France Trip Report

September 11 – 30, 2009

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I. Summary

Carol S. Clark was awarded a FY2009 Albright-Wirth Grant to travel to Nantes, France for three purposes: to work with a new international park partner, the Shackles of Memory Association (*Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*, in Nantes, France); to design two wayside exhibit interpretive panels and an educational curriculum about the international slave trade; and to improve her French speaking skills through a language immersion experience. She lived with a French couple (home stay) and worked with the Nantes Sister Cities organization and *Nantes Métropole* to meet educators, government employees of *Nantes Métropole* or *Ville de Nantes*, historical association and sister cities association members, and museum professionals. She worked with the Shackles of Memory Association on the projects related to the slave trade, which will take the form of permanent wayside exhibit panels, curriculum materials for teachers, and websites. This travel related to the NPS mission of education, working with partners, and importance of parks and their stories to the global community.

II. Background

Nantes is one of Jacksonville's Sister Cities, and it shares aspects of our history. In February 2008, representatives from Nantes, France came to Jacksonville to meet park staff, local teachers, students, and university professors. Jean-Marc Masseaut, Educational Director of the Shackles of Memory Association, came to Kingsley Plantation, one of our park sites, to speak about our shared history - the transatlantic slave trade. The project goal is to develop two wayside panels with the *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* (Shackles of Memory) and a curriculum for local schools that ties the history of slavery on both sides of the Atlantic - France, West Africa, and the American South. This project was made possible by the National Park Foundation (Albright Wirth Grant) through its partnership with the National Park Service.

The historical slave trade ports of Nantes, as well as La Rochelle, St. Malo, and Bordeaux, have records that explain the European history associated with the slave trade, its origins and process. The story of the Middle Passage will be explained through a variety of experiences recorded in primary resources throughout the history of the slave trade. Several National Parks will be used to tell the stories of the enslaved men, women, and children who lived daily with the institution of slavery as well as the legacy of slavery - the perseverance and contributions of people of African descent to modern American society.

Highlights:

There is a lot of interest in organizations and governmental entities in Nantes to further develop a partnership relationship with the City of Jacksonville and with the National Park Service. The following bullets highlight the new prospects that came as a result of this international travel:

- Permanent exhibits at Kingsley Plantation, with the two wayside panels being designed currently as the starting point
- Expanded content on the audio tour currently being developed for Kingsley Plantation
- Curriculum materials for teachers, which will also be translated into French for use by French educators
- A jointly-sponsored event in February 2010 to include the NPS, *Ville de Nantes, Nantes Métropole*, *Conservatoire de Nantes*, University of North Florida, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Sister Cities, *Ville de Nantes' Service des Espaces Verts et de l'Environment* (parks department), and Duval County Public Schools
- The first Young Ambassador to travel from Nantes to work with the National Park Service to develop materials in French for visitors, design a temporary exhibition, and coordinate the jointly-sponsored event in February 2010 at Kingsley Plantation
- Exchange of professionals/knowledge to update and expand the America garden at a large park in Nantes, to specifically include plantation-era crop examples to represent the southern United States

III. Summary of Events & Site Visits

Calendar:

Sept 12	Arrived in Paris, took train to La Rochelle (historic slave trade port)
Sept 13	La Rochelle – town; maritime/commerce, history, and protestant museums
Sept 14	La Rochelle – *Musée de la Nouveau Monde*; train to Nantes (slave trade port)
Sept 15	Orientation to Nantes with Jean-Marc Lemoine (host); tour of slave trade era buildings/landscapes with Jean-Marc Masseaut, *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*
Sept 16-17	Explored Nantes, including participating in daily life activities with host
Sept 18	Nantes-Seattle-Jax Sister Cities meeting; visit to *Musée Dobrée*
Sept 19-20	*Journee du Patrimoine* (weekend of free access to public heritage sites in France)-visit to *Château d'Angers/du Roi René*, *Galerie David d'Angers*, churches, etc.
Sept 21	Visit to Mont-St-Michel and St. Malo
Sept 22	Meeting with *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* and *Nantes Métropole* about exhibits, curriculum, and 2010 event ; meeting with the aforementioned and *Conservatoire de Nantes* ; private tour of slave trade exhibits in *Château des Ducs de Bretagne*/Nantes History Museum with Director of Conservation
Sept 23	Meeting at *Conservatoire de Nantes* and jazz band rehearsal; symphony
Sept 24	Walked Nantes taking photos for project; meeting with future Young Ambassador/international volunteer
Sept 25	Meeting at *Nantes Métropole* to discuss planning for February 2010 event, including: student exchanges in music and citizenship groups, Sister Cities anniversary, unveiling of partnership exhibits (representatives from: *Nantes Métropole, Les Anneaux de la Mémoire, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Association, Ville de Nantes, Conservatoire de Nantes, Le Conseil Nantais de la jeunesse*

Sept 26-27	Visit to Clisson to meet with Bob Destiny, who is writing a musical opera inspired by his visit to Jacksonville and Kingsley Plantation; tour of coastal areas and port of Nantes (Port Maritime de Nantes Saint-Nazaire)
Sept 28	Walking and packing
Sept 29	Meeting at *Nantes Métropole* with *Service des Espaces Verts et de l'Environment, Ville de Nantes* ; train to Paris
Sept 30	Depart Paris, arrive Jacksonville

Project Components after October 1, 2009:

- Meet with Director, International Center, University of North Florida to finalize intern (Young Ambassador) paperwork and assignments
- Submit International VIP paperwork for Young Ambassador to volunteer at Kingsley Plantation
- Present trip activities at Jacksonville Sister Cities annual meeting
- Write reports – international travel and National Park Foundation Albright-Wirth Grant
- Write lesson plans/curriculum unit for teachers, post to park website
- Write and design two wayside exhibits with Shackles of Memory staff
- Facilitate event planning for Kingsley Heritage Celebration, February 2010 – Shackles of Memory presentation and unveiling of exhibits and curriculum, musical presentation featuring UNF Jazz Ensemble and students from Nantes; Sister Cities anniversary acknowledgement and celebration; Nantes parks staff visit and tour of gardens and parks in Jacksonville area
- Participate in February 2010 events with visitors from Nantes

Summary:

Working with the individuals and entities above, I have organized five projects that will reach fruition by February 2010.

First, I will work with *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* to write and design two wayside exhibit panels for the dock at Kingsley Plantation. The site very recently (September 2009) had its permanent exhibits installed, but there was nothing about the slave trade in a global sense nor are there panels on our dock, which is utilized by visitors regardless of whether they arrive by boat. The panels will contextualize slavery by helping visitors understanding the transatlantic trade's origins and impacts. There will be a version in English and in French. Also, I will work with *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* to write a portion of the audio tour for Kingsley Plantation, for which planning has just begun.

Second, I will complete a curriculum unit on the slave trade, using the three French port/trade cities I visited as examples of the growth in commerce and the business of the trade. I have identified primary resources from the museums and organizations I visited. This unit will have as a companion the existing slavery curriculum for Kingsley Plantation, as well as five new lesson plans I am writing that identify five national park sites that can be used to explain the legacy of slavery in the United States: Fort Sumter National Monument, Natchez National Historical Park, Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site (I will incorporate MALU's existing materials), and Jazz National Historical Park.

Third, the Kingsley Heritage Celebration, an annual event held over four Saturdays beginning the second week of February 2010, will feature a special history talk about the slave trade by a representative of *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*, music by the University of North Florida Jazz Ensemble with students or instructors from the *Conservatoire de Nantes*. The event will also unveil the two new wayside exhibit panels being co-designed by myself and *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* as our first tangible step in a long term partnership, and my educational curriculum

about the origins of the slave trade and its legacy (using NPS sites to explain slavery and its effects on modern American culture). The event weekend will also include “twinning” activities between Jacksonville and Nantes Sister Cities, with activities at Kingsley Plantation, at Fort Caroline National Memorial, and other locations in Jacksonville. The music students that come from Nantes will also be given the opportunity to play with students from the university and Jacksonville’s high school and middle school of the arts.

Fourth, I will facilitate coordination of a visit by representatives from *Service des Espaces Verts et de l’Environment, Ville de Nantes*. The trip will include site visits to Kingsley Plantation and the greater Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, as well as other parks and gardens in the area.

Fifth, I will facilitate the application for Mathilde Belna, Young Ambassador from Nantes, to be the Timucuan Preserve’s first international volunteer and host part of her internship at Kingsley Plantation.

IV. Benefits to the NPS - Observations & Lessons Learned

It has only been in the last ten years that there have been public exhibits and discussions about French participation in the slave trade. Unlike the United States, which has lived face to face with the legacy of the slave trade and slavery, the French did not have direct contact in their modern society with the legal and cultural effects of slavery and the civil rights movement. In recent years, however, there has been great effort to recognize France’s role in the trade and how the nation became involved in the transatlantic trade. As in the United States, slavery is not a popular topic, and it has been easier in France to avoid discussions due to heritage differences in France versus the United States.

During my visits to La Rochelle, St. Malo, and Nantes, I was able to very tangibly identify the wealth brought to French port towns by the transatlantic trade in the infrastructure and elaborately designed buildings dating to the period. I also learned a great deal about how the history of the slave trade is presented to the public in France, which aspects of it are highlighted, and how its origins are explained. Aside from museum visits, interviews with museum professionals, walking tours of the cities, and books or other materials picked up or purchased, I also talked about the slave trade with people of different ages and backgrounds. Many of the people I talked to were not associated with studying the history of the slave trade, giving me some insight into how or when they learned about the slave trade and French involvement. I talked with several teachers about the French education system, which is similar in some ways to ours, with national standards that form the framework around which teachers design their curriculum or lesson plans. It seemed as though people in their thirties or older did not learn about the involvement in the slave trade while in school.

Key points:

- For French history, the slave trade is viewed as part of trade and maritime commerce.
- The slave trade is at the heart of a very complex system.
- The slave trade’s development was due to the technological advances in navigation that allowed exploration and increased trade opportunities, which included the slave trade.
- Very few African people or slaves ever set foot in France, so few had direct contact with the “face” of the trade.
- Emphasis today in slave trade exhibitions is on the development of the business of the trade. (As opposed to emphasis on the Middle Passage and slavery, as it is in general education in the U.S.)

- Maritime commerce development, including the slave trade, was ruled by different nations in different centuries: 15th century Portuguese, 16th century Spanish, 17th century Dutch, 18th century French and English, 19th century English
- Students are taught very little about the slave trade and slavery, if it is taught at all.
- The French educational system's common base of knowledge and skills was updated in 2005, and changes are underway. It is unclear how this will relate to student knowledge of slavery or the slave trade.
- The legacy of slavery was exemplified in the major newspaper for Nantes – there were several articles about Nantes as a slave trade port and a petition being circulated to change the names of several streets in Nantes from the current names (names of wealthy merchants associated with the trade) to new names representing the history of slavery.

As in the United States, I have the impression that some educators and museum staff in Nantes, and throughout France, do not have the content knowledge or training to teach about slavery and civil liberties. More and more materials about the slave trade have been exhibited since the 1990s, but educators may be overwhelmed by the content knowledge. A secondary goal is to have the educational materials I write for U.S. educators available in French for teachers. *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* sends out a traveling trunk of materials about slavery and the slave trade and I hope that the trunk can include our lesson plans. I brought books from the site to *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire* to include in their library and in the trunk. They do not have ready-made lesson plans for educators, which is a way in which their operation varies greatly from our NPS site, where we provide materials that are ready to use with students in the classroom and on-site. I have located materials on the *Ministre de l'Éducation nationale, de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche* website and will categorize the educational activities under the broad topics located in "The Common Base of Knowledge and Skills" documents.

Through site visits, interviews, meetings, reading, and discussion, I have learned a great deal about the origins of the slave trade. Spending time with museum, city, and history professionals has provided new perspectives for me on the origins of the slave trade and what the story can mean in a global sense. Many of the issues of interpreting this history are the same for park professionals as they are for interpreters or educators in France – it is a difficult and painful history for many people. However, we can find common ground and techniques to use to start and continue discussion of this aspect of our history, which is shared by a global citizenry.

V. Foreign Counterparts Met by the NPS Team

During the trip, the NPS representative met or consulted with the following individuals on issues relating to slavery and the slave trade, partnerships with NPS, professional and student exchanges, event planning, Sister Cities, museum exhibitions, exhibit planning, curriculum planning, and participation in the NPS international volunteer program:

- Christine Rennard, *Mission Solidarités et Coopérations Internationales, Nantes Métropole*
- Jean-Marc Masseaut, Educational Director, *Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*
- Patricia Beauchamp, *Coordinatrice, Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*
- Mathilde Bossard, *Chargée de projects, Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*
- Mariette Cassourret, *Président, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Association*
- Jean-Marc Lemoine, *Treasurer, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Association*
- Jean-François Cesbron, *Responsable subdivision Est-Centre-Sud, Service des Espaces Verts et de l'Environment, Ville de Nantes*

- Marie-Hélène Joly, *Directrice, Conservatrice générale du patrimone, Musée d'histoire de Nantes*
- Bertrand Guillet, *Director of Conservation, Musée d'histoire de Nantes*
- Mathilde Belna, future Young Ambassador
- Jean-Marie Bellec, Instructor, *Conservatoire de Nantes*
- Pierre Gallier, Instructor, *Conservatoire de Nantes*
- Laurent Guinel-Justome, *Le Conseil Nantais de la jeunesse, Ville de Nantes*
- Bob Destiny, American jazz composer and choreographer

VII. Press Coverage in Nantes

I was interviewed and photographed in uniform on September 23, 2009 by a journalist from *Ouest France*, the newspaper for Nantes and the surrounding region. I have not yet received notice that the article was published.

http://www.ouest-france.fr/

(translation available if you reach through Google)

VIII. For Further Information

http://www.lesanneauxdelamemoire.com/
http://www.nantes.fr/
http://www.nantesmetropole.fr/index.jsp
http://www.nantes-seattle-jax.com/ (currently down due to hacker)
http://www.conservatoire.nantes.fr/

(translation available if you reach through Google)

VIII. Images

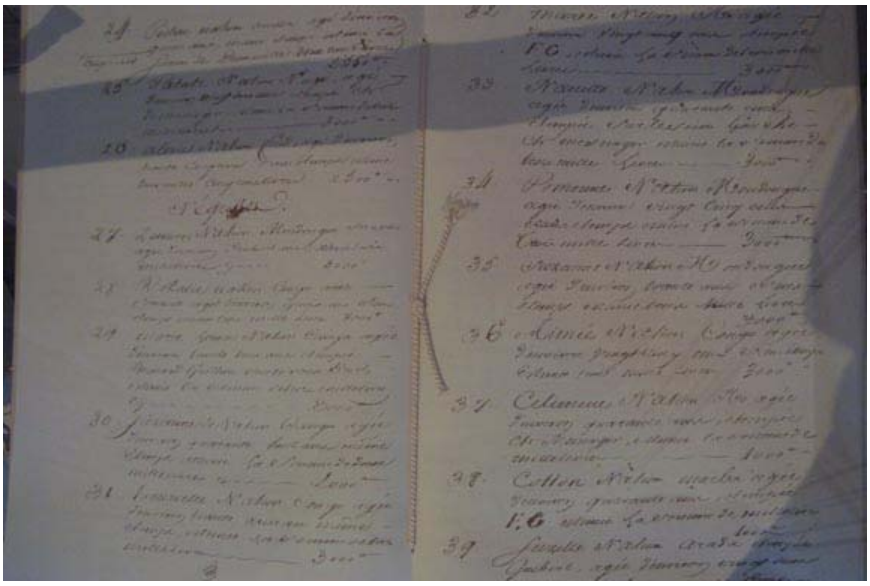
The following pictures include photographs of the towns visited (historical slave trade ports) and the foreign counterparts mentioned above.

[please see following page]

Above: La Rochelle today

Below: Painting of La Rochelle, 18th century

This painting shows the infrastructure and scenery that would have been seen by La Rochelle's 17th - 18th century merchants, financers, and sailors, when the city was actively involved in the slave trade. These same features are still present today, and a part of the daily landscape in La Rochelle.



Above: Exhibit case with *invitaire* [inventory] *d'une plantation rochelaise établie à Saint-Domingue à la fin du XVIII (18th) siecle*

Below: *Saladier aux esclaves* (salad plate depicting scenes of slavery and sugar plantation)

Primary documents or artifacts, such as these, will be integrated into the curriculum materials for educators. Students will learn more about the process and challenges of history by looking at historical documents and household items that reflect the wealth of the slave trade and its global impact.

Above: Elaborate façade of a building financed by the wealth of the slave trade, illustrating the commerce's economic benefits to the city of Nantes.

Below: St. Malo, a fortified port city which also participated in the slave trade.

Above: My host’s family was generous and living and visiting them improved my understanding of the French language and culture.

Above: Audio tour device from Mont-St-Michel tour. It was well written, with three layers of content from short summary, in-depth information, and related information options. It is a good model for the Kingsley Plantation audio tour, which is currently under development.

Above: This journalist from *Ouest* France interviewed me about my projects.

Below: Planning team for the 2010 Kingsley Heritage Celebration, to be held the second Saturday in February 2010. I am the first from the right. Representatives were associated with: *Nantes Métropole, Les Anneaux de la Mémoire, Nantes-Seattle-Jacksonville Association, Ville de Nantes, Conservatoire de Nantes, Le Conseil Nantais de la jeunesse*.