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# HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

May 2019

## COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, May 16, 2019, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Bill Bradford who will speak on the history of St. Clare Catholic Church. **Reservations are required** and may be made by calling 467-4090. **Respectfully we must request that you please call by noon on Wednesday, May 15,** to make your reservation in order to help us plan seating which is limited to fifty-four people and to apprise us of the number of lunches to order. Lunch is \$12.00, payable at the door, and it is catered by Almost Home Catering, Michelle Nichols, chef.

*Beginning in June 2019, the price of lunch will increase to \$14.00 for members and \$15.00 for non-members.*



## THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

By  
James Keating, M.D.

The Battle of New Orleans was actually a full campaign conducted by the British over four months which represented a series of eight land and sea conflicts as presented in *The Historian* of March 2019. The British strategy in the War of 1812 was to contain the United States on the North American continent. Accordingly this required the capture of New Orleans and the advancement upriver all the way to Canada. The plan was to box in the United

States from the West. To wit, England intended to halt American western migration, plunder the territory claimed in the Louisiana Purchase, and strengthen its ties with its allied combatants, the Native American tribes. Hence although the Treaty of Ghent had been under negotiation since July of 1814, England had no intention of returning any territory captured in battle. In like manner the United States did not return the 1.5 million acres of land taken in the Creek War from the Indians.

The British navy commander was Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Forrester Inglis Cochrane, who wanted to deliver to his king "complete command of the Mississippi."

THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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Cochrane expected to win the prize of New Orleans and become very rich because the law of the seas rewarded the spoils of war to the victor. It is of interest that warehouses in New Orleans were packed with tons of sugar, tobacco, hemp, and cotton. After the British armada arrived in the Mississippi Sound, Cochrane exhibited abject arrogance and reckless impatience. He elected not to wait for General Sir Edward “Ned” Pakenham to assist in the design of a battle plan. Besides, Cochrane had a burning hatred of Americans and utter contempt for their ability to defend their territory.

Admiral Cochrane believed he could land the British army a short distance (four miles) downriver from New Orleans and victory would be inevitable against any militia army the Americans could muster on such short notice. Cochrane had not studied the landscape/seascape around New Orleans properly. Moreover he rushed into the preparations for battle because he needed to take New Orleans before the Treaty of Ghent was signed, knowing that in the near future he would be ordered to terminate hostilities.

It is instructive to survey the map of New Orleans and its environs. It is a port on the Mississippi River, but the city is surrounded by wetlands, lakes, cypress

swamps, islands, and shallow sand bars. Thus, of six possible approaches considered by the British, only a direct path of the British ships anchored off Cat Island in the Gulf of Mexico through Lake Borgne and up Bayou Bienville would be practical and uncontested. Admiral Cochrane delivered the army to Chalmette on December 23, 1814, under the temporary command of General John Keane.

Nevertheless that night, General Andrew Jackson attacked the British army, in Chalmette and for two hours his eighteen hundred man force fought the British hand to hand, bayonet to tomahawk, and sword to knife rather than fire their guns and rifles and possibly hit their own men in the dark, foggy night. The British held their own, and Jackson retreated to the Rodriguez Canal nearby, but the British had suffered five hundred casualties and decided to exercise extreme caution in any future advances into New Orleans against a decidedly potent adversary. However, this caution allowed the ever clever Jackson to switch from offense to defense and build an impregnable redoubt along the Rodriguez Canal which lay between the British camp and the New Orleans prize.

The Rodriguez Canal was a disused millrace from a sawmill between the Chalmette and Macarty plantations. It was five feet deep



This rendition of the Battle of New Orleans shows the use of the cotton bales by the soldiers.



Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Forrester  
Inglis Cochrane

and twenty feet wide. Directly behind the canal chief engineer Major Arsène Lacarriére Latour supervised the construction of a rampart of mud and logs with loopholes for artillery that stretched one thousand yards from the Mississippi River to the cypress swamp. The canal was deepened and filled with water. The wall of the rampart rose fifteen feet with a surface of slimy, slippery mud. The Honorable Major General Sir Edward Pakenham finally arrived on December 25, 1814, to take command of the British army. This was to be his first independent command, and he was promised to be the future governor of Louisiana. When he realized the mousetrap that Admiral Cochrane had marched into, Pakenham was furious at the situation. In fact he wanted to withdraw from this Chalmette location and design another place of attack. Admiral Cochrane exploded and challenged Pakenham. In fact Cochrane threatened to storm the American line with his four thousand sailors and marines and let the army “bring up the baggage.” Finally Pakenham relented and proceeded to execute the campaign he had inherited.



General Sir Edward “Ned”  
Pakenham

First, Pakenham decided to test the American defenses with an armed reconnaissance on December 28, 1814. So, he attacked the Rodriguez Canal with two units of four regiments each (fifteen hundred men). In spite of that the American artillery effectively halted his troop advance. A brief artillery duel ensued but ended with American dominance, so Pakenham withdrew. Thus, he had



Major Arsène Lacarriére Latour was the engineer who supervised the building of the ramparts for the Battle of New Orleans and wrote the book *Historical Memories of the War in West Florida in 1814-15*.

learned that it would be necessary to establish a superior artillery collection of cannon to silence the American guns and destroy Jackson’s ramparts in order to prevail in any frontal assault in broad daylight across five hundred yards of open ground.

In this era there were three types of field artillery: guns, mortars, and howitzers. Guns were cannons named for the weight of the ball they fired. For example, a six pounder gun fired a six pound ball. Guns could fire shells (balls), grapeshot, or canisters. The Americans had twenty-four guns in eight batteries at the Jackson Line and six more on the *Louisiana* gunboat which served as an anchored battery that could range the battlefield on the British left. The American artillery batteries were constructed and manned by navy seamen under Master Commander Daniel Todd Patterson, army soldiers, and Jean Lafitte’s pirates. They were further protected by cotton bales which simply absorbed British cannon balls without igniting or destruction.

On New Years day 1815, General Pakenham designed a full attack on Jackson’s line. With his full army ready to advance, he executed an artillery barrage directed at the ramparts behind the Rodriguez Canal. During the night Pakenham had built three crescent-shaped batteries with thirty guns which included ten 18-lb. and four 24-lb. cannons. These were positioned on crude wooden platforms protected by barrels of sugar forming a protective parapet atop the batteries. Next an artillery duel transpired for over four hours. Even so the American earthworks held up although a few of their guns were silenced. It transpired that the

American artillery was better directed, and as a result most of the British guns were put out of commission. Surprisingly Pakenham's barrels of sugar were penetrated, engulfed in flames, and totally destroyed by American cannonballs. The British ran out of ammunition, and finally their cannon fire slowed and became irregular. By midafternoon the entire disappointed British army and its commander retired to their camp without any troop assault. In short, the American artillery was superior in design, execution, and firepower. The New Year's Day artillery duel became a precursor for the final and major engagement to follow.

On January 8, 1815, General Pakenham amassed his entire army at dawn and, against all reason, ordered a full frontal assault on Jackson's line after another brief ineffective cannon barrage. A botched minor expedition to the west bank of the Mississippi River with the intent of knocking out a satellite battery which had been peppering the British left flank was delayed. Nevertheless, Pakenham's British soldiers were amassed and ordered to march across the plain which was an old sugar cane field which became a splendid killing field. At three hundred yards the advancing British lines were hit with withering American artillery fire. Moreover the standard British infantry rifle was the Brown Bess musket which had no sights and a limited range of only fifty yards. On the other hand Jackson had two thousand riflemen, many of whom had Kentucky Long Rifles with a range of two hundred yards. These American sharpshooters were deadly accurate and protected by the rampart. Jackson placed his riflemen in rows of four so there would be continuous firing by one row while the other three rows were re-



Chalmette Battlefield  
Site of the Battle of New Orleans  
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve

loading their weapons. Hence when the advancing British lines came within two hundred yards, row after row of redcoats were mowed down by the combination of deadly accurate rifle fire and generous amounts of lethal grapeshot from the cannon. In fact besides standard grapeshot, langrage or scrap shot was put into the cannons which might contain nails, door hinges, horseshoes, broken tools, and chain links.

The result was three main assaults failed to reach the top of the American parapets at any spot. To make matters worse Pakenham and his second in command, Major General Gibbs, were fatally wounded in short order during these assaults. In twenty-five minutes the British casualties totaled 285 killed, 1,265 wounded, and 484 taken prisoner. The Americans suffered only twelve dead in this encounter. In the rear General Lambert, who commanded the two regiments held in reserve, became the commanding officer of the British. Wisely, he then ordered a full withdrawal of the army from the field. By January 19 the entire British army had decamped Chalmette to return to their ships off the coast of Cat Island in the Gulf of Mexico.

However, Purser Thomas

Shields, who had been instrumental in delaying the British on their way to the Battle of New Orleans, was not finished with them. Assembling five naval boats and a gig, he and his men harassed the British as they traveled through Lake Borgne to their ships. The Americans netted 132 prisoners and 8 watercraft whose total tonnage was similar to the five gunboats they had lost in the Naval Battle of Lake Borgne, preceding the Battle of New Orleans.

In conclusion, the War of 1812 against Great Britain was essentially a second war of American Independence. Even after the Treaty of Paris of 1793, Britain had no intention of honoring it, and in effect with the War of 1812, she attempted to reclaim all or part of her original thirteen colonies. The Battle of New Orleans was a disaster for Britain because of the arrogance of Admiral Cochrane and General Pakenham. General Jackson was not only a better general, but he was also lucky. Even if the British had penetrated Jackson's line at the Rodriguez Canal, Jackson would not have surrendered, a fact he had made plain when he previously told the town fathers that he would burn New Orleans ra-

*(continued on p. 7)*

# Gulf Coast Historical and Cultural Exposition

By  
Eddie Coleman

The City of Biloxi, the Mississippi Coast Historical and Genealogical Society, and Preserve Biloxi hosted the Annual Gulf Coast Historical and Cultural Exposition on Friday and Saturday, April 26-27 at the Biloxi Civic Center on Howard Ave.

Organizations which presented exhibits were the Slavonian Ladies Auxiliary; Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church; Gulfport Historical Society; Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area; Gulf Coast Design Studio; Biloxi Cultural and Historical Society; Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum; Hancock County Historical Society; Biloxi Public Library Local History & Genealogy Department; Preserve Biloxi; Singing River Genealogy-Local History Library; University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Library's Gulf Park College for Women Archives; Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art; Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College-Jefferson Davis Campus Campus -John Robinson Brown Condor; Gulf Coast Heritage Tours-Disability Connection; Biloxi Historical Society; and Back Bay Mission.

The HCHS exhibit included an 1857 map of the Bay of Saint Louis and Shieldsboro Harbor, photo books of Richmond Barthe, Anthony Scafidi, Hurricane Katrina, the Annual Cemetery Tour, and the Live Oak Registration information for Hancock County.

This annual event is free and open to the public.



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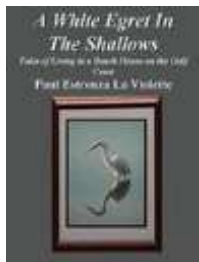


Gulf Port Historical Society



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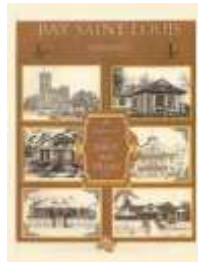
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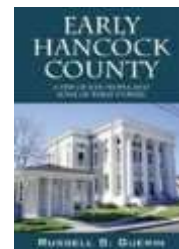
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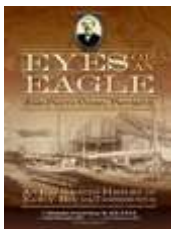
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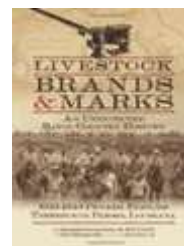
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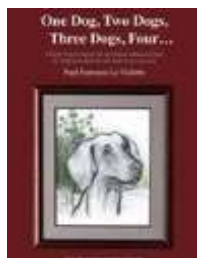
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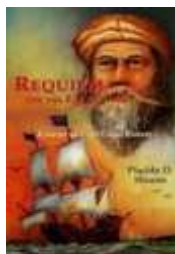
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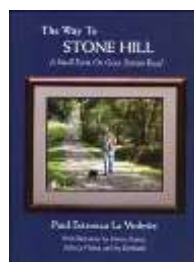
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ther than surrender. During the first War of American Independence, Generals Gage, Howe, Burgoyne, Cornwallis, and Clinton returned to England in disgrace. In 1815 General Pakenham returned home a corps in a rum casket.

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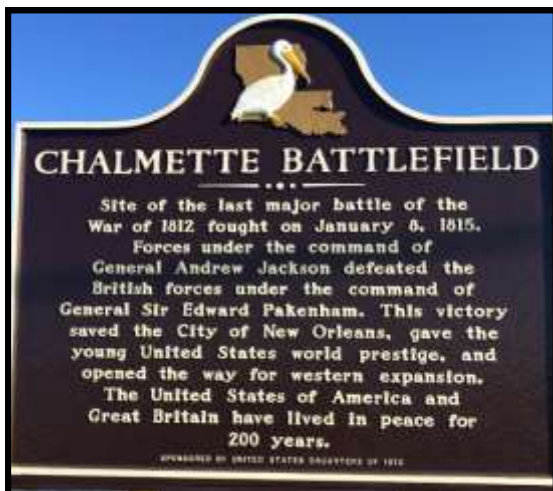
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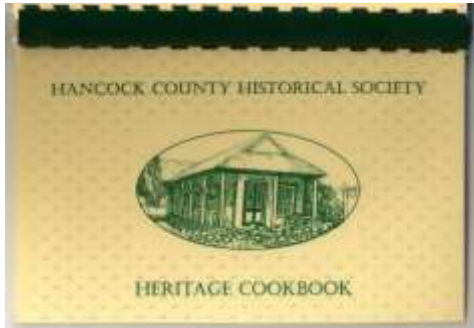
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