



**Weather or Not, Here I Come:
French Delegation Attends Slave Trade Program at Kingsley Plantation**

By Carol S. Clark, Interpretive Specialist, National Trails Intermountain Region

What do you do when your scholar, traveling from Nantes, France to Jacksonville, Florida and scheduled to speak at park's major annual event, is trapped in the Atlanta airport for thirty hours? As they say in the circus, the show must go on!

On February 13, 2010, a French delegation from Nantes, one of Jacksonville's Sister Cities, attended the Kingsley Heritage Celebration at Kingsley Plantation to participate in a special presentation entitled "Revolts during the Middle Passage." Kingsley Plantation is a part of the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve. The evening before, the mayor of Jacksonville and the delegation celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the twinning that made Jacksonville and Nantes sister cities.

Many delegation members arrive in Jacksonville on February 11, with no difficulties. On February 12, the day that scholar and event speaker Jean-Marc Masseaut of *Les Anneaux de la Memoire* (The Shackles of Memory) was to make a connection in Atlanta, the airport was closed due to

snowy and icy conditions. Mr. Masseaut, plus eleven others, including the President of Nantes' sister city association and nine teens in a French hip-hop and jazz fusion band supposed to perform at the event, was trapped in the Atlanta airport, where they stayed for thirty hours.

The morning of the event Mr. Masseaut solicited the assistance of another airport prisoner and emailed his speech to Park Ranger Carol Clark, to edit and read in his stead. The speech can be read at <http://www.nps.gov/timu/historyculture/french-connections.htm>

Special guests at the event included: Rachel Bocher, Deputy Mayor for Tourism in Nantes; Gaël de Maisonneuve, Consul Général for the Consulat Général de France in Miami, Florida; Gérard Jahoo, Manager for the Port Authority of Nantes Saint-Nazaire; Christine Renard, Mission Solidarités et Coopérations Internationales for Nantes Métropole; Marie-Hélène Joly, Museum Director for the Château des Ducs de Bretagne/Nantes History Museum; Jean-François Cesbron, Service des Espaces Verts et de l'Environnement (Nantes parks); and Mariette Cassourret, Président, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Association. Lad Daniels, Jacksonville City Councilman, opened up the event.

Amongst the many activities the delegation participated in over their five day visit, a Nantes parks representative spent time at Kingsley Plantation and the Jacksonville Zoo with Park Ranger Roger Clark, looking for historic crops of the plantation era and southern native plants to cultivate in the "America Garden" in one of Nantes' many parks.

Since February, work on the educational curriculum, exhibits, and websites for the project have continued. The curriculum and websites were published to the TIMU website in late April, and are available for teacher planning and use for the 2010-2011 school year. Permanent installation of the exhibit panels about the slave trade will occur in June.

This event was planned jointly by the National Park Service, Nantes Métropole, the University of North Florida, Jacksonville Sister Cities, and the Nantes – Seattle – Jacksonville Association. Carol S. Clark, formerly a Park Ranger at the Timucuan Preserve, traveled to Nantes in September 2009 as part of an Albright-Wirth Grant. Much of the planning for the event, including the development of exhibits, curriculum, and a new student exchange program, occurred in Nantes.

The Kingsley Heritage Celebration is an annual event. This year's schedule included four Saturdays of special events in February and March. This year's events were jointly sponsored by NPS TIMU and Florida Humanities Council with in kind support from University of Florida, University of North Florida, Florida Public Archaeology Network, Nantes Métropole, Jacksonville Sister Cities, and Tajiri Arts School and Museum. Events at Kingsley Plantation recognize the rich culture that evolved amongst slave communities despite the severe oppression of slavery and celebrate the determination and strength of those men, women, and children. Events also examine cultural aspects of modern American society that originated in the plantation period.

Image caption:

Representatives from Nantes included the Deputy Mayor, Port Director, Nantes History Museum Curator, Consul General, and Manager of Nantes Parks. The teens are part of an ongoing exchange program. Missing from the photograph are the twelve people trapped in the Atlanta airport, February 12 -13, 2010.