez Canal in front, it proved an effective barrier to the British advance.

Batteries 1, 2, and 3

The sites of these first three American artillery positions are now under the Mississippi River. Since 1815 more than 262 meters (860 feet) of the east bank of the river have eroded away.

Rodriguez Canal

The only remaining original manmade feature on the battlefield. It is crossed via the footbridge.

Battery 4

Site of the largest American cannon on the field—a 32-pounder naval gun salvaged from an American schooner. Supported by the Battalion of Louisiana Free Men of Color, it wreaked havoc among the attacking British.

Chalmette Monument

Parking

Restrooms

Spotts Monument

Picnic area

Visitor Center
(Beauregard House)

PRIVATE PROPERTY

GAR Monument

Chalmette National Cemetery

Park Entrance

St. Bernard Hwy.

Southern Railroad

46

To (47)
(Paris Road)

Park Headquarters

Service road (closed)

General Pakenham fell

Main attack of the British under Pakenham and Gibbs

Highlanders coming to aid of main attack

Left column of British attack

Jackson's Hdqtrs. 1815

MISSISSIPPI

RIVER

LEVEE

LEVEE

1815 Shoreline