

**Life in the Village:
A Cultural Memory of the Fazendeville Community**



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Executive Summary

This cultural and historical study of Fazendeville, also known as the Village, enhances existing documentation of historical land use patterns within park boundaries, facilitates a more in-depth comprehension of the nature and dynamics of the Fazendeville community, and establishes and maintains effective communication and consultation with African Americans who are traditionally associated with the park. I utilized ethnographic interviews, oral histories and other historical and social methods, as necessary, to achieve the above objectives.

The unique society of Fazendeville has been developed, nurtured, and maintained by the geographical isolation of the settlement, the social and economic independence of the residents, and their marginal contact with residents outside the area. These factors have created and fostered an environment within which the inhabitants have been able to reinforce vigorous traditions. These traditions have been passed on from one generation to another through religious practices, personal narratives, music and other forms of expressive folk culture.

This study is structured to provide a comprehensive view of life in Fazendeville by taking an interdisciplinary approach and by including an extensive use of quotes enabling the voices of the folk to have a central place in the narrative. Part I provides background information and the project research design. Part II focuses on a regional view of the area with brief descriptions of the geography, demography, and history. Part III constitutes the greatest portion of the study, concentrating on life in the Village and Part IV provides recommendations for further study.

The architectural style of each building, distinct areas of work, play and worship and memory of traditional activities generated in the participants strong feelings of attachment that also reflected the values and attitudes of the individuals concerned. These are also inexorably tied up with personal identity and cultural roots; collectively they give the former Village land area a 'spirit of place' and, to some, a feeling of sacred place.

The dominant themes that permeate the study are cooperative effort, associational networks, human interaction and self-government. These themes help to understand the communal roots of the people and bring together greater appreciation of their individual and collective achievements. More importantly, they allow us to focus attention on the real and continued strength of this African American river community in the past, and point toward further studies that will focus on the period beyond government acquisition.

Part I: Background and Research Design

Background: The Place

Fazendeville is the name of a small settlement of African Americans nestled on the east side of the Mississippi River levee occupied from 1867 to 1964. It was located approximately seven miles southeast of New Orleans, Louisiana, in St. Bernard Parish in Chalmette. The community was established on the natural levee of the river, a location which affords the highest and driest land in a region that is close to sea level and subject to flooding. Prior to human modification, the land was bracketed by swampland. Formerly known as the Chalmette Plantation, it is where the British and the Americans fought the Battle of New Orleans, the last battle of the War of 1812. The community was developed on the battlefield, which is now between the Chalmette National Cemetery and the Chalmette Monument.

After the Civil War, Jean Pierre Fazende, who was a freedman and a grocer, divided the land he had inherited into parcels, which he sold to newly emancipated blacks. Collectively, the community was called Fazendeville. The Fazende property was a narrow strip of land that stretched from the Mississippi River about half way to St. Bernard Highway. A single road serviced the community with houses on the east side of the road and a large pecan grove that flourished on the west side of the road in front of the French Creole-style Malus-Beauregard House (ca. 1833).¹ An open pasture, behind the houses was used for a baseball field (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Fazendeville, sometimes referred to as “the Village” by its residents, constituted a thriving and vibrant community. According to the residents, during its almost 100 years of existence, it had a one-room



Figure 1. Fazendeville community. (NPS Photograph)

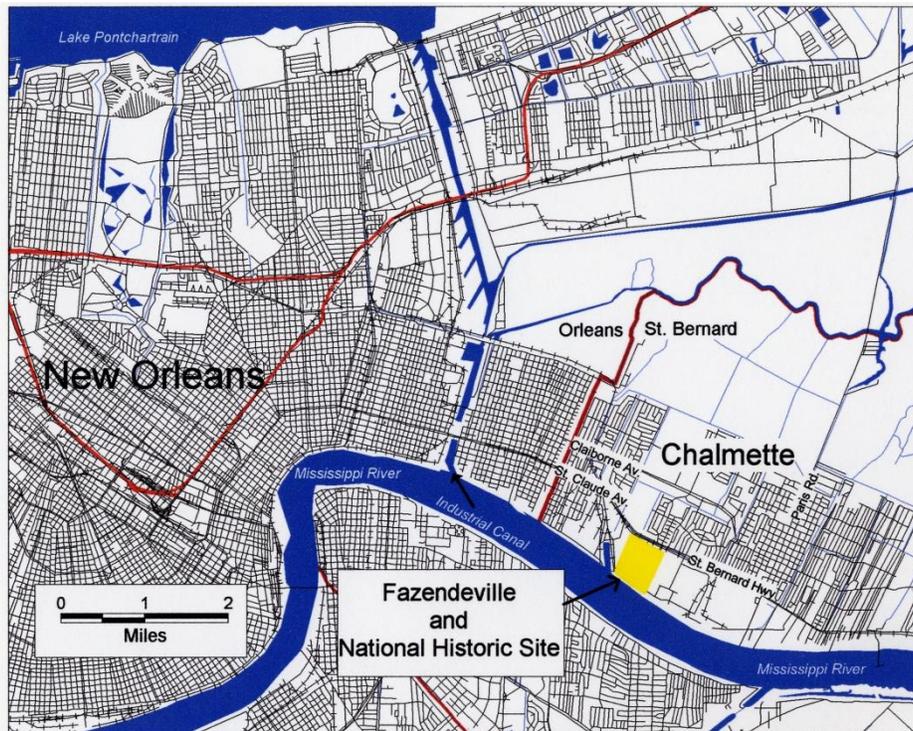


Figure 2. Fazendeville and Chalmette Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Environs. (C. Flanagan, 2003)

school which educated through grade eight, at least three churches, two benevolent society halls, two barrooms, and three grocery stores of different sizes (Figure 3). During its 100 years, the community evolved an identity and an inner life of its own, becoming a nearly self-contained river settlement, with sociocultural dynamics very akin to a traditional African village. Ron Chapman, an historian who has conducted research on the community, wrote in the *St. Bernard Picayune* that, “Fazendeville used to be a thriving community that is now lost” (Buck 2001). However, this study constitutes an argument that the community in fact lives on and continues a lively existence in an appropriated space. I seek to portray the Village through the eyes and voices of its former residents and attempt to interpret their conceptualizations of their lives in the Village.

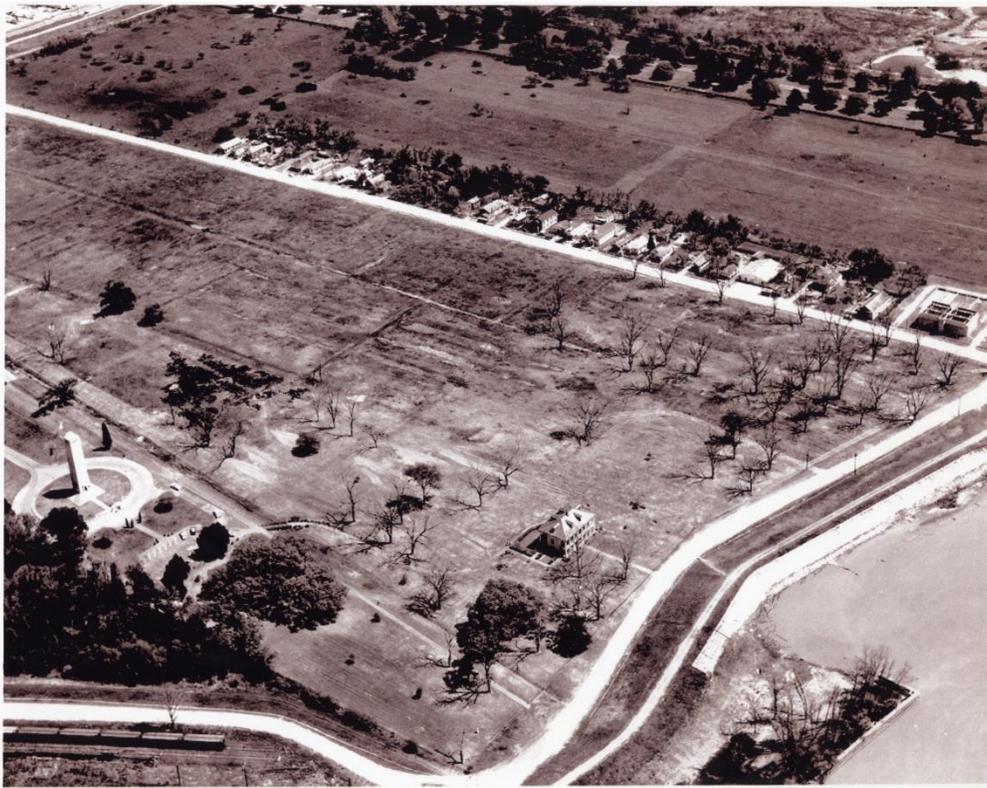


Figure 3. Bird’s eye view of Fazendeville community looking East above the Mississippi River. (NPS Photograph)

The morphology of Fazendeville was typical of settlements in the region. The community developed linearly along the Fazendeville Road, which ran perpendicular to the river (Figure 4). This morphology reflects the land survey system known as French Long Lot, a legacy of the early French settlers of Louisiana. The French Long Lot system divided land into parcels that included access to the Mississippi River. This system resulted in many long and narrow parcels, each with river frontage. In the early development of Louisiana, access to the Mississippi was essential because the river was the primary mode of transportation. The residents of Fazendeville depended on the river for much of their livelihood (Figure 5).

This work documents the process through which this community emerged and developed. Chronicles of people, places, and events through individual life experiences reveal the complexity of the Village experience as lived by its residents. I include discussions of a broad range of Village experiences including childhood and family living, education, health, occupations, politics and government, business and commerce, religion, folklore, art, culture, and social and demographic change. I emphasize the ways people participate in the process of historical and cultural development and change through what they say and do. Oral histories and ethnographic narratives such as those I have included here express the extraordinary perspectives of ordinary people, those who have been overlooked in more general histories and cultural studies. Narratives of everyday life experiences, invoke a sense of time that is often more associative than chronological, challenging a strict historical approach. The accounts themselves are uniquely valuable in enlarging our comprehension of the multifaceted human dynamics

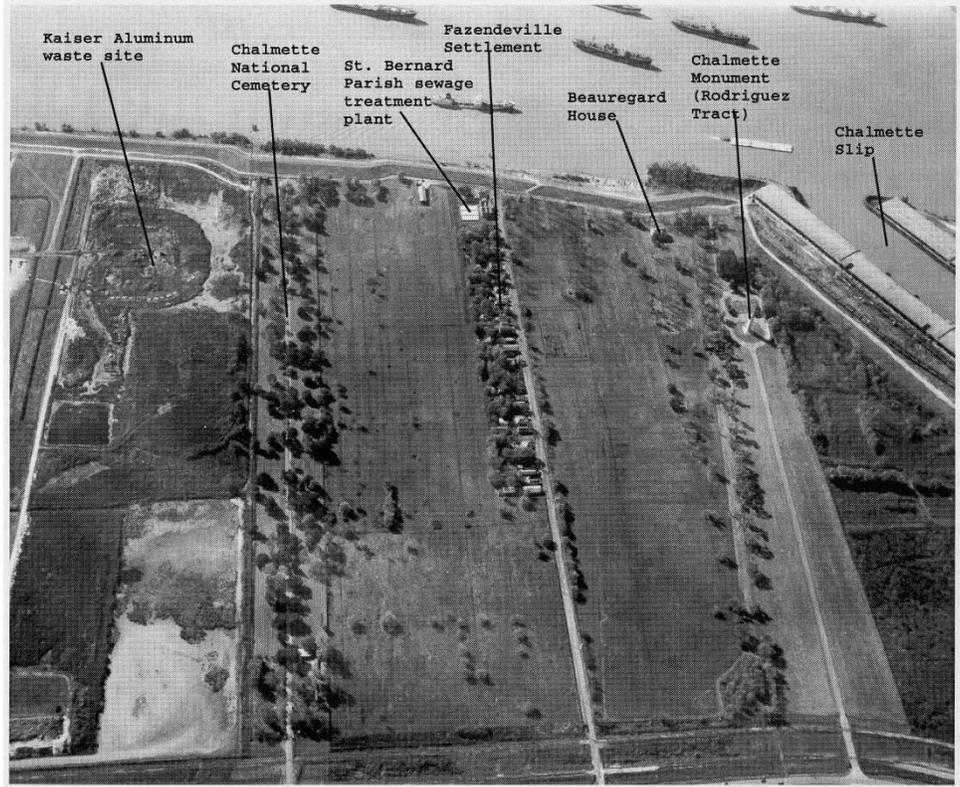


Figure 4. Bird's eye view of Fazendeville community and Chalmette Unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park looking Southwest above St. Bernard Hwy. (#10-10-001)
[Annotations by K. Risk]



Figure 5. Aerial photograph of former site of Fazendeville community. [Annotations by C. Flanagan]

through which communities are conceived, develop, and endure in spite of adverse circumstances and, in this case, ultimate physical removal.

Here, I record the natural flow of community life over several decades. My goal is to preserve the life and history of Fazendeville and stimulate dialog about an almost forgotten place by exploring the lives of its inhabitants. These individuals defy generalization and have maintained community despite removal; their voices deserve to be heard.

Perspectives

Only in recent historical inquiry, have the family and the social and political organization of the community received attention. For the poor and oppressed in American society, individualism was often an unaffordable luxury sacrificed for the needed support of the collectivity (Thompson, 1963). Nowhere is this communal support more valued or more significant than among African Americans. For these reasons, the few blacks who did find their way into the pages of American history did so as individuals. Liberal scholars often hail Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and W.E.B. Du Bois as proof of the existence of social mobility in America for oppressed people who are talented and determined. However, they are often treated by historians as men without communities. There is great need for cultural history of the black experience that focuses on the interrelationships of ordinary blacks and their communities. It has become clear that the lives of the exceptional few cannot alone bring a full understanding and appreciation of the richness of the African American communal experience.

Several cultural and historical studies have investigated the nature of the black communal experience under the institution of slavery (Levine 1977; Franklin 1974, originally published in 1946; Blassingame 1972; Genevese 1974). There is a consensus that for the enslaved, community association and alliances constituted an important shield against some of the destructive effects of bondage, and that cooperative relationships within the community were critical factors in black survival during this era. Recognition of the importance of the black community also appears in the work of scholars who have investigated the freed community during the eras of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights (Dollard 1937; Powdermaker 1939; Davis 1941).

The communal tradition of the West African heritage was and is embedded in the cultural memory of African Americans and since there are other studies on the particulars of this continuity, I will not discuss it here. However, several aspects of West African tradition coincide with the practical needs of an oppressed minority to encourage a cooperative approach in dealing with oppression, in this case the problems of being black in a society based on the assumption of white supremacy. Understanding the communal roots of people from Fazendeville brings greater appreciation of both their individual and collective achievements and, more importantly, focuses attention on the real and continued strength of this African American community. These strengths include cooperative effort, associational networks, human interaction, and self-government.

The study of a black community, that could be said to no longer exist, presents many difficulties. Written records of any kind are rare, and if institutional records exist, they are sketchy. The silence of the written record testifies to the lack of importance the dominant white society granted to the occupants of a place like Fazendeville. It is

possible, however, with patience, inventiveness, imagination and a good research design to reconstruct an African American community, its institutions, traditions, and the interrelations of its people. This process can bring a fuller understanding of the multiplicity of American experiences and allow for a needed supplement to the traditional story of the region.

Here, I use as many of the tools and resources available to researchers toward penetrating the veil of invisibility surrounding the cultural history of Fazendeville. Listening to many different voices, as they recount a variety of experiences, and express a range of attitudes toward events helps to sharpen our awareness of this place. I also hope to encourage others who struggle to view non-elite communities from the inside.

Methodology

I have engaged a variety of research techniques in my investigation of the sociocultural and historical structures of the Fazendeville community, both to understand the community, and to keep the memory alive. The main focus here is on the years between 1939 and 1964; however, understanding this period involves placing it in the historical and cultural context of an earlier period. In addition, much has happened since 1964 in terms of migration and settlement, later achievements, and visions for the future.

Only an interior view will allow others the vantage point from which to observe the survival and support functions of such a community. The narratives and resources yet to be discussed, however, are not unique to this community and are not limited to the study of African Americans. They are not even limited to the time period under study, however they do call for incorporation of several academic disciplines.

Since the early 1970's, social historians have begun to realize the significance of unconventional sources, yet it is clear that the evaluation of those sources is very difficult. The problems of reliability, authenticity, and the relative scarcity of these sources in some areas, as well as their contradictory abundance in others, demand extensive discussions of findings in relation to methods and interpretive concepts. .

Qualitative Research – Folklorists, anthropologists and social historians often do similar research and share the same methodologies, at least in some oral collecting situations. Since I am dealing with a certain kind of community and its cultural history, I am engaging in qualitative research. Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. It often includes the collection of data through interviews, observations and documents. For this study, I use all of the above methods. Because of the data available on Fazendeville, I rely most heavily on oral histories and ethnographic interviews.

Collecting oral histories or personal narratives is a dynamic interactive methodology that preserves an individual's own words and perspectives in a particularly authentic way. When I ask a people to speak about themselves, if they are willing to accommodate me, they relax and walls are broken down. Usually, it is very easy for people to speak about themselves. They feel comfortable so they give me an intimate perspective of their interpretation and understanding of their own life and events that occurred in the past that they participated in or witnessed. I encourage them to tell me what is important for them and the community then and now. In addition, tales, anecdotes, legends, songs, and other forms of spoken language can be used as sources of

data about the past as they are recalled in oral histories. An individual's account of her/his own life is not just personal, but also cultural, social, historical, and political.

Ethnography, is an attempt to describe culture or aspects of culture. Ethnography can also be defined as “a journey to tell the truth, the truth that lives in the habitat of others”(Richardson 2000). The term is usually used interchangeably with qualitative research and usually refers to forms of social research based in observing and exploring the nature of- sociocultural phenomena, and interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions.

I have used both modes of inquiry, oral history and ethnographic research, in interviewing individuals to obtain information. Ethnographic descriptions and cultural interpretations bring out the way a person is involved in the culture or a particular tradition, how they behave and their attitudes. Oral histories may capture the life of a person from birth to present, or focus on some particular period in his or her life, expressing the experiences in their own words. In this way, oral history interviews can encompass some of the same information as ethnographic interviews. To recover some of the voices of the Fazendeville community and to attempt to find the most complete story, I am using a combination of both.

I interviewed eighteen people, most of ~~whom~~who live in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans, right across the parish boundary line of St. Bernard and Orleans Parish. The respondents were of both sexes and of similar educational backgrounds and economic levels. While I used an interview guide, I was always ready to improvise when necessary, depending on the person or the topic. I began by asking very specific questions, and later I encouraged the respondent to reminisce freely on certain topics. I

recorded the interviews on a portable tape recorder and transcribed them closely, preserving stylistic and idiomatic expressions. In addition, I utilize as many validity controls as possible, that is, crosschecking interviews with other primary and secondary sources for accuracy.

Document Research – Many of the tools of the social-political historian are, of course, also useful for the kind of community study suggested here. Particularly important are local newspapers, which provide news of community events and of local developments of concern to local people. Obituaries, letters to the editor, police reports, and general news provide extremely useful clues to social and economic patterns and insight into community values. Circulation figures provide an indication of the degree of community literacy only to a certain extent, because in many poorer communities, publications are shared. The geographic reporting area suggests the extent of inter-community contact.

There are other traditional sources which can be used. Letters, diaries, autobiographies, and photographic scrapbooks are splendid documents when they can be located. Church records are treasure troves of community information. However, these are difficult to locate. Most of the time, I have had to reconstruct the lives of community people and their relations with one another one piece at a time, triangulating among interviews with different people and public documents. In this type of research, each scrap of evidence is important. Other pieces to the puzzle may appear later, as more documents are examined and checked against one another to verify information. This kind of piecing together is necessary for the study of a community such as Fazendeville because individual records are seldom complete for the non-elite.

Another useful tool is the city directory. In the early directories, the format varied from city to city and some even indicated race; however, where directories are integrated it is much more difficult to reconstruct a black community. Another problem with the city directory is the fact that they list only heads of household, and are therefore of limited use for tracing women and children. Directories also tended to underrepresent the poor and the residentially unstable, while those who owned property and particularly businesses, appeared in the listings. I had to take care not to assume that the picture presented in a city directory is representative. As a document of community pride, it is likely to exaggerate the extent of economic success within the community.

Another category of document, perhaps the most widely used by social historians, is the U.S. Census records. Starting in 1790, the nation counted its population every ten years. The results were used to apportion representation in the Federal House of Representatives. The information collected for the census became increasingly extensive so that by 1850 a variety of types of information were gathered on individual Americans. There are difficulties presented by census records before 1880 when census takers, for the first time, indicated the relationship of household members to the household head. Since there is no certain method to determine the precise relationships among the members of a household, I am forced to use a system for judging such relationships.

The census also illustrates several other important patterns among blacks. In using the census to examine households, I find that it illustrates several other important patterns among blacks. The letter "B" in the column indicating race denotes those judged to be "black" while the letter "M" in that column denotes those judged to be "mulatto." These judgments were usually made by census takers and represented observed shade of

skin color rather than racial heritage. This was, no doubt, an imprecise designation, as census takers more sensitive to the nuances of color recorded race differently than those less sensitive. Despite these limitations, however, some important marriage patterns emerge. An understanding of the meaning of color within the black society is significant to any meaningful analysis of relations among African Americans, especially in southern Louisiana. In addition, the census provides some information about ordinary aspects of people's lives, such as occupations and residential patterns.

Other government documents, including those of the Freedmen's Bureau, local land and courthouse records and other archival materials, and "gray" literature, aid in the reconstruction of the social patterns of Fazendeville. In addition, tax records, personal and business inventories, and city records are all useful for documenting the economic progress of a community or individual. Combining information from a number of kinds of documents can bring to light significant data, which would not have been suggested by those records used separately. In particular, the family Bible is important because many people recorded in it birth, marriage, and death dates, as well as other important family information, and sometimes it is used for document storage. Wills, deeds, probate and court records, health records, and police records can also contribute.

Military records may also provide information. Although the data are not systematic and definitive yet, it appears that during World War II, close to twenty men were drafted from the Fazendeville community. It will also be interesting to see if anyone from the community served in World War I. U.S. military records in the National Archives may be useful in providing information on the men and women who served and

what effect their service had on Fazendeville during their absence and following their return to the Village.

Other methods, including cognitive maps, transect mapping with respondents, genealogies, photographic documentation add to the rich, if herd won, data.

This discussion of methodology illustrates the possibilities for new ways of combining sources. Properly employed with patience and imagination, this methodology allows the reconstruction of an important African American community, its institutions and the interrelations of its people. It can bring fuller understanding of the multiplicity of African American experiences and allow for needed supplement to the traditional story of the region. Perhaps we will finally be able to hear the extraordinary story of ordinary people and their life in the Village.

Undeniably, the land that the people of Fazendeville owned and inhabited has multiple histories and lineages. It is difficult to adequately come to terms with the social multidimensionality and the politics of its past, present, and future unless we acknowledge and embrace this diversity---both the intrinsic, enriching and dynamic sociocultural breadth and the extrinsic, troubling contested political depth. Post-Civil War anthropological studies of African American rural communities are few, and have occupied a peripheral position. The marginalizing of African American rural communities has rendered them, using W.E.B. Dubois's insightful metaphor, *veiled* or hidden within the larger canon of narrative texts and discourses.

The study I undertake here has, in the process of interpreting a realistic narrative of a poor black community from inquiry and investigation of fragile and scattered records, participates in blurring ethnography's boundaries. As Renato Rosaldo points out,

the current trend of blurring ethnography's boundaries has created space for historically subordinated, or *subaltern*, scholarship (1993:xviii). Subaltern points of view reward the bravery of those who give them voice because they can enrich, as well as complicate, anthropological analysis. Rosaldo underscores that "[anthropology] only stands to lose by ignoring how the oppressed analyze their own situations. Indeed, the dominated usually understands the dominant better than the reverse. In coping with their daily lives, they simply must" (189).

The information compiled in this study repossesses and repositions the Fazendeville community lineage within the discipline and within the region. These oral histories, ethnographic observations and tangible documents provide an invaluable view of the black experience as lived through the community's history. This study represents a collaborative effort of several disciplines—anthropology, social history, folklore, and geography--to make visible, to situate, and to consolidate a broad range of data in order to trace and document an extraordinary community.

The process of learning as much as possible about Fazendeville raises several questions: Who were the African American pioneers attracted to this land and why did they come? How did their lives and work reflect the institutional structure of the enslaved communities they migrated from? What were their lived experiences in this river enclave? How did they cope with, resist, or contest ideological and institutional racism? How did they resist victimization and express proactive agency? What contribution to the region and to the disciplines have the pioneers and their descendents made? How can the legacy and historical reconstruction of Fazendeville serve as a basis for future studies? These questions are explored here.

II. Historical Background: Parish & Plantation

St. Bernard Parish

The first land that was discovered and named by the French settlers within the boundaries of Louisiana was the shore of St. Bernard, including the Chandeleur Islands. These islands are mostly located within the boundaries of St. Bernard Parish, and stretch into Plaquemines Parish. These two parishes provided the first frontier to the French settlers of Louisiana. These islands were named by Iberville, Bienville and Father Anastase Douey on the Christian Feast Day of Candlemas, February 2, 1699 (Estavas 1990).

Most of St. Bernard Parish is marshland, and about 2/3 of its 1,524,201 acres are surrounded by water, which consists primarily of estuary wetlands formed by the Mississippi River Delta some five thousand years ago. Lake Ponchartrain, Lake Borgne and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet interfacing the Gulf of Mexico make St. Bernard one of the largest and richest estuary systems on the North American continent (Figure 6).

Wealthy white settlers established plantations for the cultivation of sugarcane and indigo on the rich alluvial soil, and the wildlife of the marshlands contributed to the fur industry, for Eastern and European markets. The prime economic resources of the region have been historically associated with the wildlife, fisheries and agriculture.

Many ethnic groups have contributed to the lower Mississippi Delta region over the past two centuries including Indians, French, Spanish, Africans, Italians and Germans. During the French Regime (1718-1763), St. Bernard was a wide fertile field and cypress swamp, under the jurisdiction of the Superior Council of New Orleans. The

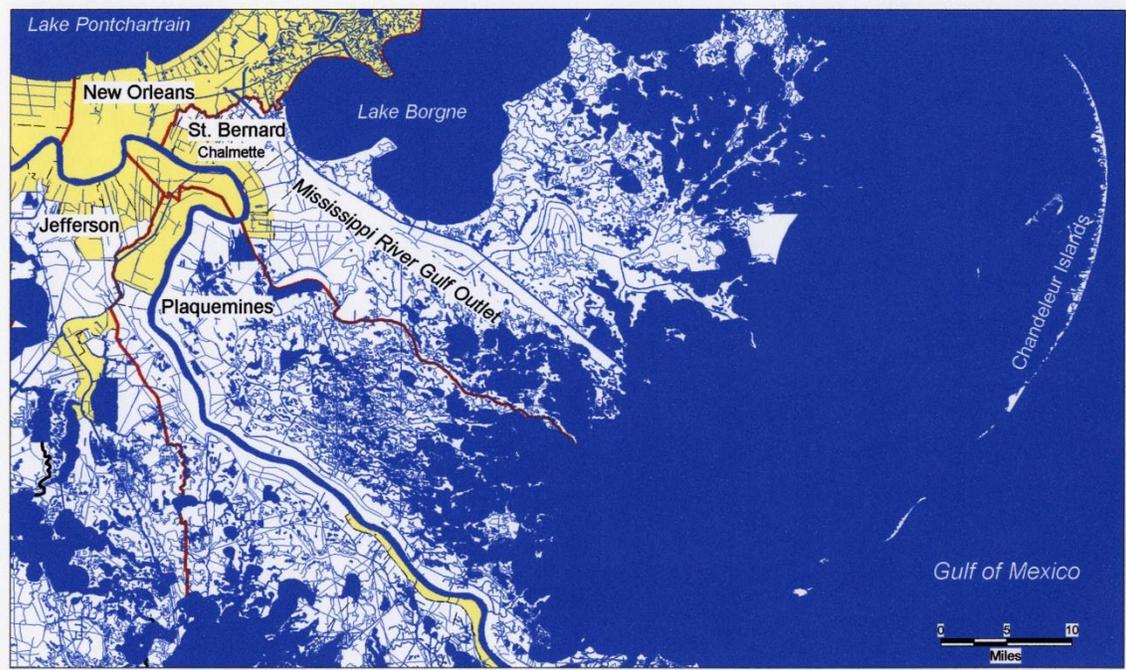


Figure 6. St. Bernard Parish, major water bodies, and surrounding marshlands. (C. Flanagan)

Company of the Indies originally awarded the land in 1721 to Sieur Le Blanc, in Arabi (Giraud 1991). Then in 1777, the ruling Spanish implemented a plan to resettle groups of Spaniards, Acadians and other nationalities that were not tolerant of the English. Spain's immigration program resulted in five settlements including Valenzuela (on the banks of Bayou Lafouche in Assumption Parish) and San Bernardo, which were settled by the Canary Islanders (Armistead 1992).

In 1805, Governor William C.C. Claiborne approved an act that divided the area of Orleans into counties; two years later, he further subdivided this area, establishing St. Bernard Parish. The parish was named in honor of Bernardo de Galvez who, along with Pierre Philippe de Marigny de Mandeville of Spain, separated St. Bernard Parish from the direct supervision of New Orleans. The new area was called St. Bernard Post or St. Bernard District. It was described as being four units below New Orleans along Bayou Terre-Aux-Boeufs. When Bernard was granted the large tract of land, it came with the

stipulation that he had to colonize it. In order to **aeffect** this project, a large number of colonists were brought from the Canary Islands in approximately 1778 (Din 1998:15).

The Canary Islanders, also known as Isleños, helped to contribute to the unique history and culture of the area.

Finally, in 1807, St. Bernard became an official incorporated American parish when the New Orleans territorial legislature discarded the county system of local government and restored the Spanish system of districts and established nineteen parishes.

Chalmette Plantation

Chalmette received its name from the original plantation, which was owned by Ignance Martin de Livo de Chalmette in 1755-1815. (Maps that were prepared by La Carriere Latour in 1815 spelled the name as “Chalmet.”) The documentary record of the site, which today is the Chalmette Battlefield, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, illustrates that the area had numerous owners and a wide range of land uses since its original settlement. Ted Birkedal sums it up well in his unpublished report quoted in Risk’s study:

From the beginning of European settlement to the present, [the Chalmette Unit’s] history has been reflective of the wider history of the city and St. Bernard Parish. Its fields produced indigo and later sugar as cash crops for the vast plantations of the French and Spanish colonial periods. Early in the American era these same fields were broken-up and subdivided to meet the growing demand for small, landed estates among New Orleans’ increasingly prosperous merchants and professional classes (1999:14,15).²

Chalmette plantation covered slightly over twenty-two arpents fronting on the Mississippi River. The lowermost six arpents of the front plantation was granted to or purchased by Francois Philippe de Marigny prior to 1728. This larger tract can be traced back to the

French Colonial Period. It included the other portion of the Chalmette plantation where no direct chain of title from the French colonial period survives today (Greene 1985:178).

The landholdings in the area, passed to Marie Madeleine Le Maire, Marigny's widow after his death. She then married Captain Ignace Francois Broutin, Chief Engineer of the Louisiana colony. Eventually, ownership of the property passed to Marigny's son, Antoine Philippe de Marigny de Mandeville. Antoine Philippe's widow sold ten arpents of land to Charles Antoine de Reggio, who subsequently, sold six arpents of the property to Ignace de Lino de Chalmet in 1805 (1985:178-179). Chalmette was the major property in relation to the War of 1812 battlefield; the sequence of land tenure is important to understand other aspects of life during this historical era. Green states:

Several properties composed the acreage of the New Orleans battlefield and its environs. These were, from upstream, the MaCarty, Rodriquez, Chalmete, Bienvenue, De La Ronde, Lacoste, and Villere' plantations. The engagement of December 23, 1814, occurred on the De La Ronde, Lacoste, and Villere' properties, while those of December 28, 1814, January 1, and January 8, 1815, took place on the Rodriquez Chalmette, and Bienvenue holdings, although cognate operations occurred on all the tracts. Like most of the others, the Chalmette Plantation occupied a somewhat rectangular piece of ground that stretched more than 1,000 yards along the Mississippi and ranged between 1,000 and 1,500 yards inland to the cypress swamp....The flat terrain of Chalmette was interspersed by buildings and groves near the river, but the vast majority of land was given over to sugar cane, which in December, 1814, had been harvested so that most of the broad fields were filled with stubble (1985:4,5).

Initially a colonial plantation, Chalmette eventually became one of the larger plantations owned by free men of color during the early nineteenth century (Green: 1985:220). Two brothers, Hilaire and Louis St. Amand, who were wealthy free men of color, bought the twenty-two-arpent property known as Chalmette. This transaction took place in 1817, two years after the death of Lino de Chalmet. Under the Amand brothers' ownership, the property was returned to sugarcane production. In order to sustain

sugarcane agriculture, the brothers owned slaves. They constructed slave quarters and sugar production facilities. Later in 1832, they subdivided the land into smaller tracts to pay off debts. Jean Pierre Fazende inherited the third tract marked Delery on Zimpel's map in 1857 (Figure 7). He was a New Orleans grocer and also a free man of color. Fazende began subdividing that part of his property that was close to the river and began selling individual lots in the 1870s. This property developed into the African American linear village of Fazendeville.

The Birkedal study states:

Following the Civil War, the land use pattern shifted again; the handsome riverfront estates of the antebellum period gave way to the effects of adjacent industrialization. White industrial workers established homes along the once elite riverfront, and Black workers took residence along one of the old plantation ditches and founded the community of Fazendeville. Perhaps because it was flanked by memorialized property, the land that was eventually to become the park unit escaped major industrial developments in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1999:14).

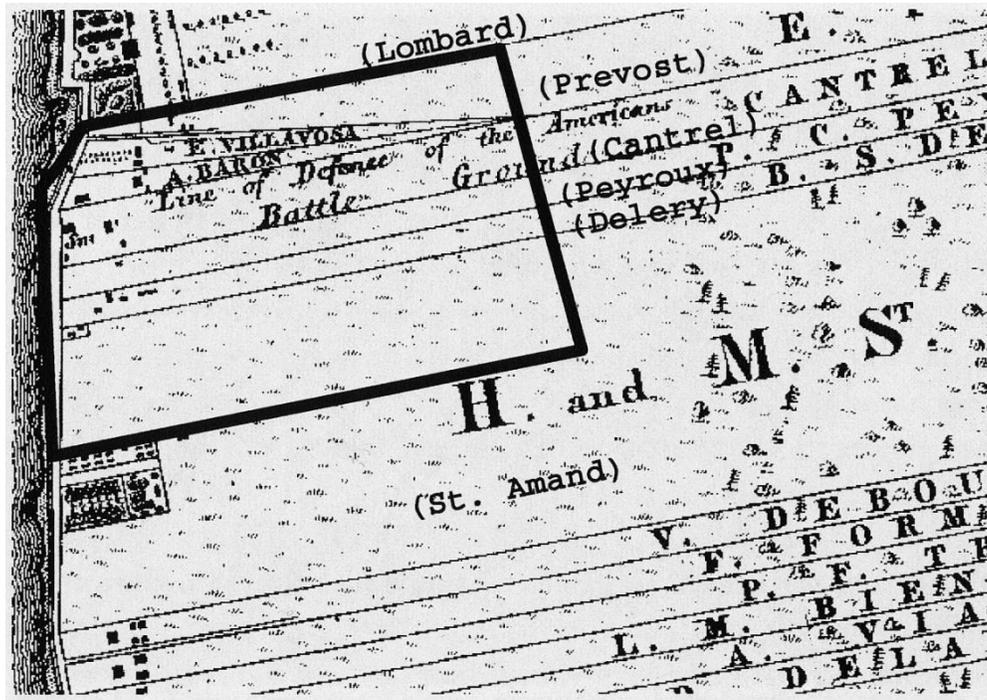


Figure 7. 1834 Zimpel map of New Orleans and vicinity showing Delery tract which later became the Fazendeville community. [Annotations by K. Risk]

Today, if one ventures down Rampart Street, until it turns into St. Claude, and continues until further along, after crossing the St. Bernard Parish line, it becomes Highway 46, one arrives at Chalmette ~~National Historical Park Battlefield~~. There is an official Park Service historical marker to help motorists identify the site. ~~The~~ Chalmette ~~was established as a~~ National Historical Park ~~on August 10, 1939; later, it~~ was incorporated into Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve ~~established~~ legislated in 1978 by public Law 95-625. The National Park marks the site where the Battle of New Orleans took place on January 8, 1815. During this battle, General Andrew Jackson's American army defeated the British under General Pakenham.

After the Civil War, understanding the growth factor is central to the study of the region. The population exceeds a number of forces on the growth process, and these forces help establish the form and character of subsequent development, giving it human dimension. In 1890, the population of the area was 5,041, including 2,347 whites, 1,523 blacks and 409 mulattos (1890 U.S. Census Report). The rest of the population of 765 consists of what the census deems foreign-born white peoples. The life-style and the general character of the population influenced the accepted living patterns and the economic activities carried out in the region. When the census was next taken in 1910, the population had grown to 8,277 consisting of 2,920 native white, 423 foreign-born white, and 6,720 Negroes and note here again that the distinction between Negro and mulatto was lost in the census interval (1910 U.S. Census Report). The relationship of commercial, industrial, and residential activity areas and the way these areas are linked by transportation and communication facilities began to give another physical form to the area. I find that the increase in the black population corresponds both with the activity

areas above, and also a trend of movement away from their parent's birth plantations. Interview data confirms that many of the first generation residents in the Fazendeville community migrated from plantations in other river parishes including Ascension, Lafourche, Plaquemine, St James, and St. Charles. Although we know that the first structures on the Fazendeville subdivision were built in the 1870s, the early twentieth century was the era nearing which the Fazendeville Village began to flourish.

III. Life in the Village

The Cultural Landscape

Migration of Southern black people searching for better conditions began in the years after the Civil War with a steady flow of blacks to Southern urban centers, along with a trickle to the North. With the end of the Civil War, many blacks left the plantations and their worn-out lands to move toward fields that were more fertile, as an effort to elevate themselves from lowly day laborers or sharecroppers to the more elevated cash renters or even land and farm owners. Though the evidence is sketchy, it appears that black movements peaked during periods of acute economic crisis toward the close of the depression of the 1870s, at the height of the Populist-agrarian agitation around 1890, and perhaps again around the minor depression that hit the United States on the eve of the First World War.

Because it is unclear exactly when the Village of Fazendeville was established, it was logical to start the investigation of its origin by researching the name Fazende as it appears in Louisiana history. Jacques Fazende came to Louisiana with Bienville and was a member of the Superior Council, the governing body of the colony when it was under French control. His term began four years after the founding of New Orleans in 1722 (Giraud 1991:6). Eventually, the Fazende family would own four properties not far from each other on the west bank of the Mississippi River from New Orleans (Figure 7).

In the category of African American, the name Fazende is first mentioned in the 1870 census of St. Bernard Parish. It indicates that Pierre (age 60 years) and Pauline (age 40 years) live in “Dwelling House #88.” There is no additional information on the location of the house. Both were born in Louisiana and both were farm laborers.

However, neither could read nor write. According to Ron Chapman, a historian at Nunez Community College, Ralph Cager, whose family grew up in Fazendeville, claims that this Fazende came from Plaquemine Parish. However, the Plaquemines Parish Court House burned so unfortunately, any earlier records may have been destroyed. Further examination of 1880 census data indicates the formation of an African American community in St. Bernard. A cluster of 17 black families lived in houses 138-155, a specified area (1880 U.S. Census). Many of the names listed are family names associated with Fazendeville. A careful examination of the map (Figure 7) indicates clearly that the site of the Fazendeville community started on the Chalmette Plantation. Other African American settlements formed further south including Violet, Toca, Mareauville^[PA1] and others (Figure 8).

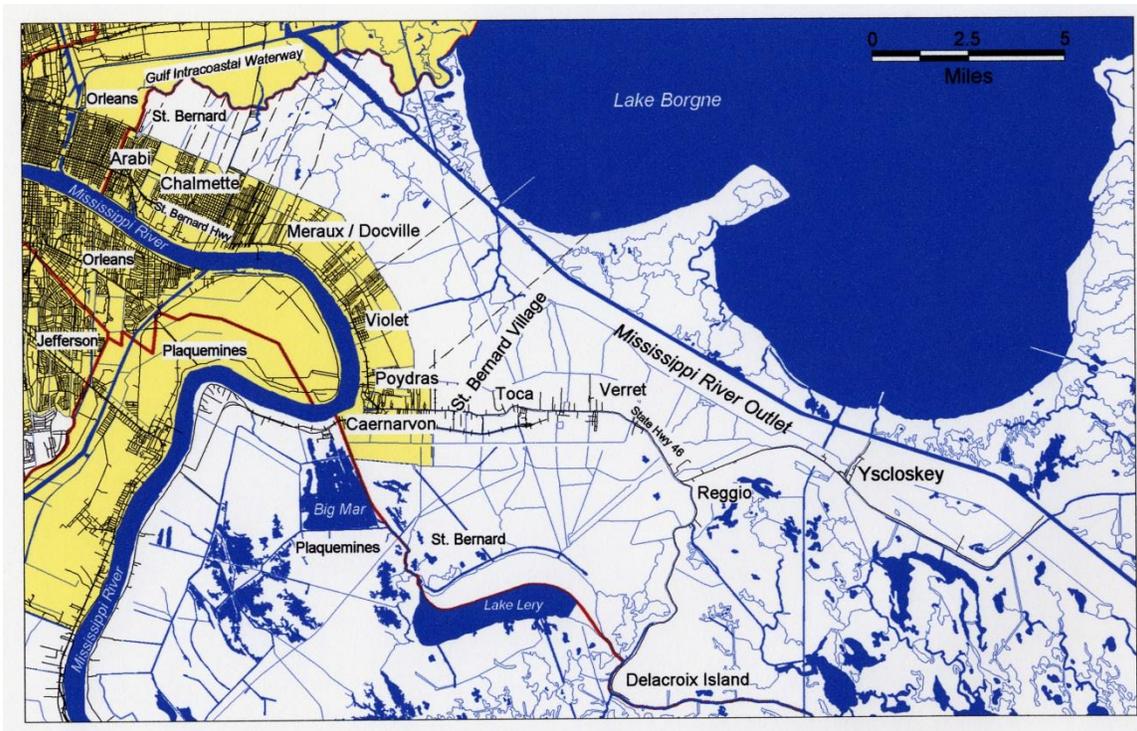


Figure 8. Local place names cited by former Fazendeville residents. (C. Flanagan)

In light of the growth of the free black population and the subsequent expansion of black residential areas, external pressures arose from whites to impede their expansion, especially when blacks sought to purchase land. In addition to external pressures from whites, there were also internal forces among blacks that contributed to the increasing number of rural and urban black settlements. Motivated by the need for mutual protection from external rejection, blacks found refuge within their own community. The institutional structures of the Village—the church, clubs, fraternal orders, and school—were typical of black settlements, in that they were centered in the community, thus discouraging many from moving into distant areas.

The Church

Black migration in the United States and throughout the diaspora was rendered less onerous because of religion. Historically and traditionally, religion was an organizing principle of the life structure of the community. Black churches have been the most significant, conservative and dominant institutional phenomenon in African American communities. As C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya assert, “The proscriptions of 250 years of slavery, followed by another hundred years of Jim Crow segregation, permitted only the religious enterprise among black people to become a stable, cohesive, and independent social institution. As a consequence, black churches have carried burdens and performed roles and functions beyond their boundaries of spiritual nurture in politics, economics, education, music, and culture” (1999: 92-93).

In the Village, Battle Ground Baptist Church (Lot 10, Track 29-See Appendix) was a central structure, as place of worship, school, forum venue, political arena, social club, dramatic theater, conservatory of music and ritual space for other celebrations and

life cycle rites, including christenings, marriages, and funerals. With these multiple levels of community involvement located within the Church, it is no wonder that this was the first institution to be owned and controlled by and for blacks in this community, and in many others. W.E.B. Du Bois has referred to the building of black churches as the “first form of economic cooperation” among black people (1907:54). Not only did the church give birth to new institutions, including schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and in addition nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development (Franklin and Mamiya 1990:8). After all, religion is, as Durkeim has made clear, a social phenomenon, a shared group experience that has shaped and influenced the cultural screens of human communication and interpretation (1965).

The black sacred cosmos, or the religious worldview of African Americans, is related both to their African heritage and to their conversion to Christianity during slavery and its aftermath. In terms of the African heritage, religion is envisioned as a part of everyday life; therefore most activities in the community centered on the church; this was and is the case for Fazendeville.

The Fazendeville church history, collectively reconstructed by elderly members and written by Mrs. Doretha Thomas, was printed in the 1992 program book for the church’s 124th year anniversary. Battle Ground Baptist Church was founded in 1868 on Godchaux Plantation in Chalmette, Louisiana. The first worship service was held in Morais Sugar Mill, and the site where the Battle of New Orleans was fought inspired the few members to give that same name to the church. Rev. John Anderson served as the first pastor from 1868 to 1872. This same year the church was moved to a settlement

known as Oak Alley, which was destroyed by fire in 1892. Afterwards the church was relocated again. The location of its third home was in Fazendeville. A committee of women who referred to themselves as “The Willing Workers” raised the \$400.00 to purchase the property, and this time, it remained in the same community for 49 years. In January 1927, the edifice was again totally destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt in 1928 (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Old historical Battle Ground Baptist Church, 1928-1964. (NPS Photograph)

After the National Park Service purchased the property through condemnation/ eminent domain, the church was relocated to Flood Street in the lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans in 1964. This area is only a few miles across the Orleans Parish line from Chalmette. That same year, hurricane Betsy came through destroying the church again,

this time by flooding. Once more, the Church was faced with rebuilding, and a few years later, an annex was added to the original edifice (Figure 10). In the church's 135 years of existence, eight pastors led the congregation. Rev. Theodore Sanders presently holds the position, having become pastor in 1986. Battle Ground Baptist Church has certainly stood the tests of fire, flood, and the federal government, proving that it is definitely a strong anchor for the community of Fazendeville in the past and in the present (Thomas 1992).



Figure 10. Battle Ground Baptist Church, 1964 – present. (NPS Photograph)

There are only a few activities that brought large numbers of persons into face-to-face contact in the Village. They are basically religious in nature, and are often considered to be the most exciting gatherings in Fazendeville. It is mainly through these

events that the community visibly becomes a cohesive social entity. Most of the adults and many of the children participated in revivals, baptisms, funeral ceremonies and the yearly Watch Night meetings on New Year's Eve. The deacons, deaconesses, and ministers of the church cooperated with one another, and joined together in organizing and implementing the various seasonal services.

Starting with the beginning of the year, the Watch Night meeting was important to the community, because everybody considered it was taboo not to be in the church praying when the New Year began. Members pray, testify, and lead spirituals and hymns as the feeling comes to them. Rose Cager remembers:

We did not have day church. It started at 8:00 p.m. and it would be after 12 midnight when they finished their testimonies. When we took communion, we did not have individual cups. They had one big cup and everyone would drink from the same cup. They passed the cup and said, "as often as you do this show forth my death and suffering until I come again." I would not want to do that now with all that's happening, but at that time you did not have to worry about diseases (2002).

Some residents who did not attend church on a regular basis but engaged in other more secular activities, did make a special effort to be in the church when the clock approached twelve on New Year's Eve, as Morris Williams recalls:

Yes, we used to have Watch Night service. We would get up and testify. Some of them old guys come out there...even now and then on New Year's night, the sinners used to come to church, what they used to do was wait until ten minutes before twelve, and then all of them would pack up in back of the church, right by the front door. They wouldn't move any further; they would stay right there. Then when they'd come out, they'd have their popguns, or shotguns or firecrackers. Then they'd go back to the barroom (2002).

In the Battle Ground Baptist Church, Watch Meeting is still a part of the seasonal services, declares Rev. Theodore Sanders: "We still have Watch Meeting; we pray out the old year and pray in the New Year. We are still doing it" (2002).

Living and growing up in an African American community, in the southern United States, I have witnessed many and heard about more Watch Night services in most Black Protestant churches. It is a church gathering of the faithful and not so faithful on New Year's Eve. The service usually begins anywhere between 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and ends at midnight with the beginning of the New Year. Some congregants come to church first, before going out to celebrate, and for others, Watch Night service is the only New Year's Eve event.

In interviewing many African Americans about Watch Night services, I have found that most of them assumed that Watch Night was a fairly standard Christian religious service which was made more Afrocentric in their churches because of the song repertoire, performance practices, ways of testimony, and shouting style. According to most blacks that I have interviewed, it appears that predominantly White Protestant churches did not include Watch Night services on their calendars, but focused instead on Christmas Eve programs. In fact, there were instances where clergy in mainline denominations spoke against the propriety of linking sacred services with a secular holiday like New Year's Eve.

However, there is a reason for the significance and continuity of New Year's Eve services in African American congregations. The Watch Night meetings in black churches that are celebrated today can be traced back to gatherings and meetings on December 31, 1862, also known as "Freedom's Eve." On that night, Americans of African descent came together in churches, barns, private homes and other gathering places throughout the nation, anxiously awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had become law (Lincoln also issued a proclamation of freedom on

September 22, 1862). Then after the stroke of midnight, on January 1, 1863, and according to Lincoln's promise, all slaves in the Confederate States were legally free. For example, in *The Emancipation Proclamation*, John Hope Franklin states:

By nightfall, Negroes all over the country nervously awaited their "Days of Days." In Washington, close to the center of history, they crowded into the chapel in the contraband camp at Twelfth and Q Streets for the "watch night" meeting. There were prayers of thanksgiving and hallelujah hymns. One man rejoiced that wives and children could not be sold any more. It was near the break of day before they disbanded (1964: 87).³

Franklin continues with another example from New York's Shiloh Presbyterian Church where there was a New Year's Eve Grand Emancipation Jubilee: "At 11:55 P.M. there was a five-minute period of silent prayer. At midnight the choir sang, "Blow Ye Trumpets Blow, the Year of Jubilee has come."...Wherever Negroes were on New Year's Eve, 1862, there was little time for sleeping (1964: 87-88)!⁴

Similarly, William H. Wiggins, Jr. states in *Oh Freedom! Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations* that, "In New England, racially mixed congregations of free Afro-Americans and white abolitionists spent the last night of 1862 singing and praying for freedom in special Emancipation Watch Night Services (1979: 331).

This patriotic and religious thanksgiving mode of celebration provides the model for most contemporary New Year's Eve observances in the Black Church. This tradition transcends denominations, socioeconomic class distinctions, religious ideology and geographical areas. The major components of this religious observance are singing favorite spirituals, gospels and hymns, praying, testifying, shouting and preaching. However, in some cases when the actual news of freedom was received later that day, there were prayers, shouts and songs of joy as people fell to their knees and thanked God. Generations have passed since that first Freedom's Eve and the events after midnight

changed in some churches. Some congregations moved the benches and pews back against the wall or moved into the fellowship hall to proceed with the shouting, ring shouts, or religious dance that continued the celebration in a sacred space (Rosenbaum 1998).

In Fazendeville, after the Watch Night service was over in Battle Ground Baptist Church, some men would go home and fire their guns, others would shoot firecrackers and other assorted fireworks. In addition, as Mr. Morris Williams recalls, “some go to house parties or back to the barroom and continue the celebration.” However a member chooses to celebrate getting through another year, the tradition still brings the community together at this time every year to celebrate once more “how we got over.”

River baptism was another one of the most essential spiritual events of the year in the Village and significant also in each person’s life as they decide to “give their life to Christ.” Preparations concerning the person’s life ways and spirituality, from the construction of the robes, to preparing the baptizing space in the river were all taken seriously. This ritual was not a simple matter, as the following accounts of Mrs. Loretta Cager Bush and Rose Drew Cager attest to:

We were on the mourner’s bench for about two weeks and you would have to tell the deacons something when they examined you.....They would march down to the river. Twenty-six were baptized with me. I was the youngest one in the group. Most of them are dead now. You called them your river sisters and brothers. After baptizing, we would go back home and dress up in your pretty dresses and veils then we would go to the church and take communion (L. Bush 2000).

We used to baptize in the river around Easter. I got baptized when I was eleven years old. It was October 1, 1930. They used to call it travel. If you did not have travel, you could not get baptized. I was on the mourner’s bench for three months. Thirty candidates were baptized. The deacons would examine you with catechism. If you did not answer the questions like they wanted, you would have to go back and pray some more.....I was not afraid when the deacons came to question me because I told the truth. They called it the water system. We would hold hands, the boys first and the girls followed. The preacher

and the deacons would walk in the front and we would march behind. It was a beautiful occasion. You talking about people, all the people in the Village would attend. After the baptizing, we would dress up in white dresses and everybody would take communion. Church would start at 3:00 p.m. We did not have a piano. We sang old meter songs by Dr. Watts like “Dark was the Night and Cold the Ground” and “None but the Righteous Shall See God” were some of the songs. Everybody had their favorite hymn before they testified (R. Cager 2000).⁵

In the eyes of most Baptists, two rituals distinguish them from all other religious bodies: rites of full-body immersion baptism and mourning rites. Mrs. Rose Cager spoke of the “water system,” meaning full-body immersion instead of sprinkling with water, and she also spoke of sitting on the “mourner’s bench” for three months and “traveling.” Mourning is a period when the candidate for baptism obtains spiritual growth by intensive praying and listening to ministers preach for many days during revival, which is often held for a week. The candidate for baptism may have dreams, see visions, hear a voice or have some other indication that they are ready for the rite of baptism. During this period they also may “travel.” The candidates’ travel is their spiritual journey through prayer and how they acquire their dreams, visions and other indications of the spirit. After their journey, a deacon or another church official examines them on aspects of the Bible and their vision. Mrs. Rose Cager said, “If you did not answer the questions like they wanted, you would have to go back and pray some more.” This meant having to return to the mourner’s bench. The mourner’s bench is the first bench or first few pews in the front of the church. It is referred to as the mourner’s bench not only for baptismal candidates, but also because grieving families and close friends occupy these benches at the wake and funeral of a deceased person.

Preparations for baptism are no longer as rigorous as the preparations described by Mrs. Loretta Cager Bush and Rose Drew Cager when they were baptized in the early

1900s. During the era of their baptisms, church officials imposed restrictions on personal behavior prior to the rite. Rev. Theodore Sanders declares that, these restrictions are the reason why a person did not want to reach the mourner's bench and start the rite too soon. He said they would definitely have to walk the "straight and narrow path," at least for the entire period of mourning because "all of the church would be watching." This is no longer the case in Battle Ground Baptist Church. If a person wants to "turn their life around" and be baptized, they express this by going to the front of the church during regular church service or revival. They are still brought to the mourning bench during revival or regular church service for a period of time until the next baptism. However, church officials, do not examine the candidates as they used to do. The one question they still pose is: Are you ready to receive and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Savior? The traditional rites have changed because the restrictions are often difficult to enforce due to candidates' qualifications, including the increased geographical mobility even before the church moved to the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. Restrictions have also become more lax in the church because of the change in ministers and other church officials, changes in church doctrine, member recruitment goals, and societal and cultural changes.

Traditionally baptizing was usually done around Easter and during the summer. Of course, this was the warmest time for the Mississippi River water. According to Rev. Sanders, no one wanted to come to the mourner's bench anyway during the winter because that meant you had to come to church every Sunday until baptism day or you would be frowned on by the elders.

Even now in the church on Flood Street, Rev. Sanders goes further to explain the present-day baptismal structure, “When there is a baptism we still come out of the kitchen on one side of the church, and we march around to symbolize that march from the church to the river. That still means a lot to us. And we still practice that to remember how far God has brought us. We don’t have to do it to the river.... Every time we have a baptism, we march the candidates around.” This is a symbolic march to the Jordan River from biblical passages and remembrance when they used to march to the Mississippi River when they were still in the Village.

Easter and Christmas were always special holidays for the children. It was a time when they could display their talents through the biblical plays. The church, turned theatrical stage, would give them an opportunity to exhibit their oratory, singing, and acting skills. There are many occasions where children chose life-long occupations because of these seemingly simplistic church and communal events. For Christmas, Mrs. Loretta Cager Bush reminisces, “we had festivities and we [the women] would depend on the church to keep the children occupied. There was always something going on.”

In addition, it was also a time they remembered as children because they would always acquire new “dress-up clothes,” that is, from those parents who could afford them. Some received hand-me-downs from older sisters and brothers. As Yvonne Dorsey aptly puts it:

“On Friday we would have the seven last words Jesus spoke before he was crucified. Then on Easter we would have sunrise service.....Before I learned what it meant I would refer to it as dress up time, the candy for children, and Easter eggs. Eat the candy and take medicine after, but those were happy times. The church would be packed. Everyone came to Easter service, whether you were a member or not. You had to leave the ball game alone.”

Lastly, these holidays always called for big feasts and family gatherings. There would always be certain special dishes that were not consumed during the year on a regular basis and relatives and friends would come to visit and partake of the Village celebration.

Another seasonal ritual that did not happen on an annual basis, but which occurred frequently enough for several residents to reminisce about was the “candle march.” It was also referred to as a “candle walk,” and “candle drill.” It appears that it always happened during the summer months, since they had to walk outside the church at night while holding candles. Ada Smith states, “We used to have a candlelight march and we would sing, “We Would All Go Out to Meet Her When She Come,”” relative to the passage in the Bible where they had the bride and we would all go out to meet her when she came. At night outside the church is when we marched.” Mrs. Loretta Cager Bush also remembers, “Yes, we would have candlelight marches around the church and around the Village for fundraisers. They would charge a few pennies to participate.” Morris Williams also recalls: “I remember when they had candle drills. They would sell candles. You’d buy a candle and you’d go to church and then after they’d come out the church and go to the levee, then come back to the church. Now, I don’t know what kind of celebration they call that, because I was not in the church at that time, but I used to participate with it, being a little bad boy like I was.... Most of the people would be dressed in white when you do this and some would have on normal clothes.... That’s the facts, I saw that, but to tell you the name, I cannot.”

To compensate for shortfalls in church income, a number of fund-raising activities were programmed. From sparse accounts of this candlelight march event, I assume that

this particular fund raiser was not done on a frequent basis. Most of the people that I interviewed could not remember it. In addition, there may have been other purposes for this event that are no longer remembered. However, from all indications, it was used as a fund-raiser to add to the church coffer, albeit not a particularly lucrative one. In the church today, assessments (i.e. for Women's Day, Men's Day, the Church Anniversary, etc.), free-will offerings and tithing are adequate to meet basic expenses.

In addition to Battle Ground Baptist Church, several other churches existed in the Village during varying periods of time. According to the plat ownership maps, property was purchased for the Southwestern Baptist Church (Lot 29, Track 5) on May 6, 1887, and although Battle Ground Baptist Church was the oldest established church, Southwestern Baptist was the first to be established in Fazendeville. Rev. Charlie Cager served as pastor and the church building was still there when the Federal Government razed the Village in 1964, although the congregation had disbanded fifty years before. The Congregational Sanctified Church was there quite a few years with Rev. Louis Elam as the pastor. This church was later moved to another location in New Orleans (Bush, L. 2002; Williams 2002). It was the Battle Ground Baptist Church that clearly had longevity in the Village.

There were also Catholics in the Village, who attended the nearest Catholic Church, which was St. Maurice. Mrs. Josie Page recalls segregation in St. Maurice Catholic Church:

I went there as a teenager if something happened like somebody died and they'd pass 'em through the church, or a christening. They had a rope. You'd sit in the back of the rope, like you did on the streetcar. You don't remember that huh? When you'd sit behind the screen on the streetcar, and you move it and you're sitting in the front. And white people got on and they'd make you get in the back. It's just like what they did in Alabama---or wherever they integrated the buses. It was here.

The number of Catholics and Pentecostals in the Village was small compared to the Baptists. Indeed, to be a Catholic involved factors that sometimes complicated the issue of going to church, including having to deal with the church hierarchy, some rituals in Latin, the segregated seating situation, and transportation to church.

In sum, the black Baptist church in the Village took as its mission the elevation of the religious, the moral, and the material condition of the people it served and for that it garnered the esteem of its general populace. It was also one of the associated networks that facilitated survival of the community. Since the Village was a small settlement, comprised of approximately thirty-five families at any given time, and the church was an important center of life. A more in-depth history of the Battle Ground Baptist Church would mirror the historical processes of Fazendeville in relation not only to religion, but culture and economics as well. As the cultural womb of the community, the church played a central role in the social, cultural, political, and economical significance and development of the Village.

Indeed, the church did much to alleviate the burdens of Jim Crow, segregation, and economic and political oppression. The Battle Ground Baptist Church had a peculiar place of institutional primacy in the Village, and was the custodian of the community's most basic societal and moral values. In the church, the people of Fazendeville continued their ritual practices. Revivals, baptisms, weddings, funerals, weekly Sunday services, Watch Night, Christmas and Easter services, choir rehearsals, Sunday school, Bible study, deacon and deaconess meetings, and many other group interactions brought segments of the community together. These gatherings served as a means of reaffirming the existence of the community as a shared group of people with kindred experiences.

Fraternal, Social and Benevolent Associations

Voluntary associations affirm the shared communal spirit of the people. The years following emancipation witnessed a burst of associational activity in the South, and the creation of thousands of black organizations---Masonic lodges, benevolent and mutual aid societies, social and pleasure clubs, church organizations and the like. These associations grew out of a need for black people to care for their community: to provide for their sick, properly bury their dead, care for the families of deceased members, as well as for entertainment and sociability. In order to subsidize these activities, society collected dues and fees. Sometimes the funds were invested, to pay sick benefits, and support indigent members; occasionally they lend money, and provided “strong boxes” for savings (Foner 1975: 559). Sometimes, the mutual aid groups were partnered with black fraternal and Masonic orders. Mutual aid groups contained the germ of what was to become a major black business, the insurance company (Bennett 1975: 126.) John Blassingame asserts that there were probably three reasons for the apparently low rate of public dependency in the black community during Reconstruction: whites—including those in official capacities-- were unwilling to support poor blacks, blacks had an abhorrence of public relief as a matter of racial pride, and the activities of black benevolent societies institutionalized the desire of blacks to care for their relatives and friends (1973: 167). Furthermore, if blacks were to prove their capability as freedmen, the black community had to provide for its members who could not fiend for themselves. On May 20, 1865, the New Orleans *Black Republican* summed up these sentiments exactly: “It is indispensable that the people of color indicate ability to seize upon all the avenues that are open to any people. We must have of our own whatever of intellectual activity, of

collective organization, in churches, asylums, or secular organizations, that makes up society and reveal[s] the capacity of government in a people.” To illustrate the importance of this commitment in the urban New Orleans black community of the time, some 226 African American societies were registered between 1866 and 1880 (Barlow 1989:183). Members of these associations often staged parades in full regalia, to commemorate their founding anniversary dates; they also participated in larger cooperative processions celebrating other events on the calendar.

Blassingame asserts in his work, *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880*:

The Negro societies and benevolent associations were the most important agencies involved in organized efforts to solve community social problems. Negro societies in the days before the rise of Negro insurance companies provided the major form of social security against sickness, death, and poverty. They aided orphan asylums, Negro veterans, and the indigent; gave religious education to children; and fought against segregation and for racial uplift. For individual Negroes the societies provided status, a sense of belonging, some form of organized social life, a guarantee of aid to the sick and to the children and widows of deceased members.

The associations in the Village held the same significance for their members. The associations were created to meet the specific needs of the people. They played an important role, not only in the satisfaction of common social and cultural needs but also for individual and community identity. Fraternal, social, and benevolent associations served as links between the people in the Village and their community, and provided a social context within which cultural traditions could be maintained. Although particular associations had their own specific goals, for many participants they highlighted the experience of belonging to the same ethnic, familial and sometimes religious group. Kenneth Little, a social anthropologist, has examined voluntary associations in West Africa as a conduit to social change. He attempted to “show that voluntary associations—*institutionalized groups in which membership is attained by joining*—are functionally

significant in the roles played in the new ‘urban’ economy by rural migrants....” (1965: 1). Although the system and setting were somewhat different in the case of the Village, role and function of voluntary associations are the same.

The land tract documents and ownership plat maps reveal that voluntary associations in the Village purchased land on which to construct their meeting halls in the years 1884 and 1896. The associations themselves were undoubtedly established prior to the date of land purchases, building membership and pooling resources to purchase the property. This is another point, which can render the notion of continuity of West African associations into the first opportunity slave ~~deseendents~~descendants had to organize themselves after Emancipation. The associations played an important role in the early years of migration from plantations to the establishment of a new community where they would eventually own land. Also, it is evident from the interviews that provide eloquent testimony to the importance of these associations in the community. Some of the former residents of the Village are still members of associations that were formed there and all of them had something to say about the associations. Further testimony to the significance of the associations is that people I interviewed often volunteered without prompting, information about them in oral histories and interviews.

In the Village, any individual might have participated in several voluntary associations. Five particular associations were mentioned in the ethnographic interviews. Two clearly are benevolent associations; the Progressive Mutual Aid Benevolent Association for men, and the Silver Star Benevolent Association for women, although there has been an occasional male member in Silver Star. Other associations mentioned

included the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythians and Court of Calanthean. Josie Page is a member of two of the associations. She recalls,

I'm a part of Silver Star. It was suppose to be for females. Progressive was male and Silver Star was female, but we had one or two males that joined us... We had meetings once a month, on the third Sunday. Once a year, we'd have a banquet for our anniversary. They'd spend some money and feed you. My daddy was a Knight of Pythian and I was a Court of Calanthean...they give you about two hundred dollars if you die and you pay three dollars a month.

This speaks to the combined social and economic functions of the associations.

Some Village residents were members of Masonic orders based in New Orleans or other surrounding areas, although none mentioned a specific lodge. Masonic orders are quasi-religious organizations, which often emerge in association with or were encouraged by the religious community and its leadership. Although Masons are not overtly religious within any specific denomination, it is apparent that, in some cases, they were intended to support and enrich the agenda of the church. They also provide a locus of familial and community social interaction. Masonic orders charge nominal monthly dues, which help to fund celebratory events such as anniversaries, community service projects, church programs, picnics, and public dances. The goals of all the voluntary associations were similar: to strengthen the ties of friendship and solidarity among their members, to provide a social context for maintaining cultural traditions, and to help finance humanitarian projects such as funerals for members who did not have their own resources.

It is interesting to note that none of the churches in the Village had a designated cemetery especially in view of the fact that during this time cemeteries were segregated in the North and the South. This situation certainly led most black communities to establish a church cemetery and some type of burial association to guarantee a "good

home-going and resting place.” In the post-war years, many poor black people bought into burial plans, paying 5 to 10 cents a week or 50 cents a month for burial insurance, in order to assure themselves of a descent burial. Since the benevolent societies collected this money, they would often take on the responsibilities surrounding the final passage. In New Orleans, some associations established cemeteries for their members, including the Good Samaritans and the Union Benevolent association (Blassingame 1973:168) In Fazendeville, the Progressive and Silver Star Benevolent Associations combined resources and established the Ellen Cemetery off Parish Road, which is not in Fazendeville, but it is where many Fazendeville residents are buried. They lived with a continued reminder of their immortality, in the form of regular burial insurance payments. The cemetery was named after Ellen Levy, because she was the first member to die after the association bought the property making her the founding resident. It is still an active cemetery. Rev. Sanders comments that, “In the earlier years when it rained, the funeral procession could not go back to the graveyard. The mud was so thick that the pallbearers had to wear boots to carry the body to the grave; the distance to the cemetery from the highway is today’s equivalent of about four city blocks. Today a residential area has developed around Ellen Cemetery” (2003).

To be properly buried in the black community was a final testimonial to a person’s human worth, Christian decency, and the individual and community life they lived. In the African American community, the traditional custom of the open funeral casket, prompted many people to keep up their burial insurance payments in spite of the pressures of poverty. This economic investment represented a lifelong goal of making a final impression that was favorable and acceptable to the community.

The similarity to West African practices is unmistakable. Funerals hold a special importance for West Africans, and often are expensive, drawn-out events involving a long period of mourning, and the burial of personal objects with the deceased. Friends and relatives of the deceased visit the family, deliver condolences, and arrange feasts involving singing, dancing, and drinking. The articulated good of this practice was to prevent the family from brooding too long over their loss, to celebrate the deceased's life, and to celebrate the African belief that upon dying one went "home" (Knight 1977: 352). Thus, many African American funerals are considered a "home-going" celebration. For an enslaved African in the New World, the location of "home" depended on their worldview, their degree of acculturation, and whether they had been converted to Christianity. In this sense, the final "home" for a newly enslaved African might have been Guinea, Senegal, Congo, Nigeria, or Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) while "home" for an acculturated, Christianized enslaved person was the heaven of the New Testament. The New Orleans jazz funeral clearly takes its place on the continuum of merriment traditionally celebrated during funerals. As Blassingame affirms: "They [New Orleans' benevolent societies] also assured members an impressive and proper burial by paying for the bands to lead funeral processions, taking care of burial expenses, holding special rites over the body, marching in special regalia in the funeral procession, and wearing mourning badges for the deceased" (1973: 167-168).

When asked if any of the associations in Fazendeville had jazz funerals or parades, Mr. Morris Williams stated, "They called them 'turn-outs.' Maybe they might have had a little march or something. Like they put on their regalia and then step out in white with made flags and with all of their jewels on." This is the usual formal or official

dress of benevolent and Masonic order associations. Thus, some Fazendeville funerals seem to represent a slightly smaller-scale version of the earlier West African traditions of the New Orleans elaborations on going home.

Economics

Property Matters – Purchasing of buildings for mutual aid or benevolent associations constitutes another example of communal economic cooperation in the Village. The National Park Service Fazendeville land tract maps show that the Progressive Mutual Aid and Benevolent Association of St. Bernard purchased Lot 13, Tract 26 on Fazendeville Road on June 10, 1884. Similarly, the Silver Star Benevolent Association purchased Lot 23, Tract 11 on Fazendeville Road on April 1, 1896. The members pooled their meager resources to buy land and to erect the buildings. After the church, the allied institutions were the second category communally built enterprises of the people in the Village.

The part played in the black communities by churches, mutual aid and benevolent societies, and Masonic lodges in creating financial institutions did not begin en masse until after the collapse of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company in 1874. The Company was chartered by Congress in 1865 and had "the most far-reaching economic influence" on the black community both during its existence and after its collapse. Its collapse resulted from the combined effects of the national recession of 1873 and the incompetence of bank officials. The disastrous effects of the crash reverberated throughout the African American community (Blassingame 1973:66-67). The contributors were defrauded of their hard-earned money, but the most crippling and long-

term effect of the crash was psychological: many blacks would never trust a bank or the federal government again. The locally logical conclusion was that if one could not safely deposit money in an institution chartered by the federal government, then no bank was sound. In response, newly freed slaves and slave descendants began to form their own financial institutions, hold on to their own money, or to spend their money for immediate pleasure and gratification rather than try to save for the future and be cheated out of it.

The failure of the Freedman's Savings and Trust Company and the general depreciation of property values in New Orleans in the 1860s and 1870s prevented the growth of a large black property-holding class (Blassingame 1973: 68). Since the 1880 census does not list property holdings, and the Orleans Parish tax assessment rolls do not indicate race, it is impossible to determine either the number of black property holders or to assess the total value of property held by blacks. On the other hand, in St. Bernard Parish blacks were in the majority, with a population of 1,913, while whites numbered 1,640. Therefore, the black population of St. Bernard Parish in 1870 was 53.84% of the total population. Some families that appeared to live in Fazendeville in the 1880s were also listed on pages 12-13 in the 1870 census. Houses numbered 138-155 were home to seventeen families; it is still not clear as to how many occupants were property owners and who was the first to purchase property from Fazende (St. Bernard Parish Census 1870, 1880). Records do show the Cager, Metoyer, Antoine and Smith families were some of the first to purchase property in Fazendeville (NPS Land Tract Map) (Figure 8).

Occupations – Most blacks continued to do the identical type of work after emancipation as under slavery.

As late as 1890, more than half of all blacks worked in agriculture, and more than 30 percent worked as domestic servants. In the Deep South, the proportion in agriculture was even higher. Among those few Negroes living outside the South, domestic service employed more than 60 percent. Professionals were rare—only one percent of black workers (Sowell 1981: 200).

Work patterns for blacks did change after Reconstruction. This change is evident in the Village. Many black women who were married stayed home to raise their children, instead of working in the fields or in white people's homes (Gutman 1976). The resentment this change incited among the southern whites who lost a portion of their house servants was indicative of the way that whites systematically underestimated the importance of family life for blacks. While, some women in Fazendeville did domestic work, and a few were professionals, the majority worked at home. As Rev. Sanders recalls,

Most of the women were hard workers, primarily because they had a lot of children.... They did not have time to work outside the home by the time they got through cooking and washing. They washed on a scrub board and they got water out of the cistern, or the well. They hung those clothes. Then they cooked. They didn't have time to work outside. Perhaps they could work, but primarily the women were in the home.

He also speaks to the tenacity of some women. In regards to Mrs. Rose Drew Cager he commented:

Some women washed for whites to supplement their income. It was usually about twenty-five cents a wash. They used long clotheslines with props in the middle. They used smoothing irons and bathe and washed in number three tubs. The rainwater would be caught in a cistern and even though there was green silt in the water, we drank all the water with the microbes and never got sick.

Mrs. Josie Page spoke about the women, who worked on the farms:

You'd go out there, they'd come and pick you up, and you'd go out and spend the whole day in the field, doing chores. Cutting parsley and all kind of picking beans and okra. And when you left you had enough stuff to take home to cook.

There were a few women who worked outside of the Village as teachers, nurses, and one worked at a jewelry store.

The men in the Village held various occupations, in addition to farming. Mr. James Minor and Charles' farms were large enough to take produce to the French Market on Decatur Street in New Orleans. In addition, Mr. Minor used to peddle fresh produce and ice to the people in the Village. He had the only ice truck in the Village and, according to Mr. Morris Williams, "He sold a block for ten cents, 5 pounds for 20 cents, and 10 pounds for 40 cents. Ice used to be cheap." Other jobs for men were available at the American Sugar Refinery, the Southern Railroad, the Standard Oil Plant, the Kaiser Plant, Charlie Colomb's Dairy Farm, the river slip, the docks, and the National Cemetery. Mr. Williams asserts,

Those people that lived in Fazendeville, I would say, sort of looked like prosperous people. They were not a lazy-type person. The average person in Fazendeville that I can remember, would try to do some sort of work for a living. And I mean, they all right now, they homeowners. Their children, they have graduated from college. And some of them, you have professors and doctors and lawyers. You name it, and we'll claim it come out of Fazendeville.

Education

In many black communities, the birthplace of the first school was in the church. Sunday schools were often the initial space where blacks came in contact with the educational process, first hearing, then memorizing, and finally reciting and reading Bible stories. Education is generally considered to be the primary means of achieving economic mobility in the United States, uplifting for slave ~~deseendents~~descendants, and it also represented a journey gaining personal and social fulfillment. Many black community leaders contended that money was second only to education. Historically, black churches established and supported schools. The Fazendeville School was established in one of the

Church's allied associations, the Progressive Mutual Aid and Benevolent Association Hall. The Hall was housed in a two-story building, with the Fazendeville School on the first floor. The school was a high priority once the community was established. Although, no one knew the exact year that the school was established and I have not been able to find any documentation, Mrs. Josie Page did say that her father went to the school when he was young. Mrs. Page was born in 1911 and her father was born in 1881.

Every resident I interviewed talked about the Fazendeville School teacher, Mrs. Marion Cager, the phenomenal woman who taught seven classes in one room. Teachers before her did not necessarily have teaching certificates, but Mrs. Cager was a graduate of Xavier University, and the school officials of St. Bernard Parish hired her. Mrs. Cager had a strong reputation as a strict disciplinarian. According to Mrs. Wilma Sargent:

You did not play with Marion Cager because she was the type...I don't know, it just seemed like she liked to beat. If the law today was the law yesterday, somebody would have been in jail. She used to ...we never gave her any trouble. Everybody did their work. She went around and gave everybody something to do. You learned your timetables...you just learned. And I think anybody who went there would tell you the same thing. You didn't play with Mrs. Cager. You did your work and you kept your mouth closed and you didn't say anything. So, it was an experience.

This method of teaching more than one grade in the same room and being very strict was prevalent in rural schools, both black and white of the time because there was a general shortage of teachers for rural areas in the early twentieth century. While the teacher was instructing one class, she would give the other classes assignments to complete until she could get back to them. Not only did the teachers have to be strict disciplinarians, but they also had to be well organized (Figure 11 and 12).

At an earlier time, the Fazendeville community school served as another focal point for community identification, but after the establishment of a consolidated school in

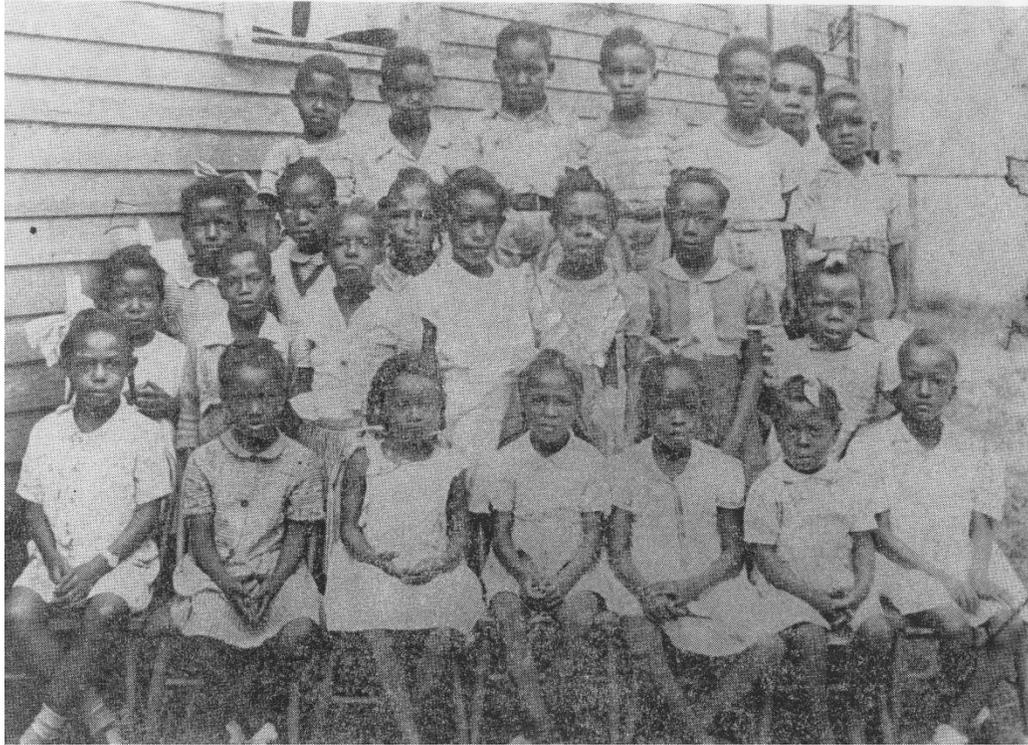


Figure 11. School day in the Village I, Marion Cager, instructor. (NPS Photograph)



Figure 12. School day in the Village II, Marion Cager, instructor (NPS Photograph)

the nearby community of Violet which led to the closing of the Fazendeville School in 1949, this focus shifted outside the Village community. Before it closed, when students finished seventh grade at the Fazendeville School, they could go on to Violet Consolidated School, or to a school in New Orleans. Mrs. Deloris Thomas, a former Village resident, expressed her initial strong opposition to leaving the Fazendeville School to attend school in New Orleans. In the beginning of the year, she boarded the bus and went to school in the Village. However, once she was forced to attend the school in New Orleans, she expressed the realization that she should have left Fazendeville earlier. At the New Orleans school, the books were newer, they had good furniture, they had gym classes, gym suits, and other extracurricular activities that were not available in Fazendeville. Mrs. Thomas' account follows:

I did not want to leave from down in Fazendeville to go to no Bell [School]. I knew after we left and moved to the Lower Ninth Ward, that that [Fazendeville] was no longer my district. When those people called and said I could no longer come down there, that I was out the district and I had to go to another school, I cried. But baby, I could not see, they say you can't miss what you never had and I thought it was so good there [Fazendeville]. But honey, when I hit Bell, and I saw Bell with that big gym, I saw Bell with the basketball, I saw the girls with the gym shorts on, I saw the football team, I said, what is this? The cheerleaders cheering and everything, I said this is where I should have been! This is it! Look what I have been missing all this time. I never caught the bus to go to Fazendeville School again.

Rev. Theodore Bush explains the circumstances further: "Now our new books was the old books that the white children had used. Our new desks were the old desks that the white children had used with no bottoms. I can't remember the superintendent's name. They wanted to send an old piano so we told him we did not want that junk down here. We believed in education even though the school did not go but from first to seventh grade."

Some students went through the primary grades at Fazendeville and ended their formal education at that juncture. To continue to secondary school meant walking long distances or catching a bus to Violet or New Orleans. The majority of the girls continued, but many of the boys had to stop and work to help support the family. Despite the thirst for learning and the rapid expansion of schools throughout the South, the harsh reality was that even some black women and children had to work and forgo a formal education. Sometimes the need for family labor precluded these types of aspirations especially among small farmers and sharecroppers (Foner 1988:86).

One of the continuing paradoxes of African American life throughout the diaspora is the coexistence of the high value placed on education and the low levels of educational achievement. Education was intrinsic to the missionary effort to Christianize slaves, and came to be seen as an essential part of being civilized. While white missionaries were partly responsible for the early establishment of schools for the freedman, it appears that by the early nineteenth century the free black community itself had assumed responsibility for education in many areas (Holt 1977: 52). During Reconstruction and the early twentieth century the practice of sending children to school and keeping wife at home were symbols of man's status of freedom. Many south Louisiana villages, like Fazendeville, were constructed around a church and a school. Foner reports that in the American South, the availability of schools for their children was often the first requirement before freedmen would accept employment (1988: 96).

Family

The traditional family in the Village extended itself beyond the nuclear group, with links of mutual obligation extending through much of the Village. As would be

expected in such a closed community, familial ties, marriages, and the concept of the extended family are taken with utmost seriousness. This multiplex organization is an African-like social tradition in the Village, just as it is in most small isolated black communities in the South; acknowledging and readily accepting the obligations and responsibilities due not only to one's spouse but also to one's spouse's family is a social imperative. Community support and family ties contributed to a low incidence of divorce and separation. In addition, like the members of extended families in West Africa, people in the Village acted with deference toward their elders, and most elders accorded respect to young adults, especially those with children. Conflicts were minimized as each member acknowledged and respected the other's domains.

An extended family operated beyond the immediate needs of regeneration, conforming to the economic and social realities of production. The obligations of each family member were related to the survival of the entire family. Dependency was reciprocal and correspondingly, individualism was not highly valued. Given this worldview, no advantage would accrue to independency, since concern was focused on family and the Village community.

In modern terms, it would seem that individuals sacrificed much for the family and the community. However, Village residents gained a sense of self and place in the social order from their community. A person could be defined in terms of other people, who knew all of their strengths and weaknesses, and who provided affirmation and support. These ties remained even when all the social and economic underpinnings that sustained the family had been removed.

The Village population varied through time. When I asked about the population of

Fazendeville, in the early 1950s Rev. Sanders stated:

We left in about fifty-three. I was about twelve. Approximately, I know at tops it couldn't be no more than a hundred [people]. But again, you know, it was a village and it was like a family. So, the people were real close. I mean you have little arguments and they would have fistfights. And the next day they would be good friends.

Several respondents concurred with Rev. Sanders population estimate of about one hundred people, give or take a few. Similarly, most also agree that the Village included from thirty-five to forty families. Indeed, the family was the single most important organizing principle in the Village. Even outsiders could see the strong family ties in the Village. Mr. Woodard, who lived in “the Camp,” area close to the Village where railroad laborers lived, and worked on the Southern Railroad, had this to say about the residents of the Village and their mutual familiarity and generosity towards outsiders:

Practically everybody knew everybody. Just now and then, you would have a misunderstanding. Ah, people down there at that time they was kill'n hogs down there and all like that. Rais'n gardens down there. And people [in the Camp] hardly didn't have to raise nothing like vegetables, you know—buy nothing like that. They go there [to the Village] and they just give it to them....They were gardening for the market. Nobody could go hungry down there. You could go to practically any house down there and they would feed you.⁶

Mr. Samuel Gant, who moved from Fazendeville in 1945 to the Lower Algiers/Cutoff area, also comments: “Everybody got along. Everybody raised each other's children and anyone who needed help, the others helped.” The family is the single core from which everything else radiates. Even the memberships of voluntary associations such as the church, benevolent societies, and other fraternal associations were often predetermined through kinship connections. The organization of such social entities into a community, however, is in accordance with a different principle—that of binding together people not related by kinship and thereby constructing obligations for mutual assistance, as in the

family grouping. However, there was still a major factor that interfered with this cohesiveness—the war and military service.

Effects of World War II

Migration, whether forced or undertaken by choice, has been an ongoing social experience for African Americans. The large-scale migrations from the rural South to the urban North and to the West clustered around the periods of the two world wars and the Korean ~~war~~War, transforming the demographic landscape of the United States, as millions of African Americans relocated in search of jobs and a better life. From many conversations with Village residents, it seemed that Fazendeville represented a departure from this general pattern, with men or women relocating for jobs, however many men were drafted into military service. As Josie Page remembers, “I was about six or seven years old at the time, but I think about four men served in World War I from Fazendeville. A couple of my uncles and James Lawrence served. His sister Annette Marshall is still living on Gordon Street. I think her husband also served” (2003).

Military service in World War II took an estimated fifteen men out of the Village, four of whom came from one family. Between the draft and voluntary enlistment, the male work force suffered in such a small community. The absence of men in the service affects not only their families, but also the community as a whole. For those who served, this experience dramatically broadened their horizon and raised their expectations for the future. Even before entering the United States military, they knew that the dominant culture did not embrace the idea of training black men to shoot, but the idea that they share the risk of being shot at was perfectly acceptable. In both African and United States traditions, few roles reinforce masculinity more than that of the warrior, and although

most of the blacks who served were drafted, they were empowered by America's need for them. Both, whites and blacks knew that the military establishment could not easily ask blacks to take on the responsibility of being a soldier while denying them the full rights of citizenship; this knowledge implied increased access to the American dream for black men, however reality prevailed.

From the Revolutionary War through World War II, blacks were treated as second-class citizens in the military just as they were in all other arenas of American society. Their weapons, pay scale, food, and combat training were substandard compared to those afforded to white soldiers. War veterans expressed their feelings regarding the need for change in the military, and when they returned home, they came to expect greater equality. This expectation arose not only from their willingness to risk their lives for their country, but also from having the experience of viewing how others elsewhere in the world lived. However, improvements in their situation were long in coming. Mr. Morris Williams was drafted into the service in 1942, when he was twenty years old. He served in an outfit called the 9888 Central Postal Directory. He said they waited for about a month in Hunters Field, Georgia in order to assemble enough black men together to make up a full company, since blacks and whites could not serve together. The company consisted entirely of black men, with only white officers, trained to handle heavy ammunition, which they supplied to the planes. He remembers vividly and tells one of his stories:

It was a bad feeling. It was a bad feeling.... We were near the Rock of Gibraltar at that time. That's one of the seven wonders and you wonder why that big old rock is sitting out there in the middle of the ocean and it don't sink. We were attacked by planes. They had different things shooting at us and all around us. We could not see them because it was at night. And this young fellow [referring to himself] right out of the country, I think that's when I got converted. Because I was playing cards that night. I

heard all that “pow pow and boom boom” and what not going off; I got up and threw those cards away and grabbed the little Bible that they give all the soldiers. And I took my little Bible, and I started reading the 23rd Psalm. “The Lord is my ~~Sheperd~~Shepard, I shall not want...(recites the entire 23rd Psalm)...in the house of the Lord forever.” And I read the Psalm that night and we went on and we went on; we go up in North Africa near Egypt somewhere.

Neither Rev. Theodore Bush nor Rev. Gant were drafted, because they were attending seminary school at the time. Rev. Bush recalls:

The war started in 1941, but we started in the seminary between '38 and '39. All the young men who were studying for the ministry—now they were taking the Protestants but not the Catholics that were studying for the priesthood...But after we proved that we were in there before the war....it helped us.

The Village was lucky to not suffer many war casualties. A few men returned wounded, only Rev. Bush spoke about his brother's death in World War II. This loss in one of the founding families of Fazendeville was so strongly felt that, to show sympathy, respect and reverence, an ongoing church conference broke up when Rev. Bush received notice of his brother's death. He recalls the moment:

I will never forget, we were having conference and my older brother didn't come to conference that night but he came down and knocked at the door and called me out. He showed me this telegram that Tiki was missing in action. Oooh Lord that was worst than my mother, my father, my sister, and my brother. And oh I start lumbering and everybody come running out and they did not have no more conference that night. And I had to preach a sermon. I told Rev I ain't gon be able to preach that sermon.... That was a hurting thing just like they tell me if you loose a child, that its worst than you loosing a mother or father. And I'm telling you that thing hurt me some. Up until this day, I think about him. Well now, they sent us something in a casket about a man's weight, but that wasn't him. They tell me when a man die, they just dig a hole and just push them over in the hole and bury them there, somewhere in Saipan. But we had what they called his body....and we buried him in Ellen Cemetery....There was a big turnout because everybody knowed the family, you know. But it was sad.

During World War II, several women of the Village worked in defense plants in New Orleans. The Municipal Auditorium, an area on the lakefront, and the Ford motor

plant were converted for defense production. Therefore, instead of leaving the area and migrating to the North, several women elected to temporarily migrate the short distance to New Orleans during the war years to work in the defense plants. In addition, at the plant where Mr. Morris Williams worked before he was drafted, “many men left and the ladies took their places driving the lift, the telecars, the tractors and anything else they had. Everywhere they could replace a man, he was gone and a woman was taking his place.” Ironically, the exigencies of war opened up more avenues for labor mobility and improved standards of living for African Americans than all of the official but feeble efforts at economic parity combined.

Nonetheless, families were disrupted for several years with the absence of the male figure. Some women who had been homemakers took jobs in defense plants to help supplement household expenditures. The absence of both males in military service and females in employment outside the home also meant that someone else in the family or the community had to be responsible for childcare. In these ways, the wars had several repercussions for Village families.

Governance and Leadership

Although there was never any formal government organization in the Village, and despite the limitations to the range of activities, the community had effective local leadership. Over the years leaders tended to be the elderly men and women of the community. They were ~~descendents~~descendants of the older, well-established families; all were married or were widowers; and, of course, they were highly respected by both the majority of the Fazendeville community and the whites that they had occasion to interact with. In addition, they usually held the position of deacons and deaconesses in the church.

While, these were not formal leadership positions, selection of leaders within the community recognized the qualities necessary for leadership. When I asked Rev. Sanders who the leaders were in the community, he responded:

He [Mr. Morris Williams] was one of them. They call him the “gentle giant” and as a young man, he’s not going to tell you this, he got out of the army and he was angry with the world. He got in a lot of fights in his first jobs and so fourth and played baseball. When he joined church, something happened to him. And still today, he is a defender of the weak and if someone is found taken advantage of today, he will still speak up for them. And he doesn’t use his size or his strength. He is a very powerful man and, you know, and if he spoke everybody listened. There were a few men like that and there were a few women who garnered that kind of respect. Still today he is chair of our deacon board and when the young men come in church he puts his arms around them and befriends them (2003).

Although formal hierarchy existed among the leaders, most were generally either the chairperson of the church board, or deacon, or deaconess of the church. Female leaders are also referred to as “mothers of the church.” In the case of religious guidance and instruction, they act as “spiritual fathers” and “spiritual mothers,” basically roles of religious advisors or mentors to those seeking a “vision” or “call” to join the church. This mentorship is particularly necessary for those going through the mourning period before baptism. A potential candidate or the parents of a candidate, may ask any church member to serve as a spiritual father or mother and generally the person chosen to serve is usually a deacon or deaconess. Their task is to advise the candidate regarding any dreams or visions they might experience, to provide basic religious instruction, and to sponsor the person when they are prepared to join church. This role of spiritual leadership is considered to be significant by many in the Village. This is a critical stage in an individual’s life and much of the responsibility for religious guidance and teaching, rest in the spiritual leader’s hands.

Some secular leaders are considered as role models within the community. These people usually owned businesses, and were considered to be economically successful in

the community, having obtained more economic advantage than others. For example, Mr. Jules Hill, who owned the grocery store and Mr. Victor Minor who owned the barroom and dance hall, were both also considered people to emulate for economic success. Then there were those who managed to accomplish an exceptional feat in life in spite of the adverse circumstances, like sending ten children to college. Rev. Sanders speaks about a deceased leader of the community who managed to achieve greatness through his children as he struggled against the odds:

This man Frank Cager started out milking cows for Charlie Colomb....Colomb was a cattleman and he ran cattle in those fields in front of and back of [Fazendeville]. He lived around the levee there. He [Mr. Cager] started there. He worked at Higgins building Higgins boats and he went to the slip, to the waterfront and from there to the sugar refinery. But he educated ten children and I think most of us looking at him, saw what he could do--we realized that we could make something of ourselves.

Most people that are considered leaders by the residents of Fazendeville own their own homes and generally fall into the middle or upper range of the economic level of the community. Seniority alone does not secure them this special position; it is also based on continuous active interest in family, church and community. Contact with whites was infrequent, and so seldom directly strengthens a black community leader's role or influence.

With regards to maintaining peace in the Village, Rev. Theodore Bush comments:

If you come into the Village and if you would start anything, my cousin and my brother would have gotten them (ha ha ha). Philip Rowley—the Village did not stand no foolishness. They would treat you nice but no foolishness....The Village was a good place to rear children. I tell you something else, if you see the [car] lights coming into the Village, you know who they was...We were all for one and one for all. We knew the troublemakers and the peacemakers.

Rev. Bush continues:

Old Linch [Park Superintendent from July 18,1954-September 12, 1964] found out that he could not handle the Negroes in the Village like he came off an Indian reservation.

And he thought he was gon come there and run over them Negroes. What he did, he picked up one of those little boys a Cager boy, James Cager's son. He did not put him in the back of the car, no. He put him in the trunk of his car....Old Linch was a terrible man, but we straightened him. We let Linch know that he wasn't gon rule nobody in the Village. And when he got ready to do his dirty work he would put on them little ole medals he had bought, you know. And James went back there and told Linch, if anything would have happened to that boy, no telling what would have happen to you. Linch ain't tried that trick no more.

Rev. Bush begins another story about Linch:

Now, we used to play ball in the field. We had two big fields and you could pick up all the pecans you want. When Linch got there, he put a fence up, didn't want them to play no more ball. My ball game days were way over with and they weren't playing too much a ball there no more. And pecans, give him half of the pecans, you know. And what we used to do when they had a hard rain that night and wind especially around in October and the pecans would drop and we fool with them before they open up. And the pecan shells [outer shell] had a dye like and they get in your fingers and had to ware out. And so when they had a hard rain we top our pants leg and had a hold in our pockets and kneel and we go there early in the morning before dark, daylight rather. And get on our knees and where we could feel them and put them in our pants leg. And hear my brother was at a place call the alley by his grandmother's house. He sitting on a sack of pecans eating. Here come Linch, with that little junk on him, come to get half of them pecans...Grandmother believed in calling everybody a bastard. She came over there and said, 'You bastard you, you better get away from back here if you know what is good for you.' Linch turned around and ain't never went back there no more and didn't ever worry nobody about them pecans no more.

I close... by saying this, half hasn't been told about the Village. It was a very very independent place with Negroes. And no white folks came and run over no Negroes, deputies and nobody else came and run over no Negroes in the Village. Now where other people was living in them Italian houses and it was mandatory for them to go and work in the field, not us. They did not come here with that stuff.

When I asked Mrs. Wilma Sargent about crime in the Village, she had this to say:

.....Now the boys, a lot of the boys drank, drank their wine, but they never bothered nobody and never got into trouble.... It was quiet. You knew everybody as a matter of fact, I don't remember locking our door. You know, we'd stay out, as long as you were in your yard, we'd stay out sometimes until 10, 11 o'clock. You didn't have to worry about anybody bothering you. I never remember anybody being molested. Anybody wasn't coming in the Village....My daddy said, when they were coming up, if they [a stranger] couldn't tell them who they were going to see, then they couldn't come in.

On the same topic of crime and policemen coming into the Village, Mr. Morris Williams

comments:

They had something that they would say that one boy's family, he was sassy to a white woman. They tried to make something out of that, but it was nothing. But for a while in Fazendeville, it was nothing too much. Not too many people went to jail. We did not have no record of going to jail...or stealing, or shooting anybody or something like that. It was rare. We hardly seen the policemen, not the policemen—the deputy, the sheriff. They didn't have to come back there. Most like one or two of the older heads, they was mostly like deputized. If there was something going on, they would come down there and tell you to stop that. Well, you had to stop and if they would hit you with a club or something like that, you were just well hit.

Mr. Williams continued to explain to me that Brother Jules Hill and Brother Charles usually were the ones who would intervene and take care of these matters of secular conflict. This was a logical allocation of duties since these men were the owners of the main businesses in Fazendeville. By keeping the peace, they were protecting the residents of the Village while simultaneously protecting their business interests.

In summary, the interview data suggest that in the Village there was no rigid hierarchy of political secular leadership; in fact, there were different leaders for separate aspects of the society. Two types of leaders seem to emerge, the sacred and the secular.

From, the interviews and oral histories it appears that the Village had a fierce kind of pride and generally lacked fear of whites, the legal power structure, and blacks from other areas who threatened the peace of the Village. In the Fazendeville community, blacks constituted the majority of the population since its inception, I speculate that Fazendeville residents may have had self-perceptions and attitudes that differed from blacks raised in other areas. According to the records, most of the Fazendeville families owned their own land starting from Reconstruction and the early twentieth century. Because of their status of landowners, they do not know what it means to pay rent or to have a mortgage. Furthermore, the isolation of the community could survive only by

developing a strategy of self-sufficiency, independence, and self-governance. Through their cooperative efforts and associational networks, they created a community in which they took great pride in its ability to take care of its own without having to bring in outsiders. Given the isolation and independence of the community they also had to develop their own ways of survival and maintained ways of entertaining ~~them-selves~~ themselves, which was usually done through various forms of expressive culture.

Expressive Culture

Traditional Celebrations

The study of expressive culture greatly fills in our understanding of the continuities of life in Fazendeville. The community periodically sets aside portions of time for celebration. These are moments of special significance to the group. They may be moments of life transition like a baptism, or mark seasonal holidays like Christmas or Easter. These recurring moments of significance are celebratory occasions for the people to rejoice together—to interact in an ambiance of acceptance and joviality. They function to provide occasion and form for positive community interaction, which is a necessary condition for the continued existence of a close community. I discussed earlier the sacred rituals and celebrations; here I will describe secular celebrations in the Village.

Decoration Day – Memorial Day, the 30th of May, or Decoration Day was a special day in the Village. It was called “Decoration Day,” because it was the day for decorating the graves of the soldiers buried in the Chalmette National Cemetery. However, different communities celebrated in different ways. For the white community, it was a special day to honor those who died in the wars giving service to this country. Their ceremony began with a formal parade or procession to the cemetery with military

officials, National Park Service personnel (some on horses), out of town guests and people from the surrounding communities. The event was open to the public. They would present the flag, offer prayer, engage various speakers, perhaps include a song or two followed by the formal closing. This celebration would take place all day and would operate according to a rigid and official protocol.

On the other hand, the Fazendeville residents had a very different style of celebrating the 30th of May. Mr. Morris Williams reminisces about Decoration Day and contrasted the way both communities celebrated it:

On the Decoration Day, they used to have outings in the cemetery. And there would be speeches going on, we'd be playing baseball, at night they would have a dance. In Fazendeville, people would come from all around, from miles around ... They used to have an old man, I used to hear that old man talk, old man Charlie. He used to get out there and speak over the dead. He was a World War I veteran. At Chalmette Cemetery, that's where most of the activity would be going on. The cemetery would be lined up with little flags, like I got here outside. Each soldier would have a flag, and it would be all decorated. And they had speeches and talks and solos and whatnot. It would be something going on all day over there, until about 4:30 because the cemetery closed at 5:00 o'clock. During the day over there, we would be playing baseball. And after the baseball game, we would go and clean up and come back and be out there in the streets. The band would be playing and it would be on the truck. They had a man named Victor Minor, he had a truck with a top over it and flatbed, and they had the band in there. I was trying to remember some of the band members. I can think of old man Sam Johnson.

Mrs. Wilma Sargent also recalls that:

They [the Fazendeville Baseball Team] would play a team from Sunrise. They used to go to Sunrise, Louisiana to play. They would have a big celebration in the cemetery, then they would come out the cemetery. But we never went to the celebration. For some reason, it seems like that was for whites. It seems like they had nothing but whites in there so we never even bothered to go. We celebrated in our own way, with the ball games and whatever.

For Village residents, Decoration Day was akin to Emancipation Day or the Juneteenth celebrations that are currently held in various parts of the South. In the past, the actual day of the Emancipation celebration started the night before with the

Emancipation Watch Night Services, discussed earlier. The 19th of June in 1865 was really started as a camp meeting where the participants prayed, sang, and gave thanksgiving. Afterwards, it was a joyous good time devoid of any religious overtones. In some areas of the South, beauty contests, presentations of awards, reading of the Emancipation Proclamation document, and singing the “Black National Anthem,” “America,” “John Brown” and other freedom songs were the order of the day.

The schedule of happenings in the Village for Decoration Day was similar to the central components of Juneteenth events in other areas, although simpler. This exuberant, good-time celebration usually involved the culinary rituals of eating barbecue and fried fish, drinking whiskey and beer to excess, and performances such as playing athletic games namely baseball, as well as dancing to blues and jazz music performed live by local bands.

The major athletic celebration ritual in the Village was the baseball game. On Decoration Day, the game went on during all the speeches and other activities that happened in the cemetery. The big dance followed later in the evening. Baseball was the main secular community event in the Village. Many men could participate as players, and all the women could be spectators. The game was so important that Mrs. Yvonne Dorsey actually delayed being baptized in order to continue playing baseball: “I was a ball player and they told me that if I joined church, I could not play ball anymore, so I joined church at fifteen. At that time, you couldn’t say I believed in God.... Yes, I gave up ball because I believe in the Lord that was the head of my life.” The community viewed Mrs. Dorsey as being strange, since she was a woman and played baseball. That was not proper behavior for a lady and especially a lady of the church. Mr. Morris Williams adds: “I’ll

put it like this, before 1946, when I got baptized, I used to like to play baseball. They were singing gospel [in the church], I wasn't there. I was playing baseball. That's the way it was until I got baptized. Then, I put the baseball down and got on the other team, the gospel team." Lastly, Rev. Theodore Bush also mentioned that he was a good ball player, however after he started preaching, he did not play ball anymore. Also, in a traditional black church, "men of the cloth" or ministers ceased to play competitive sports like baseball, cards, and checkers, after going into the ministry. This type of activity was frowned upon because it was associated with sin, especially for a minister or some other church official. However, many of the other men in the community indulged both moderately and excessively.

Baseball was very competitive, and there were several teams in the region that were stiff competition for the Village. Several respondents talked about following the team on a bus to various "away" games as well as mentioning several teams coming to play in Fazendeville. Baseball was not only the major entertainment for Fazendeville, but it held the same pleasure for many African American communities in the South. It was during some of these fiercely contested games that some black men were selected for the Negro Baseball League. The National Baseball League discovered "Rube Foster" from East Texas and he later founded and managed the Chicago American Giants, the first premier African American baseball team (Paterson 1970:103). "In the first decade of this [twentieth] century he [Foster] also founded and served as the first commissioner of the Negro National League, a sports institution that would leave its mark on Afro-American culture and radically alter American society before its demise in the 1950s (Williams 1987:42).

In the 1930s the same decade that the major leagues began their All-Star Game tradition, organized Negro baseball began their annual East-West All-Star Game tradition. This summer baseball classic, which pitted the best Negro players from both leagues, was an annual fixture on the Afro-American cultural calendar from its inception in 1933 until its demise in the early 1950s (Williams 1987:42).

In the Village, baseball was magic, just like it was in most small communities with limited entertainment from the 1920s through the 1950s. Most Village residents during this period had radios, and during baseball season, the talk of the Village males would be the antics and diamond magic of Buck Leonard, Leroy “Satchel” Paige, “Cool Poppa” Bell, Josh Gibson, and of course, Jackie Robinson. Robinson, the cultural hero, successfully integrated organized baseball and paved the way for integrating all of America’s professional sports. “His athletic prowess also inspired other Afro-Americans to strive for excellence and social acceptance in other areas of American life. As the song says, “Did you see Jackie Robinson hit that ball? He stole home and that ain’t all” (Williams 1987:43).

It seems as though members of the Fazendeville Village had been influenced by their black baseball heroes, and had superstardom in their vision. Rev. Theodore Sanders and Mr. Morris Williams remembered a few former residents that actually made it to the Negro National League. In a conversation, they recalled a few names.

Decoration Day perpetuated another event in the community—namely the big dance, which happened later during the night. “People would go home after the ball game, rest a while, clean up and hit the dance hall for the rest of the night.” Decoration Day was a celebration of homecomings, feasting, playing and watching baseball games, dancing, and other public expressions of communal satisfaction and good will.

Mardi Gras – In the Village, Mardi Gras took on a certain respectability as the

last days before Lent. In New Orleans, the season actually started on the sixth of January, the first of the Epiphany. For several weeks preceding Fat Tuesday, there were large float parades consisting of ~~krews~~ krewes, large cotillion balls, smaller parties, and a lot of individual masking—a major bacchanal. However, in the Village, there was no specific annual activity, for Mardi Gras, nor were there in any other surrounding rural areas. For the majority of the people, this occasion was mainly one of respite from work. Some people would go into New Orleans to see the parades, meet family, and occasionally participate in the masking. One year, a group decided that they would mask as Baby Dolls and Ms. Deloris Thomas shared the experience with me:

It was Betty's idea that we go as Baby Dolls...I was about 13 or 14 years old. They sewed for two or three nights making them Baby Doll suits. Like I said, no patterns. But I never forgot they was black, honey and they had the panties to match. We were tough. My brother-in-law already worked with the cattle—Charlie Colomb. So it was no problem for him to do extra work for Charlie Colomb for him to loan him the truck. He was probably working like an old slave to get him to do that lil' favor for him. It was about twelve of us dressed like Baby Dolls and we all got in that truck. We had it decorated with moss and headed on up to Dumain [Street] to the center of sin. We go up there around the city people and acted a fool.

Ms. Thomas continues:

Now, Lynette's father wanted to be different so he went as the Moss Man and made his own suit. The Moss Man had a motorcycle, you remember? We told him we would meet him up there and you know where we found him? In the muddy canal, he almost made it home. The moss had turned green from the water. The bike was turned upside down. The Lord was with him... That was the best Mardi Gras that we had—the Fazendeville Krewe!

Even though, the Fazendeville Krewe did not mask together in New Orleans every year, that particular year will live on for those that directly and indirectly participated. The people identify with each other and to their communal experiences. Thus, these

celebrations are prime devices for promoting social cohesion and for maintaining the members through shared, recurrent, positive moments.

Storytelling and Other Forms of Verbal Lore

Social intercourse ranked high on the list of favorite occupations and ways to spend time. Members of the Village could always be seen socializing in aggregations under the trees, on the benches, or on the stoops of the houses, a sociable configuration also common in the villages of West Africa and the Caribbean. Set occasions for parties are not as important as the ongoing more or less continuous, casual contact, which characterizes village social life. The demonstration of verbal agility exhibited at these junctures establishes a person's reputation in the community. Storytelling affords a showcase for the virtuosity of its members in this respect. The Fazendeville Village had many storytellers and their proximity to a cemetery served as a logical reason for the proliferation of ghost stories. Mr. Morris Williams exemplified this tradition when he told me the story about the "cooling board":

Years ago when they didn't embalm people, you know, they would sit them on these cooling boards. They had this minister who was in the church and he was preaching. And while he was preaching, he would close his eyes. And while he was preaching, he was roaming around the church. Soon he happens to open his eyes, and look and see the dead man sitting up on the cooling board, and everybody had run out the church. So, he jumped out the window and when he jumped out the window, there was a nail in the window and it caught his coat. So, of course he thought the dead man had him. And he said now wait a while now. Allow me the same chance you allowed the rest of them. Turn me loose! Turn me loose! He never preached with his eyes closed anymore.

Rev. Sanders explained the following:

Before I was born, I'm told that if you were not a member of the church, you couldn't come through the church, you just couldn't come through the church [if you were dead]! There were no funeral homes [for blacks]. So, they have the funerals at their house. And we hear the old timers pray, 'Lord don't let my bed be my cooling board. Don't let my cover be my winding sheet.' Well before embalming, they would plug up all of their orifices. They would wind their body in what they called winding sheets as tightly as they

could. And they had them on a board, like a board. And they had the funeral in that house.... So, a lot of children came up saying that, 'I seen ghost.' They had a thousand ghost stories down here. I am sure you heard of bodies sitting up? Because they hadn't embalmed them, they sit up and they make noises and of course you had a lot of people kind of squirmiest... You know after they had buried that body out of the house everybody would be afraid of the house, you know. They told us those stories to keep us in line.

I am quite familiar with "cooling board" stories. There are a number of them that circulate in my family. Many times, just as Rev. Sanders stated, they were utilized to control bad behavior in children. However, these narratives also give us a vivid picture of the era and aspects of segregation. White funeral homes would not take black bodies even in the areas where there were no black funeral homes.

Continuing in the same vein, Mr. Williams gives a racially charged story as he continues to remind me that all stories were not fictional. He proceeds to give me an example:

They had some real things. It used to happen back then probably all over the state. They used to have people; we used to call them the gown men. They'd be dressed in white. You'd be walking, lady or man they'd catch people out there on the road somewhere walking and they'd take 'em back in the woods and kill 'em. And cut them up. There would be young students going to be doctors, and that's what they'd do, they'd cut 'em up so they could study the parts of a body. And we used to call them gown men but later on people used to say they was Ku Klux Klan. You might go back there and you would see people hanging from a tree or body parts. And that happened once or twice in the past but not too much, but it used to happen. That circulated around the Village and so that would keep us off the street late at night. When it got dark, we would be getting inside. There was a fright of that.

Night Riders in Black Folk History (1975), the pioneering and landmark study of the folklorist, Gladys-Marie Fry, illustrates and examines through the "folk view" how whites used disguises which had one cardinal purpose: to control blacks through intimidation. Through extensive interviews (150) with the ~~descendents~~descendants of slaves who migrated to the Washington, D.C. area in the postbellum period and a

comprehensive use of slave narratives collected by the Works Progress Administration Federal Writers Project all over the South, Fry has examined the role that oral traditions can play in helping to articulate more fully how whites coerced black people into submission and obedience by psychological and physical means. In the “Foreword” to the study, William Lynwood Montell states:

Systematic exploitation of black folk beliefs and fears was originally practiced by slave masters and overseers who disguised themselves as ghosts to prevent unauthorized movements, unsanctioned social visits, dances, religious meetings, and other forms of activity among slaves. The fear of slave insurrections ultimately led to the establishment of the mounted guards (“patterollers”), the first of the night riders. They, too, were often clad as ghosts. With the Civil War and the end of slavery, the idea of ghost garb and mounted horsemen was appropriated by the Ku Klux Klan. These hooded defenders of “all that was good and pure in southern life” rode through the South, often posing as the spirits of dead slave masters, slain confederate dead, or devils, with the expressed intent of dealing with wrong-doers, blacks and whites alike (1975: xii).

Fry observes in *Night Riders* that to her interviewees these creatures of the night were not always ghosts, but real men with evil missions. Likewise, Morris Williams makes it clear to me in speaking about the “gown men” that these are not ghosts. He prefaces his story with the statement that: “They had some real things. It use to happen back then probably all over the state.” In other words, he wanted to clarify that this narrative was not a fictional folktale.

The interviews and narratives Fry collected and reviewed covered a broad time period, from slavery, postbellum and Reconstruction, to the early twentieth century. Morris Williams was raised in the Village during the 1920s and ‘30s and it is interesting to note that he uses one of the same names to designate the night riders-- “gown men.” In addition, he includes the body snatching and medical experiment motifs that are discussed in *Night Riders*:

The “night doctor” is the last figure of psychological deception described in *Night Riders in Black Folk History*. He is portrayed as a “body snatcher” and dealer in live persons reputedly sold to northern hospitals for medical research. He was not a grave robber, as often portrayed in southern white tradition, but a thief who kidnapped and murdered black people at night. Other terms for his type of figure include, “needle doctor,” “needle man,” “hood doctor,” “black bottle man,” and “gown man” (1975: xii)

Although I do not want to belabor the essence of Mr. Morris Williams’s narrative, it is especially significant that certain information, in this case reference to control through use of fear of the supernatural and clandestine scare tactics, is found almost exclusively in oral narratives. Aspects of segregation and negative racial issues tended to be revealed through these narratives. In addition, other information concerning this topic turned up in my field data with several former Village residents including Rev. Theodore Bush and Mrs. Deloris Thomas. These multiple attestations underscore the importance of these stories in the Village. Because of the paucity of recorded information on this form of control, I have been forced to rely almost exclusively on oral narratives.

Nevertheless, we do seek explanations for such phenomena. Fry found that there “was a systematic denial of the existence of night doctors by trained physicians, and lack of solid historical evidence of murder for the purpose of obtaining bodies to sell...”

(210). So, how does one explain these events? Fry continues:

One explanation is that whites deliberately fostered a fear of night doctors among rural Southern Blacks (and perhaps whites) in order to discourage their migration to urban industrial centers.... Another view, perhaps too long overlooked, is that living people were, indeed, victims of scientific experiments while bona fide patients in approved hospitals, at least during the early part of the nineteenth century. To what extent slaves before the Civil War and the poor, downtrodden, and disadvantaged after the war were openly used to try out unproven medical techniques has to remain an intriguing conjecture (210).

At least until the 1930s a number of marginalized people chose to avoid certain parts of cities near hospitals and many from the Village spoke about avoiding travel at

night unless they were with a group. Fry's respondents seemed to think that it was during the 1930s that hospitals began to have enough unclaimed bodies on which to experiment (210), which she relates to time when the accounts of body snatchers, night riders, night doctors and gown men ceased to exist.

The ironies that emerge from such stories as those about the "gown man" that Mr. Williams tells today, allows us to gain a perspective from which to discern history from social information functioning in the tales. What these narratives reveal is a tremendously complicated relationship between the blacks that found themselves marginalized and those whites that affected their lives. The frustration and helplessness that many blacks felt about whites is registered in these narratives, along with a kind of benign resignation to the perceived reality that whites are eccentric people who would do the strangest things to maintain their notion of superiority.

The narratives above contain historical realities. African Americans relate local traditions, family history, and personal experience narratives with as much gusto as any folktale—and sometimes these localized and personalized narratives are transformed to become traditional anecdotes, folktales or legends in disguise. Mrs. Beverly Calvin remembered Rev. Theodore Bush and said that he needed to be on my storytellers list.

She said:

You know you asked the question about someone in the Village that used to, you know, talk, and use to joke. That was Rev. Bush....He was always pleasant you know. He would always have something funny to say or make us laugh or....that's the way he was....He was beautiful.

When I interviewed Rev. Bush, he continually told me stories. He had a story for almost every other question I asked and many of them had an aura of comic relief. He had a varied repertoire of true stories about Village life, racism, occupations, family life,

and religion. An example of an anecdote that he shared and said was true follows: “The river water was freezing cold all the time. It was dangerous but none of us got drowned. One young man [not from the Village] got drowned and the lady [his mother] was still beating him cause she told him not to go in the river.” Rev. Bush later told me that all his stories were true because he had lived such a long and rich life that he did not have to make up any. I can attest to the fact that he has a huge repertoire of stories and I only “scratched the surface” in a three-hour interview. However, he did share with me a few funny jokes and sayings interspersed with other accounts of life in the Village. Towards the end of my interview with him, Rev. Bush said: “So now, that is my story for the Village. I hope I have helped you some. I went a little further back (laughter).” And I said “...then anybody else.” He continued to laugh and said:

“Yeah, but let me tell you this little story about a fellow that was pastoring the church. He told them, say now y’all think I went back, now wait ‘til my son come here. Oh, he gon go way back further than I went back....So, the son starts preaching.

Son: Well, I am going back before Adam and Eve!

Father: Go back son, go back!

Son: I’m going way back before there was a when and a where!

Father: Go back son, go back!

Son: I’m going way back before God!

Father: You going to damn far back now. Come on up some.

So now, that is my story for you about going back.

Men were not the only storytellers in the Village. Mrs. Doretha Thomas talks about women sitting outside on the porch. One occasion she recalls in particular:

I’ll never forget Mrs. Celie. She would scare the children with her fairy tales. And she used to wear long dresses and she would keep her bob on her head and she’d be sitting on the porch but everybody loved her. We would go and listen to her but some of ‘em were really scary.

Other storytellers in Fazendeville were mentioned who were quite animated. Folk narratives were enhanced by the manner of their delivery. Black storytellers were a

source of delight and stimulation to their audiences. Their oral inventiveness were combined with facial gestures, body movements, chants, mimicry, rhymes, and songs to perform a story. Throughout the entire performance, the audience would comment, correct, laugh, and respond, making the story as much of the communal experience as the spiritual, the blues and the sermon with the integral performance style of call and response of the dialogic tradition.

Traditional Healing

Natural or herbal folk medicine is a common practice among the economically deprived especially in rural areas. African American ethnomedicine has a triadic cultural influence by Africans, Native Americans, and Europeans. Knowledge about home or herbal remedies was usually transmitted from generation to generation through the mechanisms of oral tradition and apprenticeship. In the Village, folks gathered herbs that the community experts deemed to have special curative ability in the woods and fields. The time of the year when the plants would be gathered, the season or the day of the church year, was really important. Some of the women planted herb gardens, usually within their vegetable gardens; these herbs served both medicinal and culinary purposes.

Most herbal specialist in the Village, were women, but most adults, male and female, seemed to know something about folk remedies for different ailments. Women hold special status as healers because of the leadership roles they take in the religious system, because of their role as nurturers, and because they may be perceived as being more gifted in “seeing things” and maintaining relationships with the supernatural (Fontenot 1994:89). The women in the Village were most active in gathering the herbs

and preparing them for use. There were several Village women known for their special remedies, however the only time names were called was in relation to birthing babies.

Herbs were not the only source of medicinal cures for natural healing. Certain foods, minerals, oils, animal and fowl substances, kerosene, and asafetida bags were widely used. Some remedies were used during various seasons for preventive measures in fighting diseases. For example, Mrs. Shirley Lyons remembers:

Like during springtime like now, my grandmother used to give us sulfur and syrup for seven days. And after that, you get a big cup of tea...you know that nasty tea (laughter). And in the fall, you get Castor Oil. And now, all you do is take a pill... We also used goose grease. That was good for colds. Yeah. Don't take goose grease by itself though (laughter). It will kill you. Its terrible. So, you got to put honey and lemon to cut some of the taste. And it really helps you out with colds especially greasing the inside. See people take...how you put it ...cough medicine but that's not like greasing the inside. So, I used to make it for my little people---for my nieces and nephews.

Mr. Morris Williams recalls: "Sometimes they'd wrap you up in blankets and different things to keep you warm and treat you with some home remedy like Vicks Salve and Castor Oil. And give you soup and pray over you and nurse you back to health." This example illustrates the interplay between religion and medicine. Although it is not practiced outwardly, spiritual healing factors into the realm of folk "healing therapies" in the Village. Spiritual healing is usually carried out at the home of the patient. Central practices include the recitation of a prayer for healing, the reading of verses from the Bible, and sometimes the imposition of hands. The ritual is simple and informal and is usually done with the participation of immediate family. If the minister is present, he will render a prayer and read verses from the Bible. On some occasions, the people present would sing a traditional spiritual, gospel song, or hymn. All these practices accompany

the traditional healing remedy. A core body of folk remedies shared by most of the Fazendeville residents is listed below (Figure 13).

ILLNESS	REMEDY
Fever	Elder leaf tea Jacob tree root tea
Flu/Common Cold	Wrap fig leaves around head Honey, Vick Salve, and goose grease Goose grease, lemon and honey Bitterweed tea with lemon and honey Beef iron and wine
Indian fire	Honey, syrup, and sulfur powder
Purge	Epson salt and Castor Oil
Clean blood	Sulfur powder and syrup
Nail in foot/prevents lockjaw	Hot salted fat meat tied on foot with rag Put cobwebs [spider webs] on the womb
Menstrual cramps	Bay leaf tea
Tender and swollen breast	Elder blossom
Bleeding piles	Peach leaves fried in grease applied to area
Toothache	Rinse with warm salt water

Figure 13. Folk remedies used by several Fazendeville residents (2002).

In regards to healing, Rev. Theodore Bush speaks about the flu epidemic, and how his Aunt Annie Mae came to the rescue of many in the Village by making and administering doses of the bitterweed tea:

Well it's a bush of that high [gestures] with little white balls on it but it's bitter. One of the best things in the world for flu...Ya boil it with lemon. Put you some sugar in it, but drink it only at night when you are going to bed. It brings that fever outcha. My Auntie Mae....Dr. Mareau told her 'just keep going around giving people this tea cause I can't do nothing with this flu'...If that don't getcha up, you ain't gon get up.

Rev. Bush continues speaking about his great grandmother, who was a Native

American Indian:

My great-grandmother was a Indian. People didn't want my grandmother to come to see them when they were sick. You could be lying in that bed and my grandmother said, 'She never get up.' You wouldn't get up. You die. And a person, I don't care how sick they was... 'Oh she get up.' She would get up. And you got up. And people in (chuckle) people in New Orleans used to call her Aunt Shelia. And people didn't want Aunt Shelia to come see them when they was sick. I don't care if she just had a headache laying up there. Aunt Shelia.... 'Oh she'll never get up.' And if she said you were getting up, didn't care how sick you were, you were getting up... You didn't fool with Shelia.

Although Aunt Shelia was not really viewed as a traditional healer, the folk in the Fazendeville community thought she had special powers to foresee the future. She may have been referred to as a "fortune teller," or "Indian Reader." Working in a black community on the south side of Atlanta, Georgia, Arthur Hall and Peter Bourne contend that they found four types of "indigenous therapist" there: the root doctor, faith healer, magic vendor and neighborhood prophet (1973:139). Rev. Bush's great grandmother Shelia, falls into the latter category of prophet—a person who is divinely inspired and can usually predict the future. While this particular Indian woman may not have been a healer, I would like to note here that there were strong influences of Native American Indian traditional medicine in enslave African and subsequently freedmen folk medicinal practices. According to Genovese, the slaves "freely admitted learning much from the Indians" (1974: 225).

Over the years, there were always specific women who were skilled as midwives for birthing babies. The person usually lived in the Village. Mrs. Ada Smith mentioned: "My younger sister and I were born with midwives. They called her Edna..." Mrs. Rose Cager who was born at an earlier date, comments: The midwife's name was Mae Sue. We had only one in the parish. She would stay at the house until the baby was born. She

stayed in the house across the field.” Mr. Morris Williams also talks about a midwife named, Mrs. Rosie Budd Cager.

In interviewing both men and women of the Village, I find that all of them have some knowledge of folk cures. Individuals and families developed a corpus of herbal remedies that was extremely useful in this rural settlement. A person was taken to a medical doctor only in an extreme case of illness or an emergency. Most of the Village residents mentioned two medical doctors, Drs. Mereaux and Triche; Mr. Morris Williams made reference to the “drugstore doctor” who was different from the doctors above. At that time it was common for some of the drugstores to either have a doctor on call or one would actually have his office set up in the back of a drugstore. In the absence of a doctor a pharmacist might be a local medical authority. In addition, the patient may only need a few questions answered or suggested medication and not an actual examination or treatment. Although licensed medical doctors occasionally treated Fazendeville residents, most of the health and medical care of the Village inhabitants rested primarily on their effective use of folk medicine in the late 1800s and early twentieth century.

Folk medicine, especially when labeled “superstitions,” “old wives remedies,” “old folkisms,” and “quack medicine,” is one of those areas of folk culture on which in-group attitudes can be touchy. Therefore, many from the younger generation, no longer choose to use the folk remedies. However, Mr. Lloyd Dorsey comments: “I still use these remedies on my grandchildren. Any little scrape or cut, they come to Grandpa.”

Music

Music has traditionally played a significant role in life in the Village, especially in connection with worship activities. Of course in a regular church service, there is an

abundance of song—during the devotional period, for the period of collection, before the sermon, after the sermon and during the invitation while “opening the doors of the church.” While this is the norm in the church service, from a musical standpoint, worshippers also used the prayer meetings and the once-a-year Watch Night meeting, to express themselves individually through *a capella* song. On ~~These~~ these occasions, they sing, pray and testify as “the spirit rises and moves them” without inhibitions.

A vast repertoire of old and “older” religious songs become manifest in these special services. Evidence of the vital role played by unaccompanied singing in this type of service can be as before or following each person’s testimony or prayer, the person who is testifying or praying “rises up a song.” Others present may join in at some point. The songs are usually folk spirituals, traditional gospels or lined-out hymns. Traditional gospel songs are sung with the same fervor as the older spirituals or long meter songs, and are capable of bringing on “shouting” just as readily. When these songs are performed, *a capella*, to the congregation, there is often no difference between the gospel and the spiritual sounds. The testimonies and prayers are almost without exception powerful pronouncements; but after each, a rousing, emotion-filled song always comes before to set the mood and/or follows in order to give the feeling of completeness or closure that only the tuneful employment of the human voice alone can provide.

Special sacred ritual events call for particular songs and therefore ensure the existence of these vocal creations for some time to come. Christmas, Easter, Watch Night, communion, and especially baptism, for instance, demand certain songs. Rev. Sanders spoke about how the elderly sisters of the church would have prayer meeting at 6:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings when he was a little boy. He said, “You could hear them

all praying out loud and then stomping their feet on that wooden floor to the singing of ‘Give Me That Old Time Religion.’” In these earlier days, clapping hands and stomping feet constituted the principal song accompaniment, from which voices had a freedom that would not have been possible with a harmonic instrumental accompaniment.

Baptism songs were not originally created for baptism ritual; the members of the church just have a special repertoire of spirituals that serve this event especially well. According to several respondents, during a Village baptism songs sung while the candidates are on the mourner’s bench might include, “None But the Righteous Shall See God.” During the procession to the river the congregation usually sings, “Take Me to the Water,” or “Wade in the Water.” After the candidates are baptized, the song is usually, “So Glad, I Done Got Over.”

Many other favorite “special occasion” musical pieces might be sung at any time, and will continue to be heard even with the modification or demise of the practices with which they are most closely associated. It is evident that these songs are indispensable.

Jubilee Singers and gospel quartets perform another form of sacred music. These groups initially formed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and became popular through the early institutions of higher learning for the freedman, such as Fisk University. During the 1930s and ‘40s the quartet style of singing reached a high level of popularity in the black community. The Village had their resident quartet—the Battle Ground Four. Although quartets initially consisted of four singers, later they added a fifth as a lead;

later even more singers. Singers in these groups continue to refer to ~~them~~ selvesthemselves as a quartet because they emphasized four-part harmony. Rev.

Theodore Bush reminisced about the quartet of which he was a member and other

quartets: “Quartets would come from the Ninth Ward and other parts of the city. They came from Cut Off too. They would come to sing at Progressive Benevolent Society Hall. Some of them worked at the American Sugar Refinery. They would come in and we would have competitions. We sounded pretty good too.” From the collective memory of several people, the members of the Battle Ground Quartet were: Rev. Theodore Bush, Willie Dawson, Al Thomas, William Thomas and Willie Theodore.

The decade of the 1940s was the “golden age” of quartets when they served as a popular form of sacred entertainment. Quartets perform in the church as well as outside venues. In addition, they held an escalating series of “song battles” where the various groups would meet and compete against each other to determine who were the best songsters in the area.

In the secular genres of music, the Village also had a good representation. Mr. Morris Williams comments on the jazz musicians:

I was trying to remember some of the band members. I can think of old man Sam Johnson. He was a musician. He played the clarinet. And we had another fellow by the name of Jules Hill. He was the drummer. All I know about this other fellow, we used to call him Maurice. But I didn't know his last name. And one of the other fellows' name we used to call him Tootsie. He played the great big bass. You know one of those great big old basses that's as tall as me... Yeah, a lot of jazz. “St. Louis Blues”...and “High Society,” “Muskrat Ramble”.....Sam Johnson and Jules Hill stayed in Fazendeville, but the other three I recall they didn't stay in Fazendeville.

Rev. Theodore Bush recalled that the Johnson Serenaders Jazz Band performed in Fazendeville during the 1930's; his own brother Mr. Leonard Bush, played clarinet in the band. He also remembered that the band used to play for white functions. When Leonard passed away, he was buried in Ellen Cemetery with a jazz funeral. He states:

Leonard died on Good Friday and they buried him that Sunday, Easter Sunday. It rained and in the Village, it used to flood out so that we had to go through the cemetery. And they had a band used to play and if a fellow got a band, the white folks used to say

‘A big nigger died’ (laughter). If you had a band, you know. They played the hymns you know, going to the cemetery and when they coming back “Didn’t She Ramble” (laughter) and they turn loose.

Although jazz funerals are more closely associated with New Orleans, there were occasional jazz funerals in the rural areas outside of the city. The above quoted comment from whites indicated that these jazz funerals did not happen too often. The person who went out with a jazz funeral was usually a jazz musician, a politician, a prominent businessman in that community, or a person who had become prominent in New Orleans and was brought back home to his birthplace to be buried with other members of his family.

Rhythm and blues bands would come in from New Orleans to play for the Village dances held on Saturday nights at Minor’s dance hall. Mr. Morris fondly remembers:

Well at one time, Fats Domino...when Fats Domino first started playing, he used to come out and have little dances out there on Saturday night. Now, I don’t know what year that was in but during that year, Fats Domino, when he first started playing his piano, he used to come out there and sing and play for us. They used to have concerts like that. Get-together dances. Seventy-five cents to get in.....

Black music in the Village, along with other forms of expressive culture, allowed the members of the community to express themselves communally and individually, to derive great spiritual and aesthetic pleasure, to perpetuate traditions and values, and to create new expressions. One of the new expressions that was emerging at the time was contemporary gospel music. Large choirs were becoming prevalent in Black Protestant churches in New Orleans, and the music was changing along with the culture. Not only was sacred music changing, but rhythm and blues and jazz were also changing. With these changes in the 1960s, came another more drastic change to the people in the Fazendeville Village---“the declaration of taking.”

IV. Declaration of Taking

On February 7, 1964, Frank J. Barry, National Park Service Solicitor wrote a letter to the Honorable Attorney General of the United States. An important excerpt follows:

For use in connection with the administration, protection, and development of the Chalmette National Historical Park pursuant to the act of October 9, 1962 (76 Stat. 755), I have determined that it is necessary, advantageous, and in the interest of the United States to acquire by condemnation a parcel of land in St. Bernard Parish, State of Louisiana, consisting of 7.02 acres, more or less, and described in the exhibits to the enclosed Declaration of Taking.

This 7.02-acre parcel lies in the heart of the field over which the historic Battle of New Orleans was fought in January of 1815. Its early acquisition, as an entirety is necessary in order to construct a tour road, to erect markers to interpret the Battle of New Orleans, and otherwise to prepare for the forthcoming sesquicentennial celebration of the battle.

Even though the discussions and correspondence on the proposed addition to the National Park had started years before, the above excerpt from the letter was the impetus for the evacuation of people and the demolition of the homes in the Village. While the federal government made official claims to the land and justified its actions as nationally significant, Villagers interpreted the process differently. What follows then, are some of the residents' speculations on the real reason for condemnation procedures and how they felt about this "government situation."

Mr. Morris Williams: The only thing that I can remember is Senator Hebert and Eleanor and Senator Carls and those people, they had been trying to get that land, down there to make that a park. And so that was coming up. My thinking about the integration of the school and they might have had to integrate our children in the schools in the area, 'cause

they were bussing them from Fazendeville down to Violet Consolidate. But, they were passing white schools to get to a black school. I think that might have had some part to get them out of there. 'Cause there was too many of them in there.

Mr. Williams continues to give another reason:

The people in the land, they were trying to become registered voters. You'd begin to brace against the power. They'll always try to push something down on you to break you. The people didn't break because the lawyer he came down with us.....a black lawyer. He went down to the courthouse and he laid down the foundation to become registered voters. After that, I left because that's when I became a registered voter in New Orleans. In 1963. My family was poor, but we were poor and independent and my mother's family was the same way.

Rev. Bush: Old Linch [Park Superintendent] said, a few more years, there will be no more Fazende Village, and he kept it up....This woman, I don't know what her name was or where she was from but this might have been started in Washington...I am trying to think of that lady's name.....Mrs. Brown started that in Washington about making the park...and then old Linch he kept it up and he said a few more years there ain't gon be no more Fazendeville and he kept it up. But they ain't made no park out of it....

Rev. Theodore Sanders had this to say in a telephone interview:

People from Fazendeville picketed the courthouse [in Chalmette] in 1963 and protested with signs because they could not vote. They had to recite the Preamble to the Constitution or pay poll taxes. So, they were suing the parish for their right to vote. Now Kaiser Aluminum sold the property on both sides. So, when it came to the Village, the politicians did not defend the Village and allowed the Federal Government to move us out. Frank Cager, Morris Williams and Val Lindsey were the last ones to sell their property.... I moved out in 1953 and there was talk that the Village was going to be sold then.

From the Reconstruction era until now, many African Americans have been inclined to believe that the government was insincere in its claimed support for racial equality. During the history of Fazendeville, the community did not seem to have much support from its public officials at several crisis junctures including gaining voting rights and desegregating the schools. Because residents were not informed in the early stages of the process to make their home into a federal park, suspicions based on earlier betrayals

led to circulation of rumors. When people do not have direct official answers from the “authorities” or the “power structure” then they began to formulate their own answers.

When I asked former residents to tell me the approximate time they became aware of the government’s intentions to acquire their property by purchase or condemnation proceedings, most could not remember exactly when it was. Rev. Sanders mentioned that he left the Village in 1953 and that he heard rumors during that time. However, most said that they knew about the change about two years before it happened, but that even then, the government still did not disclose the exact time. When I asked Mrs. Dorsey about her earliest knowledge of the government seizing her property, she replied:

In 1962. We had moved but we would always go back, but eventually everybody had to leave so they tore all the houses down with bulldozers. Lindsey was the last to leave. It was talked about a long time before it happened. Finally, in September 1964 everyone had to go. It was very sad.

The residents retained a lawyer in 1962 to help them acquire more information, and to understand their situation and rights. Below is an excerpt from a letter, dated September 20, 1962, that an attorney sent to United States Senator Russell Long on behalf of Mr. Eugene Cager and several other property owners in Fazendeville:

This office has been retained by Mr. Eugene Cager and several property owners of Fazend Village, Louisiana, to represent their interest relative to establishment of a new National Park in their area. These people tell me that newspaper publications indicate that Fazend Village, which is located in Chalmette between the National Monument and the National Cemetery will be wiped out as a result of the establishment of this park.

There are approximately forty families mostly negro living in this area and they are naturally anxious to know what they might expect. Since you have sponsored this bill establishing the park, would you please let me know whether the park will encompass the area of Fazend Village, and, if so, what steps are to be taken in condemning the property owned by these people. I would appreciate knowing the present stage of this bill and whether it is now in committee. Will you please send me any pertinent information pertaining to the rules and regulations by which this property will be condemned and methods of determining how much these property owners will be reimbursed.

A few residents said they knew about it back in the fifties but they did not have definite evidence, it was just hear say. It was very difficult for the National Park Service to disclose an exact date for occupation due to the complex process of determining property titles, carrying out heir searches, and sorting through legal entanglements. However, regardless of the length of time for the process, residents should have had official disclosure as soon as deliberations began, or at least as soon as the bill was ~~past~~passed. The assistant director of the park sent a letter to Senator Russell Long to respond to his inquiry on the Fazendeville property, on October 8, 1962. It stated, “As you know, S. J. Res. 60 has been cleared by Congress for the President’s signature. The National Park Service proposes to acquire all of the inholdings within the Park described in the bill, including property known as Fazendeville.....”

It could be coincidental that this series of disruptive events, the desegregation of schools, struggles to register to vote, and loss of their land to the government--happened around the same time. However, the confluence of events was close enough that it was certainly logical for Villagers to see them as connected. In essence, several residents of the Village believed that there was a conspiracy between the federal government (the ~~National Park Service~~Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve^[PA2]), the local white politicians, and some of their powerful constituents in Washington D.C. to prevent blacks in the Village from gaining voting rights, going to school with their children and maintaining their land holdings on the battlefield. In essence, powerful whites wanted poor black residents removed from their homes which happened to be located on the sacred War of 1812’s Battle of New Orleans battleground.

At this point in time, I cannot substantiate any of the Villagers claims, and I am not sure if enough evidence will ever surface even if they are right. However, these assertions constituted a satisfactory explanation of events for a number of former Village residents. Forty years later, their rationalization for the government taking their land is stronger than ever.

Part of the Villager's consternation arises from different definitions of what a park is. Villager's perception of a park is land with trees, areas to play ball, areas to cook out, and areas for people to sit in the shade and converse. The land that was taken from them has none of these amenities; it is still a grassy field (Figure 14). Consequently, they feel that their allegations forty years ago have validity. They strongly contend that, "They ain't made no park out of it." Mrs. Yvonne Dorsey's comment illustrates the point:

The park destroyed all the pecan trees. The pecan trees was on the front of the Village. The street was in the middle. It was a field to the right and one to your left, the same size, the length of the Village. Our houses was on the left in front of the Monument. The road was where the sewer [Sewer Treatment Plant] was. Where the church was it was all pecan trees. They cut all the pecan trees down. It is a flat field now. They took it for the park (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Former site of Fazendeville community looking Northeast from the Mississippi River. (NPS Photograph)

Mrs. Deloris Theodore Thomas also states:

They bought everybody out and they had to go because my Mama and Daddy would still be there. And they have not done anything with it.

Mr. Morris Williams adds to the discourse:

They have not done anything to this place since we moved out of there. The only thing that they did to this place is to cut a road from the Chalmette Monument to run you into the Chalmette Cemetery. But, any improvement or anything else is nothing ever had been done there since (2003).

In contextualizing the above comments, we actually have two views or perspectives on what a park is supposed to be. Villagers saw the government destroying valuable resources—the trees and their community; the National Park Service saw destroying the

trees and the community as necessary for the recreation of the battlefield, so they transformed the site into an empty field with no trees.

When asked what was the response to the acquisition of the property and did any one try to fight the government, Rev. Theodore Bush replied:

They ain't made no park, but one thing they just took our houses and we ain't got nothing for them. Now there was a few of us tried to hold out and a little fellow was in the cemetery working under Linch said: If the rest of them did like ya'll did, you would have gotten way more money for your land. But they had some.....they get a little few nickels and they was satisfied. But we few, we tried to hold out.

Ada Smith recalls:

Well, I know the government told them they had to move. They did not want to move. Some of the older people had a meeting and said they was going to fight it but it did not come to that but the younger people said let it go. But, all the older ones are dead now.

Rev. Theodore Sanders in an emotional state put it aptly:

Even now, I feel that pain. It was a very heartbreaking time and there was much pain and suffering. (emotional) I think some of the scars and the wounds have still not healed yet for our parents because that was their home. Now, it is almost like you don't have anything to fall back on, you don't have anywhere to go or a home to go back to. And so, it is like a part of us has been cut off and so it's a painful experience. Even now, I feel that pain....

It could have been done better, but it wasn't done that way. It was done roughshod. The houses were worth around \$20,000 or \$30,000 and I don't think anyone got more than \$7,000 for their house. So, they kind of took the property away from them. So, I used to could go down there stand at the end of the road and look down the road and now the Park Service has literally dug up the road (2003).

Amidst the paper trail of correspondences housed at [the headquarters building of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve on Decatur Street, the Jean Lafitte Unit of the National Park and Preserve](#)^[PA3], I find that the process of eminent domain was not very smooth and there is evidence of protest by some of the residents. An example of one correspondence follows in an excerpt from a letter dated September 8, 1963 and written by the Park Superintendent to the Southeast Regional Director:

Mr. Oliver Bush had told us that he was proceeding nicely with getting this option signed and for that reason we gave him some additional time. He informed us last weekend that all signatures were on the option with the exception of Vivian's whom he would procure the following day. The truth of the matter was brought abruptly to our attention when we picked the "signed" option up from him at his station....Oliver loudly proclaimed that they had agreed not to sign and would have to have more money.

He apparently was unmoved by your paragraph regarding "preserving this historic land for future generations." It was rather a disheartening blow after our hopes had been continually heightened. It reminded us of one of the first lessons we learned (perhaps not well enough) when we began this project. That is, don't count your options until they're signed.

The Lindsey heirs played another more dramatic scene documented in a letter dated September 25, 1963, written by the Park Superintendent, and addressed to the Southeast Regional Director:

It was a two hour session in which Val Lindsey lost his temper and stalked out and the entire confab consisted of bickering, arguing and the heirs trying to out shout one another.

Before Val Lindsey left the gathering, he said that he would fight it in the courts, regardless of cost and time. He also said that he would rather wind up without a single penny after it was settled, than to be pushed around and offered an unfair price. He said he would consider the offer on his own house and land when it came, as a separate deal entirely. However if it was anything like the other two that we were discussing, he would rather have nothing than something unfair. The gist of the entire meeting seemed to be that they would all rather have absolutely nothing and be dragged from their homes bodily, screaming, before they would settle for our offer. It was impossible to talk sense to them or to try and reason with them due to the continuous shouting and arguing among the various heirs. We feel that it would be useless at this time to try and pursue that particular option any further.

Initially, the Village residents had "three months to relocate and to remove their possessions." However, the time was extended for individual cases. Some had to have time to acquire loans to purchase other property, others had to have time for appraisals, some moved their houses to other sites, and some wanted time to try and fight the government or to try and get a better price for their property. The Pastor and Deacons of Battle Ground Baptist Church wanted justice, so they wrote the Park Superintendent a

letter and he passed the new developments on to the Regional Director. This excerpt from a letter dated June 18, 1963, describes the situation:

You will be interested to know our colored neighbors chipped in to accumulate a fund of \$25.00 and had negro integrationist lawyer [lawyer] Touro [Tureau] out Wednesday night of last week for a public meeting in the Benevolent Hall. James Lawrence told Lawrence Page that Touro [Tureau] told the assembly they had better cooperate if prices were near reasonable, that it was futile to buck the Government when it was set on an improvement project.

On the other hand, there were Villagers who thought that the government did the residents a favor. The following expression from Mrs. Rose Drew Cager is illustrative:

We weren't angry... about the government buying the Village. We weren't angry. All them little raggedy houses in the Village, people were glad to get in some descent houses. I don't know nobody that was angry.... It was a little land that had nothing but raggedy houses and was a beautiful place to live.

Since the Village was razed in 1964 and the area was officially established as part of the Chalmette Unit of the Jean Lafitte National [Historical](#) Park and Preserve, the majority of the former residents do not associate with that site any more except in their memories. Only periodically, a few have gone back physically. Mrs. Rose Drew Cager and her husband Frank Cager used to take their exercise in the area by walking early in the mornings. Lloyd and Yvonne Dorsey occasionally walked in the area. A few have gone back for the January 8 Battleground Commemorative Celebration. Mrs. Ada Smith comments:

Really and truly, I went for the first time in January [2002]. So, they had a fence and we did not like that. They had big times when the horses would be stepping we would go and look. We don't get together on that day [Decoration Day] anymore. A lot of things have changed.

Mrs. Deloris Theodore Thomas also went back recently and she had this to say:

When I walked through the cemetery, everything started coming back and this was about forty years....This was recently. I walked back through the cemetery. I said, oh my God! Some things I would not want to remember—hard work. Mama had nine children.

Mr. Morris Williams pointed out:

Battle Ground Baptist Church is [now] home to the people of Fazendeville, because we are people who do not have a home. Everyone, when you come to a homecoming, you can go back to where you was born or raised and the people are still living in that community. But, we don't have a community to go back to. And the only place, if you come from New York, Chicago or anywhere you want to come from, and if you want to see ~~any body~~anybody from the Village you have to come to Battle Ground. So, therefore that's what keep the people in close unit to Battle Ground Baptist Church because that's the only place that we can call home....They even put a sewage purification plant there before the people moved out. That is to say, if you don't move, the sewage purification plant gon stink you out.

I can tell you this, you can start from in the Ninth Ward from Dary St. on back to Caffin Avenue over, you gonna find somewhere four or five people from Fazendeville are living close together, because of that home feeling. They still have it—family. (Figure 15)

The Battle Ground Baptist Church congregation went back to their former home site for an anniversary celebration in 2000. They went to the Chalmette Monument, had a program and returned to the church. Many walked, while others drove their vehicles. This visit to the site represented a pilgrimage to and from whence they came. David Jacobson states that “pilgrimage is the means of meeting the sacred, or seeking “eternal moments” or monuments that transcend the present, be they national parks, museums, or memorials” (2002: 161). The pilgrimage that was taken on that day by the church

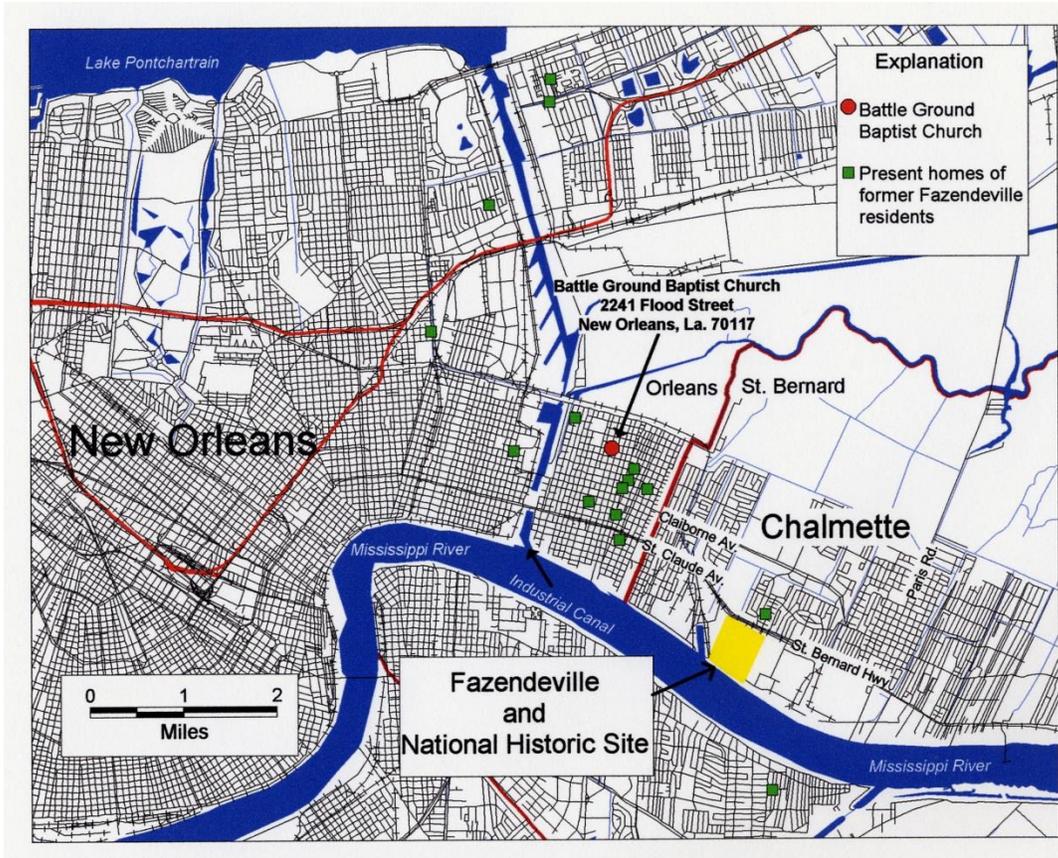


Figure 15. Migration by former Fazendeville residents (C. Flanagan, 2003)

congregants also symbolized the Village community's migration across the parish line to another home. Although Mr. Morris Williams said that the distance traveled was about twelve blocks, it was much longer symbolically. The people were in a sacred context of time and space, seeking to capture an eternal moment and thereby memorialize the Village. The Chalmette Monument and the [Chalmette National Cemetery](#) meant something to them as reference points for placing through memory the Village, since there was nothing left on the site but a grassy field. They remember seeing the Monument everyday they walked out of their homes. Now the Chalmette Monument is a memorial marker for the former Villagers to remember where their homes were.

Conclusions

Even though their community developed on the 1815 Battle of New Orleans site, only two or three people ever mentioned the War of 1812 or the famous battle, which eventually caused the National Park Service to raze their homes in the Village. Therefore, they could care less about the battle of 1815, but some do identify with and value the Chalmette Monument that memorializes the battle. Thus, the Fazendeville residents have transformed the Monument into an icon that they can use to symbolize and depict a familiar space that they can still call home. So, it is only fitting that the church congregants decided to make a pilgrimage back to the Chalmette Monument because the Village site is only a grassy field (Figure 14). Therefore, they have transformed the Monument to serve their own purposes.

In many respects, the Fazendeville Village is still alive in the Lower Ninth Ward. A number of the residents spoke about the Village comparatively in the past and the present. While their life of course is not the same, they all agreed that while there were positive aspects in moving to the city, their overall quality of life was better in many respects in the Village. When I asked residents if they felt like the community was still alive, although in a different space, the responses were varied. Mrs. Rose Drew Cager answered:

I don't know because the younger ones they don't even remember it too much, you see. And the older ones so few of us are still living, you see. I talks about it, mostly to my kids, so they could know we came from Fazendeville. It was our home and a beautiful place to live.

Mr. Morris Williams remarked resolutely:

The people out of Fazendeville are prosperous people. Because, I could tell you, right now, it's a little village. Right here in the Ninth Ward, you could call it Fazendeville. They just moved from Fazendeville....on this side of the street. The majority of those

people, those two blocks, they all out of Fazendeville... My sister-in-law just called me up, she's from Fazendeville. (Figure 15)

The Village that was built across from the pecan grove lacked any formal legal and political organization of its own; it had no established cooperative labor groupings; and it was not the center of highly large commercial activities. However, there was a secular educational institution, a few voluntary associations, and some commercial activity. The Village itself was enmeshed within the larger political and societal organization of St. Bernard Parish and Chalmette, but without significant representation within these groupings.

Like slave quarter societies on plantations that lined the Mississippi River, the Fazendeville Village had strong African and Caribbean components. The families and their culture constituted a mixture of African, diasporic and European cultural elements, which combined to create a unique mode of life and expression of the people. This community, complete with its own folklore and social institutions, was predominantly oral/aural in its communication. Its expressions were spoken and heard in an intensely sociable atmosphere as the Village dwellers carried on their lives in many face-to-face contacts in the past and even today in a different space. Some voices are still heard within these pages.

The common ideological identification of the people of the Village, the informal network of social relations surrounding kin, marriage, and friendship, the interlocking relationships associated with the activities of churches and the benevolent associations, and the face-to-face contact of large numbers of community members at church anniversaries, revivals, baptisms and funerals, gave the Fazendeville Village its focus as a

community when it existed on the battleground site between the Chalmette National Cemetery and the Chalmette Monument. These interactions and events are

~~continued~~continued in the Lower Ninth Ward surrounding the Battle Ground Baptist Church on Flood Street.

When asked what they wanted people to know and what they wanted to remember about Fazendeville, Mrs. Deloris Thomas replied:

I don't want to remember the hard work and the negative things. I do want to remember the baseball games, the baptizing and all the festivities and good times we had. Everybody raised everybody's children. Fazendeville's children was raised like all the other children should be raised.

Mrs. Yvonne Dorsey states:

I think the Village was a blessed place because the worst thing that I saw was a fire. You never heard of so many murders like we have today. Even when there was a storm and it flooded, the water would come up to the back of the Village but would never come into the Village. I always thought that God was watching over the Village. We had problems but we also had love. They had devotion with their families. I don't know, I guess it rubbed off on my husband and I (smile).

These voices from the Village have some vital things to say about their sacred space, and can more specifically promote further constructive engagement with concepts emanating primarily from their core of life in the Village.

V. Recommendations

- Another fertile field for further study would be to identify, analyze, and interpret the social and political functions of the church and voluntary associations in relation to those of other institutions. In addition, a strong case can readily be made for studying the church and the religious experience as it responded to major periods in American history. Local church history usually expresses the mood or spirit of its age. It could possibly reveal the response of local personalities to the important events of the past. For example, the study may be divided into such periods as Reconstruction, black migration, World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, and the rise of black theology. Each of these periods poses special problems and opportunities for the study of Battle Ground Baptist Church, the voluntary associations and their leaders.

First, in order for me to make general claims on the church's and association's social teaching, values and political influence or lack of, I have to review and analyze documents that have some measure of official denominational status and the public discourse of its most respected leaders. Second, any such analysis must show not only how those values determine the nature of the people, but also how they designate the communal spirit of the people, which forms the basis for their collective experience of Village solidarity.

There are several sources that reflect the way individual church leaders responded to and participated in the key events of given periods. For example, church publications, sermons, addresses, souvenir booklets, church programs, pictures, obituaries organizational minutes, and local newspapers can be very helpful as primary sources. A

critical evaluation of such sources along with oral histories and ethnographic interviews would provide a wealth of information on the church, pastors, social and political movements, and the variety of relationships between clergymen and lay members. Furthermore, the purpose of this study component is to describe the way in which those basic communal values culminate in a distinctive principle of coherence which forms the bedrock of the Village's long—almost a century-- existence.

- Conduct more ethnographic interviews on other members of the community. This component should include other elderly people, however it should also target younger members. It would be interesting to get their perspectives on the Village and beyond, focusing on the years they experienced living in the Village and those years after 1964.

- Conduct archival and library research on military service (WWI and WWII), educational (1964 school desegregation) and political (1963 protest for voting rights) issues affecting Fazendeville and St. Bernard Parish.

- Construct kinship charts of the Fazende family and the first families in Fazendeville. They can reveal a wealth of information and provide valuable insights into the historical life of the Village. A genealogy study can have an added positive effect on interpreting life in this community. There are many records in Bibles, property transfers, tax records, funeral programs, and other sources, which can open our understanding of the genealogical links of families. I have found that many of these records are still in the possession of Village residents. The collection, preservation and analysis of these records are a feasible task.

- Conduct an archival study of land transfers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth

centuries affecting the Fazendeville property.

- A questionnaire for statistical purposes should be developed to gather specific information from those who have had the face-to-face interview and for those who have not been interviewed.

- A historical exhibition with an educational outreach program should be developed to depict life in the Village. The exhibition should include the following components:

Photographs

Significant quotes from residents

Documents (gov. letters, church records, benevolent and mutual aid

—association records, etc.)

Diorama of the Village

Artifacts

- Commemorative sign should be placed at the end of the Fazendeville Road
- A color brochure should be developed for the Fazendeville community

Endnotes

¹ The Malus-Beauregard House was built in the French Creole style ca. 1833 as a suburban retreat for a prominent New Orleans widow. It was acquired by the state of Louisiana in 1948 and transferred to the National Park Service in 1949. The Park Service restored the house in 1958 and the vestige of its domestic landscapes was altered to reflect the park's concern with reclaiming the battlefield scene. The structure now stands somewhat out-of-context at the southeastern part of the Chalmette tract (Risk 1999: 16, 18, 59).

² This unpublished report was quoted in Rick's work: Birkedal, Ted, et al. *The Search for the Lost Riverfront: Historical and Archeological Investigations at the Chalmette Battlefield, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park*. Unpublished report submitted in draft to the Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, n.d. report contains the chapters entitled "Historical Geography of Civilian and Post Battle Features" and revised Historical Geography of the Chalmette Battlefield" cited in the CLR."

³ This was quoted from the *Washington Evening Star*, January 1, 1863.

⁴ This was partially quoted from the *New York Times*, January 1, 1863.

⁵ According to Stephen Glazer, [Spiritual] Baptist takes the mourning to another dimension. Along with the mourning rite before baptism, they also "participate in mourning rites frequently. Loyal church members are expected to mourn at least once every three years. Mourning ceremonies may be initiated at the request of the candidate or by church leaders (1983:58). For a more extensive discussion of Spiritual Baptist mourning rites see Glazier (1983). *Marchin' the Pilgrims Home: Leadership and Decision-Making in an Afro-Caribbean Faith*. Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1983. See also Alfrieta Veloits. "The Conceptualization of Kinship Among the Spiritual Baptist of Trinidad. Ph.D diss, Princeton University, 1981.

⁶ There was a community called "the Camp" that housed about fifteen – twenty families that the Southern Railroad brought in to work. Initially they lived in railroad cars not far from the Village. Later the Railroad built wood framed houses. They lived in the vicinity of the railroad and the dock. These men were brought in primarily from Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas. When these families got ready to celebrate something or go to church, they would attend Battle Ground Baptist Church.

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