

They have maintained enduring family, cultural, and language ties. Their fair complexion and education have somewhat lessened their distinct identifiability and the level of discrimination they experience. The other, more recent group, the *Marielitos*, came here as ex-convicts from Cuba, with no family ties or resources and a darker skin, to a very different experience. They have tended to stay poor, uneducated, and powerless.⁵

Miami, the city where both make their home, with its beaches, music, and food is the vibrant crossroads of the United States and Latin America. Its entrepreneurial, shopping, and entertainment scenes help us recapture some of our balance of trade with countries to the south, since thanks to Cubans, many Latin Americans feel they are still in Latin America.

¡Viva La Diferencia!

Perhaps what we most need to remember is that neither the U.S. nor Latin America and the Caribbean is monolithic or static. Each is diverse and changing and vary greatly in response to circumstances. Each culture in the hemisphere is a product of social relations between different groups, and they are constantly changing in response to the requirements of demographics,

changing technologies, and economic arrangements. Appreciating this complexity, and associated diversity, can only benefit our cultural resource programs.

Notes

- ¹ Ilan Stavans, *The Hispanic Condition: Reflections on Culture and Identity in America*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1995),
- ² *Newsweek*, "Latino Americans: The Face of the Future," http://newsweek.com/nwsrv/issue/02_99b/printed/int/us/latino_1.htm
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Poor Mexico... So FarA quote attributed, ironically enough, to Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz, a staunch ally of the U.S. from James Diego Vigil, *From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican American Culture* (Prospect Hts., Illinois: Waveland Press) 1998.
- ⁵ Earl Shorris, *Latinos: a Biography of the People* (New York: Avon) 1992.

This paper derives from my presentation on diversity among Latinos in the U.S., given at the NPS ethnography training course in Miami, in May 2000.

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Fazendeville

Highlighting Invisible Pasts and Dignifying Present Identities

Twenty years after the razing of the community of Fazendeville, the headline of an October 1, 1989, article in *The Times-Picayune* said: "Community Lost Its Life on Chalmette Battlefield." One of Fazendeville's former residents, Val Lindsey, Sr., remembered that when he closes eyes and thinks about what happened on that grassy field, he doesn't see what most people see—he doesn't see Andrew Jackson holding off the British in the Battle of New Orleans. Instead he sees his yesterdays—families, friends, and the remnants of his own personal battle. He sees the clean, quiet village of Fazendeville sacrificed on the altar of historic preservation 25 years ago.

Another resident, Evelyn Minor, noted that "it really was a unique place... Everyone knew each other. They were there to help each other...."

Henry Cager said, "it was the most beautiful place to live... it was a family affair." But perhaps Mr. Lindsey summed up the feeling of most of the residents, "I didn't have the money to fight it. There wasn't no yelling with the federal government. They didn't care. I had no choice. If I did, I'd be down there now."¹

This historic African-American community known to many as Fazendeville or simply "the village"² existed from 1867-1964 on the site of the Chalmette National Battlefield in St. Bernard



Fazendeville, showing Battleground Baptist Church and homes, 1960. Courtesy U.S. Marine Corps by George E. Statham, Jr. GY/SGT, USMC, 8th Marine Corps Reserve and Recruitment District, New Orleans 13, Louisiana.

Parish, Louisiana, where the Battle of New Orleans had been fought in 1815. Fazendeville exemplified the early reconstruction period African-American communities that sprang up after the Civil War. The land was listed in 1854 as part of the succession of Jean Pierre Fazende, a free man of color,³ who passed it on to his son. After the Civil War, c.1867, the younger Jean Pierre Fazende began to sell lots to former slaves. The residential community of African Americans known as Fazendeville started to grow.⁴

In addition to the Battleground Baptist Church, founded in 1868, the community grew to include a one-room school,⁵ three general stores, and two mutual aid societies. The Silver Star Benevolent Association and the Progressive Mutual Aid Benevolent Association served the community by offering insurance and aid, as well as providing opportunities for social intercourse. These structures helped form a cultural landscape that survived well into the 20th century. The community was a viable, close-knit community of “honest reliable people,” and was also described as “country but near the city” because of its close proximity to New Orleans.

When Chalmette National Historical Park was established in 1939, on former War Department lands, to commemorate the 1815 battle, this African-American community remained in the midst of the preserved “hallowed ground.” In addition, the Chalmette National Cemetery, established by the War Department in 1864, was located down river or southeast of Fazendeville. National Park Service properties surrounded the private residential area.

The most significant change in the community would occur in the early 1960s. The planning, development, and reconstruction of the Chalmette National Historical Park had been ongoing since its establishment in 1939. Both National Park Service officials and local preservationists spearheaded efforts for land acquisition

to reconstruct the established boundaries of the battlefield. The Battle of New Orleans Sesquicentennial Celebration Commission, created in 1962 by President Kennedy, was preparing for the celebration. The National Park Service was responding to the many public demands on its cultural, historical, and natural resources by planning Mission 66. These projects would upgrade the facilities, staffing, and resource management throughout the system by the 50th anniversary of the Service in 1966.

However, two major obstacles hindered the plans of park officials and preservationists: the Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Plant and Fazendeville. The land between the park and the Chalmette National Cemetery totaled 64-1/2 acres. It was owned by the Henry J. Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corporation. After much negotiation with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Kaiser agreed to donate the land between the cemetery and the Fazendeville community to the park—the first donation was 13-3/4 acres—the remainder to be given in yearly increments. Fred A. Seaton, Secretary of the Interior at the time, called Kaiser’s donation a “generous act,” and noted that “When this tract comes under government control, we will be able to preserve a most important part of the field where the historic and significant Battle of New Orleans was fought on January 8, 1815.”⁶ Only the Fazendeville properties remained.

Local preservationists pressed forward and wrote their congressmen that they were “overjoyed at the news of the donation of this land and we do not think that we should stop until the Fazendeville tract is acquired....[It is] vitally needed to join the separated areas of Chalmette National Historical Park.”⁷ Steps to acquire the Fazendeville properties began. But by the 1960s, Fazendeville was home to over 50 families, some 200 persons. It was a “proud, tight-knit” settled community that did not want to be “bought out” and have to relocate to other surrounding areas. Nevertheless, by 1964, after extended legal negotiations, the National Park Service acquired the numerous properties that belonged to long-time Fazendeville residents. By 1966, the homes were razed. Virtually all evidence of this historic community was erased—the Fazendeville village and its people became “an invisible resource.”

There was little knowledge of this community among the park staff when I entered the Service in 1989, even though NPS historian Jerry

Greene had suggested a study of Fazendeville in his 1985 Historic Resource Study. I was so “green” (and not “green blood” either) and new to the Park Service and caught up with the planning of the newly legislated Acadian cultural centers—that this important part of the park’s cultural history and significant part of the African-American story in Louisiana by-passed me. Several years later a park ranger asked if I would be interested in talking with one of the former Fazendeville residents who visits the park periodically. This was the spark which ignited my fire — to plan an ethnographic project which would include oral histories of the surviving Fazendeville residents, together with an ethnohistory of the Fazendeville community. It was obvious that the former Fazendeville residents maintained a connection with the landscape even though “they may not step onto that landscape for a long time....”

The 1998 *Cultural Landscape Study of Chalmette* noted that the park contains some significant features not connected with the battle, such as a trace of Fazendeville Road. Author Kevin Risk adds that “the interpretation of these non-battle-related features has proven problematic to the park’s primary mission of interpreting the battlefield landscape...yet, these features hold historical, cultural, and ethnographical significance in their own rights.”⁸

In the NPS *Management Policies 2001*, Park Ethnographic Resources (5.3.5.3) are defined as “cultural and natural features of a park that are of traditional significance to traditionally-associated peoples. These people are the contemporary park neighbors and ethnic or occupational communities that have been associated with a park for two or more generations (40 years), and whose inter-

ests in the park’s resources began prior to the park’s establishment.”⁹ The former residents of Fazendeville are traditionally-associated peoples. They consider the park resources an integral part of their cultural identity, and are a part of the park’s history. They are also a necessary National Park Service concern.

In 1999, a park intern gathered initial information on the remaining Fazendeville families and began archival research. Last November, the NPS Southeast Regional Office awarded the park a small sum to initiate the ethnographic oral history project. With these initial “starter funds” we hope to collect oral histories from surviving residents of the Fazendeville community, especially those elders who are in poor health; contextualize the oral history data within the regional culture of the Lower Mississippi Delta region; and identify potential African-American ethnographic resources within the park and community consultants interested in working collaboratively with the park.

And finally, a personal goal is to have a “homecoming” at the park for the former Fazendeville residents. It will undoubtedly be bittersweet, as former residents walk along the newly mowed trace that highlights Fazendeville to park visitors—and to see the surviving lillies that once bloomed in their backyards, and blooming still on the battlefield; and a walk down the Fazendeville Road from St. Bernard Highway to the Mississippi River closed by the federal government on November 25, 1964, almost 40 years ago, will most assuredly bring back memories.¹⁰

The history of African Americans has often not been emphasized at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Through this project we will have developed a more complete ethnographic and historical account and have a more inclusive history. We will begin to tell the whole story of Chalmette Battlefield, from the 1815 Battle of New Orleans to contemporary times. For to many of those “muted voices,” Chalmette represents a place closely linked with their sense of purpose and existence as a people and as a community.

Notes

- 1 *The Times-Picayune*, New Orleans, LA., (October 1, 1989): 1. Newspapers kept on microfilm in the New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA.
- 2 Eric Cager, son of long time Fazendeville resident, Henry Cager, told me that residents referred to

Aerial photograph, c. 1960, showing Chalmette Monument in foreground, Fazendeville community in center, Chalmette National Cemetery among the allée of oaks in rear and Kaiser Aluminum Plant, far rear. Photo courtesy Louisiana Air National Guard.



- Fazendeville as “the village” and that it was like a township. (Personal Communication)
- 3 The *gens de couleur libre* or “free people of color” had a unique social and legal status recognized in antebellum Louisiana. See Jerah Johnson, “Colonial New Orleans: A Fragment of the Eighteenth-Century French Ethos,” in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, editors, *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1992) and Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803*. (Durham, Duke University Press, 1997).
 - 4 Jerome A. Greene, Historic Resource Study, Chalmette Unit, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1985), 205-208.
 - 5 In 1926 there were a total of 69 students that attended the one room school house which ran from the first through the eighth grade.
 - 6 Letter from Secretary of the Interior, Fred A. Seaton, to Mr. Chad F. Calhoun, Vice President, Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corporation, dated April 9, 1959.
 - 7 *St. Bernard Voice*, Friday, April 24, 1959: 1. Excerpts of a letter from Mrs. Edwin X. deVerges, President of the Chalmette National Historical Park Association to Congressman F. Edward Hebert, dated April 17, in article entitled, “Wants Fazendeville.”
 - 8 Kevin Risk, *Chalmette Battlefield and Chalmette National Cemetery: Cultural Landscape Report*. (Cultural Resources Stewardship Division, National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, 1999), 1.
 - 9 *Management Policies 2001*, in *Ethnographic Resources*, 5.3.5.3., (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, NPA S1416/December 2000): 57.
 - 10 *The St. Bernard Voice*, Arabi, La. Friday, November 27, 1964, Vol. 75, No. 46:1.

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This paper was first presented December 7, 2000, at the National Park Service conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Cultural Resources 2000: Managing for the Future. It was read in the symposium organized by Miki Crespi: “Seeking a More Inclusive System: Raising Muted Voices and Identifying Invisible Resources.” Only preliminary research was conducted. Intensive research from The Freedmen’s Bureau, U.S. Census, and the National Park Service archives, as well as local sources needs to be carried out. This, of course, is in addition to oral interviews with former Fazendeville residents.

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Audrey L. Brown

African-American Churches as Ethnographic Resources

Churches are perhaps the most common ethnographic resources of African Americans — significant places and spaces in their lives. Even those who no longer attend, often return to church in nostalgic memories or in person for homecoming or home-going celebrations.

While schools, mutual aid societies, and other social institutions evolved from churches, there is little research about day-to-day details of that process. Ethnography can be the link that documents and preserves such knowledge and thus illuminate the cultural meaning of the “church” in African Americana. This article offers a glimpse of that process through ethnographic

description of a “Singing” and “Giving” ceremony commonly held in rural Florida Afro-Baptist churches since the 1930s or earlier. I compare it to a 1998 “giving” ceremony at a national Baptist conference and use anthropological theory to explain its’ cultural significance.¹

From 1981-1985, I lived in Jerusalem, Florida, a church community established in the post-bellum period. Other church members and I became involved in documenting and preserving community cultural traditions like the Men’s Federation of Brothers in Christ “Singsings.”²

Excitement was running high in Shady Grove church when I got there for a Federation “Singing” held Christmas Sunday, 1983, instead