

**194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of**

**The Battle of New Orleans**

**Living History Participant  
Information Handbook**



**January 8 - 10, 2009**

**Chalmette Battlefield**

**Chalmette, Louisiana**

*Jean Lafitte*



**National Historical Park  
and Preserve**

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### **EVENT OVERVIEW**

Coinciding with the January 8, 1815 date of the Battle of New Orleans, the National Park Service holds an anniversary commemoration of the battle every January at Chalmette Battlefield, part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve. A variety of events and activities mark the commemoration, including a living history encampment on the battlefield, an off-site reenactment, a wreath-laying ceremony on January 8<sup>th</sup>, and other non-living history activities. This event information guide focuses mainly on the living history encampment and is intended mainly for the potential living history participant. We hope it will provide the information you need and answer most of your questions.

Chalmette Battlefield, one of the most important sites pertaining to the early history of the United States, is located on the left bank of the Mississippi River about six miles down river from Jackson Square, the heart of New Orleans’ French Quarter. The physical address – and mailing address – is 8606 West St. Bernard Highway, Chalmette, Louisiana, 70043. Chalmette is an unincorporated community in St. Bernard Parish. The battlefield is a quiet and peaceful place but it’s only a 20-minute drive to the French Quarter and some of the world’s best cuisine, best music, and, of course, Bourbon Street!

Living history units representing both British and American forces participate in the encampment, and each “army” sets up a separate camp area on its respective side of the battlefield (see details in “Logistics” section). On the British side, appropriate units to represent include the 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 44<sup>th</sup>, 93<sup>rd</sup>, and 95<sup>th</sup> Regiments of Foot, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> West India Regiments, the 14<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, and the Royal Artillery, along with sundry representatives of the Royal Navy and the Royal Engineers. On the American side appropriate units include the 7<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, Light Artillery Corps, US Marines, US Navy gunners,

Baratarian gunners, Free Men of Color, the several units making up Plauche's Battalion, Beale's Rifles, Jugeat's Choctaws, and the Tennessee and Kentucky Militias. These lists are not exhaustive; feel free to contact park staff and discuss your impression.

Emplaced in embrasures in the reconstructed American rampart at the battlefield, the park has three reproduction artillery pieces, a new 18-pounder and two 6-pounders, that artillery crews fire as part of historic weapons demonstration programs. Otherwise, participants must bring their own small arms, tents and all other gear. The park provides black powder, certain meals, and other camp supplies (see details in "Logistics" and "Black Powder and Historic Weapons" sections).

Above all, the living history event is an **interpretive** program for park visitors. Period authenticity is very important (see "A Word on Historic Authenticity" section), but just as important is telling the story of the battle and its consequences in a compelling way so that visitors make connections and understand the "so what?" and the relevance of the battlefield *today*. Please refer to the "Interpretation vs. Information" section for a discussion on interpretation in the National Park System.

As we get closer to the bicentennial of the Battle of New Orleans in 2015 we want to reach as many potential participants as possible. Feel free to share this announcement packet and application with units that may not be on our mailing list. It is also available in PDF format on our website, [www.nps.gov/jela/](http://www.nps.gov/jela/). We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era unit to apply, **but only units that receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

## SCHEDULE

### **THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2009**

At 10:00 a.m. a **Wreath-laying Ceremony** will be held at the Chalmette Monument on the battlefield. This will be a simple ceremony to commemorate the exact time and place of the Battle of New Orleans 184 years earlier. Any living history participants who have arrived in New Orleans are invited to attend, period dress or modern.

### **FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2009**

**Morning parade** in both camps will be promptly at 9:00 a.m. All participants are expected to attend.

**For the general public**, the battlefield will open on Friday at 9:00 a.m. and close at 3:30 p.m. Event publicity will encourage general visitors to avoid Saturday's crowds and come on Friday afternoon, so living history participants be prepared for historic weapons demonstrations and other activities until flag lowering ceremonies at 3:15 p.m.

**School Day** The first groups will be scheduled to arrive at 9:00 a.m., and we expect the last groups to depart by 2:00 p.m. They will be invited and encouraged to stay as long as they like, with departure times depending on their own school schedules. Most groups will bring sack lunches to eat at the park, in designated areas away from the encampment.

School groups will explore the battlefield at their own pace and under the leadership of teachers and chaperones with no prescribed tour route. To prepare the students and teachers for their visit, each registered group will have received a pre-visit packet with lots of materials and activities geared to their grade level and based on the Louisiana state curriculum. Upon their arrival at the battlefield that morning, they will be greeted by uniformed park staff who will give them a brief orientation to the site. At that time teachers will receive a schedule of events for the day with a map that denotes where all activities are located. **That schedule should include your unit's camp and any programs or activities you do.** For example, if you are doing a demonstration program on rolling musket cartridges, the schedule will state your location and the times of your programs. You can give specific times for programs or simply say "every hour" or "every half-hour" or "on-going." The attached "Participant Application" has a space for this information. We urge every participating unit to schedule activities that we can list on the day's schedule. It really helps the teachers plan their days and make the visits more meaningful for their classes.

School Day in 2007 drew over 2000 students; in 2008 over 2500 attended.

Some living history participants consider School Day to be the best and most rewarding part of the whole event. The park greatly appreciates everyone's effort and participation, and urges all of you to make your travel plans to arrive by Thursday night in order to be a part of School Day on Friday.

**Flag lowerings** in each camp will be at 3:15 and the park will close and be cleared of all visitors at 3:30 p.m.

**The skirmish reenactment** (representing the Night Battle of December 23, 1814) is planned and sponsored by the St. Bernard Parish Government. It starts at 4:30 in the afternoon at the Pakenham Oaks, about 1.5 miles from the battlefield, and lasts about one hour. Transportation for reenactors will be provided. The National Park Service is glad to work with the parish to make this reenactment grow every year, and we encourage you to participate. As more information is available from St. Bernard Parish we will update the 194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration link on the park website, [www.nps.gov/jela/](http://www.nps.gov/jela/).

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2009** will be the big day for the general public, with camp demonstrations and programs at the battlefield all day, followed by the lantern tour after dark.

**Morning parade** in both camps will be promptly at 9:00 a.m. All participants are expected to attend.

**The battlefield encampment** will open to the general public at 9:00 a.m. Visitors will be directed to an off-site parking area where free shuttle buses will take them the short ride to the Battlefield. There will be no driving on the Battlefield Road nor any parking allowed at the Visitor Center Parking Lot. Special arrangements will be made for handicapped individuals.

As with School Days, each visitor will receive a detailed schedule of events and a map of the encampment. There will be a full schedule of small arms and artillery firing demonstrations throughout the day, along with two memorial ceremonies. Most other activities in the military and civilian camps are ongoing, but if you or your unit want to have any special demonstrations or programs included in the schedule, indicate so on the Participant Application.

**Flag lowerings and dinner** - The day's activities will end with flag lowerings in both camps at 3:15, and we will clear the park of visitors and close at 3:30. The park will provide dinner for participants – buffet style – from 4:30 to 5:30 on Saturday.

**The Lantern Tour – “The Night Before the Battle”** - begins at 6:00 p.m. Saturday evening.

The tour follows a route of about eight stops that present short vignettes of scenes that might have taken place on the night of January 7, 1815. No audience interaction is permitted so first person interpretation and even portraying historic figures is encouraged. Historically, since no women would have been on the field that night, we ask that all women participants either help to conduct groups along the tour route or be part of the vignette that features women at home in the city of New Orleans preparing for the upcoming battle.

Tours will start every ten minutes from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. for a total of ten tours. Tickets will be \$5 per person ages 6 and older (5 and under FREE). This year, all tickets will be sold in advance, see website for updated details.

Revenues from the Lantern Tour are used to purchase items to enhance the living history aspect of the anniversary. Suggestions are welcome for how to spend 2009 Lantern Tour monies.

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 11** will be the day we wrap up the 194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and start thinking about the 195<sup>th</sup> ! We will provide all living history participants with an event evaluation form – please give us your suggestions. We strive to make each year’s event better than the last.

**Breakfast** - The park will provide a farewell breakfast – again buffet style – from 7:30 to 8:30, and then it will be time to break camps and pack up. We ask that all camps be cleared by noon so park staff can get to the job of cleaning up.

**2010** – Tentative dates for the 195<sup>th</sup> are Friday, January 8<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

## **LOGISTICS**

### **ARRIVAL, CAMPING AND OTHER LODGING OPTIONS**

Participants are encouraged to camp on the battlefield - in designated areas, using period tentage. Several portable toilets will be placed throughout the park convenient to the American line and the British and Civilian camps. PLEASE check with your camp commander before setting up camp (see "Camps and Camp Commanders" below).

We encourage you to arrive Thursday in order to participate in School Day on Friday. You may arrive as early as Thursday morning. Starting Thursday night the main gate at the battlefield entrance on Battlefield Road will be closed but not locked after hours, so you may arrive any time during the night. If you arrive during the day on Friday you will be allowed to drive into camp and unload your gear, but then you must move your vehicle to the designated parking area in the cemetery (see "Parking & Shuttles" below).

There is one hotel in St. Bernard Parish, the Marina Motel (formerly the Econolodge). The address is 5353 Paris Road in Chalmette and the telephone number is 504-277-5353. Paris Road is the main highway coming into Chalmette from I-10 and the north (exit 246 on I-10, the Chalmette exit, is I-510, which becomes LA 47, which is Paris Road). The hotel is about a ten-minute drive from the battlefield.

There are hundreds of other hotels, inns and guest houses in New Orleans East, the French Quarter, Downtown New Orleans and beyond.

### **CAMPS AND CAMP COMMANDERS**

The American camp will stretch along Battlefield Road (the main park entrance road) from the monument toward the highway. Units will be allowed to leave a little open space between camps to facilitate dealing with large crowds, but the overall idea on the American side is to establish one camp and create the impression of *one army*, albeit made of diverse troops, united against the enemy.

A camp for civilian impressions will be in the area between the river and the Visitor Center. For interpretive purposes we refer to the civilian area as "the city of New Orleans." This allows for all sorts of non-military activities that would have taken place away from the front line, like blacksmithing, musicians, and the very important contributions of women to the defense of the city: sewing clothing and preparing meals to send down to the troops, rolling bandages and preparing for casualties, and even the Ursuline nuns' continual prayer vigil.

The Malus-Beauregard House will be ready for the British headquarters by January, 2009. When the last of the construction and painting projects is completed this fall it will be a completely renovated and beautiful building, inside and out. The British Camp will be located on the grounds adjacent to the house.

Mr. Tim Pickles and Mr. Steve Abolt have accepted the park's invitations to serve as commanders of the British and American camps, respectively. They have served in these positions at this event for over a decade. They are excited and honored to serve in this capacity again. They will expect that during hours when the parks is open to visitors, all military participants do their utmost in properly portraying the men of both sides by following military

protocol, decorum, and courtesy as laid out in the regulations of each respective army (the regulations in effect at the time of the December 1814 - January 1815 New Orleans Campaign). In regard to decisions on period military matters, the park delegates authority to the camp commander(s).

Upon arrival, participants should first report to their camp commanders for their camp locations. We ask that your camp be laid out according to the regulations. We know that because of the weather and the lay of the ground some deviations will occur. If you have any questions concerning the layout of your camp please contact your camp commander prior to your arrival. It will facilitate the duty of the camp commander if each participating unit lists on the Participant Application the amount of frontage and depth that it will need for its camp.

Camp commanders will hold a morning officer's call with unit leaders on Friday and Saturday to discuss the day's goals, objectives and duty stations. The times and locations of these meetings will be announced once you arrive.

Success of the event depends on participants being punctual for their assigned duties, demonstrations and programs.

Your camp commander is also your liaison with the park staff. If any problems arise that cannot be resolved within the individual unit, participants should bring them to the attention of their camp commander. If a resolution still cannot be found, the camp commander will take the matter to park staff.

## **FOOD**

Hot and cold drinks will be available for living history participants throughout the event at the Supply Tent behind the Visitor Center.

For lunch on Friday and Saturday, the park will supply raw meat, vegetables and other ingredients for a stew. We ask that you cook these meals in camp as part of the living history interpretive program.

Dinner Saturday evening, before the Lantern Tour, will be a catered, buffet-style affair of favorite New Orleans dishes.

Sunday breakfast will also be a catered buffet. This farewell breakfast allows participants to concentrate on breaking camp and packing up instead of cooking and cleaning.

## **SUPPLIES**

In addition to food, the park will provide potable water in gallon jugs, plenty of dry firewood and bedding straw, and candles for use during the Lantern Tour.

Upon request, items for demonstrations may also be provided, such as sugar cane for fascines and poles for ladders in the British camp. Please contact the park to arrange for these materials.

Please remember that the park will provide all black powder as well (see "Historic Weapons and Black Powder" section).

## **PARKING & SHUTTLES**

During the entire two-day event, no vehicles will be allowed to remain parked *anywhere* on the battlefield, including roadways and parking lots, while visitors are on the grounds (9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. both days). Vehicle parking for volunteer participants – and park staff as well - will be in the Chalmette National Cemetery along Military Cemetery Road, out of sight from the battlefield and about 1/3 mile away. Two shuttle vans will run continuously between the cemetery and battlefield. The shuttle stop for the British camp will be where the Malus-Beauregard House sidewalk meets the Shell Road (the road that parallels the base of the levee); for the American camp it will be at the intersection of Battlefield Road (the main entrance road) and the battlefield tour loop road (at the Tennessee Militia end of the line).

## HISTORIC WEAPONS AND BLACK POWDER

We will have an extensive schedule of black powder firing demonstrations featuring small arms in the British Camp and both artillery and small arms in the American camp. The park will provide all black powder in prepared cartridges, whether for musket, rifle or artillery. If you want to bring an artillery piece, please contact the park's Black Powder Coordinator (see "Event Contacts" on page 12).

Those of you who plan to participate in the parish's skirmish reenactment on Friday afternoon will have to bring prepared cartridges for that event. If you bring black powder to the battlefield, whether as prepared cartridges or in bulk containers (one-pound cans or larger) it must be stored in the battlefield's magazine. The event Black Powder Safety Officer will collect any powder from you, and then reissue it before the reenactment or when you break camp and leave the battlefield.

A copy of the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety will be provided to confirmed unit leaders. The event Black Powder Safety Officer will use this document and other pertinent National Park Service guidelines and policies to make any decisions regarding historic weapons and black powder. The event Black Powder Safety Officer will have the final authority on any such decision. As always, safety is the primary concern.

For American units, the National Park Service prefers its own modified version of the timeless Von Steuben drill. Other drills are appropriate for this period, and at the discretion of and with the approval of the event Black Powder Safety Officer, individual units may use the War of 1812 period manual to which they are most accustomed when firing and marching as a separate unit. Morning and evening formations in the American camp as well as the mass firing demonstration Saturday afternoon will be conducted according to Smythe's Manual. For British units, the corresponding regulation period musket and rifle drills for infantry and cavalry will be used. Artillery drill will be conducted according to NPS regulations and safety modifications. On the firing line the word of the NPS Black Powder Safety Officer is absolute.

Before a unit (or any member thereof) can participate in any firing demonstration, 1) each unit leader must sign the Black Powder Agreement certifying that he or she has read and understood the Black Powder SOP and will comply with it fully; 2) all firearms must pass a safety inspection; and 3) the unit must demonstrate its drill to the satisfaction of the event Black Powder Safety Officer. **Facilities for weapon maintenance and repair are extremely limited on site and there will be no time for training during the event.** If you have any questions about drills, weapons and firing demonstrations please contact the park Black Powder Coordinator well before January.

***Edged weapons*** NPS policy and the Chalmette Battlefield Standard Operating Procedure for Historic Weapons and Black Powder Safety state that edged weapons like swords, knives and bayonets may be drawn and brandished, in a safe and prudent manner, when the bearer and the weapon are behind a barrier in a secure area out of reach of visitors. **At no time may event participants engage in combat with edged weapons or simulated edged weapons without the express permission and consent of the event Black Powder Safety Officer.** When NOT behind a barrier, however, when out amongst visitors, swords, knives, bayonets and the like may

NOT be fully drawn. They may be partially drawn out of the scabbard enough to expose some of the blade for visual inspection for interpretive purposes, but no visitor may touch the blade. Also, when not behind a barrier, bayonets may be fixed on muskets but the muskets must be kept in a vertical position and the bearer must maintain control of the weapon and the bayonet. At no time may muskets be fired with the bayonet fixed.

## A FEW WORDS ON HISTORICAL AUTHENTICITY

The reputation of the National Park Service, the Chalmette Battlefield living history program, and the Battle of New Orleans Anniversary Commemoration depends on every living history participant striving for and maintaining the highest possible degree of historical accuracy and authenticity in period dress and accoutrements, character role portrayals and demonstrations. Furthermore, the reputation of every living history participant at the Chalmette Battlefield event depends on every other participant's dedication to these same high standards. At the battlefield we hold that *everyone* is responsible for historical authenticity. If you see something being worn or used by another participant or in camp that is "out of period" then the first course of action should be to find a gentle and tactful way to call attention to it and correct it. Second course of action will be for your unit leader to bring the matter to the attention of your camp commander, and third will be for the camp commander to bring it to the attention of park staff. Any determination made by park staff on historical authenticity and appropriateness is final.

During the anniversary encampment at Chalmette Battlefield, historical authenticity standards will be observed and in effect during hours when visitors are on the grounds: from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily, and Friday night during the lantern tour from 6:00 p.m. to about 9:00 p.m. All non-period articles will be kept out of sight, in tents with tent flaps closed and tied shut, or covered *well* with burlap or blankets or another appropriate material.

The event attempts to recreate a hastily assembled military camp on both sides. Excessive cast iron ware, glassware, pottery, baggage, furniture, and heavy objects are generally not suitable for this impression and should be kept to a reasonable minimum and/or out of sight. Some units, like the Tennessee Militia and the US Regulars, traveled a great distance to get here and of necessity traveled lightly. Other units, like local militia, lived nearby and may have enjoyed some material comforts brought from the city. And while British officers simply could not survive without their silver tea services, most of the British rank and file had endured considerable hardship and privation and arrived on the banks of the Mississippi with little more than what they could carry on their backs. Try to keep faithful to the impression you are portraying.

Bales of straw should be broken and the straw scattered or piled. Whole or partial bales are out of period, especially if tied with brightly colored nylon cord. Instead of using bales for seating, find and use logs or other things that would have been available here in 1814-15. (Across the levee by the river you will find an abundance of driftwood logs of all sizes and weights.)

Modern machine-made cigarettes and cigars should be smoked behind tents (not *in* them) and completely out of sight of the visiting public. Period hand-rolled smoking materials and pipes are acceptable.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY INTERPRETATION?

What is “interpretation?”

In recent years, the National Park Service has devoted considerable time and effort to this question, to identify what we do as successful interpreters. Interpretation is not simply the communication of facts and information. Although facts are an important part of an interpretive program, they are not enough. Even when done well, a recitation of facts leaves the audience to wonder, “what does it all *mean*?”

Interpretation is the communication of facts and information **in such a way as to develop an appreciation and understanding of the park and its resources and their significances.** As interpreters we do this by facilitating connections between our audience and the meanings of the park. At the Chalmette Battlefield, our programs and presentations serve as catalysts for the audience to make connections with the Battle of New Orleans and the men and women involved. Our primary goal is not to provide information, but to provide access to meanings. First we provide accurate and balanced information. (Remember that there are at least two sides to every story, so the information we provide must take into account multiple points of view.) Then we provide a catalyst for the audience to make those connections. Members of the audience should arrive at their own conclusions because ultimately they will understand and appreciate the park and its resources on their own terms.

For example, a short talk during an artillery firing demonstration might include facts on the size of the piece, the material it is made from, effective range, and the firing drill. But the focus of the talk could be about the crew and the teamwork needed to fire the piece, the leadership necessary to run the drill, the unity that came from a well-drilled and well-led team, and the effectiveness in battle of such a unified team. These concepts of teamwork, leadership and unity are *universal concepts* that most everyone can relate to based on their own life experiences. There are many other universal concepts pertaining to the battle, including fear, suffering, sacrifice, family, patriotism, community, survival, and pride. Using universal concepts is one way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

For another example, a talk about the Battle of New Orleans would cover the basic facts of the British amphibious movement across Lake Borgne to the Villere plantation, where Keane decided to stop and rest and await reinforcements. But, instead, you could describe the experience for the typical British soldier: the little island where they waited with no tents or food in the cold and rain, then the arduous trip across the lake in the dark and cold wind, then the march through endless marshes of reeds and muck, finally arriving on dry ground in a strange place. Then pose some questions to the audience. “How would *you* have felt? Would you have been tired and hungry? Would your morale have been very high at that point?” Asking questions encourages the audience to think and arrive at their own conclusions. This is another way to provide a catalyst for the audience to make connections.

Interpreters must provide opportunities for the audience to make connections with the meanings of the resource, realizing that all audience members arrive with their unique set of filters. We meet this challenge by learning and understanding as much as possible about 1) the audience, and 2) the meanings we want to reveal. Using our skills – and techniques like living history – we craft the message we wish to deliver.

**EMERGENCIES**

National Park Service Protection Rangers will be in charge of emergency services during the event. The most up-to-date information regarding designated first aid stations and emergency procedures will be provided upon arrival at the event.

The telephone number at the Chalmette Battlefield Visitor Center is 504-281-0510. The Visitor Center is only staffed on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, so this is not a good way to contact the park. During the event in January, however, the Visitor Center will be staffed during business hours and this will be a good number to contact living history participants in the encampment in case of emergency.

**EVENT CONTACTS**

Event Coordinator	Cidney Webster	cidney_webster@nps.gov (504) 589-2636 x121
Living History Participant Coordinator and Black Powder Coordinator	Danny Forbis	danny_forbis@nps.gov (504) 589-2636 x228
Secondary Living History and Black Powder Coordinator	Matt Boswell	matt_boswell@nps.gov (504) 589-2636 x221





Do you intend to participate in the Friday School Day? YES / NO

Please describe the activities and demonstrations the school groups can expect to see in your camp area.

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Do you intend to participate in the Saturday evening Lantern Tour? YES / NO

Can any women members please act as guides or escorts during the lantern tour? YES / NO

Do any women members want to participate in the women's vignette during the lantern tour? YES / NO

Do you or any members want to schedule and present a short individual interpretive program or demonstration during the main event on Saturday? Please describe. (The park encourages those that play musical instruments or like to demonstrate any other period craft or skill, military or otherwise, to consider presenting a short program.)

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Please return the completed application **by October 31 2008.**

Mail it to:                   attn: 194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
                                  Jean Lafitte NHP&P  
                                  419 Decatur Street  
                                  New Orleans, LA 70130

or fax it to:               (504) 589-4155.

Please share this announcement packet and application with others who may be interested in participating. It is also available in PDF format on our website, [www.nps.gov/jela/](http://www.nps.gov/jela/). We encourage and welcome any interested War of 1812-era units or individuals to apply, **but only those who receive confirmation from the park will be allowed to participate in the 194<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans.**

Questions? Contact Park Ranger Danny Forbis at (504) 589-2636 x 228 or [danny\\_forbis@nps.gov](mailto:danny_forbis@nps.gov)