

REVIVING THE OLD SOUTH: PIECING TOGETHER
THE HISTORY OF PLANTATION SITES

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

Stacey Wilson, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas
August 2013

REVIVING THE OLD SOUTH: PIECING TOGETHER
THE HISTORY OF PLANTATION SITES

Committee Members Approved:

Dwight Watson, Chair

Patricia L. Denton

Peter Dedek

Approved:

J. Michael Willoughby
Dean of the Graduate College

COPYRIGHT

by

Stacey Wilson

2013

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As the copyright holder of this work I, Stacey Wilson, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational purposes or scholarly purposes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been completed without the support and encouragement from family and friends. I want to first thank Dr. Denton, Dr. Watson, and Dr. Dedek for agreeing to be on my committee and for helping me find a clear voice. I want to thank my sister for helping me proofread this thesis. She learned a lot more about Louisiana history than she ever thought she would. To my mom, stepfather, and a close network of friends that were there when I needed to vent about frustrations, to ease my mini meltdowns, and who listened when I needed to work out an idea...I want to say Thank you!

This manuscript was submitted on Friday, June 21, 2013.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY	1
II. THE UNPRESERVATION OF THE SOUTH: THE CHANGING INTERPRETATION OF PLANTATION SITES	31
III. PLANTATIONS AS COMMUNITIES: TELLING THE HISTORY OF THE SITES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY	59
IV. TWO CASE STUDIES ON LOUISIANA PLANTATIONS AND CONCLUSION	90
BIBLIOGRAPHY	107

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Changes in Interpretation Themes at Destrehan Plantation.....	54
2. Changes in Interpretation Themes at Ormond Plantation.....	56

I. INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

I was raised in St. Rose, a little town about thirty minutes outside New Orleans, Louisiana. Honestly, there is not much there in terms of shopping, restaurants, and local attractions. In fact, people from New Orleans refer to St. Rose as the country, the boondocks, and I have one friend who refers to my town as Jerusalem because of its distance from New Orleans. St. Rose is comprised of subdivisions and commercial businesses. The lack of development, in contrast to a city, does have its benefits—remnants of the past are still visible. The mighty Mississippi River and its levees, long tracts of land similar to the original arpents¹ of land granted to the first colonists, and plantation homes along the historic River Road are still evident.

Plantation sites are abundant in southern Louisiana. As a child, I passed plantation homes daily on the way to school and I visited them on school field trips. As a child and even as an adult I did not connect the history of the site or its buildings to the plantation system. Plantations were places where whites owned blacks as slaves, simple as that. That is all I learned in school until I enrolled in a History Research Seminar course as an undergraduate student. By studying the antebellum era, I learned that plantations were so much more; they existed as economic entities. This connection as well as the social and political aspects of a plantation is not always clearly made. My desire to learn and

¹ The French used an arpent to measure land. In Louisiana colonists were given land grants in linear arpents in either 40 or 80 arpents in size. An arpent was approximately 192 feet or about five-sixths of an acre. Mary Ann Sternberg, *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byways*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 1996), 16-7.

understand the relationships that occurred between blacks and whites, slaves and slave owners, and their interactions drove my initial interest in the Antebellum South and my first major research paper.

As I have matured, I have gained education and insight on public institutions and difficult histories. I have also begun to question the acceptance of interpreting plantation sites in a way that romanticizes the history, omits/marginalizes slavery, and/or focuses primarily on the white residents of the plantation. Plantations in this region have interpreted themselves in the same fashion for as long as I can remember. The knowledge I have gained about history, slavery, and plantations are not reflected in the plantation sites interpretation. Interpretation is how the plantation presents the history of its site. For example, Ormond Plantation located in St. Charles Parish does not mention the institution of slavery, the enslaved, or anything related to the economy of plantations. There is a complex history and function of plantations that is not included at most plantation sites. Mostly the lineage of the past owners, their house, and their importance is interpreted.

Plantation interpretation needs to be specific to each plantation and not just in terms of the owners. It needs to include the area, the people, the agriculture and the political, economic, and social aspects of the community. One of the points many Louisiana plantations do not make is that antebellum slavery in Louisiana was different from the rest of the country. In Louisiana, as in the United States, there were two dominant groups, free and enslaved. However, in Louisiana some plantations were owned by men and women of African descent—this in itself changes the typical notions of plantation history. When the public thinks of slavery, they think of the first American colonies on the East coast. Louisiana did not become a part of the United States until

1803.² By that time, Louisiana had been owned by France and Spain, respectively, and already had established a long history of slavery. Plantation sites need to tap into the community context to interpret the complete history and function of the site and to allow today's multicultural older and younger generations to relate to that history.

Historic houses and sites have been preserved as remnants of America's past. These sites educate on past architectural styles and lifestyles, but have the potential to educate the public on diverse topics such as slavery, which with all of its cruelties and complexities, women, the community, and the culture within the plantation existed. The narrow interpretation of plantation sites causes many to marginalize or omit slavery, ignoring that the wealth was obtained through slave labor. There are some plantations that are better at interpreting difficult histories. However, why has the interpretation of most plantations remained unchanged for so long?

My initial argument for plantation interpretation was that slavery needed to not only be included, but also integrated into the discussion of plantation sites. However, after I began my research I realized to truly understand the meaning and function of a plantation it needs an anchor. Currently, the plantations under consideration are interpreted in such a way they could be picked up and moved anywhere in Louisiana without changing the focus. The anchor of historical context fixes the plantation to the specific geographic location and culture of that area, answering the questions: Why this building? Why at this place? Why preserve this plantation as a cultural link to the past?

This project will examine past and present plantation interpretation at Destrehan Plantation and Ormond Plantation. Located in the German Coast, these case studies are

² For more information on the Louisiana Purchase refer to *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* edited by Peter J. Kastor.

important for two reasons. First I grew up there; this is my history. Secondly, these plantations are similar in appearance and are located within 1.25 miles of each other, but interpret their sites very differently. Native Americans, Germans, French, Spanish, Canary Islander, and Italians all lived on the German Coast. Two revolts occurred there, but much of this history has been lost to the local community. The plantations need to interpret their history through the lens of community to insure that the public understands the history and function of each site.

The following historiography will examine the scholarship on Louisiana plantations, how it has changed, and how it influences current plantation interpretation. An analysis of the historic preservation movement, the interpretation components and interpretative programming of a plantation, will trace the ways in which these factors influence plantation interpretation. Area history for the case studies provides context for the plantations' history. The two case studies will examine how two plantations located in the same area operate and how that influences their interpretation. I will also provide suggestions on how to anchor the plantations in the community to present a more inclusive history.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Interpretation of plantations is shaped by outside influences and most particularly is directly linked to how historians discuss and analyze plantations. Their emphasis becomes the emphasis of the sites. The information historians exclude and thereby imply is not important becomes silenced histories at these sites. To understand why plantation museums interpret their sites the way they do, this historiography will be divided into

three sections. The first section looks at how historians write about Louisiana plantations; the second at how academic and public historians suggest interpreting plantation sites, and the third at how historians discuss difficult histories. All three will foster an understanding as to why the current plantation interpretation has been in place so long.

Popular novels and movies such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, published in 1935 and made into a film in 1939, romanticized plantations in the minds of the general public. More recently, Alex Haley's *Roots*, published in 1976 and made into a film in 1977, provided an alternative viewpoint, but the romanticized version has prevailed. In 1924, Francis Gaines wrote *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition*. Gaines compares the tradition of romanticizing plantations with the realities of actual plantation life. Written forty-one years after the Civil War, Gaines argues that the "popular conception of the old plantation"³ excludes Jim Crow, economic problems, and race relations. He traces the development of that concept through literature, theatre, and songs as early as 1832 to as late as the 1900s.⁴ He goes further to compare each representation to the realities of slavery, the plantation, and race. Gaines is truly before his time.

Twenty-one years later in 1945, Harnett T. Kane resumed the romanticized description of Louisiana plantations with *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana*. Kane provides a brief history of French, Spanish, and United States ownership of Louisiana with a discussion of Louisiana architecture throughout the book. He connects the aftereffects of the Civil War with the "perseverance" of southern traditions. Kane argues that a decimated sugar industry and homes destroyed by fire, storms and

³ Francis Pendleton Gaines, *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition*, 1924, Reprint, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1962), vii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vii-viii.

neglect forced families to leave after owning their homes for generations. He romanticizes the history through the use of descriptive language and by not making the connection between “Negro” and slave and planter and slave owner. Although there is a romanticized tone, this book does offer insight into the daily lives of whites and blacks during the French and Spanish ownership of Louisiana and their interactions with Anglos. Kane also includes a map and list of historic Louisiana plantations. The list provides the name of the plantation, the owner at that time, and in some cases describes the architecture of the plantation.⁵

The romanticizing of plantations continued well into the mid twentieth century. In 1961 Clarence John Laughlin wrote *Ghosts Along the Mississippi: An Essay in the Poetic Interpretation of Louisiana's Plantation Architecture*. Laughlin attempted to present the evolution of Louisiana plantation culture in terms of “historico-architectural” analysis and through the use of poetry. The historico-architectural approach discusses the evolution of Louisiana in terms of architectural styles and includes photographic plates of the buildings, landscapes, and people. Each plate has a poetic description that correlates with the scene in the photograph. Poetry is used to depict the past through language and relies on the photographs to “penetrate beyond the tough outer skin of appearances”⁶ to provide a reality of how “elements of the past and of the future play equal parts with that of the present.”⁷ Laughlin wrote this book to reveal the magic and the mystery of old Louisiana plantations. In his words, he used his camera not as a machine, but as a lens to present a specific and personal poetic and psychological record of Louisiana plantations.

⁵ Harnett T. Kane, *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945), 17-18.

⁶ Clarence John Laughlin, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi, An Essay in the Poetic Interpretation of Louisiana's Plantation Architecture*, (New York, Bonanza Books, 1961), n.p.

⁷ Ibid., n.p.

He also provides a history of the owners of the plantations.⁸ In his discussion of historico-architecture, Laughlin mentions slavery, but promotes the common misconception that slaves were not people, but property. We have since learned their role and importance in history. Also, the poetic nature of this book adds to the romanticized tone.

The end of the 20th century brought about a change in the way plantations were examined. In 1993 John Michael Vlach wrote *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* to reintroduce an overlooked history. His focus is on architecture like Laughlin, but specifically he focuses on slave architecture. Vlach argues that to understand the human dimension of old buildings, there needs to be a complete description of the people who lived there. He uses Historic American Building Survey (HABS)⁹ records, slave interviews taken during the Federal Writer's Project,¹⁰ old diaries, newspaper accounts, ledgers, travel accounts, and planter's correspondence to discuss plantation architecture in its proper historical format. Vlach believes slave architecture and the black presence needs to be recognized and included before revising the portrayal of southern architecture. He addresses the physical structure and the landscape of plantations. The Big House and the slave quarters, two very distinct types of buildings, defined one another because they existed in the same landscape. One, the slave quarters, made the other, the Big house, possible. Vlach argues that slave owners laid out

⁸ Ibid., n.p.

⁹ To look up a HABS survey on a particular building, visit Alkek Library at Texas State University-San Marcos on the fourth floor in government documents or online on the Library of Congress website at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/.

¹⁰ For more information on the Federal Writer's Project, visit the Library of Congress's website at <http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fwp.html>.

plantation landscapes, but slaves claimed and modified their spaces for their own purposes, which gave them a sense of place and community.¹¹

In 1999 the shift continued with John B. Rehder's *Delta Sugar: Louisiana's Vanishing Plantation Landscape*. Rehder examines the overlooked history of plantations turning into sugar factories. Plantations used various cash crops to support themselves such as indigo, cotton, and sugar. Rehder examines sugar plantations that no longer exist being replaced with sugar factories. He discusses the Louisiana sugarcane plantation landscape, why it is vanishing, and traces the evolution of Louisiana plantations from their origins to the 1960s-1990s. As a cultural geographer, he looks at this topic from a historical and cultural perspective. Rehder introduces the plantation concept and discusses the impact of cultural identity on the settlement patterns of Anglo, French, and African slaves. He further explains what a working plantation was and how it functioned, and examines why plantations are disappearing. Rehder argues that plantations evolved into more corporate operations during the early 20th century resulting in the loss of the functionality of the plantation. He provides six case studies of sugar plantations in varying degrees of decline to allow the reader to fully understand the plantation, what it meant, the culture, the economics, and the landscape.¹²

Plantations by the River: Watercolor Paintings from St. Charles Parish, Louisiana by Father Joseph M. Paret, 1859 edited by Marcel Boyer and Jay D. Edwards in 2001 uses Father Joseph M. Paret's watercolors, to examine the organization and daily life of plantations in this parish. Father Paret lived in St. Charles Parish for twenty-one

¹¹ John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: the Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), xi-xiv.

¹² John B. Rehder, *Delta Sugar: Louisiana's Vanishing Plantation Landscape*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), xi, xiii, xiv, 179.

years serving as the parish's only priest. Boyer and Edwards argue that Father Paret's 1859 watercolors "constitute the single most valuable visual source for documenting the 19th century plantation landscape in lower Mississippi region."¹³ His watercolors differ from other artist's depictions of that time because they include topographical views of entire plantation estates and interior views, which allow us to understand the overall organization of plantation landscapes.¹⁴

Boyer and Edwards separates Father Paret's paintings into three categories: sites and dwellings depicting plantation homes, the Little Red Church, the presbytery, and farms; flora and fauna depicting flowers and animals such as alligators, snakes, and birds; and French landscapes painted from memory. Father Paret's watercolors reveal that a plantation was more than the "big house," but a community with slave quarters, an agricultural zone with cash crops, and an industrial zone with the sugar house. Echoing Vlach's argument, Father Paret's watercolor depictions of the close proximity of the big house to the slave quarters indicates that one existed because of the other. Boyer and Edwards discuss plantations, slave labor, immigrants, and laborers in this period.¹⁵ Interestingly, 66% of the white families in St. Charles parish owned slaves while the average for the entire South was only 15%.¹⁶ Father Paret's watercolors include Ormond Plantation, but not Destrehan Plantation, even though it was one of the most important plantations of the parish. It is unknown why Destrehan Plantation was not painted. Boyer and Edwards provide a history of the owners and comments on the architecture of each

¹³ Marcel Boyer and Jay D. Edwards, *Plantations by the River: Watercolor Paintings from St. Charles Parish, Louisiana*, by Father Joseph M. Paret, 1859, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), 3, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

plantation included. The book also includes excerpts from Father Paret's letters, *My American Journal*, to his family in France which describes life in St. Charles Parish.¹⁷

The focus on architecture returns with Richard Anthony Lewis's *Robert W. Tebbs Photographer to Architects: Louisiana Plantations in 1926* written in 2011. This book pays homage to Robert W. Tebbs, one of the pioneers of architectural photography.

While Lewis goes into great detail about Tebbs' life and career, he also discusses Louisiana plantations in terms of architecture and daily plantation life. Unlike many historians, he stresses the importance of the Mississippi River, which had both economic and social functions. Lewis also includes a historiography on how photographic plantation images reinforce the romanticized views of plantations. More importantly, he takes the discussion of the plantation past the Civil War, discussing the affects the war had on the plantation, which many plantation sites do not do. The remainder of the book features photographs and histories of specific Louisiana plantations.¹⁸

The literature on Louisiana plantations emphasizes plantation architecture and romanticizes plantations. However, increasingly, some historians ventured to explore or emphasize silenced histories over architecture. Understanding how Louisiana plantations are written about in general allows us to see how those writings influence the interpretation of Louisiana plantations. Most rely on non-historians. Few plantation sites have trained historians on staff; some use resources such as the ones above to learn more about their historic sites. The emphasis of these books becomes their emphasis. The next section will show how historians are writing about the interpretation of historic sites.

¹⁷ Ibid., 115.

¹⁸ Richard Anthony Lewis, *Robert W. Tebbs, Photographer to Architects: Louisiana Plantations in 1926*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 6, 17.

As early as 1980, new ideas were proposed to interpret plantation sites. Suzanne Louise Turner, a professor of landscape architecture, wrote an article explaining the importance of landscapes to historic sites, specifically plantations. In “Plantation Papers as a Source for Landscape Documentation and Interpretation: The Thomas Butler Papers,” Turner argues, that at that time, there were attempts to interpret not only the building, but the political, social, and economic conditions of the site itself. She believes that preservationists began to realize that the landscape possessed the potential to communicate the impact of man on the environment through time. Turner notes that because the landscape is always changing, it makes it harder for physical evidence of past landscapes to survive and argues that landscapes had not been interpreted or preserved because no one realized the importance of them. Two common excuses for not interpreting the landscape were that not enough documentation existed and that the meaning of the landscape had yet to be explained.¹⁹ Unfortunately, many of the slave cabins, fields, and sugar refineries were lost by the 1980s.

Turner believes that plantation documents can potentially interpret the landscape and speak of the lifestyle and culture of past generations. She argues that examination of business and legal documents, slave ledgers, receipts for goods and services, cash crop transactions, correspondence, and other plantation documents can reveal “important information about how man [both free owners and enslaved workers] viewed the land, and how he manipulated it in order not only to survive, but also to enrich his experience of the environment.”²⁰ Turner examined the Thomas Butler Papers, Thomas Butler’s

¹⁹ Suzanne Louise Turner, “Plantation Papers as a Source for Landscape Documentation and Interpretation: The Thomas Butler Papers.” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 12, no. 3 (1980): 28-9.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

plantation records, to answer broad questions such as how did he view the land and more specific questions such as what garden tools were used. After examining the records relating to Cottage Plantation located in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana she concluded that the collection provided a “perspective of the way man of this period related to this peculiar and beautiful landscape, the role the landscape played to his everyday perceptions, the way the life cycle of the plants blooming, leafing, and fruiting provided benchmarks in the cycle of plantation life.”²¹ Turner believes this information can and should be added to the interpretation because it provides an additional layer to plantation interpretation. However, she believes that the information should not be used to replicate the landscape, but be incorporated into the interpretation.²² Text panels, photographs, and paintings can be used to describe and illustrate what the plantation landscape looked like and to ensure that future visitors understand how both free and enslaved men, women, and children lived.

Sixteen years later in 1996 William T. Alderson and Shirley Payne Low wrote *Interpretation of Historic Sites*, which focuses not on the landscape, but on how to interpret historic sites in general. The historic sites committee of the American Association of Museums, now the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), defines interpretation as “a planned effort to create for the visitor an understanding of the history and significance of events, people, and objects with which the site is associated.”²³ Freeman J. Tilden in *Interpreting Our Heritage* defined interpretation as “an educational activity, which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original

²¹ Ibid., 39.

²² Ibid., 39-40.

²³ William T Alderson and Shirley Payne Low, *Interpretation of Historic Sites*, 2nd ed., (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1996), 3.

objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.”²⁴ Alderson and Low argue that the differing definitions of interpretation provided by AAM and Tilden are not contradictory. Essentially they express the same idea, that understanding these sites require more than factual information and must encompass interrelated and complex relationships. Comprehensive understanding will not occur until the meanings and relationships within the plantation system have been revealed and explored.²⁵

After defining interpretation, Alderson and Low discuss interpretation in terms of the relationship of historic site staff and visitors. Interpretation can help the visitor place the topic of the site into a historical perspective and understand why it existed. Alderson and Low state that there was little interpretation of historic sites during the historic preservation movement in the 19th century because the average visitor had prior knowledge of what he or she was visiting. The first historic sites were shrines to great leaders or war veterans. The public either learned about the historic events and/or figures related to the sites in school or from family members. They argue that the shrine interpretation is inadequate today because visitors are not learning the information in school or from family members. Alderson and Low realize that today’s visitor is more cultured because he usually has visited more historic sites, but is less informed because the history of the site does not relate to his/her life experiences. Therefore, he/she needs more help to understand the site. They concluded by stressing an important point, public site employees are the sites’ trustees. They have a duty to restore, manage, and interpret the historic sites because earlier generations saved them so future generations can claim

²⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

their heritage. The remainder of the book explains steps to interpret historic sites.²⁶

Alderson and Low raise another point. Site employees have duties beyond guardianship—to dispel the myths of the traditional plantation narrative dominant during the nineteenth century. They need to reveal the realities of slavery and other brutal practices that may have occurred on plantation sites.

After determining how to interpret historic sites, the literature moves to examine the feasibility of interpreting a plantation site's archeological findings. In 1997 Carol McDavid wrote "Descendants, Decisions, and Power: The Public Interpretation of Archaeology of Levi Jordan Plantation." An archeological excavation at the Levi Jordan Plantation recovered artifacts representative of both the white and black residents of the plantation. The goal was to include both the white and black descendants and the community in the planning of subsequent interpretation. Many of the plantation's black and white descendants still live within thirteen miles of the plantation. McDavid stated that she and her collaborators worked "together to decide how to interpret, publicly, the material culture of slavery, tenancy, and racism."²⁷ McDavid does not offer any answers to the questions she raises. However, the political and organizational strategies used between the descendants, the archeologists, and the other community members serve as good examples for others attempting to do similar work. McDavid concluded "the common view is that the old attitudes were, simply, wrong...presenting 'good' and 'bad' parts of history is an open ended, inclusive way, rather than closed 'this is the way it was' fashion, could help people to see for themselves how much people and attitudes have

²⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

²⁷ Carol McDavid, "Descendants, Decisions, and Power: The Public Interpretation of the Archaeology of the Levi Jordan Plantation," In "The Realm of Politics: Prospects for Public Participation in African-American and Plantation Archaeology," special issue, *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 114.

changed.”²⁸ This is important. This means that people can handle both sides of the plantation system, the sites just need to give them a chance to do so.

In a logical progression, the next literature helps organizations and individuals develop public programs that effectively interpret the history of an historic site. In 2000 Ron Thompson and Marilyn Harper wrote “Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for the Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.” Thompson and Harper make an important point; historic sites cannot speak for themselves. The sites need to be interpreted and we have an obligation to communicate their stories to incite “passion, commitment, and action”²⁹ in future generations because “historic places that are valued will be preserved.”³⁰ The Bulletin discusses the history of historic preservation and education and the importance of the National Register of Historic Places. Thompson and Harper provide a lengthy discussion on interpretation, what it is, how to plan for it, and where to turn for help. They also explained that the term interpretation is used in correlation with historic sites “because it seems to parallel the process of translating from one language to another, telling the story of a place.”³¹ They suggest ways to interpret through people with activities such as talks, tours, living histories, festivals and dramas, through educational materials such as publications,

²⁸ Ibid., 126.

²⁹ Ron Thomson and Marilyn Harper, “Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places,” U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, (2000): 6.

³⁰ Ibid., 6.

³¹ Ibid., 12.

newspapers, and through indoor and outdoor exhibits. They use thirty-two case studies to provide examples and they also provide resource information.³²

Recent publications also focus on which interpretative models are best suited for historical sites. In 2006 Scott Magelssen wrote “Making History in the Second Person: Post Touristic Considerations for Living Historical Interpretation.” Magelssen argues that American living history museums should move towards second-person interpretation at their sites. Second-person interpretation allows visitors to actively engage in the museum’s educational programming instead of primarily engaging in a dialogue with the interpreter. According to Magelssen second-person interpretation also allows visitors to interpret the sites for themselves instead of relying on the staff member. He believes that first-person and third-person interpretation only interprets the time period of the historic site and treats visitors as “contemporaries from far away,”³³ ignoring the progress that has occurred since that time. He further argues that the visitors cannot personally connect to the history of the site because the current history portrayed reinforces the “nostalgia and nationalism”³⁴ of the past. Maglssen uses Eric Gable and Richard Handler’s concept of “Disneyfication of history” as evidence, believing that these sites “match visitor expectations and comfort, rather than to stimulate accurate, or at least meaningful, reconstructions.”³⁵

Magelssen’s problem with second-person interpretation is that the visitor can only play the role of women, children, slaves, and peasants indirectly suggesting that anyone

³² Ron Thomson and Marilyn Harper, “Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places,” U.S. Department of the Interior: National Park Service, (2000): 6, 12.

³³ Scott Magelssen, “Making History in the Second Person: Post-Touristic Consideration for Living Historical Interpretation,” *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 2 (May 2006): 292.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 293.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

can portray these roles.³⁶ This is not true. Not everyone could play a slave or a peasant because both are inferior roles in society. Not many people are willing to lower themselves to that degree and many do not understand the historical context these roles functioned in to portray them correctly.

Magelssen further suggests the visitor should be presented with information of the time and “led to make choices based on their understanding of their role and the sensibilities, relationships, ethics, knowledge, curiosity, and creativity unique to each visitors.”³⁷ He argues that second person interpretation is not effective if it is restricted. He provides examples such as United States Supreme Court interpretive exhibit. A visitor can “sit on a replica of the Supreme Court bench, listen to historic cases”³⁸ and issue an opinion and see if it matched the verdict in the actual case. He believes it can be adapted to interpret slavery and provides the Colonial Williamsburg slave auction reenactment as an example.³⁹ Slave auctions ripped apart slave families and in some instances allowed white men to purchase female slaves for sexual purposes. Magelssen assumes that visitors would help a slave family stay together buy helping a free black purchase a loved one or perhaps buying an entire slave family. I am not sure he is aware of the dangers. What if someone racist is chosen? He is forgetting that old southern ideologies in regards to African Americans still exist. Slavery and the relationship between the free and enslaved are complex issues. Visitors can be given glimpses of the realities of slavery, but they may not be able to grasp the entire picture because it is so foreign and unrelated

³⁶ Ibid., 298, 302.

³⁷ Ibid., 304.

³⁸ Ibid., 306.

³⁹ Ibid., 307.

to today's society. Colonial Williamsburg cancelled the slave auction reenactment after the controversy it caused.

In addition to discussing how to interpret sites, the literature also addresses interpreting servants. In 2010 Jennifer Pustz wrote *Voices From the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants Lives at Historic House Museums*. She argues that authenticity is an important part of the museum experience and encompasses everything including difficult histories. The increasing number of academically trained historians staffed in museums and the influence of social history on exhibitions and interpretations has broadened the definition of authenticity to not only include the wealthy, but the poor and the servants. Two topics influenced her approach to thinking about authenticity and interpretation of domestic servants: the over representation of the wealthy in museum collecting primarily and the effect reproductions can have in reconstructing authentic experiences. Pustz argues that the standards of authenticity should apply equally to the stories and people interpreted in museums and at historic sites instead of only the objects on display and the building. Interpreting domestic servants tells a more complex story of everyday life. She believes the first step involves tracing the changes in thinking about historic houses from their roles as shrines, collections of antiques, and architectural masterpieces to the more recent role of educating the public about the lives of people that were not wealthy.⁴⁰ She includes a case study that offers ways to interpret servants beyond the normal tour. Her goal is to help historic house museums tell the whole history of their sites through the

⁴⁰ Jennifer Pustz, *Voices From the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 6-9.

interpretation of domestic servants. Even though her focus is 1870-1920, she believes her suggestions can be applied to different periods of American history.⁴¹

Recent scholarship on how to interpret historical sites does not align with how historians discuss Louisiana plantations. The nostalgia continues to guide them to emphasize architecture and romanticism while historians push to interpret the whole history of the site. This disconnect may be the result of the absence of academically trained historians at sites or because site managers believe the public cannot handle difficult histories. Many of the staff members are self-proclaimed historians that have not been trained to deal with difficult histories and as a result do not interpret them. Difficult histories do not have a large place in the interpretation of historic sites because they represent embarrassing epochs in American history. However, in recent years, historians have proposed ways to include difficult histories in historic site programming. This section will examine how historians evaluate current plantation interpretations and provide solutions to make them more inclusive.

In 2002 Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small performed the first major study and analysis of plantation interpretation with *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. Eichstedt and Small's work has become a crucial resource for historians who write about plantation interpretation. They studied over one hundred plantations, identifying patterns that allowed them to categorize current interpretation approaches. Eichstedt and Small state that white-centric sites "normalize and valorize white ways of organizing the world of labor (and enslavement)."⁴² This normalization suggests that anything other than whiteness is unimportant, sustains "white

⁴¹ Ibid., 11-12.

⁴² Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 4.

dominance,” and encourages white racial pride in an incomplete democratic history based on freedom and hardwork.⁴³ They further state that black-centric sites are organized by African American and focus on their history.⁴⁴ Eichstedt and Small applaud these sites for being holistic—discussing the evils of slavery and the perseverance of slaves, noting that slaves were brought from Africa to the United States and bringing the conversation past the Civil War to the Civil Rights era.⁴⁵ Also, a major point they make is that black-centric sites humanize slaves by “giving them names, identities, and histories.”⁴⁶

Eichstedt and Small studied fifty-four plantations sites in Virginia, twenty-nine in Georgia, and thirty-nine in Louisiana. After visiting these sites multiple times, they noticed reoccurring trends in slave interpretation and organized them into five categories. *Symbolic Annihilation and Erasure* sites marginalize slavery, implying that the institution of slavery is not important enough to be remembered. *Trivialization and Deflection* distort the truth about slaves and the institution of slavery. *Segregation and Marginalization of Knowledge* sites separate the master’s narrative and the slave’s narrative. At these sites, tours and exhibits about slavery are separate from the regular master narrative tours and are optional. *Relative Incorporation* sites have successfully integrated slaves and slavery into their tours. They are more prone to challenge dominant themes found at plantation sites. *In-Between* sites have done more than Symbolic Annihilation, Trivialization and Deflection, and Segregation and Marginalization sites, but not enough to be considered a Relative Incorporation site.⁴⁷ Of the thirty-nine sites

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 255.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 241.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10-11, 13.

studied in Louisiana, twenty-four were categorized as symbolic annihilation and erasure, nine as trivialization and deflection, five as in-between, and one as a relative incorporation site. None were categorized as a segregation and marginalization site.⁴⁸ Destrehan Plantation was categorized as a In-between site and Ormond Plantation as a symbolic annihilation and erasure site.

In 2004 Julia Rose⁴⁹ wrote “Collective Memories and the Changing Representations of American Slavery.” She noted a growing trend of southern Louisiana plantations beginning to represent African Americans and slavery at their sites. Rose examines a shift in the interpretation at Oakley Plantation in St. Francisville, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, which is owned and operated by Louisiana’s Office of State Parks. Rose argues that the opening of places such as the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and the National Museum of African American History and Culture has encouraged the inclusion of slave lives at historic plantations in Louisiana. In Louisiana, plantation landscapes have expanded to include slave dwellings, slave quarters, and slave communities. Rose believes this activity is reshaping the region’s memory of North American Slavery and that the American collective memory is moving toward an integrated identity. She traces an increased interest in African American history to the influence of social history in the 1960s and an increase in historic preservation public policy and efforts by public and private organizations to preserve and document the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁹ For more information on similar works to this thesis see Julia Rose’s dissertation, “Rethinking Representations of Slave Life at Historical Plantation Museums: Towards a Commemorative Museum Pedaology.”

diversity of the United States. After 1965 that effort intensified as a result of the cultural awareness brought about by the Civil Rights movement.⁵⁰

In 2004 Kevin Strait wrote “Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites,” a publication based on the findings of the Presenting Race and Slavery at the Historic Sites Project, a joint project between the National Park Service and the Center for the Study of Public Culture and Public History at George Washington University. The purpose of the project was to “examine how race and slavery are interpreted, represented, and displayed at historic sites.”⁵¹ The Robert E. Lee Memorial/Arlington House in Arlington, Virginia was one of the case studies. To determine how the house interprets, represents, and displays slavery and race, the project examined the site’s interpretation practices, conducted staff interviews, visitor surveys, and visitor interviews. Staff interviews and visitor surveys ultimately agree “the full history of the site is not being conveyed.”⁵² The staff, site manager, and site historian, agree that they do not accurately portray slavery and do not provide enough interpretation on underrepresented topics such as women, religion, and race. The staff attributes this problem to the massive number of visitors. Due to the large volume of visitors at the site, tours are self-guided with an optional informational pamphlet and a strategically placed site interpreter. Also, the narrow mission statement does not allow for them to talk about slavery, but focuses on the “historical narrative of Robert E. Lee and his family.”⁵³ Strait believes that visitors need to learn about Lee within a broad historical context to include slaves. He suggests that the

⁵⁰ Julia Rose, “Collective Memories and the Changing Representations of American Slavery,” in “Museums of Memory,” special issue, *The Journal of Museum Education* 29, no. 2/3 (spring/summer-fall 2004): 26-27.

⁵¹ Strait, Kevin, “Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites: Arlington House, Robert E. Lee National Memorial,” (Washington, DC: National Park Service 2004): 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 13.

house can be interpreted as learning about Lee “as a complex and even controversial figure.”⁵⁴ This is a way to set up and defend a new broad and inclusive interpretation.

Looking a little closer at slavery and memory, James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton edited *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* in 2006. Horton and Horton argue that early American ideals were contradictory because they believed in both the freedom of men and the enslavement of blacks. They make the point that many critics in Britain believed the contradiction “discredited the American Cause.”⁵⁵ Further, “if there be an object truly ridiculous in nature, it is an American patriot, signing revolutions of independency with the one hand and with the other brandishing a whip over his frightened slaves.”⁵⁶ Horton and Horton argue that during and after the Revolutionary era Americans began looking for ways to explain or justify slavery. Because slavery united whites of different social and economic status they felt a racial bond that created theories of racial superiority of whites and inferiority of blacks.⁵⁷ They state that the history of American slavery has been difficult to discuss because the nation tried to hide its “hypocrisy.”⁵⁸ This book contains articles that explain how historians and public history struggle to address slavery, race, and “the public memory of slavery.”⁵⁹ In the concluding essay, Edward T. Linenthal claims that the essays in this book are important for “historical transcendence.”⁶⁰ He quotes Edward Bell, “Reconciliation is about being able to look the tragedy of American history in the eye.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁵ James Horton and Lois E. Horton, ed. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, (New York: New Press, 2006), vii.

⁵⁶ Ibid., vii.

⁵⁷ For more information on the racial attitudes of the south, see *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* and *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* by Winthrop Jordan.

⁵⁸ Ibid., xi.

⁵⁹ Ibid., xi.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 224.

It's about coming to terms with the violence and suffering, chaos and anger and fear in our heritage, and saying 'We accept this, and together we will transcend it.'"⁶¹ This ends the book on a positive note assuring the public that healing can begin once we come to terms with the evils of the past. Slavery must be confronted to move forward.

Analyzing the historiography sheds light on two problems with current plantation interpretations—the lack of a comprehensive and accurate history and the lack of historical context to frame a plantation. The first problem is that the full history is not accurately told, specifically the plantation's function and diversity of people is not mentioned and/or some participants are marginalized. Plantations existed to generate agricultural income, but over time large plantations began to signify wealth, power, and status. For that reason, many surviving artifacts serve as evidence of the most visible power structure, the wealthy plantation owners. It is harder to find evidence of the lives of those who were more likely to be seen and not heard, the slaves, the free blacks, and the poor whites. Louisiana plantations are discussed in literature in terms of their architecture or in terms of their lineage of previous owners. There are few works that discuss the daily lives of people in the plantation community. The lack of a full history translates into a lack of resources for staff at sites and a distorted reality for those visiting. Therefore, sites need to work to incorporate aspects other than the big house and the wealthy plantation owners into the plantation narrative. They need to take a holistic approach interpreting the plantation as economic, racial, and cultural system.

The first problem is guided by two factors: in many cases trained historians are not present on plantation sites and site mission statements are narrow. Benjamin Filene in "Passionate Histories: 'Outsiders' History-Makers and What They Teach Us" calls

⁶¹ Ibid., 224.

people “working outside museums and universities, without professional training, and often without funding,” “outsiders.”⁶² A museum professional is an “insider.” However, in many cases these “outsiders” are working in historic house museums such as plantations. Filene argues that museum staff has focused on what they think the public wants instead of listening to that the public needs.⁶³ While both of these statements may be accurate, as untrained historians, “outsiders” tend to focus on what interests them, leaving out aspects of history, in the case of plantations—the slaves and poor whites. Also, they may lack the training to understand and interpret the context within which the slaves lived and worked. Filene also notes that “outsiders” “take history too personally.”⁶⁴ The narrative becomes their narrative, their history.

The second factor is that some historic sites have a mission statement that is too narrow. Some mission statements focus on a person i.e. the “master,” the structure, or certain time period. At the Arlington House, Robert E. Lee National Memorial the site manager acknowledges that the mission statement is too narrow to incorporate any story besides Robert E. Lee’s in the interpretation of the site. The full history of that site and others cannot be fully interpreted until sites revise and expand their mission statements. Other ethnicities, controversies, and difficult histories need to be included to fully understand the social and political atmosphere of the time of the historic structure or historical figure.⁶⁵

⁶² Benjamin Filene, “Passionate Histories: ‘Outside’ History Makers and What They Teach Us,” *The Public Historian* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 12.

⁶³ Ibid., 14.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁵ Kevin Strait, “Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites: Arlington House, Robert E. Lee National Memorial,” 17-18.

The lack of untrained historians also feeds into the second problem: plantations are not interpreted within their historical context, but often in a romanticized fashion. The problem is that there is no balance. The interpretation should not just highlight the harshness of slavery such as Alex Haley's *Roots*. However, the interpretation should not fictionalize the history such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* does. Instead, plantations need to find an interpretative balance by giving equal authority to the most visible power structure (wealthy planter class) and the invisible power structure (slaves, poor, women, and children). If not, local residents of the area and tourists will stop visiting plantation sites. Tourists may or may not expect to learn about the lives of slaves or the plantation community since American history and plantation history have established a long tradition of not interpreting this history. However, there are tourists who want to learn about the complexity of a site's history and will accept a more changing interpretation if a balanced history is told.

Thomas J. Schlereth debunks myths of histories in "Collecting Ideas and Artifacts: Common Problems of History Museums and Texts." The idea that history is patriotic, nostalgic and simple connects with the romanticizing of plantations. Nostalgic history focuses on the good times, therefore no matter how many battles were lost, the fact that the war was won is what is remembered. However, in regards to the Civil War, the South chooses to forget. In plantations systems, the wealth and grandeur is what is remembered, not the system of slavery that provided the wealth. Patriotic history evokes "cultural nationalism"⁶⁶ and plantations houses serve as shrines to the patriotic history of the antebellum south. People take bus tours of southern plantations and many may not be

⁶⁶ Thomas J. Schlereth, "Collecting Ideas and Artifacts: Common Problems of History Museums and History Texts," *Roundtable Reports* (Summer-Fall 1978): 2.

satisfied with the romanticized version. As of 2013 many plantations have not changed or adapted their narrative to include the invisible power structure of the slaves, and the holistic community surrounding the plantations. Instead they endorse a simple version of the past. Schlereth believes to “enshrine only one version of the American past violates historical truth.”⁶⁷ Plantations need to weave other histories such as slavery, women, and children into the interpretation of the site. This can be done by offering tours in the perspective of women, children, and slaves or by simply adding their status to the tour itself.

The problems of an incomplete and inaccurate history of plantations combined with a romanticized interpretation of a plantation result in a Disneyland experience at plantation sites. Ormond Plantation and Destrehan Plantation both serve as examples. Ormond Plantation omits slavery completely as if it never existed. Destrehan Plantation includes slavery, but makes the information available as an option serving the needs of both those who want to learn more and those who do not. This term is not usually used in reference to plantations; however, Eric Gable and Richard Handler’s concept of the “Disneyfication of history” is fitting. The “Disneyfication of history” is “the shaping of living museum environments to match visitor expectations and comfort rather than to stimulate accurate, or at least meaningful, reconstructions.”⁶⁸ This concept first emerged in the 1970s. Historians began to recognize the shorthand of Disney history in relation to memory and history in the public’s conscious. Nostalgia for the antebellum pre Civil War era, present as early as the 1870s and 1880s, lasted well into the 1960s and 1970s and is

⁶⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁸ Magelssen, “Making History in the Second Person,” 293.

present today.⁶⁹ Therefore, when the historic preservation movement first began in the 1920s, many plantation homes were interpreted to cater to those longings, resulting in a fictional history.

The term Mickey Mouse History⁷⁰ means reveals a definition that combines *Mickey Mouse*, “not to be taken seriously; worthless; of little importance,”⁷¹ and *History*, “a chronological record of significant events (as affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes... a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.”⁷² Therefore, *Mickey Mouse History* means a worthless, unimportant explanation of past significant events. Tourists of the 21st century are not necessarily looking for a nostalgic connection to the past, but a “deeper and more meaningful connection”⁷³ in order to learn and experience history.

In 1994 Disney proposed Disenyland’s America, a themepark about American history. It was set to be in Virginia near 16 Civil War battlefields, 13 historic towns, 17 designated historic districts and 5 miles from the first and second battles of Manassas. Disneyland’s America would “respect history”⁷⁴ and present American history including slavery. Many historians were upset at this proposal because Disney has become a “power/authority as a spokesman for American culture.” Despite the dreamland of Disneyland and Disney World, both themeparks invoke history in the sense that the designs are a conglomeration of towns, cities, and cultures. The problem is that Disney’s

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Robert W. Tebbs, Photographer to Architects*, 6.

⁷⁰ For more information on Mickey Mouse History refer to *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* by Mike Wallace.

⁷¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. “Mickey Mouse.”

⁷² Ibid., “History.”

⁷³ Catherine M. Cameron, and John B. Gatewood, “Excursions into the Un-Remembered Past: What people Want From Visits to Historical Sites,” *The Public Historian* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 109.

⁷⁴ Muriel Dobblin McClatchy, “Virginians Protest Plans for History a la Mickey Mouse,” *Daily News of Los Angeles*, May 22, 1994.

history is “filtered to conform to a personal and world view.”⁷⁵ This filtered view is a major problem because as Cary Carson puts it, “ordinary people learn history the same way they get fat: a few binge on rich delicacies prepared by master chefs, but most load up on calories from a smorgasboard of home cooking, school lunches, TV dinners, street food, and candy-coated snacks.”⁷⁶ In other words they are not reading books, but learning from the Internet and movies and then going to museums and historic sites. Therefore, historic sites and museums have a responsibility to tell a comprehensive and accurate history that is not romanticized, but realistic. Actually, plantation sites can borrow from Disneyland and Disney World. With all of the technological advances, the use of holograms, computers, and 3-D effects can be used to paint a holistic picture of the plantation community.

Historic sites allow the public to do more than read about history; preserved buildings and their contexts, reenactments, and demonstrations allow visitors to experience a living history. These sites interpret historic events, cultures, and lifestyles. They may be the only encounter the public will have with a particular aspect of history, thus making it important that the site histories are inclusive and contextualized. Evidence of a Disneyland history in plantation sites is present from the romanticized tour scripts to the costumed guides, which omits the evils of slavery. For example, the 1811 Slave Revolt, the largest revolt in United States history, occurred in Louisiana yet many Louisianans including those that live in the area it occurred have never heard about it.

⁷⁵ Richard Francavilla, “History after Disney: The Significance of ‘Imagineered’ Historical Places,” *The Public Historian* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 72.

⁷⁶ Cary Carson, “Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall, Whose History if the Fairest of Them All?” *The Public Historian* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1995):65.

Currently, most plantation sites interpret their histories through a narrow lens, focusing on the previous owners, their houses, and decorative arts. Sometimes, the topic of slavery is mentioned, but in a marginalized fashion that downplays the roles of slaves and excludes their history from the tour, leaving it to be optional and un-interpreted. The goal of this project is to widen the lens to incorporate not only the slaves, but also the community and the physical environment, the factors that made the plantation possible in order to answer the question: why this place? The public should walk away from plantation sites with a complete understanding of their function and their social impact in that space. Evaluating how Ormond Plantation and Destrehan Plantation in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana interpret their sites will provide an example of how to implement a more inclusive history at a plantation site.

II. THE UNPRESERVATION OF THE SOUTH: THE CHANGING INTERPRETATION OF PLANTATION SITES

The United States does not have a perfect history. Many historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects have painful memories associated with them. The historic preservation movement often strives to preserve the “history and material culture of diverse peoples from all economic levels and all ethnic groups throughout America.”⁷⁷ While the historic preservation of plantation sites preserves an era that existed long ago, it still impacts society today. It is on these sites that whites, and in some areas of Louisiana free blacks, forced African American men, women, and children to work in the fields, to cook, to clean, to drive, and in some cases to supervise other slaves. Also, slave women were forced into sexual relationships with their owners. Although, the historic preservation movement saved plantation buildings such as the plantation house, the kitchen, the laundry, and some slave cabins from demolition and neglect, it lost many in the late 1900s. However, the preservation of these buildings does not necessarily mean the history and meaning of the entire plantation estate has been preserved, at least not in its entirety. Many of these sites, whether missing a historical building or not, present an incomplete history of the site. This incomplete history causes many to avoid visiting plantation sites and continues to silence difficult histories.

⁷⁷ Peter Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, in the author’s possession, 16.

In the previous chapter I raised the question, why has the interpretation of most Louisiana plantation sites remained unchanged? Truthfully, interpretation has changed, adapting to meet the standards and needs of the current generation. Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler argue that “the basic purpose of preservation is...to understand the present as a product of the past and a modifier of the future.”⁷⁸ The present interpretation of plantation sites is a product of past generations who purposely decided certain aspects of a historic site’s history were more important than others. These choices have limited the interpretation of plantation sites today, but that can be changed. This chapter will examine the influence of the historic preservation movement on plantation interpretation, the interpretive components of a plantation, and how those elements combined influence the changing of plantation interpretation. I will also examine documents related to Ormond Plantation and Destrehan Plantation to determine if there has been change at these sites.

The historic preservation movement began in the early 19th century as locality-based movements.⁷⁹ Among the first buildings saved was Mount Vernon, the plantation home of George and Martha Washington in 1860.⁸⁰ Private persons, organizations, and historical societies saved the first historic buildings to use them as “a vehicle to teach love of country.”⁸¹ The first societies were the Massachusetts Society founded in 1791, the New York Historical Society in 1804, and the American Antiquarian Society in 1812.⁸² At this time the government was not involved. However, the government began

⁷⁸ Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel, and Ilene R. Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009), 14.

⁷⁹ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 12, 27.

⁸⁰ Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd ed. (New York: AltaMira Press, 2008), 127.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 118.

preserving natural landscapes with the establishment of national parks.⁸³ Yellowstone National Park, the first national park, was established and protected in 1872.⁸⁴ Many preservation groups viewed “historic houses as shrines,” connections to an historical event or figure. Thus, historic buildings during the 19th and early 20th centuries were preserved for patriotic reasons.⁸⁵ The Hermitage was saved in 1856 because of its connection to Andrew Jackson.⁸⁶ The beauty of the house or its connection to an important historical event or figure were the only criteria for saving a historic building.

Independence Hall, site of the Declaration of Independence signing in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is one of the first preserved historic buildings in the United States. Pennsylvania planned to demolish the building and subdivide the lot to sell. The public outcry of Philadelphia citizens caused the city to buy the building from the State in order to preserve its historical and patriotic significance in 1816.⁸⁷ Next, in 1850, the Hasbrouck House, George Washington’s headquarters in Newburgh, New York was saved. Concerned citizens and local organizations argued that local residents would not only travel to the house but, “...if he have an American heart in his bosom, he will feel himself to be a better man, his patriotism will kindle with deeper emotion, his aspirations for his country’s good will ascend from a more devout mind,”⁸⁸ after visiting Washington’s Headquarters. The state of New York bought the house and the surrounding land making it the first historic house to be saved in the United States.⁸⁹

⁸³ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 27.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁸⁶ Diane Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 30.

⁸⁷ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 27-28.

⁸⁸ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 126.

⁸⁹ Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 3.

The patriotic ideal continued with the saving of Mount Vernon, the plantation home of George and Martha Washington in Virginia. Formed in 1854, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association of the Union, the first national preservation group, petitioned Congress and the Commonwealth of Virginia to save the house.⁹⁰ Neither organization was interested in taking on the responsibility in terms of financing and maintenance.⁹¹ Pamela Cunningham, the first American historic preservationist, motivated by her desire to “memorialize” the nation’s first president and to repair the relationship between the North and South,⁹² fought to “save [an] American honor from a blot in the eyes of the gazing world and to establish a shrine ‘where mothers of the land and their innocent children might make their offering in the cause of greatness, goodness and prosperity of the country.’”⁹³ The Ladies Association was not interested in the entire picture. It is not until the mid-20th century when historic buildings began to disappear due to neglect or demolition that society takes an active role in preserving historic buildings based on their architectural significance.⁹⁴

William Sumner Appleton, historic preservationist and architectural historian,⁹⁵ was the first to understand the architectural significance of historic houses. He believed the preservation of historic buildings should be according to their “architectural excellence, old age, and connection to significant historical events.”⁹⁶ Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) in 1910 in Boston. He viewed “houses as useful documents of the past” marking the beginning of concern

⁹⁰ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 29, 35; Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 126.

⁹¹ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 30.

⁹² Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 3.

⁹³ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 126.

⁹⁴ Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 3.

⁹⁵ Barthel, *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity*, 20.

⁹⁶ Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 3.

for the history of these sites. More importantly, he realized that not all historic homes could function and be supported as a museum. By encouraging the adaptive use of historic buildings such as offices, their “usefulness” was transformed for “modern living.”⁹⁷ By Appleton’s death in 1947 SNEA possessed 57 historic buildings. His criterion is still used today by preservationists and public historians alike.⁹⁸

By the mid-20th century historic preservation gained momentum,⁹⁹ partly due to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal. As part of the Works Progress Administration, Roosevelt established the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) program in 1933 to employ photographers, architects, artists, and craftspeople to document America’s historic buildings through photographs and drawings.¹⁰⁰ This is one of the first instances in which the federal government took an active role in historic preservation and denotes a fundamental shift in the government’s role in the control of public spaces. By 1935 the federal government becomes fully involved in the historic preservation movement with the passing of the Historic Sites Act in 1935, The National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949, and later the Historic Preservation Act in 1966.¹⁰¹ Fueled by preparation and celebration of the Bicentennial of 1776, by the late 20th century the strength of the historic preservation movement renewed the American public

⁹⁷ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 127.

⁹⁸ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 127; Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 6.

⁹⁹ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 27.

¹⁰⁰ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 40; Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 128.

The Historic Sites Act was established to identify and preserve historical buildings with significance to the nation. This act made it a nationwide priority to preserve historic buildings for the public. The National Trust for Historic Preservation was created to combine public and private sector efforts to preserve historic sites. The Historic Preservation Act established the National Register of Historic Places. (Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 8; Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 129)

interest in preserving “the country’s architectural heritage.”¹⁰² It is important to note that during this time historic preservation was a project of the elites.¹⁰³

The themes of patriotism, adaptive use, and architectural significance are the same factors that led to the preservation of plantations; however, instead of love of country it was love of the South. The adaptive use of choice was either as a museum or bed and breakfast inn with the architectural significance as the main reason these structures were saved. Virginia’s Woodlawn Plantation was the first preserved plantation and the first acquisition of the National Trust.¹⁰⁴ Each plantation has its own history, but these three elements led many plantations to have the same interpretative components: a plantation narrative, exhibits and demonstrations, and gift shops/museum stores. Plantations also have similar public education and interpretative programming. According to Eichstedt and Small, these components “work to construct an image of the pre-emancipation life of white enslavers in the South as honorable, refined, gracious, beauty-loving people. There are few wrinkles that mar the surface of the genteel Southern way of life.”¹⁰⁵

A clear definition of the terms *plantation* and *museum* need to be defined and explained. Historically, a plantation was defined as an “agricultural unit with twenty or more enslaved people.”¹⁰⁶ Twenty or more slaves relieved the master from working next to his slaves, elevating him to the status of planter. There are two types of plantation sites, public and private. Public sites receive most of their funding from public monies,

¹⁰² Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 12.

¹⁰³ Alexander and Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 127; Dedek, *Historic Preservation for Designers*, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 43.

¹⁰⁵ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 101.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

have government employees, and are organized at federal, state, city, county, or regional levels. Private sites include private-for-profit, bed-and-breakfast, and private nonprofit. There may be some confusion in the difference between private-for-profit and bed-and-breakfast sites. Private-for-profit sites are owned by a single entity and used to make money. The owners decide how the plantation is managed and what information is included on tours. In many cases, the owners still live in the home.¹⁰⁷ For example Evergreen Plantation located in Edgard, Louisiana is privately owned and continues to operate as a sugar plantation.¹⁰⁸ Bed-and-Breakfast sites use advertising to promote plantation homes as a way to experience “the grandeur of the South as it used it to be,”¹⁰⁹ despite the fact that all plantations were not equally grand. Ormond Plantation located in Destrehan, Louisiana operates as a bed-and-breakfast, is open to the public and has an onsite restaurant. Private nonprofit foundations are tax-exempt organizations that restore and operate plantations with earned and grant funds.¹¹⁰

Museums are recognized as authorities of historical knowledge in society. They “tell us about people, places, and events that they think we should note.”¹¹¹ Museums present national identity, cultural memory, and community to the outside world.

Plantation sites as museums interpret the planter family that lived on the site, the period of their residence, and any famous historical event that took place there. Therefore, the plantation narrative is shaped by the people, place, or region, but also by the visions of the tour guides, curators, and donors. Some plantations have condensed the complicated

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹⁰⁸ Evergreen Plantation. “Home,” Evergreen Plantation, evergreeplantation.org/index.php (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹⁰⁹ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 62.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 6.

history of the South into a simplified iconic image in hopes of reviving nostalgic feelings towards the past. Many tourists, curators, and donors alike have little interest in what the plantation actually was, an “institution crucial to the nation’s agricultural production powered by slavery.”¹¹² They also do not realize that it represented “the impetus for a rebellion that threatened to put an end to the United States.”¹¹³

Before discussing the first interpretative component, the plantation narrative, there needs to be a discussion of its development and origins in the broader historical “Lost Cause” narrative. The analysis and scholarship of the “Lost Cause” provides a complex background, but for my purposes the discussion will allow one to see why it is difficult for the interpretation of plantations to change. Not only was the institution of slavery threatened over years of political turmoil, so was the Southern elites way of life. After the end of the Civil War, the South was faced with reconstructing a collective identity to mask the humiliation that an end to slavery, defeat in the Civil War, and Reconstruction brought.¹¹⁴ Identity, the core of one’s being, ethics, and morals, is directly linked to memory and to place. As moments in the past, memories can evoke strong emotions and relative to history, memory can unify individuals by providing a narrative for life experiences. This collective narrative transcends generations and is preserved through written and spoken language, artwork, sculptures, and buildings. It also creates collective memory. The collective memory of a loss, tragedy, or triumph can form a collective identity. When dealing with a cultural trauma, such as the Civil War, there is

¹¹² Jessica Adams, “Local Color: The Southern Plantation in Popular Culture,” *Cultural Critique* 42, (Spring 1999): 163.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹¹⁴ Charles H. Nichols Jr., “Slave Narratives and the Plantation Legend,” *Phylon* 10, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 1949): 201.

an attempt to transform tragedy into victory.¹¹⁵ Therefore writings about life pre-Civil War was heavily nostalgic¹¹⁶ and according to Michael Kreyling “nothing more than propaganda.”¹¹⁷ The collective narrative of the ante-bellum South created and then perpetuated sentimental or romantic stories about a period in time that can never exist again because of the means—slavery, that allowed it to exist.

The aftereffects of the Civil War created several distinct eras: the Old South, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and the New South. In essence Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras were Southern attempts to retain remnants of the Old South. The Civil Rights era marked the beginnings of the New South. The Old South was transformed into everything the New South was not—comfortable, safe, and beautiful.¹¹⁸ To use Southern vernacular, southerners relied on memories “befo’ de wah”¹¹⁹ to reproduce “their world from the scattered fragments of a shattered past”¹²⁰ based on personal experiences. Even though “nostalgia draws its strength from the past, it is unmistakably a product of the present.”¹²¹ Therefore nostalgia exploits the past and reconstructs it to foster an appreciation for, faith in, and a revival of the past. Hence, the “impurities of memory-its fallibility, its fragility, and its proclivity for mythmaking”¹²² allowed southern elites to create a romantic version of the antebellum South known as the “Lost Cause.”¹²³ It is

¹¹⁵ Ron Eyerman, “The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory,” *Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 161.

¹¹⁶ Nichols Jr., “Slave Narratives and the Plantation Legend,” 201-202.

¹¹⁷ Michael Kreyling, “The Hero in Antebellum Southern Narrative,” *The Southern Literary Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 3.

¹¹⁸ David Anderson, “Down Memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Reminiscences,” *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (February 2005): 107.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 108.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 118.

important to note that not all southerners wanted to recreate the past; some wanted to create a New South.¹²⁴

This background is the wellspring for the plantation narrative. Plantation sites purport to provide visitors with snapshots of a past way of life, specifically during the antebellum period. Each state has its own interpretation of the “Lost Cause” and a form of it is translated into the plantation narrative. After studying over one hundred plantations, Eichstedt and Small identified common themes found in the narratives of these sites. In Louisiana many of the plantation sites emphasize “wealth, grandeur, hospitality and the tragedy of the Civil War,”¹²⁵ which all relate to romanticism. Plantations refer to themselves as “beautiful, scenic, evocative backdrops for lovers, with European architecture and furniture, and resplendent perfumed gardens.”¹²⁶ For example, the Houmas House Plantation and Gardens located in Darow, Louisiana advertises itself as a “Beautiful Louisiana plantation...what a magical venue for daily tour or a destination wedding.”¹²⁷ At some plantation sites the romantic relationships of the owners are recounted on tours. Many people “pined away after losing the great love of their life—often to disease ...war or politics.”¹²⁸ By ignoring the historical function and significance of plantations, the sites reduce their use to weddings and tours when in reality they are historical centers of knowledge. Plantation sites specialize in antebellum era history—technology, lifestyles, clothing, meal preparation and storage, construction

¹²⁴ Ibid., 134.

¹²⁵ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 89.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 89.

¹²⁷ Houmas House Plantation and Gardens, “Home,” Houmas House Plantation and Gardens, www.houmashouse.com/ (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹²⁸ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 90.

techniques and architecture, gender roles and relationships, racial attitudes, and Creole culture.

In creating a romantic past, the plantation narrative presents a skewed and inaccurately limited perception to the public. Ormond Plantation interprets itself without any mention of slavery or slaves suggesting that slavery did not occur.¹²⁹ Most plantations present a master's narrative, which focuses on the "hard work, civility, and ingenuity of [the] plantation owner."¹³⁰ For example, Destrehan Plantation presents its history through a chronology of previous owners. All the owners listed, with the exception of three, are male despite the fact that the plantation remained in the family due to female inheritance. Also, the history highlights the men's accomplishments. Jean Noel Destrehan is credited as a "cornerstone of Louisiana History."¹³¹

According to Ron Thompson and Marilyn Harper, historic houses "are perceived by the general public as being elitist, dealing only with the lives of the rich, white, and famous."¹³² Eichstedt and Small note that plantations are presented within the broad context of the "genteel South."¹³³ Nostalgic images "revealed a lavish Old South of immense wealth, self-sufficiency, honor, hospitality, happy master-slave relations, and, incredibly, the scents and sounds of innocent plantation upbringings."¹³⁴ Woodville Plantation in Pennsylvania describes the previous owner, John Winifred Oldham Nevilles, as a "man of wealth and education... [whose] home was deemed a 'temple of

¹²⁹ Ormond Plantation. "Ormond's History," Ormond Plantation. ormondplantation.com/ (accessed 11/28/2012).

¹³⁰ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 6.

¹³¹ Destrehan Plantation, "History," Destrehan Plantation, www.destrehanplantation.org/history.html (accessed 4/17/2013).

¹³² Ron Thomson and Marilyn Harper, *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places*, (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register, History and Education, 2000), 74.

¹³³ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 71.

¹³⁴ Anderson, "Down Memory Lane," 110.

hospitality.”¹³⁵ There are some plantations that acknowledge that slave-master relations were not all happy. Laura Plantation acknowledges “slaveholders who were brutal as well as sensitive” ran the plantation.¹³⁶ These authors acknowledge that the narrative interpreted on plantation sites is one-sided representing the wealthy white plantation class rooted in nostalgia for a past and romanticized way of life.

As early as 1949 Charles Nichols argued that through this plantation narrative, “romancers” transformed the planter class into a cultured and wealthy people that provided every provision, comfort, and security to their slaves. He further states that “romancers” avoided slavery, miscegenation, and the inhumane methods planters used to control their slaves. Nichols argues that because of this misrepresentation of the truth, the “average American believes slavery made possible a civilized life.”¹³⁷ Society accepted this narrative because it mirrored the society before them, the one that raised them.¹³⁸ This explains why there is a call to change the current narrative. Written by an older generation, it does not reflect the current multicultural generation’s ideologies, beliefs, or perspectives.

All of the interpretive components at a plantation site feed off of the plantation narrative, especially the exhibits and demonstration component. Originally, museums and their exhibitions were a “means of casting the newly realized nations, and cultural, racial, and class differences as fact.”¹³⁹ That meaning continues to exist today, therefore, exhibits are authoritative, having the power to construct truths, distribute knowledge, and

¹³⁵ Woodville Plantation, “Significance,” Woodville Plantation, woodvilleplantation.org/significance (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹³⁶ Laura: A Creole Plantation, “Laura’s Family Tree,” Laura: A Creole Plantation, www.lauraplantation.com/gen_w_nav.asp?cID=34&grp=6 (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹³⁷ Nichols Jr., “Slave Narratives and the Plantation Legend,” 303.

¹³⁸ Kreyling, “The Hero in Antebellum Southern Narrative,” 5.

¹³⁹ Sharon Macdonald, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science and Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 11.

to empower or disempower history and people.¹⁴⁰ Artifacts do not shape exhibits, but are shaped by the theme of the exhibition, which is why the plantation narrative is important.¹⁴¹ Artifacts have the potential to tell many different stories, but the plantation narrative determines which are told.

People travel locally and nationally to experience the past. Plantation sites use exhibits to interpret and demonstrations to recreate the history and people of the past. The everyday household items of the past through preservation and display become artifacts with meanings (the use of the object), values (the object's worth and rarity), and rights (the right to be displayed).¹⁴² This only happens if the artifacts are grounded in historical context to provide a reference. It is common knowledge that slaves lived in slave cabins. However, add that a family of ten lived in such a cabin that was built by the father and was the family's only possession makes it more imperative and changes the power of its display.

Staff members and historians also influence the exhibit's content. Staff members such as curators and directors decide what objects to display and what stories to tell, whether traditional white history or a more inclusive history.¹⁴³ Since the late 1800s people of other races and/or lower classes were erased from history. Their material culture "had little value for scholars and other professionals interested in recreating and preserving the past"¹⁴⁴ and was not saved. A new generation of social historians is influencing the interpretation of plantation sites. Placing an importance on the bottom-up

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁴¹ Spencer R. Crews and James E. Sims, "Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue" In *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 171.

¹⁴² Ibid., 159.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 163.

instead of the top-down, various ethnic groups, laborers, and women are now considered “important contributors to history.”¹⁴⁵ However, this trend has not reached all plantations. As previously mentioned, Ormond Plantation as well as Houmas House Plantation and Gardens do not mention slaves or slavery on their website. Unfortunately for museums, as they try to integrate the new histories into their exhibits, they find that their collections may not have objects that relate to these histories. However, plantations have one of the most central artifacts to tell their story—the place, the modified landscape, and in some cases original artifacts and documents.

Key factors in supporting and recreating the plantation narrative are the exhibits and demonstrations. Plantations use indoor and outdoor exhibits to provide a connection to the past. Indoor exhibits are a compilation of artifacts, art, photographs, interpretive text, and/or maps. If indoor exhibits are too wordy, too content heavy, and/or too broad in theme or time span, they can confuse and overwhelm the visitor.¹⁴⁶ Outdoor exhibits “give visitors the sense of actually being in the past.”¹⁴⁷ Because outdoor exhibits are usually not a part of the tour, interpretative text is important because a tour guide is not present to provide additional information or to clarify an issue. The text cannot include too much information because people will not read it. At the same time, the text cannot be too short because it can “present a distorted or oversimplified view of the past.”¹⁴⁸ Successful exhibits require careful research, well-documented artifacts, and a historically accurate presentation to ensure that the interpretation of the plantation is accurate and inclusive.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 164.

¹⁴⁶ Thomson and Harper, *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories*, 40.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 42.

As complements to exhibits, demonstrations or living histories, “explain an unfamiliar process in a way that words alone could never match.”¹⁴⁹ Demonstrations are important to interpretation because they engage all five senses. Interpreters wear period clothing and in interpreting history transport the visitor into the past. The entire presentation from clothing to products can “reinforce important messages.”¹⁵⁰ It is important that the interpretation is accurate and balanced to allow visitors to gain a sense of what life used to be like and to relate or connect to the narrative. Therefore, to address the void in the current history, the tough stuff of slavery—shackles, whips, slave advertisements and auction blocks need to be incorporated.

The last, but equally important interpretative component is the plantation gift shop/museum store. It allows these sites to earn income and the visitors to take home a piece of the past.¹⁵¹ Although the terms are often used interchangeably, a museum store focuses on merchandise that aligns with the museum mission whereas a gift shop is often volunteer operated and focuses on souvenirs and memorabilia. Contributing to the museum’s mission, the museum store is not meant to be a separate entity, but an extension of the museum. According to Amanda Kraus, “everything in the store speaks to the collection in some way,”¹⁵² whether it reflects an idea, emphasizes a technique, or is a replica. Because education is a priority, the merchandise selected should reflect the museum and not be based on high sale items.¹⁵³ On many plantation sites, museum stores or gift shops exist in transformed slave cabins.¹⁵⁴ Destrehan Plantation sold the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 27.

¹⁵¹ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 67.

¹⁵² Amanda Kraus, “Extending Exhibits,” *Museum News* (September/October 2003): 37.

¹⁵³ Theobald, Mary Miley, *Museum Store Management*, 2nd ed. (New York: AltaMira Press, 2000), 10.

¹⁵⁴ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 67.

plantation store original to their site to another plantation, acquired two slave cabins, and converted them into a museum store. This causes the plantation sites to miss out on interpreting an integral part of history and strips the historical significance from the building.

The museums store walks a fine line between educational and commercial purposes. During the transition from a gift shop to museum store, museums wondered if a gift shop had a place in a museum and now the question is how much space should be dedicated to a museum store. As their role has shifted, museum stores, exhibits and demonstrations, and tours are “a unified idea.”¹⁵⁵ As the “search for a marketable past,”¹⁵⁶ the museum store “is the key to linking the shop to the visitor’s overall experience.”¹⁵⁷ If this overall experience is invisibly linked by modern commerce to the commerce of slavery, it perpetuates an injustice that is insidious and corrosive.

The merchandise in a museum store “must make a genuine contribution to the museum’s stated educational purposes or overall mission.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, the merchandise should relate to the museum, striking a balance between “the rather tight focus of the museum and the predictability diverse interests of our many visitors.”¹⁵⁹ Museum store merchandise falls into four categories: reproduction or replica, adaptation, interpretation, and creation. Reproduction or replica is an accurate duplicate in size, color, and material of an object. Adaptation is the alteration in size, color, and/or material of an object i.e. a fabric offered in different colors. Interpretation places object or an element of the object’s

¹⁵⁵ Kraus, “Extending Exhibits,” 41.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas J. Schlereth, “Collecting Ideas and Artifacts: Common Problems of History Museums and History Texts,” *Roundtable Reports*, (Summer-Fall 1978): 10.

¹⁵⁷ Kraus, “Extending Exhibits,” 39.

¹⁵⁸ Theobald, *Museum Store Management*, 48.

¹⁵⁹ Kraus, “Extending Exhibits,” 42.

design in a different context i.e. a quilt design on a napkin. Creation is when the museum, an artist or photographer creates something new through research i.e. an educational board game.¹⁶⁰ However, there are limitations to museum stores at plantation sites. They cannot sell whips, shackles, or slaves, however, they can sell Br'er Rabbit books like Laura Plantation does.¹⁶¹

Museum merchandise can be selected from three areas: products that relate to the museum's collection, to the museum's historical period, or to the museum's building or location if there is a historical or architectural significance.¹⁶² Examples of merchandise at plantations include books on the owners of the plantation and the plantation history, Confederate paraphernalia, mugs and t-shirts with the plantation logo on it, and magnets and postcards with images of the plantation's interior and exterior.¹⁶³ Without a clear mission, plantation sites can sell a wide variety of unrelated items. The Houmas House Plantation and Gardens sell mugs, confederate money, copies of the Louisiana Purchase, as well as dog and flamingo ornaments.¹⁶⁴ Some sites sell products that "replicate stereotypical images" of blacks i.e. mammy and are called "negritude memorabilia."¹⁶⁵ Laura Plantation also sells mammy dolls made of cornhusks.¹⁶⁶ While this is an example illustrating how byproducts of crops grown on plantations were used, it promotes and memorializes racial stereotypes.

¹⁶⁰ Theobald, *Museum Store Management*, 64.

¹⁶¹ Laura: A Creole Plantation, "Shop-Dolls, Laura: A Creole Plantation, http://176.12.172.34/shop_category.asp?catID=9 (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹⁶² Theobald, *Museum Store Management*, 48.

¹⁶³ Eichstedt, and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 67-68.

¹⁶⁴ Houmas House Plantation and Garden, "Gift Shop," Houmas House Plantation and Garden, houmashouse.com/gifts.htm (accessed 6/18/2013).

¹⁶⁵ Eichstedt, and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 68.

¹⁶⁶ Laura: A Creole Plantation, "Shop-Dolls, Laura: A Creole Plantation, http://176.12.172.34/shop_category.asp?catID=9 (accessed 6/18/2013).

Public education and interpretative programming is very important to the interpretation of plantation sites and includes tour guides, tours, and tourists. Tour guides or docents have many roles. They are “creators of historical empathy”¹⁶⁷ inviting tourists to emotionally connect with the people of the past. Tour guides influence “tourist interpretation and experience of the place”¹⁶⁸ by controlling what the tourists see and what narrative is told. Even their appearance influences the tourist. Most tour guides are female, white, and wear period clothing transforming them from a tour guide into the mistress of the house showing the tourists, now houseguests, her home and furnishings.¹⁶⁹ Tour guides act as “creative storytellers”¹⁷⁰ drawing from the life experiences, background, and in some cases scholarship to interpret the plantation narrative. Lastly, and most importantly tour guides are “caretakers of memory.” By choosing what is told on the tour and in turn choosing what the tourists remember, they choose what the visitor will remember about the plantation itself and ultimately about the Southern Louisiana antebellum period. Tour guides are essential to demonstrations because of the authority they have at these sites.

The most important tool of a tour guide is the tour because it allows him or her to interpret the plantation narrative and to interact with the public. A good interpretation “creates a shared experience between interpreter and audience.”¹⁷¹ When visiting plantation sites, visitors expect to “identify and empathize”¹⁷² with the people that lived there. Plantations are emotionally charged sites meaning they are associated with a

¹⁶⁷ Modlin Jr., Alderman, and Gentry, “Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy,” 4.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶⁹ Adams, “The Southern Plantation in Popular Culture,” 170.

¹⁷⁰ Modlin Jr., Alderman, and Gentry, “Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy,” 8.

¹⁷¹ Thomson and Harper, *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories*, 23.

¹⁷² Modlin Jr., Alderman, and Gentry, “Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy,” 8.

controversial history that evokes conflicting feelings of anger, resentment, guilt, and sadness. Plantation sites need to educate visitors about difficult histories so that visitors of different backgrounds and ethnicities can identify and empathize with the history of the site. This also teaches the visitor to cope and fully understand what they learned. If nothing is changed, the tours will continue to validate the white privilege on these sites and discredit the African American experience even though the institution of slavery links the histories of both racial groups.

There are two types of tours: self-guided and docent-guided. During a self-guided tour, visitors are given a map of the site and are free to tour at their own pace using interpretive text to learn about the site. Docent-guided tours sometimes have a self-guided aspect. Usually kitchens, laundries, icehouses, smoke houses, and slave cabins are not interpreted by tour guides.¹⁷³ Docent-guided tours “have the luxury of time to help visitors make connections between the history of specific places, broad historical trends and currents and their own experiences.”¹⁷⁴ Docents may or may not be provided with a tour script. Guided tours can last between 25-75 minutes and are sometimes preceded by an introductory video. Plantation tours represent a certain message in that they usually focus on “architecture, furniture, and antiques, wealth and/or status of the white family who owned the house, elite family lifestyles, famous white people who lived there, and/or famous events like the Civil War.”¹⁷⁵ During some tours, tourists learn that some furnishings are not original to the home, but are “period pieces” being from the period of the home.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 71, 95.

¹⁷⁴ Thomson and Harper, *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories*, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 71.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

The tools of a tour guide—the plantation narrative, artifacts, exhibits, and demonstrations—place the tour within a historical context. How a tourist connects with the site is framed by how the tour guide retells the story. By putting an emphasis on a person or an item, the tour guide decides who or what should be remembered and who or what should be forgotten. Artifacts allow the tourists to make the connections between themselves and the people of the past. Thus, effective interpretation does not necessarily mean memorizing history, but depends on how history is portrayed.¹⁷⁷ Skilled interpreters can “adapt to the unexpected, [and] they can thrive on surprises by incorporating spontaneous exchanges into the interpretive message.”¹⁷⁸ When well done, interpreters “can compete with all other media for impact and effectiveness.”¹⁷⁹

The interpretation components along with the public education and interpretive programming shape the interpretation of plantations by presenting the history of the site as fact. The danger in presenting interpretations of historic buildings that emphasize nostalgia and an incomplete history is the likelihood that the site’s meaning is lost, omitted, or intentionally suppressed. Instead of remaining a historic building, plantations become “inanimate structures”¹⁸⁰ turning history into period pieces or “objects of curiosity.”¹⁸¹ Façadism is a form of historic preservation that is looked down upon because it only preserves the front of the structure and demolishes the rest.¹⁸² Façadism is applicable to the interpretation of plantations. A façade is “a false, superficial, or artificial

¹⁷⁷ Thomson and Harper, *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories*, 23.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁷⁹ Modlin Jr., Alderman, and Gentry, “Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy,” 5, 7, 11-2; Adams, “The Southern Plantation in Popular Culture,” 171; Modlin, Jr., “Representing Slavery at Plantation-House Museums,” 155-56.

¹⁸⁰ Tyler, Ligibel, and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 15.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 16.

appearance or effect” of something that exists or once existed.¹⁸³ Therefore, nostalgic connections present a façade or superficial interpretation of plantations creating the illusion of an all white world instead of the multiracial world of their existence. Façadism as an experience is most closely linked to Disney and the theme park phenomenon. The Disneyfication of plantations has not always been present at plantation sites, but as discussed earlier, Mickey Mouse History has influenced the interpretation and thusly the visitor experience.

To illustrate examples of change in interpretation, I examined Destrehan Plantation and Ormond Plantation, both located in St. Charles Parish and previously a part of the German Coast. These plantations are located a little over a mile from each other, are very similar in appearance, but interpret the histories of their site very differently. Ormond Plantation is privately owned and operates as a Bed-and-Breakfast, whereas Destrehan Plantation is owned by the River Road Historical Society, a non-profit organization, and operates as a plantation museum.

To understand the origins of the interpretation at Ormond Plantation and Destrehan Plantation, I began searching for newspapers, magazines, plantation publications, and brochures on the two plantations. Documents found were gathered from the Louisiana State Library in Baton Rouge, the New Orleans Public Library in New Orleans, and a tourist office in Jackson Square, New Orleans. Many of the documents did not have a date of creation. Some newspaper and magazine articles have dates as do some of Destrehan Plantation’s publications. The rest of the documents are dated according to when the libraries received them, primarily in the 1970s and relatively into the 1980s and 1990s. The materials from the tourist office in Jackson Square do not have any dates.

¹⁸³ Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. v.s. “façade.”

Some of the documents seem to predate the dates the libraries received them because of their appearance. Some of them reflect a time when technology was not as advanced and some were handwritten with hand drawn images. Internal and external documents were analyzed because both were influenced by outside sources whether an historian, trained or self-proclaimed, the historic preservation movement, or the interpretive components.

Analyzing the historiography, the historic preservation movement, the interpretive components, the public programming, and interpretive programming reveals that these two sites interpretive emphasis follows national trends. From analysis emerges the following timeline. During the late 1700s-1960s historic buildings were saved for patriotic reasons and a desire to connect to a romantic past. Between the 1920s-1960s the nostalgia remains, but architecture becomes an important focus. By the 1970s and subsequently architectural significance became the criteria for saving historic buildings due to the National Register. Also a different nostalgia emerges. Instead of wanting to learn about a romanticized past, the public desires to learn about the difficult and/or silenced histories brought to light by the new social histories. Today there is a growing desire for a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the past. I examined 25 newspapers, 13 plantation guides, 9 brochures, 2 postcards, and 6 plantation publications (all the plantation publications were published by Destrehan Plantation) that mention or focus on Destrehan Plantation and/or Ormond Plantation.

When examining these documents, several themes began to emerge: History, Nostalgia/Romanticism, Owner Lineage, Patriotism, Architecture, Preservation, Slavery, and site specific references cited in Other. The definition of the themes were assigned based on the information most commonly found in the documents. The History category

refers to any mention of the history of the area, sugar cultivation, and French and Spanish influence. The Nostalgia/Romanticism category is often in poetic language, but in some cases is translated into photographs that made a connection to the past. The Owner Lineage category refers to a document that went into detail about the family or mentioned the several owners that owned Destrehan Plantation and Ormond Plantation. The category of Patriotism is reflected in two ways, within relation to the Constitution or to the Revolutionary War. The construction methods, materials used, and architectural style constitute the Architecture category. The Preservation category is referenced when the documents asked for help and support for preservation of these plantations and if it mentioned the restoration of them. The Slavery category indicated if slaves were mentioned, and the category of Other referred to something specific to the individual plantation, for example the marble tub at Destrehan Plantation and the Oak trees at Ormond Plantation. To better understand the connections between the themes and the time periods, I created a table for each plantation to illustrate how many documents reference certain themes. In the tables you will notice some overlap as some documents reference more than one theme.

There were more documents that referenced Destrehan Plantation, probably because it operates as a plantation museum. Ormond Plantation did not have as many documents as Destrehan Plantation most likely because it operates as a bed-and-breakfast and gives tours on the side. Ormond Plantation has one category, Mystery, that Destrehan does not. The first owner of the plantation, Pierre Trepagnier, mysteriously vanished. Ormond Plantation also is missing a category that Destrehan Plantation does have, Slavery. Slavery is not mentioned in the interpretation of the plantation at all. For each

plantation, the themes are listed in order of most referenced and include what information was most common to each theme. Each plantation also has a table that illustrates the kind of documents used, the number of documents, and the emphasis of those documents. The most common themes are Preservation, Owner Lineage, and Architecture, which parallels the timeline as most of the documents date to the 1970s and later. According to the timeline the 1960s and after represented a strong emphasis on architecture. Interestingly, examining the documents from least references to greatest correlates to the timeline: Patriotism, History, Nostalgia/Romanticism, Architecture, Owner Lineage, and Preservation. This reinforces that the interpretive focus has changed over time as the older emphasis became less relevant.

Table 1. Changes in Interpretation Themes at Destrehan Plantation

Documents that Spotlight Destrehan Plantation								
	History	Nostalgia/ Romanticism	Owner Lineage	<i>Patriotism</i>	<i>Preservation</i>	<i>Architecture</i>	Slavery	Other
Newspapers/ Magazines (20)	2	10	13	2	16	12	6	-
Plantation Guides (6)	2	-	4	2	-	2	-	1
Brochures (8)	5	5	9	2	6	5	4	7
Postcards (2)	-	2	1	-	2	2	1	-
Destrehan Publications (6)	2	4	2	2	-	2	2	1
Totals	11	21	24	8	24	23	13	8

Most Common Topics Found in the Themes for Destrehan Plantation

- **Preservation (24 references):** Call for preservation of the plantation and the River Road Historical Society, the organization that owns the plantation
- **Owner Lineage (24 references):** Mostly referred to the Destrehan family and the various owners of the plantation
- **Architecture (23 references):** Construction techniques, building materials, and the West Indies style of the plantation
- **Nostalgia/ Romanticism (21 references):** Text and photographs that alluded to the past and a different way of life. Two documents dating to 1830 and 1901 provide house cleaning and cooking tips from plantation wives
- **Slavery (13 references):** Mostly in the context of Charles Peqot, the free mulatto who built Destrehan Plantation, his contract, and a few documents mention slave life in general
- **History (11 references):** Etienne de Bore, the first man to granulate sugar in Louisiana, sugar cultivation, and Spanish and French. One of the documents refers to the area as the Golden Coast, which the German Coast became known as because of the amount of crops and wealth in the area
- **Patriotism (8 references):** First owner Jean Noel Destrehan's participation in the writing of the Louisiana Constitution and the plantation construction before the United States Constitution was written or while delegates were meeting in Pennsylvania at the Constitution Convention in 1787
- **Other (8 references):** Oak trees on the site, a marble tub, specialized rooms such as the 1811 Slave Revolt Museum and Education Center, Jefferson Room, Herbert J.

Harvey Room and that the house is listed on the National Register. Interestingly, two of the brochures had a welcome written in French, Spanish, and English to signify the history of the area.

Table 2. Changes in Interpretation Themes at Ormond Plantation

	Documents that Spotlight Ormond Plantation							
	History	Nostalgia/ Romanticism	Owners Lineage	<i>Patriotism</i>	<i>Preservation</i>	<i>Architecture</i>	Mystery	Other
Newspapers/ Magazines (5)	1	1	4	-	4	2	2	-
Plantation Guides (7)	2	2	4	3	1	3	1	1
Brochures (1)	1	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
Totals	4	4	5	3	6	5	4	1

Most Common Topics Found in the Themes for Ormond Plantation

- **Preservation (6 references):** Refers to a call for preservation of the plantation
- **Owner Lineage (5 references):** Mostly referred to the Trepagnier Family, the Butler Family, and the Brown Family, all previous owners of the plantation
- **Architecture (5 references):** Construction techniques, architectural features, and the West Indies style of the plantation
- **Nostalgia/ Romanticism (4 references):** Photographs and text that refer to the Old South
- **Mystery (4 references):** Mentions the mysterious death of Pierre Trepagnier, the first owner of the home
- **History (4 references):** The history of the area, sugar cultivation, and the Mississippi River

- **Patriotism (3 references):** Refers to the Revolutionary War and the “Fighting Butlers.” Colonel Richard Butler was an owner of Ormond Plantation and the son of General Richard Butler. General. Butler and his four brothers were nicknamed the “Fighting Butlers” for their bravery during the Revolutionary War
- **Other (1 reference):** Ghosts, antiques, and that it is a bed and breakfast

These tables reveal that interpretation has changed. The top two categories for both plantations were preservation and architecture, the most recent plantation theme. Owner Lineage and Nostalgia came closely behind, trends that existed since the beginning of the preservation movement. However, the fact that at Destrehan Plantation the category of Slavery comes in fourth indicates that a change to a more inclusive history is occurring. It is slow based on the fact that Ormond Plantation does not mention slavery and Destrehan mentions it in the context of an optional exhibit. History of both plantations ranked rather low indicating that it is not a central interpretive theme, however, it needs to be fully explored in order to understand the complex plantation system. There is a minimal progress towards including slavery, but a greater push to encompass the community is needed as well.

The historic preservation movement and the interpretive components of a plantation have an obvious impact on the interpretation of plantations. After examining the older document for Destrehan Plantation and Ormond Plantation, it is clear that the plantation’s interpretation has changed over the years, however, the plantation staff is unlikely to realize this. Staff members come and go and often old publications such as newspaper and brochures are discarded. However, keeping these items allows a

plantation to know its own interpretation history—what it was and how it has changed.

However, to really interpret the history of the plantation site, the complete history of the area, the people, and the community needs to be known.

III. PLANTATIONS AS COMMUNITIES: TELLING THE HISTORY OF SITES THROUGH THE COMMUNITY

The interpretive components of plantations currently remove the racial atmosphere plantations existed within. In this scenario, Europeans were superior to the poor, blacks, and Native Americans. It also does not mention the non-agricultural tasks performed on plantations and the purpose of the plantation overall. The French had specific instructions for establishing plantations in Louisiana, called the *Instrucion pour etablir les habitations a la Louisiane*. Colonists brought to Louisiana, at the government's expense, were required to clear the land, build homes, and establish gardens to cultivate crops to support themselves and France.¹⁸⁴ France promoted a plantation society with a "profit-oriented economic system," however, it functioned more like a community than a business.

This chapter will discuss plantation interpretation within the complexity of a community focus as opposed to current interpretative strategies. In order to anchor a plantation within its community, it must be situated within its historical context. This chapter will also address the aspects of the area's history that is not presented at the plantation sites today. Due to few surviving and translated sources, some aspects of the historical context are German Coast specific and are broader to include New Orleans

¹⁸⁴ Helmut Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*, ed., trans., Ellen C. Merrill, (Destrehan, Louisiana: The German-Acadian Coast Historical and Genealogical Society, 1990), 42.

or Louisiana in general.

The current interpretation of plantations on the German Coast¹⁸⁵ focuses on the extant buildings and structures, which in most cases is the “Big House.” Other buildings such as slave homes, kitchens, or carriage houses may exist, but are most often an optional component of public tours with little to no interpretation from the tour guide. Focusing on the buildings and structures that remain presents two problems. First, because the physical environment no longer exists as it had during the antebellum period, the historic economic function of plantations is lost. Tourists understand that a plantation grew crops and had slaves, but knowing that it produced 15, 000 barrels of sugar and had over 200 slaves puts the economy of the plantation system into perspective. Second, the societal aspect of the plantation is lost. Tourists learn about the white owners and their black slaves, but eighteenth and nineteenth century Louisiana was not a black and white world. Ethnically diverse, the interactions between the Native Americans, Acadians, French, Germans, Spanish, and Africans and the dynamics of the free and enslaved shaped the daily life and the community. These two problems are the result of the plantation not being interpreted within its historical context.

Historical context “constitutes information about historic trends and properties grouped by an important theme in the prehistory or history of a community, state, or the nation during a particular period or time.”¹⁸⁶ To fully understand the social, economic, and political aspects of a plantation, the interpretation must anchor the plantation in its

¹⁸⁵ The German Coast was located about twenty-five miles above New Orleans and became one of the wealthiest areas in Louisiana. Today St. Charles Parish and St. John the Baptist Parish comprise the former German Coast.

¹⁸⁶ Kerri S. Barile, “Race, the National Register, and Cultural Resource Management: Creating an Historic Context for Postbellum Sites,” in “Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millennium,” special issue, *Historical Archaeology* 38, no. 1 (2004): 90.

geographic location. If a Louisiana plantation were relocated to another part of the state, the interpretation and educational programming would rarely be affected because the interpretation focuses on the previous owners of the plantation. To provide a more inclusive interpretation and understanding of the plantation community, site-specific aspects of the community need to be addressed. On the German Coast the proximity to the Mississippi River, swamps, the River Road, the inhabitants, the governing regimes: French, Spanish, and American, all played a part in how the plantation system and society developed.

Historical context also gives a voice to “the people without history:” slaves, women, indentured servants, and laborers. Because of their social status, gender, and race, little documentation exists for them.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, sites associated with people without history are least likely to be preserved.¹⁸⁸ If the interpretation does not become more inclusive on plantation sites, the descendants of those without history “will remain ‘without history’ indefinitely.”¹⁸⁹ This has long term effects for plantation sites. With the introduction of new social histories, the public expects to learn this history from centers of knowledge beyond universities at museums, museums, plantation sites, and other cultural institutions. What is currently lacking on plantation sites is an explanation of the systematic plantation components and their interrelationships—the inhabitants, buildings and structures, and the organization of the plantation. Government officials, planters, overseers, laborers, farmers, and slaves coexisted in the plantation community.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Eric Wolf as quoted in Barile, “Race, the National Register, and Cultural Resource Management: Creating an Historic Context for Postbellum Sites,” 90.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 92.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 98.

¹⁹⁰ For more information on the plantation system refer to *Life and Labor in the Old South* by Ulrich B. Phillips, and *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* by John W. Blassingame.

An active institution, the plantation community evolved and prospered as a result of changes in government, crops cultivated, and addition of new inhabitants. Thus, the definition of the systematic plantation components changed throughout the history of Louisiana. Initially, the first planters in Louisiana were wealthy government officials of French origin. The first slaves were the Native Americans, but after the introduction of Africans in the 1720s the term referred almost exclusively to a person of African descent. However, due to miscegenation and emancipation a person of African descent as early as the 1730s could also refer to a free African that was either a farmer, laborer, or in some cases in New Orleans, a planter. Also, an African could be a slave and laborer because slaves were allowed to cultivate crops and sell them at market on the German Coast. By the 1760s, the first farmers, the Germans, grew prosperous enough to become the first planters on the German Coast. The poor French, Germans, and Acadians comprised the farmers and the laborers.

Due to Father Joseph Michel Paret's letters and watercolors, images of the American German Coast's systematic plantation components exist. Father Paret, a French priest, arrived to Louisiana in 1847. During the twenty-one years he lived on the German Coast he wrote a series of letters to family members as well as painted watercolors that portray everyday life in St. Charles Parish.¹⁹¹ Father Paret painted fifty-three watercolors depicting plantation estates, River Road, the Mississippi River, animals, flowers, and French landscapes drawn from memory.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Marcel Boyer and J. D. Edwards, *Plantations by the River: Watercolor Paintings from St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, by Father Joseph M. Paret, 1859* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2002): 39.

¹⁹² Ibid., 42.

A close analysis and interpretation of Father Paret's watercolors by Marcel Boyer and J.D. Edwards identified three types of white men in the works: gentlemen, entrepreneurs, and farmers. These identifiers, however, disassociate the men from slavery. The terms are associated with refinement, hard work, ingenuity, respect, and astuteness, none of which are typically associated with slavery. According to the St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, the "power of land translated to the power to govern,"¹⁹³ therefore, the wealthy planters dominated social, economic, and political activities.¹⁹⁴ To provide a complete look at the dynamics and economy of slavery and plantations, I have assigned narrowed identifiers to these categories. The planter class/slave owners consisted of gentlemen who were portrayed by their top hats and waistcoats, outward signifiers of wealth and status. The entrepreneurs or overseers were shown engaged in business and overseeing plantation activities. The overseer had an essential role in the plantation community. He ran the everyday operation of the plantation. He also walked a fine line of mirroring the plantation owner's treatment of slaves and getting the slaves to work.¹⁹⁵ An overseer could be a white man or a free black man. Both entrepreneurs and gentlemen attended mass, rode horses, spent time with their wives and sisters, played games, visited with others, and traveled in River Road in buggies. Laborers managed field gangs, sailed on luggers (boats), poled flat boats, poled

¹⁹³ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, "Life Changes," St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/culture/lifestyle/life-changes> (accessed 12/2/2012).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹⁵ Mary Ann Sternberg, *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) 74.

or rowed *bateaux* or rowboats, and hunted with riffles and shotguns.¹⁹⁶ Farmers grew rice, corn, and vegetables.¹⁹⁷

By 1859 enslaved and free blacks lived on the German Coast. However, it is hard to differentiate the two in Father Paret's watercolors. Black men are predominantly engaged in agricultural work. They chopped wood, repaired roads, tended animals, or were coachmen and attendants. In their free time, black men fished with nets, rods, and poles, walked on the levee, in the plantation quarters, and along River Road.¹⁹⁸ As slave labor blacks worked as field hands tilling soil and growing sugar cane. They also constructed and maintained levees, roads, and buildings, dug canals, and cut firewood. Free and enslaved blacks worked as carpenters, blacksmiths, and masons.¹⁹⁹

Women and children are the least frequently depicted.²⁰⁰ The upper class white women, mostly shown in public activities, wore hoop skirts, bonnets, and shawls. As the wives of plantation owners, they took care of the both the free and enslaved sick and disabled. Only after her husband's death would she engage in the plantation business.²⁰¹ Black women are portrayed as "domestic servants."²⁰² Slave women often helped the plantation mistress as nurses, house servants, and sometimes worked in the fields.²⁰³ Only white male children are depicted and are engaged in leisure activities such as racing horses and hunting with dogs.²⁰⁴ White children were educated as children by a tutor and

¹⁹⁶ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 5-7.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁹⁸ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 5-6.

¹⁹⁹ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 74.

²⁰⁰ For more information on the relationship between slave owners and slaves see *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese.

²⁰¹ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 73.

²⁰² Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 7.

²⁰³ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 73.

²⁰⁴ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 6.

sent to New Orleans or Europe when they matured.²⁰⁵ Father Paret's watercolors reveal that a plantation was more than a building or a field but a self-sufficient village with numerous inhabitants and buildings with various functions.²⁰⁶

The plantation estate consisted of three zones: residential, agricultural, and industrial. The agricultural zone included the land used for cash crops and surrounded the residential and industrial zones. The industrial zone included buildings used to process crops such as a sugarhouse or a cotton gin.²⁰⁷ The residential zone included the big house, the yard, the kitchen garden, the plantation garden, and various outbuildings including the kitchen, warehouses, stables, barns, the granary, chicken coops, woodshops, saddle shops, and slave quarters.²⁰⁸ The residential zone presented the planter's home, wealth, and prestige to the community.

Two types of homes, the plantation house and the Creole cottage, existed for planters/slave owners, farmers, laborers, and overseers. Plantation homes first appeared during the early eighteenth century and structural details often reflected the owner's origin. The styles included West Indian style (most prominent), Acadian, Spanish, French, English, and Caribbean.²⁰⁹ Due to the climate and flooding, plantation homes were built to make the inhabitants as comfortable as possible. The plantation home was raised to avoid flooding,²¹⁰ the ground floor used for dinning, and double leaf doors on the front and rear facades allowed air flow. Large galleries placed in front, back, or around the house allowed the family to spend time there in the warmer months.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 73.

²⁰⁶ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 43.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

*Garçonnières*²¹² were commonly built on the sides of the main house for the sons of the family after they entered puberty.²¹³ The Creole cottage, home of laborers, overseers, and farmers, consisted of the same components of a plantation house, but was smaller in size and less grand in size and appearance.²¹⁴

Directly behind the plantation house was the yard, rectangular in shape, often fenced, and surrounded by the outbuildings. The yard was essential to the daily operation of the plantation house. The smoke house, animal coops and pens, kitchen, black smith's shop, laundry, house servant quarters, woodpile, storage provisions, and bathrooms were located here. Sometimes a carriage house and livestock barn was adjacent.²¹⁵

Not all plantations had slave quarters. In Louisiana the number of slave quarter homes depended on the amount of acreage under cultivation.²¹⁶ In the mid-1700s slave quarters resembled camps, with the houses scattered in no order. They were rectangular in shape, had one or two rooms, and were similar in size to the homes of lower class whites. The slave quarters resembled camps until the 1820s.²¹⁷ By this time, probably due to American influence, the slave quarters were laid out in one or two linear rows²¹⁸ with a central dividing main road.²¹⁹ Slaves were given the area behind their homes to grow vegetables to sell or supplement their diet.²²⁰

²¹² *Garçonnières*, derived from the French word *garçon* (boy), were the designated areas for boys to live after puberty. They were either built separately from the house or integrated in the main house separated from everyone else. (Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 21)

²¹³ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 47.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

²¹⁷ Destrehan Plantation, *A The Creole Slave Cabin*, Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series, (Destrehan, LA: Destrehan Plantation, 2004) 1-2, 4.

²¹⁸ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 17.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

The systematic plantation components helped shape the community of the German Coast and vice versa. The components of a modern community are geographic area, government and laws, commerce, and a common cultural heritage. These components also can be used to define an antebellum plantation community with the addition of inhabitants and slavery, which were crucial to the functioning plantation system. This section will focus on the plantation community components. Specifically in the German Coast to demonstrate not only the complexity of the factors, but to illustrate the scope of historical information omitted from current interpretation in the area. Six categories will be features: geographic location, inhabitants, commerce—crops grown locally and for export, religion, political life, and changing government regime.

Geographic location played an crucial role in the development of plantations. Climate, soil, rainfall, and proximity to waterways determined what could be grown, what diseases were common to the area, and what animals could survive in the region. Thus, location determined what was grown on a plantation and how people transported themselves and their goods. Ormond Plantation and Destrehan Plantation are located within the *Cote des Allemands* or the German Coast. The German Coast, located between twenty-five and thirty miles above New Orleans,²²¹ reached as far as forty miles up the Mississippi River on both riverbanks. The area obtained its name from the Germans that

²²¹ Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803*, 14.

The exact location of the original German Coast is not known because the early census records have a few discrepancies. The November 24, 1721 census places the German settlement 33.6 miles north of New Orleans on the left bank heading upstream. Also, the reference of the 1721 census lists the settlement as 8.4 miles north of *Anse aux Outardes*. This information does not clarify the location because the location of *Anse aux Outardes* is not provided. *Anse* does not provide any additional clarification because it simply means outer bank of a river bend. What is known is that the original German settlement was located north of New Orleans on the west bank of the river “between the Bonnet Carré and Norco bends” and reached far above present day Hahnville and far below present day Lucy. Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803*, 12, 14-5.

settled the area. French for coast, *côte* refers to the concave bank of the river²²² and in Louisiana, described “a string of settlements along a bank of the river.”²²³ Presently, St. Charles Parish and St. John the Baptist Parish comprise the former German Coast.²²⁴ During the French regime, the German Coast gained the reputation as “the breadbasket of the colony” because it was the only dependable food source saving the city of New Orleans several times from starvation.²²⁵ During the Spanish and American regimes, it was also known as “plantation country” and the “Golden Coast” because of the crops grown and the large concentration of wealth in the area.²²⁶

Three aspects of the German Coast’s antebellum physical environment continue to exist: the Mississippi River, the levees, and River Road. Each makes a unique contribution to the understanding of plantation community life. These key geographic and cultural features determined how the colonists traveled, built homes, cultivated crops, and in appearance may be foreign to out-of-state tourists.

The river served as a source of transportation, provided food such as shrimp and fish, allowed recreational activities such as swimming and boating, and acted as a baptismal site for black church congregations. The Mississippi River also functioned as the center of society. Everyday people and merchandise came and went spreading news

²²² Ibid., 21.

²²³ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 20.

²²⁴ St. Charles Parish, “Quick Look: St. Charles Parish History,” St. Charles Parish, <http://www.stcharlesgov.net/index.aspx?page=205> (accessed 9/7/2012); St. Charles Parish, “St. Charles Parish: Parish Map,” St. Charles Parish, <http://www.stcharlesgov.net/index.aspx?page=85> (accessed 9/7/2012).

²²⁵ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, “Breadbasket of the Colony,” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/18th-century/the-french-colonial-period-1698-1762/immigration-and-settlement/breadbasket-of-the-colony> (accessed 9/19/2012).

²²⁶ St. Charles Parish Museum. “Antebellum Lifestyles,” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/culture/lifestyle/antebellum-lifestyle> (accessed 9/7/2012).

and goods to neighboring plantations, New Orleans, and the world.²²⁷ Colonists used luggers, *bateaux* or rowboats, steamboats, flatboats,²²⁸ and *pirogues* or small boats to bring their goods to New Orleans.²²⁹ Even though, the Mississippi River served as an essential travel source, the river was potentially dangerous due to flooding. On one occasion, Father Paret wrote in a letter to his sister, that the river rose “30 feet over a stretch of nearly 200 miles.”²³⁰

To combat the floods, colonists constructed levees. Derived from the French term *levee*, a levee is an “artificial embankment built along a stream or river to prevent flooding.”²³¹ When the colonists first settled the area natural levees already existed, built up overtime by sediment carried in the Mississippi River. However, the natural levees were not large or strong enough to protect the colonists, their homes, and their crops. Therefore, France required the colonists to raise the natural levee not only to protect themselves, but to protect France’s investment.²³² They had to do so within a certain time period or risk losing their land.²³³ Levee maintenance was crucial because *crevasses* or breaks in the levee caused flooding.

Levees also served as a space for social gathering. Stairways, leading to platforms at the top of the levee, were built by plantation owners and “on late summer afternoons the levee became a long promenade, a parklike setting with young couples strolling,

²²⁷ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 44-6.

²²⁸ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 7.

²²⁹ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, “Breadbasket of the Colony.”

²³⁰ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 120.

²³¹ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 22.

²³² Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803*, 4.

²³³ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, “Mississippi River Levees.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/the-french-colonial-period-> (accessed 9/19/2012).

children playing, and elders watching all and chatting.”²³⁴ The first levees were at least two feet high and six feet wide²³⁵ and the tops of the levee wide enough for both a foot and horse path.²³⁶

Another crucial transportation way was the roads. Since the early 1700s a road existed on both banks of the Mississippi River and on both sides of the levee. In 1732 Governor Etienne Percier ordered every landowner along the Mississippi River to build a public road in front of his property.²³⁷ The colonists had to construct a 1.95 meters wide road, able to handle wagon traffic, as well as maintain it and build drainage ditches. Colonists used buggies, horses, and horse drawn vehicles to travel.²³⁸ By 1834 a road existed between New Orleans and Baton Rouge known as River Road. This road primarily served local traffic, but colonists continued to depend on the river for travel because the roads were often impassable.

The geographic location establishes the significance of the area and answers the question why this place? The close proximity to New Orleans gave the German Coast plantation community a viable and consistent market for its goods. Its location near the Mississippi River allowed easy transportation, despite the floods. The geographic location of the German Coast allowed the plantation community to be very wealthy. Explaining the aspects of the environment that continue to exist, the levees, Mississippi River, and River Road, allow tourists to connect to plantation sites. They also can begin to picture what the plantation sites teach them. All these factors are key to the reason why

²³⁴ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 44.

²³⁵ Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803*, 78.

²³⁶ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, “Mississippi River Levees.”

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 87.

the plantations were established, prospered, and survived today. Re-contextualizing current interpretation anchors these sites in their historical and geographic setting.

On plantation sites, the interpretation is geared towards the owners and therefore, the only ethnic group presented in that of the owners. As previously stated, Louisiana has been ethnically diverse since its colonization. The original inhabitants of the German Coast were the Ouacha, the Native American tribe who settled the area until 1721.²³⁹ The Native American tribes indigenous to St. Charles Parish and the surrounding areas were the Acolapissa, Tunica, Okalosa, Washa, Chawasha, Chitimacha, Bayou Goula, Quinipissa, Tensas, Tangipohoa, Houma and Choctaw.²⁴⁰ This indicates that the area was continuously settled before the Europeans arrived.

The French²⁴¹ were the first group of Europeans to settle the area. Besides government officials, it was hard to attract French settlers because the long trip and lack of development of the colony. Thus, France resorted to sending prostitutes and criminals to Louisiana.²⁴² As an incentive, they were promised their freedom if they agreed to marry each other and settle in Louisiana.²⁴³ However, most of them did not make it to Louisiana. They died on the way to French ports, escaped before making it to the ports, never left their jail cells, or were on ships that were lost at sea.²⁴⁴ Those that made it to Louisiana were unprepared for life in Louisiana.²⁴⁵ Many died and those that survived did

²³⁹ Blume, *The German Coast During the Colonial Era 1722-1803*, 15.

²⁴⁰ Nancy Tregre Wilson, *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*, 2nd ed. (Destrehan, Louisiana: St. Charles Parish Council, 2010), "Detailed Look: St. Charles Parish History," <http://www.stcharlesparish-la.gov/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=2219> (accessed 9/7/2012), 3.

²⁴¹ For more information on the French in Louisiana see *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley* by John Francis McDermott.

²⁴² Reinhart Kondert, *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*, (Stuttgart, Germany: Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart Academic Publishing House, 1990), 14.

²⁴³ Wilson, *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*, 4.

²⁴⁴ Hardy Jr., "The Transportation of Convicts to Colonial Louisiana," 220.

²⁴⁵ Kondert, *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*, 14.

not become productive members of society. France expected them to cultivate crops, but the women continued to be prostitutes and the men continued to be thieves.²⁴⁶ Of the 7,000 procured for Louisiana, less than 900 made the journey to Louisiana and by 1721 only 60 lived in Louisiana.²⁴⁷

John Law,²⁴⁸ second proprietor of Louisiana, brought the Germans to Louisiana. Law “envisioned a model plantation community employing several thousand industrious German farmers, enriching their employer beyond measure.”²⁴⁹ The Company of the Indies misled the Germans about Louisiana.²⁵⁰ A German brochure printed in 1720 described Louisiana as vast, with soil that tolerated several crops a year, and animals such as leopards, buffalos, deer, ducks and bears for hunting. The brochure also emphasized gold, silver, lead, and copper mines, and Native American herbal medicines that could heal deadly wounds.²⁵¹

Louisiana appealed to the Germans in the horrible aftermath of the Thirty Years War and French occupation.²⁵² About 10,000 Germans traveled from Germany to France,

²⁴⁶ Wilson, *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*, 4.

²⁴⁷ James D. Hardy Jr., “The Transportation of Convicts to Colonial Louisiana,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1966): 220.

²⁴⁸ John Law was born in Scotland and studied banking and finance in Holland. He organized the General Bank of France, later the Royal Bank of France, in 1716. In 1718 Law used the Bank’s assets to finance Louisiana. The Royal Bank created the Company of the Indies, which absorbed the Company of the West’s chartered making Law the proprietor of Louisiana. The twenty-five year charter gave Law a trade monopoly on Louisiana, and he could issue unlimited numbers of shares and stocks. The Company obligated itself to bring at least 6,000 whites and 3,000 people of color because Law had the power to give land away on conditions or sell it outright. To fully capitalize on Louisiana’s resources, agriculture needed to be developed on a large scale. Large concessions or large tracts of land were given to wealthy men of France who in return had to finance and bring settlers to the colony. Law himself owned two concessions. Bennet H. Wall, Light Townsend Cummins, Judith Kelleher Schafer, Edward Fittaas, and Michael L. Kurtz, eds. *Louisiana: A History*, 5th ed., (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2008) 48-9.

²⁴⁹ Kondert, *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*, 15.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁵¹ J. Hanno Delier, *The Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent*, (Philadelphia: American Germanica, 1909), 13.

²⁵² St. Charles Parish, “Quick Look: St. Charles Parish History,” St. Charles Parish, <http://www.stcharlesgov.net/index.aspx?page=205> (accessed 9/7/2012).

only about 6,000 Germans left France for Louisiana, and less than 2,000 arrived in Louisiana.²⁵³ Some Germans broke down on the way to French ports, and France, unprepared to care for the large amount of immigrants, crowded the Germans together resulting in unsanitary conditions that spread of disease and death. Some Germans tired of waiting, found work in France and settled there while others died on the journey to Louisiana.²⁵⁴ Three groups of Germans arrived between 1719 and 1721 and settled on what became known as the German Coast.²⁵⁵ The German settlers proved influential in settling the German Coast.

After Spain gained control over Louisiana in 1763, few Spanish colonists settled in Louisiana. Those that did were the Canary Islanders who settled at *Terre aux Boeufs* near New Orleans. Also, some of Spanish-Mexican descent, and a few of Castilian descent settled in or near New Orleans.²⁵⁶

Descendants of French peasants, the Acadians originated in the Nova Scotia district called Acadia of present-day Canada. The Acadians began having problems when the British came into control in 1713. After refusing to pledge their allegiance to Great Britain, they were exported against their will to various colonies. In 1765, two hundred and sixteen Acadians moved to the German Coast.²⁵⁷ Most Acadians settled in what is now St. James Parish, which became known as the Acadian Coast.²⁵⁸ The Acadians were attracted to Louisiana because of its French language, traditions, and religion.²⁵⁹

²⁵³ Wilson, *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*, 4.

²⁵⁴ Delier, *The Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent*, 15-6.

²⁵⁵ St. Charles Parish, "Quick Look: St. Charles Parish History."

²⁵⁶ Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans, (New York: W. H. Coleman, 1885), 167.

²⁵⁷ Wall et al., *Louisiana: A History*, 84-7.

²⁵⁸ Wilson, *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*, 12.

²⁵⁹ St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association, "Acadians Arrive." St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/18th-century/the-spanish-colonial-period-1762-1800/acadians-arrivecolonial-period> (accessed 9/11/2012).

The exact date of first African slave brought to Louisiana is not known. France hoped that bringing Africans to Louisiana would prevent the colony from failing. Two-thirds of slaves brought to Louisiana under French rule came from Senegambia and were Bambara.²⁶⁰ Contrary to common beliefs, the slaves brought to Louisiana were not savages. The Bambara were skilled workers with knowledge in agriculture and in manufacturing dyes and cloth. They knew how to cultivate crops, kept animals, and were metalworkers, including goldsmiths, silversmiths, arms makers, blacksmiths, horseshoe makers, coppersmiths and iron workers. The Bambara were Muslim and most could read and write Arabic. Some were doctors, nurses, carpenters, potters, builders and leather workers.²⁶¹

A large free black population²⁶² began to grow due to emancipations and miscegenation. Black slaves were freed one of three ways: *buenos servicios* (good service), purchase, and emancipation.²⁶³ Slave owners freed slaves as a reward for service in war²⁶⁴ or to faithful slaves to encourage loyalty.²⁶⁵ In some cases free blacks bought their freedom or a loved ones freedom with money or by promising to work the debt.²⁶⁶ Finally, slave owners emancipated their slave mistresses and offspring. Female slaves were more likely to be freed because household slaves were of lower value.²⁶⁷ Free Blacks were “respected architects, furniture makers, painters, masons, and metal

²⁶⁰ Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*. Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series, 2002, 1-2.

²⁶¹ Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*, 2.

²⁶² For more information on free blacks see *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana* by H.E. Sterkx.

²⁶³ Thomas N. Ingersoll, “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 48, no. 2 (April 1991): 186.

²⁶⁴ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 129.

²⁶⁵ Ingersoll, “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” 186.

²⁶⁶ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 130; “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” 186.

²⁶⁷ Ingersoll, “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” 186.

workers.”²⁶⁸ In French Louisiana blackness was not automatically inferior and whiteness not always associated with power and prestige. Some free blacks owned plantations and held positions that allowed them to inflict punishment on whites.²⁶⁹

Understanding the diversity of those who lived in the plantation community allows the tourist to learn how various ethnic groups interacted and shaped one another, but also what conflicts, accommodations, and contributions were a part of the historical fabric. Each group brought a piece of information needed for the community to survive. The Acadians brought the technology needed to build stronger levees, the Germans were influential because of their early farms, free Blacks worked as skilled laborers, slaves as laborers, and Indians shared their knowledge of the land, plants, and river.

Louisiana is known for its Creole culture, but few plantations actually explain what Creole means. When the United States bought Louisiana in 1803, they bought a country with people, laws, and traditions. The term “Creole” was not used in Louisiana during the French period.²⁷⁰ When Spain took over Louisiana, the term Creole “distinguished the French speaking population from the Spanish colonials.”²⁷¹ It was applied by the Spanish and subsequently, Americans to the residents of Louisiana. *Creole* referred to “those born in, or native to, the local populace”²⁷² as a result of “European exploration and colonial expansion.”²⁷³

²⁶⁸ Glen Pitre and Michelle Benoit, *Country Roads of Louisiana*, (EBook printer 3/19/2013), 79.

²⁶⁹ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 130-1.

²⁷⁰ Cécyle Trépanier, “The Cajunization of French Louisiana: Forging a Regional Identity,” *The Geographical Journal* 157, no. 2. (July 1991), 163.

²⁷¹ Shanno Lee Dawdy, “Understanding Cultural Change through the Vernacular: Creolization in Louisiana,” *Historical Archaeology* 34, no. 3. Evidence of Creolization in the Consumer Goods of an Enslaved Bahamian Family (2000): 108.

²⁷² Sylvie Dubois, and Megan Melancon, “Creole Is, Creole Ain’t: Diachronic and Synchronic Attitudes toward Creole Identity in Southern Louisiana,” *Language in Society* 29, no. 2. (June 2000): 137.

²⁷³ Connie Eble, “Creole in Louisiana,” *South Atlantic Review* 73, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 40.

The definition continued to change and by 1929 referred only to the “Caucasian population.”²⁷⁴ Today, the term Creole has multiple definitions and refers to white, black, people of color, and Native Americans. The term Creole was used just as “Native,” “Savage,” “Slave,” “Negro,” “Creole Negro,” and “Mulatre” as an identifier. Even though Creole referred to all Louisianans, after their arrival the Acadians acquired a name of their own. The “aristocratic, well-educated, financially well-off Creoles, city folk and plantation princes” looked down upon the Acadians. Creoles and Anglos used Cajun, a corruption of Acadian, as a “slur of reproach.” Cajun became the equivalent to “hill billy” in the United States. Referring more to class than race, a poor Creole could be called Cajun and an educated Acadian called Creole.²⁷⁵

Many plantations advertise their Creole and Cajun cuisine and culture, but do not provide an explanation of what it meant to be Creole or Cajun. Initially, Creole was a term used to identify native residents, but over time it identified a distinct culture with a diverse population. This is a crucial component of the plantation community on the German Coast because it separates Louisiana plantations from all of the plantation museum sites in the United States. It is also crucial because it dictated how the Creoles of Louisiana interacted with the Anglos.

On the German Coast various crops were grown for export and for sustenance. Initially, commercial crops were not cultivated.²⁷⁶ The Company of the Indies instructed the colonists to plant gardens,²⁷⁷ and German Coast residents primarily grew *vivres*,

²⁷⁴ Dubois and Melacon, “Creole Is, Creole Ain’t,” 237.

²⁷⁵ Trépanier, “The Cajunization of French Louisiana,” 164.

²⁷⁶ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*, 67.

²⁷⁷ Surrey, N.M. Miller. “The Development of Industry in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763.” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 9, no. 3. (December 1922), 229.

provisions to live on.²⁷⁸ Other colonists disregarded the suggestion to plant gardens and by 1723 relied on the provisions from the German Coast.²⁷⁹ The Germans produced cucumbers, green peas, beans, artichokes, sweet-potato- greens, spinach, onions, pumpkins, dried peas and beans, French, Spanish and English melons, sweet and white potatoes and watermelon.²⁸⁰ They grew rice, Indian corn, milk products such as butter and cheese, and raised poultry.²⁸¹ Even though pigs and sheep were kept, cattle-raising was more important because meat was scarce and expensive.²⁸²

The first crop introduced for profit in Louisiana was tobacco. France hoped to produce enough tobacco to “relieve her of her heavy English tobacco bill.”²⁸³ However, Louisiana’s climate was not suitable for its cultivation. Drought and heavy rainfall sometimes destroyed the crop.²⁸⁴ France became “the sole buyer of Louisiana tobacco” in 1731 causing prices to drop.²⁸⁵ By the early 1730s tobacco proved to be an unprofitable crop and the colonists grew tired of cultivating it because of the risks involved. Many farmers began cultivating indigo by 1736.²⁸⁶

Reports dating as early as 1709 state that indigo²⁸⁷ grew wild in Louisiana.²⁸⁸ Some historians claim that the Jesuits introduced indigo in 1727, but historian

²⁷⁸ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 67.

²⁷⁹ Surrey, “The Development of Industrious in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763,” 229.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 230.

²⁸¹ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 67.; Surrey, “The Development of Industrious in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763,” 220.

²⁸² Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*, 69.

²⁸³ Surrey, “The Development of Industrious in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763,” 233.

²⁸⁴ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 50-51.

²⁸⁵ Surrey, “The Development of Industrious in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763,” 233.

²⁸⁶ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 50.

²⁸⁷ For more information on indigo cultivation in Louisiana see William S. Coker’s “Spanish Regulation of the Natchez Indigo Industry, 1793-1794: The South First Antipollution Laws?” and “Indigo in Colonial Louisiana and the Floridas” by Jack D. L. Holmes.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 51.

Gwendolyn Hall asserts that wild indigo was first processed in 1721.²⁸⁹ The Company of the Indies encouraged indigo cultivation because there was a market for it after the West Indies replaced indigo cultivation with sugarcane. The transition from tobacco to indigo was difficult at first because neither the colonists nor the Native Americans knew how to process it. The Jesuits in New Orleans, through their experiments in cultivating and processing indigo and the African slaves were able to teach them.²⁹⁰

Sugar cultivation²⁹¹ replaced indigo in the late 1700s. The first sugar cane plants were brought to Louisiana in 1700 by Iberville. It took decades to find plants that were best suited for the climate and physical conditions of Louisiana as well as the “appropriate working methods.”²⁹² Governor Bienville’s records show sugarcane production began as early as 1733. The first sugar cane was cultivated to produce molasses and after 1766 ceased being grown.²⁹³ Étienne de Bore, devastated by the collapse of indigo cultivation, began experimenting with sugar cane and in 1795 was the first person in Louisiana to extract sugar.²⁹⁴ By the late eighteenth century sugarcane replaced indigo as export crop in the parish.

Rice was another important cash crop. The French first brought rice from the Carolinas and by 1719 many farmers were growing it. However, rice was only profitable when it was grown in conjunction with other crops because there “was too much idleness for slaves.” It was usually coupled with tobacco, indigo, lumber, or wheat.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 124.

²⁹⁰ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 51.

²⁹¹ For more information on sugar cultivation in Louisiana see *The Sugar Master: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World* by Richard Follett and *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910* by John Alfred Heitman.

²⁹² Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 63.

²⁹³ Rise of plantations St. Charles Parish Museum.

²⁹⁴ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. 101.

²⁹⁵ Surrey, “The Development of Industry in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763.” 232.

Aside from cash crops, the German Coast residents earned income through other industries such as lumber. “Lumber was the first nonagricultural industry of significance” and main source of revenue during the 18th century.²⁹⁶ Lumber was always a very important export especially to the West Indies. As early as 1724, the large concessions supplied wood to the Company of the Indies.²⁹⁷

An essential part of commerce was slavery. The French did not share the same views of slaves as Americans.²⁹⁸ Slaves were viewed as chattel and were denied “freedom of movement...the right to own property, to hold public office, to testify at criminal trials except in extreme cases, to be party in civil matters, to bear arms, or to marry as he pleased.”²⁹⁹ However, in eighteenth century France this was not a harsh policy. Of all of the rights denied to slaves, only the right to own property was considered a “basic, unalienable human right.”³⁰⁰ Women could not hold public office or be involved in civil functions. Beggars and vagabonds were not allowed to carry weapons or heavy sticks. French men under thirty and women under twenty-five needed their fathers consent to marry. Foreigners that lived in France held property rights during their lifetime, at their death their property was forfeited to the government.³⁰¹

African slaves were essential to the development of plantations not only as laborers, but as teachers. The Company of the Indies sent skilled workers to Louisiana from France, but few of them survived. Slaves were the medical doctors and surgeons in

²⁹⁶ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 83.

²⁹⁷ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*, 43.

²⁹⁸ For more information on American slavery and ideologies see *American Slavery, 1619-1877* by Peter Kolchin, *Class, Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution* by Staughton Lynd, and *Early American Views on Negro Slavery* by Matthew T. Mellon.

²⁹⁹ Blume, *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*, 132.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 132.

³⁰¹ Mathé Allain, “Slave Policies in French Louisiana,” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 2. (Spring 1980), 132.

the 1700s because they were skilled in herbal medicines and were often better than French doctors. Slaves knew how to cultivate indigo and how to transform swamps into rice fields by building dams and dikes. The slaves cultivated the land for 6-7 months a year, during the remaining 4-5 months they cleared land, fixed levees, built levees, dug drainage canals, and constructed docks and public buildings. They grew and sold crops at market during the French, Spanish, and United States regimes and up until the Civil War.³⁰²

The relationship between successful crops and the knowledge of their cultivation as well as harvesting and production relied on a complex mix of historical experimentation and individual or ethnic expertise. The success of these crops also aided the planter in gaining more wealth, prestige, and status in addition to acquiring more slaves. The inclusion of the topic of commerce recognizes slave authority by providing information on their knowledge and importance in the plantation system. Slaves were involved in the activities essential to the daily life of the plantation and the community. Their inclusion also sheds light on the relationship between slave owners and slave.

Little interpretation reflects that Catholicism was the only religion allowed in Louisiana, not just on the German Coast. Little evidence remains today with churches of different dominations on the German Coast. During the 17th and 18th centuries, “the perpetuation of the Catholic religion was considered one of the most sacred duties of the French Monarchs.”³⁰³ The Company of the Indies was supposed to supply and support a priest and provide the tools needed to construct a church, but did not. Of the first families on the German Coast about ten were Protestant which caused a concern for Catholic

³⁰² Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 121-122, 126.

³⁰³ Kondert, *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*, 88.

authorities in the colony.³⁰⁴ During the Spanish regime, non-Spaniards were welcomed to Louisiana if they agreed to convert to Catholicism and swear their allegiance to Spain. However, the Spanish government allowed people of other religions to settle the area after 1785 because of the amount of new settlers. Only the Catholic religion could be practiced openly.³⁰⁵

Father Paret's letters reveal much about the status of religion on the German Coast to white and black residents. As revealed in Father Paret's letters white residents were not regular attendees. On several occasions only two or three would attend mass³⁰⁶ and on one occasion no one came and he recited mass to himself. There were occasions when a "good crowd" would attend mass. In a letter to his brother, Father Paret says he was not going to have mass because of a migraine but had to because a parishioner begged him to.³⁰⁷ This upset him, he goes on to say that "in France a pastor knows at least a week in advance, here the priest never knows anything."³⁰⁸ He goes on further to say that "They imagine that the priest can say Mass all the long day, fasting or not, and as easily as he can pick his cane and breviary and go for a walk on the river bank."³⁰⁹

As far as black resident, both enslaved and free, they were faithful and took care of Father Paret. In a letter to his father, he writes that he did not have any "white visitors" and that "being grateful to a priest has gone out of fashion, at least in this parish were egotism and pride rates among all classes except for those most scorned and ill-treated of the human race."³¹⁰ This letter reveals that slaves and blacks were more

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 91.

³⁰⁵ Sternberg, *Along the River Road*, 27.

³⁰⁶ Boyer and Edwards, *Plantations by the River*, 125.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 119-120.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 121.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 121.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 119.

appreciative of priests. In the same letter, he mentions that a slave woman and a colored man visited him. In a letter to his brother Auguste, he mentions that he received various presents from “the Negroes: eggs, pumpkins, preserves, caramels, apples, and oranges.”³¹¹

As the official religion it not only united the German Coast, it united the colony. It also united the free and enslaved. It is unsure how the process of acculturation worked, slaves converted from Muslim to Catholicism. Their acculturation allowed slave owners and slaves to share the same religious beliefs even though they may not have attended services together. More importantly the role of religion in plantation society is revealed.

Government and laws shape a society or community. Louisiana is different from the rest of the country because France, Spain, and the United States owned the colony, respectively. The residents had to adjust to new laws and new influxes of people. The laws continued to change as a reflection of the community adapting to its new rulers. The law that had the most effect on the lives of the community was the *Code Noir* or the Black Codes. Because this paper is only concerned with interpreting plantation community, this section will not be a comprehensive analysis of the laws and the governing body of the German Coast. Instead it will focus on the *Code Noir* because those laws shaped how the free and enslaved interacted.

The French first issued the *Code Noir*³¹² in Louisiana in 1724. Consisting of fifty-five articles, the codes were written “to define the rights of black slaves, the rights

³¹¹ Ibid., 125.

³¹² For a indepth study of the *Code Noir* see Judith Keller Schafer’s *Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana*.

of slave owners, and the rights of those freed from slavery.”³¹³ In conjunction with the Black Codes, the Company of the Indies, the Superior Council, and the governors of Louisiana issued ordinances regarding slavery, but they often “reiterated” the *Code Noir* and allocated harsher punishments. Initially, the *Code Noir* were not racist in their purpose, but reflected the French’s desire to establish “order, centralization and unity” in the colony. The *Code Noir* was adapted from the French’s regulation towards vagabonds, beggars, women, and children.³¹⁴ The royal edict was read in public places and copies were posted in public spaces such as churches, markets, and taverns to make both the slave owners and the slaves aware of slave policy.³¹⁵ The *Code Noir* aim was not to demean slaves, but to protect France’s investment. It was considered wasteful when slave owners “damaged valuable property”³¹⁶ as slaves were considered “indispensable for the development of tropical colonies.” Black status as slaves protected them.³¹⁷

The *Code Noir* was influential to the development of the plantation system. The first five articles address religion. Judaism was not allowed, Catholicism was the only religion, all slaves had to be baptized and taught Catholicism, and no one, slave or free, worked Sundays or church holidays.³¹⁸ If a slave worked on Sunday, it was with his consent and he was compensated for it.³¹⁹ These five articles gave free whites and blacks and enslaved blacks a common religion and cultural heritage. Articles 19-23 address the master’s treatment of slaves. Articles 19, 20 and 21 state that the master had to provide

³¹³ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series. (Destrehan, Louisiana: Destrehan Plantation, 1999), 1,7; Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*, 5.

³¹⁴ Allain, “Slave Policies in French Louisiana,” 128.

³¹⁵ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, 1,7; Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*, 5.

³¹⁶ Allain, “Slave Policies in French Louisiana,” 135.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 136-137.

³¹⁸ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, 2.

³¹⁹ Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*, 15.

food and clothing for slaves and not give them time to earn money, a slave could report any mistreatment by his or her master, and the slave owner had to provide for the disabled, sick and elderly slaves.³²⁰ These articles give slaves rights that slaves in the United States did not have. Articles 50-54 address the manumission of slaves. Those who could free slaves had to be over twenty-five years old, freed slaves did not have any obligations to their former master except to treat them with respect, and freed slaves were given all of the rights and privileges of free born people in regard to person or property.³²¹

When the regulations reached Louisiana, enforcement “depended on the settlers and the officials whose interest were often identical with those of the colonists.”³²² Slave owners were required to teach their slaves Catholicism. Because of the lack of clergy in Louisiana, most slaves did not regularly attend mass.³²³ Slave owners were also required to feed and clothe their slaves, but most did not. Thus, slaves were allowed to work to buy their own food and clothing.³²⁴

The Code Noir did not change much during the Spanish period.³²⁵ In 1762 Spanish government under King Charles III allowed Louisiana’s French Laws, institutions, and colonial practices to remain in affect until he determined otherwise.³²⁶ Upon arriving in the colony in 1766, the Spaniards found a strongly established slave system, which benefited the slave owners. Changes in the *Code Noir* as Louisiana

³²⁰ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, 2-4.

³²¹ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, 7.

³²² Allain, “Slave Policies in French Louisiana,” 137.

³²³ Destrehan Plantation, *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*, 15.

³²⁴ Destrehan Plantation, *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*, 1-7.

³²⁵ For more information on the Spanish in Louisiana see *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley, 1762-1804* by John Francis McDermott.

³²⁶ Gilbert C. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves: The Spanish Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763-1803*, (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999) 35, 38.

adjusted to United States rule brought more restrictions to slaves. Americans were appalled at the laxness of the slave regulations.

Explanation of the *Code Noir* should be included in the interpretive context because it allows tourists to realize the United States slave ideology and practices were not the only one. It also demonstrates increasing restrictions with each change in regime. The *Code Noir* was key to plantation community operated because those that were followed and ignored are telling about class politics and influences and their way of life.

There are international events that affected the ownership of Louisiana and thusly the plantation community, but received little attention as interpretive context. The Seven Years War, also known as the French and Indian War, began in 1754 between Great Britain and France. Spain entered the war in 1761 as an ally to France. The Peace of Paris treaty ended the war and the Treaty of Fontainebleau gave Louisiana to King XV's cousin Charles III of Spain in 1762. This event marks the first change in ownership of Louisiana and incites the first revolt on the German Coast.³²⁷

After Spain took possession of Louisiana, Governor Antonio de Ulloa issued several decrees that caused the Germans to revolt in 1768. He forbid trade with the English, angered ship captains by closing all of the mouths of the river except for the most dangerous ones, restricted Louisiana's commerce to Spanish ports and required that Spanish vessels and soldiers ship exports.³²⁸ The leaders of the rebellion were prominent businessman Jean-Baptiste Noyan, Louisiana Attorney General Nicolas Chavin de Lafréière,³²⁹ German Coast commandant Charles Frederick D'Arensborg,³³⁰ head of

³²⁷ Wall, et al. *Louisiana: A History*; 66; Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves*, 33-4.

³²⁸ Ibid., 55-6.

³²⁹ Ibid., 55-6.

³³⁰ Ibid., 57.

the German Coast militia Joseph Villeré, Colony's chief administration officer Denis-Nicholas Foucault, and commandant of the Chapitoula post Francois Chavin de Lery.³³¹

The rebellion was planned for October because by then the crops would be harvested. The Germans, joined by the Acadians who also had grievances against Ulloa, marched to New Orleans on October 28 "to lend support to the Superior Council's deliberations to expel the Ulloa regime." On the morning of October 29th, the Superior Council deliberated and passed the bill to expel Ulloa. He was given three days to leave the colony and left with his family for Havana on the November 1, 1768.³³²

Seven months later in August, Spain sent General Alexander O'Reily to establish order in the colony. He did not single out the Germans, but punished the leaders. The Germans were only required to pledge allegiance to the Spanish crown. D'Arensbourg had to sell his land and property along the river and move to New Orleans. His punishment was not as hard because of his age, he was 76 and because Forstall interceded for him, O'Reily served under Forstall's uncle in the "Hiberian regiment in Spain." Villeré, charged with high treason and sentenced to death, died from a stab wound obtained while resting arrest. His trial and sentence rendered in Abstentia. O'Reily was lenient; he could have charged the Germans with a tax or fine and sentenced D'Arensbourg to death.³³³

In October 1800, France secretly reacquired Louisiana from Spain. France wanted Louisiana since it lost it in the Treaty of Paris of 1763. The Treaty of San Ildefonso was

³³¹ Ibid., 56-7.

³³² Ibid., 59-60.

³³³ Ibid., 60-61.

to remain a secret until France had enough military force to protect the territory from American or British invaders. However, rumors spread and it was an open secret.³³⁴

The United States wanted the city of New Orleans to continue to expand and trade westward. In 1803 President Jefferson sent James Monroe to Paris to work with Robert R. Livingston, U.S. Ambassador to France, to buy New Orleans from France. They had the authority to buy New Orleans, the land surrounding it, and procure free and undisputed navigation rights for Americans on the Mississippi River. Napoleon countered with an offer to sell all of Louisiana. Unsure of what to do they exceeded their authority and on May 3, 1803, the Louisiana Purchase was signed. For \$15 million dollars plus an extra \$5 million that was paid for damages during the Anglo-French War, Louisiana became apart of the United States.³³⁵

Under the United States regime, the second revolt³³⁶ occurred on the German Coast. On the evening of January 8, 1811, slaves led by Charles Deslondes, a mulatto slave driver, rebelled.³³⁷ The slaves marched in military-style formation carrying weapons, beating drums, and waving flags notifying the slaves of their presence. The group grew larger along the way to New Orleans as slaves joined out of free will or by force. Eyewitness accounts say the number of slaves fluctuated between 150-500 along the march.³³⁸

³³⁴ Wall et al., *Louisiana: A History*, 94.

³³⁵ Ibid., 94-5.

³³⁶ For more information on the 1811 Slave Revolt and other slave revolts see *From Rebellion to Revolution Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the New World* by Eugene D. Genovese and *American Negro Slave Revolts* by Herbert Aptheker.

³³⁷ Robert L. Paquette, "Slave Insurrection of 1811," In *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*, edited by David Johnson, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 2010-. Article published January 10, 2011, <http://www.knowla.org/entry/756/>.

³³⁸ Robert L. Paquette, "Slave Insurrection of 1811," In *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*, ed. by David Johnson, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 2010-. Article published January 10, 2011,

Many of the slaves warned their masters and they fled. The group set fire to four or five plantations and there were a few white victims before the slaves were succumbed. News spread and fearful whites fled to New Orleans. In response Governor William C. C. Claiborne imposed a curfew, ordered a lockdown of shops and cabarets, and called out the militia. General Wade Hampton organized a force of regular troops, militia, and volunteers. The group of slaves was soon met by the militia under General Hampton from New Orleans and regulars under Major Milton from Baton Rouge. In the course of the attack 66 slaves died and the rest scattered with some injured. Most were hung on the spot, and 16 were held for trial at Destrehan Plantation. The slaves that escaped took shelter in neighboring swamps. To serve as a warning the slaves sent to trial were convicted and heads set on high poles above and below the city along the river. That sight spread fear among slaves and the regular forces of the militia remained in the area for a while after the revolt.³³⁹

These events need to be included because they represent key times in Louisiana. Each change of ownership brought new rules and procedures. Depending on who held more power, the government or the people, determined which were followed. The revolts need to be included because it represents a time when the various ethnic groups joined together regardless of status and class against a common enemy. Both the free and the enslaved were not afraid to stand-up for what they believed was right. Also these revolts affected the plantation community causing them to create harsher laws.

The current interpretation of plantation sites devotes little attention to the plantation community's context. These sites are interpreted through the lens of previous

<http://www.knowla.org/entry/756/>.; *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, (New York: W. H. Coleman, 1885) 169.

³³⁹ Paquette, "Slave Insurrection of 1811," *Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans*, 169.

white owners. To fully understand how plantations functioned in the past and why they have been preserved for the future, plantations need to be interpreted through the lens of historical context and relationships. The romanticized version of plantation interpretation led one to believe everyone, both free and enslaved, were content and there were no disagreements. Not only were there disagreements among individuals, there were disagreements between individuals and the government, and he slaves and their owners. There were complex social relationship expectations that existed in the plantation community that need to be revealed.

IV. TWO CASE STUDIES ON LOUISIANA PLANTATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is not to solely critique the current interpretations of plantations in Louisiana, but to propose a solution to a problem. Plantation sites that operate as museums present an outdated narrative. Early emphasis centered on patriotism relating to historical figures, romanticism, and architectural significance. These themes should not be discredited because at the time they incited concerned citizens and later the government to preserve historic buildings and structures. However, the plantation narrative has seen few revisions since that time. Under the new social history, a movement to incorporate slave history at sites began. However, some plantations have not incorporated the interpretation of slavery at their sites. Equally important plantation interpretation must incorporate a broader context that situates the economic, social, and cultural functions within a community anchored in a specific place.

This interpretation has resulted in a Disneyland experience which presents a façade of what plantations looked like and how they functioned. As a result of social history, research and publications more historical information than ever is available to document slavery, slave lives, and legacies. The visiting public and in particular younger generations want to see that reflected in historic sites and are ready for a change.

This chapter suggests ways to reconnect slave owners and slaves to the plantation and within the community in order to present an inclusive interpretation anchored within historical context. Destrehan Plantation and Ormond Plantations have been chosen as case studies because they located within a few miles of each other, are similar in appearance, and are part of the German Coast. However, they are owned and operated differently, are at opposite sides of Eicheid and Small's study, and interpret themselves completely different. I will analyze their tours and the presented to determine what is missing from the narrative and to identify what needs to be added to change the current plantation interpretation.

ORMOND PLANTATION

Ormond Plantation has received little historical research attention. It has had numerous owners since its construction in the late 1730s and currently operates as a bed-and-breakfast with modern amenities, a restaurant, one small exhibit and the staff provides tours to the public. The plantation house is West Indian style, still has the original carriage house, but most of the furnishings are period pieces not original to the house. As revealed in the sale of the plantation home from Alfred Brown to Ormond Plantation Land Company, Brown kept many light fixtures, curtains, and other furnishings. However, the sale did not indicate if these fixtures were original to the home.

Ormond Plantation has two versions of their history, one found on their website and a handout given at the beginning of the tour. These histories are very similar except the handout is presented in a more romanticized fashion. The plantation narrative focuses solely on the various owners of the plantation and omits any reference to slavery—slaves,

crop production, and other buildings of the site. The Civil War is referred to as the “War between the States”³⁴⁰ negating the causes and aftereffects of the Civil War. The plantation does not have demonstrations, but includes one small exhibit featuring a doll collection that belonged to Leila Brown, restorer of the plantation. The plantation does not have a museum store, but does have a restaurant that serves local Creole and Cajun cuisine. The tour is conducted by a staff member in 21st century dress who dictates the history from the handout given to the visitor upon arrival. On their website, Ormond Plantation does not indicate when tours are given and how much they cost.

Eichstedt and Small do not discuss Ormond plantation in their book, but list it in the appendix as an Symbolic Annihilation and Erasure of Slavery site.³⁴¹ As previously mentioned, this category omits/marginalizes slavery and free and enslaved Africans suggesting that the institution of slavery and slaves did not exist or not important enough to remember. Eichstedt and Small explains further that symbolic annihilation and the erasure of slavery sites focus on the planter class, omits nor discusses Africans, free and enslaved, and slavery; mentions enslaved and free Africans as an afterthought, but does not offer details or context; uses euphemism such as servant and servitude to refer to slaves and slavery; or disvalues the achievements and labor of slaves.³⁴²

I visited Ormond Plantation in the spring of 2012 with a friend and fellow historian interested in the antebellum era. For the purposes of this thesis, I did not visit the plantation multiple times because in many cases tourists only visit plantations once. I also did not take notes during the tour or immediately after the tour in order to test what

³⁴⁰ Ormond Plantation, “Our Story,” Destrehan, LA: Ormond Plantation.

³⁴¹ Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 272.

³⁴² Ibid., 105.

the plantation wanted me to remember. The information they emphasize is the history the tourist will remember and associate with Ormond Plantation, Louisiana plantations in general, and slavery.

We approached the main house, but found it difficult to find the entrance because it was not clearly marked. We walked to the end of the gallery and entered the plantation through the café. No one was there so we walked towards the other end of the building in search of a person who could direct us. We met an African American man, who appeared to work in the kitchen. He told us the office was in the direction we were headed in. In the office we met a woman. We explained that we wanted to go on a tour of the plantation and she left to get our “tour guide,” an older white woman. The tour cost seven dollars. While she swiped my debit card through the credit card machine, she asked us to wait outside under the beautiful magnolia tree. She also gave us a two-page handout on the history of the plantation. Because the plantation operates as a bed-and breakfast, we toured the rooms that are rented to visitors. A previous owner bought all of the furniture in the rooms in an attempt to match the time period and the culture of the construction era of the plantation.

While on the tour, the staff member told us about the first owner Pierre Trepagnier that mysteriously disappeared. To complete this story, she asked to look at my handout to refresh her memory. We toured the bedrooms and learned that the fireplace was the only original artifact originals in the rooms. Also all the rooms had modern conveniences, such as a mini fridge or a television. The staff member showed us Leila Brown’s doll collection. The staff does not know any background information on the dolls such as what time period they date to, the doll maker, or why Mrs. Brown collected

them. Earlier that week, we visited Destrehan Plantation and learned about the use of kneeling benches on the tour. We saw a kenneling bench in one of the rooms and asked the staff member about it. She did not know what it was or the meaning behind it and we told her what we learned about it from the other tour. The tour ended where it started, under the magnolia tree. We asked her if she knew any information about slaves being on the plantation and she did not. She did remember an African American man from Mississippi that visited the plantation a few years ago that knew a lot about the history of the plantation.

The interpretation of the site, the narrative, and the tour does not provide any information on the economy of the plantation. Even the stories of the previous owners are vague. To anchor the plantation into the community and provide a full interpretation of the plantation system the elements of the community discussed in the previous chapter need to be incorporated.

Ormond Plantation's interpretation does not mention the importance or significance of the location of Ormond Plantation on the German Coast. Its close proximity to New Orleans allowed the plantation community to have a consistent market for its products. Located next to the Mississippi River, Ormond Plantation had a readily available transportation source. The inhabitants did not have to travel on unpaved roads to get to the river. The ethnic diversity is also not mentioned in the tour or narrative. The visitor has no understanding of how the French owners of the plantation came to Louisiana or about the other inhabitants that lived in the area.

The key to the plantation community, slave labor, is completely omitted. My friend and I had to ask the tour guide about slavery. The gentleman from Mississippi

presents a missed opportunity for the plantation. He may have had information on the slaves of the plantation or the various owners and their treatment of the slaves. By not following up on that lead, the plantation staff indicates that interpreting an inclusive history is not a priority. Additionally, only mentioning that sugar cane and rice were cultivated on the plantation removes the plantation from the context of the plantation system. Also, the omission of slavery, excludes any information on the Code Noir, which governed how the free and enslaved interacted.

The interpretation does mention key historical events such as the American Revolution and the Civil War, but little is done to allow the tourist to understand the impact those events had on society and the economy. There are a few glimpses into societal relations. The mention of Senator Laplace's death indicates that everyone did not get along in the plantation community and plantation life was not as picturesque a time era as romanticists would like to think. The different regimes, French, Spanish, and Anglo are mentioned allowing the tourists to construct a mental timeline. The focus on the previous owners is vague and does not put them into any context as to who they were, what status they held, and what they did. The current story is not history, but a shallow and incomplete history.

Lack of interpretation is not the real issue. Operating as a bed-and-breakfast, does Ormond Plantation have an obligation to interpret the history of the site? Ormond plantation advertises tours and uses the romanticized vision of the plantation to attract tourist and bed-and-breakfast people. Therefore, the plantation does have an obligation to interpret its history in an accurate manner that discusses the plantation within its broader context anchored in the plantation community.

DESTREHAN PLANTATION ANALYSIS

Destrehan Plantation is somewhat famous. There have been many studies, reports, and books written on the plantation. Destrehan Plantation has had relatively few owners since its construction 1787. The plantation home remained in the family until the Amoco Oil Company purchased it in the early 1900s. By the late 1950s Amoco Oil ceased to use the property beginning a period of neglect. At this time a group of concerned citizens petitioned Amoco to repair and protect the home from burglars and vandals. Amoco Oil, in turn, indicated they wanted to donate the plantation to a non-profit organization for preservation purposes. The group organized and by 1969 the River Road Historical Society became a non-profit organization. Two years later Destrehan Plantation, the house and four acres of land was deeded to the Society. By 1978 Destrehan Plantation was restored and open to the public for tours.³⁴³ Eichstedt and Small determined that Destrehan Plantation was in the in-between category because the plantation “neither clarifies the economic importance of slavery nor complicates the reading of the white enslavers, but instead leaves for intact their construction as hardworking, ingenious, and generally noble.”³⁴⁴

Destrehan Plantation has all of the plantation components discussed in the previous chapter. The plantation narrative focuses on the Destrehan family and presents the family as being essential to the development of Southern Louisiana.³⁴⁵ The plantation house itself acts as an exhibit. The bedrooms and dinning room are staged to depict an

³⁴³ Destrehan Plantation, “About the River Road Historical Society,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/about.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

³⁴⁴ Eichstedt and Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 210.

³⁴⁵ Destrehan Plantation, “History,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/about.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

antebellum lifestyle. The grounds, the laundry house, and the kitchen are staged the same way, but are not included in the tour. There are two additional exhibits, The Herbert J. Harvey, Jr. Legacy Room, which highlights surviving artifacts and documents of the Destrehan Family. The 1811 Slave Revolt Museum and Historical Research and Education Center, includes information, and artwork on the Slave Revolt.³⁴⁶

Destrehan Plantation has demonstrations from Monday-Saturday which include open hearth cooking, *bousillage* construction, indigo dyeing, candle making, African American herbal remedies, and carpentry. Open-hearth cooking shows how people cooked with dutch ovens to prepare meals. *Bousillage* construction demonstrates the *bousillage entre' pateaues* or mud between posts technique to construct walls made using Spanish moss, clay, and water. Related to the original function of the plantation, indigo dyeing demonstrations shows how indigo was used to dye yarn and thread. Women often made candles using animal fat or bees wax by either hand-dipping them or casting them in colds. African slaves brought medicinal remedies and cures that were highly valued by the white population. This demonstration shows honey, cow manure, leeches, and herbs were used. Carpentry demonstrations show which tools were used in the 1780s in construction.³⁴⁷

Destrehan Plantation is available for tours Monday-Saturday between 9am-4pm and costs \$18 for adults and \$7 for children.³⁴⁸ The plantation is also available for private events, predominately weddings.³⁴⁹ There is also a museum store that sells period items

³⁴⁶ Destrehan Plantation, "Exhibits," Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/exhibits.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Destrehan Plantation, "Visiting Destrehan," Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/visit.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

³⁴⁹ Destrehan Plantation, "Private Events," Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/events.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

and booklets for more information on Destrehan Plantation. The Destrehan Plantation narrative presented on their website centers on the Destrehan family. The narrative highlights their contributions and influence in the German Coast and New Orleans.

I visited Destrehan Plantation in the spring of 2012 with my cousin and fellow historian for two reasons. I needed to research and explore sources for my thesis and he wanted to see how much information the plantation had regarding slaves for our upcoming family reunion. One of our ancestors may have been enslaved at the plantation. For the purposes of this thesis, I did not visit the plantation multiple times because in many cases a tourist only visits a plantation once. I also did not take notes during the tour or immediately after the tour in order to test what the plantation wanted me to remember. The information they emphasize is the history the tourist will remember and associate with Destrehan Plantation, Louisiana plantations in general, and slavery.

We entered the museum store to inquire about tours. We browsed the museum store until the tour started. We went on a tour with four other people. My friend was the only black male and there were two black females, mother and teen age daughter, and a older white couple. Both groups seemed to have visited the plantation because of a plantation tour. When the tour ended they were waiting for a bus.

We began the tour by watching a video of the history of the plantation house. Next, we were taken on a tour of the house. Many of the rooms were staged to depict a activity such as dinner and a card game. While on the tour, we learned about the furnishings, the construction techniques, the architecture, and primarily the previous owners. Slaves were mentioned throughout the tour but only in reference to Marguerite, a house slave, when she showed us where the cook lived, when she explained that the

plantation used to cultivate indigo, in reference to Charles Peqot, a free mullato that built the house. We only toured the plantation house, a laundry room, kitchen, and an old house existed on the grounds, but they were optional. There are two exhibits, one highlighting the Destrehan family and the other, the 1811 Slave Revolt. The tour guide told us we could visit them after the tour, but they were optional as well.

Our tour ended just in time to watch the *bousillege* demonstration. After, we went back into the museum store which sold items such as recipe books, fleur-de-lis, dolls, and picture frames. The museums store also sold informational booklets about different topics relating to Destrehan Plantation such as the plantation store, slavery in St. Charles Parish, and Charles Peqot, the free mulatto who built the plantation house. Destrehan Plantation makes up for the information not included in the tour by selling these informational booklets, but again this is optional. The tourist does not have to buy them. Overall, my friend and I felt that the plantation did not provide a significant discussion on slavery.

After the tour, our tour guide gave use the name of another tour guide who could possibly help us with the two reasons we visited. This proved very helpful as he scanned and made copies of information on our ancestor and suggested books and articles to use in my thesis. Because I knew him, my friend and I were able to go into the tour guide office and talk with some of the other tour guides. One female tour guide in particular, helped a great deal. She was white in her thirties and told us that she agreed that slavery need to be incorporated more in the tours. At that time she was reading information on a tour focusing on slavery that had been canceled. The other tour guides also tried to recruit us to work there and give tours because they did not have any African American tour guides.

The plantation narrative and tour does not provide enough information on the plantation community. The exhibits and demonstrations provide some insight, but it is in the optional components of the tour may not be visited. The narrative focuses on the male previous owners of the plantation, despite the fact that the plantation remained in the family because of the female line. Also, the tour highlights the Destrehan family and does not give any significant attention to the other owners. Stephen Henderson, upon his death, wanted to free his slaves and give them the option to move back to Africa. The proposal, unthinkable in that time, is barely mentioned.

Destrehan Plantation demonstrates that the inclusion of slavery is not enough. The plantation operated as an indigo plantation as conveyed in the history and the indigo demonstration. However, the interpretation does not make tourists aware that it also functioned as a sugar plantation and was one of the wealthiest plantations in the area. Also, the importance of the close proximity of the German Coast to New Orleans and to the Mississippi River is lost.

The ethnic diversity is also not mentioned in the tour or narrative. The visitor has no understanding of how the French owners of the plantation came to Louisiana or about the other inhabitants that lived in the area. The only key even mentioned is the Louisiana Purchase. Other historical events had with a direct impact on the plantation community go unexplained. The French, Spanish, and Anglo regimes are not traced and the *Code Noir* is not mentioned at all.

There are plantations that have successfully incorporated slavery into their interpretation. The Sotterley Plantation in Maryland revamped and revised their

plantation interpretation to be more inclusive in 1999. The site realized that they were not presenting an accurate and complete history of the plantation. The plantation planned and researched to rewrite their interpretation, but most importantly they trained their tour guides to be comfortable presenting difficult histories such as slavery. Sotterley has since then become a leader in slavery representation at plantations offering educational workshops to teachers and plantation sites on how to discuss and interpret slavery.³⁵⁰

The previous chapter revealed that a plantation was more than the Big House or crops. It functioned as a community that changed and evolved throughout its existence. There are some that will argue that they current plantation interpretation is fine and does not need to be changed. Some will also argue that it is too costly. Plantation sites need to be realistic and realize that the people who love and visit their sites are dying out. They need to become relevant in today's multicultural world. Other ethnicities need to be able to relate, silenced histories need to be told, anger and shame on behalf of African-Americans, and guilt on behalf of whites needs to be healed. This reinterpretation and in some cases reorganization is to ensure the survival of plantations for future generations.

The first step to revising plantation interpretation to provide historical community context is research. Revision of plantation interpretation will require new research or new understanding of existing research. Primary sources such as plantation records, newspapers, deed of sales, family diaries, slave registers, and plantation inventories are increasingly available in digitized form and in locally accessible repositories. However, understanding and training in how to critically access, evaluate, and contextualize is as important as knowing where to find records and documents. Historians and/or staff

³⁵⁰ National Park Service, "Making Visible the Peculiar Institution: Interpreting Slavery at the Sotterley Plantation," Civic Engagement Case Study, 2004.

members should perform the research. Historians are valuable because they are trained to research and to watch for their inherent human biases. Staff members are valuable because of their connections in the community. He or she can gather information that an outsider cannot because of his or her relationship and work in the community.

The information found through research will not only be used to reinterpret the history of the plantation sites, but to construct an identity to present to the public. Most plantation sites do not have a mission statement, but they should. These mission statements need to explain who they are, why they exist, and why they have been preserved. This mission statement functions as a checks and balance system. If the site is not interpreting itself according to the mission statement, it has a solid reason to change the interpretation. If the plantation site realizes that it cannot interpret the complete history of the site because of the mission statement, then the mission statement is too narrow and needs to be expanded. Ormond Plantation is “open to the public for tours, weddings, lunches, meetings, and various other private events year round, as well as a quiet bed and breakfast stay.”³⁵¹ This statement is misleading because the bed and breakfast is the priority, not the tours.

The second step is planning. The institution needs to decide how to use the research to best interpret the inclusive history of their site. Does the entire site need to be reinterpreted based on the research, or just pieces here and there? When entering the planning phase, the site needs to already have it in their mind that the tour will be inclusive meaning the big house, slaves’ quarters, and community is interpreted. The tour is now desegregated, so-to-speak. At Ormond Plantation this means incorporating slavery

³⁵¹ Ormond Plantation, “Ormond’s History,” Ormond Plantation, <http://www.plantation.com/> (accessed June 21, 2013).

and the plantation community into their interpretation and at Destrehan Plantation this means including buildings relating to slaves such as the laundry room and kitchen in the interpretation.

Planning not only includes rewriting the interpretative components, but also preparing a diversity plan for staff and visitors. Most plantation sites have a white staff. This does not reflect the historic fabric of the community. Ormond was operated by French and Anglo planters and had black slaves. People speaking in French accents and black slaves can give tours. Also neighboring plantations need to collaborate on special events. A reenactment of the 1763 German Coast Uprising and the 1811 Slave Revolt can be planned. A German Coast community bus tour can be planned that explains the significance of the area and explains where long gone plantations existed, who owned them, what they grew, and why they no longer exist.

After research and planning is complete, the revision of the site interpretation begins. This includes a revamping of the plantation narrative, exhibits and exhibit designs, tours, and a refocus of the museum store, if there is one. A historian should be contracted to write the interpretation preferably a public historian who is trained to engage the public with history. Some are trained specifically in working with difficult histories such as slavery. Revisions need to be done in a manner to not offend those who may not be ready for a change in interpretation, but also not to insult those ready for a change by providing a shallow attempt at creating an inclusive interpretation.

Ph.D. student Evan Kultzier, while working for a non-profit organization, learned that the staff can be just a hindrance in terms of interpretation as the tourists. His job at the plantation site was to write a history on the plantation; however, he was only allowed

to use plantation documents. This limited his discussion because the plantation did not have much information on slaves in the plantation records resulting in a published history that marginalized slavery. Kutzler suggests using examples of plantations that have changed their interpretation as a basis to argue for change.³⁵²

Plantation museums need to establish an interpretive plan to reinterpret their sites. This plan allows plantation museums to evaluate their sites ultimately allowing them to establish long time and short time goals that address their interpretation problems. Interpretation, visitor experience, education, advertisement, media, and public programming can be decided upon and the best course of action established. There are several resources available for these sites to refer to for guidance. The National Park Service has several guides such as Planning for Interpretation and Visitor Experience and Comprehensive Interpretive Planning guide. The National Association for Interpretation has a guide for Interpretive Planning, its standards and practices.

Once the plantation narrative is established, the exhibits need to be integrated. This may not be a big change. Destrehan Plantation has original artifacts and collections. They also have an 1811 Slave Revolt exhibit, an exhibit on Destrehan family documents in the Jefferson room, a kitchen, and laundry exhibit. In fact if anything is known about the organization of the plantation store, the museum store can function as an exhibit as well. Ormond Plantation does not have original artifacts and does not know the origin and meaning of some of their artifacts. Ormond Plantation has such a rich and interesting history that remains unknown to the site and public.

³⁵² Evan Kutzler, "Lessons in Interpreting Controversial History at a Southern Heritage Site," History at Work, posted March 15, 2013, <http://publichistorycommons.org/controversial-history-at-a-southern-heritage-site/> (accessed June 11, 2013).

Plantation museums can refer to other institutions on how to interpret artifacts. The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia in Big Rapids, Michigan contains emotionally charged artifacts. The museum uses “objects of intolerance to teach tolerance and promote social justice.”³⁵³ They have found a way to interpret a difficult history that promotes healing, understanding, and enlightenment. The goal of the curator, David Pilgrim, is to “create a room that when people come into that room, it changes the way they talk about race.”³⁵⁴ This model can be adapted to plantation sites. The rooms of the plantation home can be reinterpreted to change the way visitors and society talk about slavery, antebellum southern Louisiana plantation, and the plantation community on the German Coast.

Lastly, the tours need to be integrated with the new plan because the tour is developed from the narrative and shaped by the exhibits. This may be the most straightforward aspect and presents an opportunity to develop different tours. It would be interesting to be given a tour from different perspective—a slave child, a plantation owner’s child, a free slave visiting the plantation, or an overseer. The tour guide does not need to be restricted to a white man or white woman. Other people lived, worked, and visited the community. Mark Twain visited Destrehan Plantation on several occasions. A tour guide acting as Mark Twain can give a tour on what he thought about his visit using Twain’s writings. Tour guides of different ethnic groups and backgrounds allows the visitor to see the plantation through different eyes.

³⁵³ The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, “Home,” The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/> (accessed June 1, 2013).

³⁵⁴ The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, “Jim Crow Museum Values,” The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/> (accessed June 1, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Plantation sites have had a long history of interpreting one-sided histories of the site from the slave owner's perspective. While this proved to be an adequate interpretation in the past, it is not today. With the influences of social historians and younger generations, plantation sites have been forced to incorporate slavery into their interpretation. Some plantations have been slow to make these changes; however, plantation sites need to go further. To truly understand the social, economic, and political aspects of the plantation, the site needs to be discussed within its historical context, anchoring it into a time and place, as a complex community instead of an individual entity.

There is not a rigid definition of a plantation community because each had its own systematic plantation components. Updating the plantation interpretation is crucial for the survival of plantation museum sites. To remain relevant and relatable to today's society, plantation sites need to take a holistic approach. Society is ready to learn about the realities of the antebellum era.

Tracing the origins of the plantation sites interpretative themes allows plantation sites to understand where they started and to decide where they need to go. Calling for change is not new, as the themes have changed consistently since the nineteenth century. The institutional components of a plantation and the systemic plantation components can be used to shape and guide the plantation's interpretation of their site as a plantation community. Adding slavery to the interpretation is no longer enough because without historical context the original meanings are lost.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Boyer, Marcel and Jay D. Edwards. *Plantations by the River: Watercolor Paintings from St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, by Father Joseph M. Paret, 1859*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.

Plantations-Destrehan. Louisiana State Library. Baton Rouge, LA.

Plantations-O-M. Louisiana State Library. Baton Rouge, LA.

Plantation Guides. New Orleans Public Library. New Orleans, LA.

Destrehan Plantation Sources

Destrehan Plantation. *The Code Noir: The 1724 Edict of Louis XV*. Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series. Destrehan, Louisiana: Destrehan Plantation, 1999.

— *A Concise History of Destrehan Plantation*. Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series. Destrehan, Louisiana: Destrehan Plantation, n.d.

— *History of Slavery in Saint Charles Parish*. Destrehan Plantation Informational Booklet Series. Destrehan, Louisiana: Destrehan Plantation, 2002.

Destrehan Plantation, “About the River Road Historical Society,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/about.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

— “Exhibits,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/exhibits.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

— “History,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/about.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

— “Private Evens,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/events.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

— “Visiting Destrehan,” Destrehan Plantation, <http://www.destrehanplantation.org/visit.html> (accessed May 15, 2013).

Ormond Plantation Sources

Ormond Plantation, “Our Story,” Destrehan, LA: Ormond Plantation.

Other Plantation Sources

Evergreen Plantation. “Home,” Evergreen Plantation, evergreeplantation.org/index.php (accessed 6/18/2013).

Houmas House Plantation and Gardens, “Home,” Houmas House Plantation and Gardens, www.houmashouse.com/ (accessed 6/18/2013).

— “Gift Shop,” Houmas House Plantation and Garden, houmashouse.com/gifts.htm (accessed 6/18/2013).

Laura: A Creole Plantation, “Laura’s Family Tree,” Laura: A Creole Plantation, www.lauraplantation.com/gen_w_nav.asp?cID=34&grp=6 (accessed 6/18/2013).

— “Shop-Dolls, Laura: A Creole Plantation, http://176.12.172.34/shop_category.asp?catID=9 (accessed 6/18/2013).

Woodville Plantation, “Significance,” Woodville Plantation, woodvilleplantation.org/significance (accessed 6/18/2013).

St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association Resources

St. Charles Parish. “Quick Look: St. Charles Parish History.” St. Charles Parish. <http://www.stcharlesgov.net/index.aspx?page=205> (accessed 9/7/2012).

St. Charles Parish Museum. “Acadians Arrive.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/18th-century/the-spanish-colonial-period-1762-1800/acadians-arrivecolonial-period> (accessed 9/11/2012).

- St. Charles Parish Museum. “Antebellum Lifestyles.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/culture/lifestyle/antebellum-lifestyle> (accessed 9/7/2012).
 - “Breadbasket of the Colony.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/18th-century/the-french-colonial-period-1698-1762/immigration-and-settlement/breadbasket-of-the-colony>(accessed 9/19/2012).
 - “Life Changes.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://www.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/culture/lifestyle/life-changes> (accessed 12/2/2012).
 - “Mississippi River Levees.” St. Charles Parish Museum and Historical Association. <http://museum.historyofstcharlesparish.org/index.php/periods/the-french-colonial-period-> (accessed 9/19/2012).
- Wilson, Nancy Tregre. *St. Charles Parish: A Brief Look at the Past*. 2nd ed. Destrehan, Louisiana: St. Charles Parish Council, 2010. <http://www.stcharlesgov.net/index>. (accessed 9/7/2012).

Secondary Sources

- Adams, Jessica. “The Southern Plantation in Popular Culture.” *Cultural Critique* 42 (Spring 1999): 163-87.
- Alexander, Edward P. and Mary Alexander. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. 2nd ed. New York: AltaMira Press, 2008.
- Alderson, William T. and Shirley Payne Low. *Interpretation of Historic Sites*. 2nd edition. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press, 1996.
- Allain, Mathé. “Slave Policies in French Louisiana.” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 21, no. 2. (Spring 1980): 127-137.
- Anderson, David. “Down Memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Reminiscences.” *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (February 2005): 105-136.
- Aptheker, Herbert. *American Negro Slave Revolts*. New York: International Publishers Company, 1993.

- Barile, Kerri S. "Race, the National Register, and Cultural Resource Management: Creating an Historic Context for Postbellum Sites." In *Transcending Boundaries, Transforming the Discipline: African Diaspora Archaeologies in the New Millennium*. *Historical Archaeology* 38, no. 1. (2004): 90-100.
- Barthel, Diane. *Historic Preservation: Collective Memory and Historical Identity*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996.
- Boyer, Marcel and J. D. Edwards. *Plantations by the River: Watercolor Paintings from St. Charles Parish, Louisiana, by Father Joseph M. Paret, 1859*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.
- Blume, Helmut. *The German Coast during the Colonial Era, 1722-1803*. ed., trans., Ellen C. Merrill. Destrehan, Louisiana: The German-Acadian Coast Historical and Genealogical Society, 1990.
- Carson, Cary. "Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall, Whose History if the Fairest of Them All?" *The Public Historian* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 61-67.
- Carter, Perry L, David Butler and Owen Dwyer. "Defetishizing the Plantation: African Americans in the Memorialized South." *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 128-146.
- Coker, William S. "Spanish Regulation of the Natchez Indigo Industry, 1793-1794: The South First Antipollution Laws?" *Technology and Culture* 13, no.1 (January 1972): 55-58.
- Dawdy, Shanno Lee. "Understanding Cultural Change through the Vernacular: Creolization in Louisiana." *Historical Archaeology* 34, no. 3. Evidence of Creolization in the Consumer Goods of an Enslaved Bahamaian Family (2000): 107-123.
- Dedek, Peter. *Historic Preservation for Designers*. in the author's possession, 2012.
- Delier, J. Hanno. *The Settlement of the German Coast of Louisiana and the Creoles of German Descent*. Philadelphia: American Germanica, 1909.
- Din, Gilbert C. *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves: The Spanish Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763-1803*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1999.
- Dubois, Sylvie, and Megan Melancon. "Creole Is, Creole Ain't: Diachronic and Synchronic Attitudes toward Creole Identity in Southern Louisiana." *Language in Society* 29, no. 2. (June 2000): 237-258.
- Eble, Connie. "Creole in Louisiana." *South Atlantic Review* 73, no. 2. (Spring 2008): 39-53.

- Eichstedt, Jennifer L. and Stephen Small. *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.
- Eyerman, Ron. "The Past in the Present: Culture and the Transmission of Memory." *Sociologica* 47, no. 2 (June 2004): 159-69.
- Filene, Benjamin. "Passionate Histories: 'Outside' History Makers and What They Teach Us." *The Public Historian* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 11-33.
- Follett Richard. *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.
- Francaviglia, Richard. "History after Disney: The Significance of 'Imagineered' Historical Places." *The Public Historian* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 69-74.
- Gaines, Francis Pendleton. *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition*. 1924. Reprint. Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1962.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the New World*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.
- Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.
- Hardy Jr., James D. "The Transportation of Convicts to Colonial Louisiana." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1966): 207-220.
- Heitmann, John Alfred. *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.
- Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans. New York: W. H. Coleman, 1885.
- Holmes, Jack D. L. "Indigo in Colonial Louisiana and the Floridas." *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 8, no. 4. (Autumn 1967): 329-349.
- Horton, James and Lois E. Horton. ed. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. New York: New Press, 2006.

- Ingersoll, Thomas N. "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, 48, no. 2 (April 1991): 173-200.
- The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, "Home," The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/> (accessed June 1, 2013).
- "Jim Crow Museum Values," The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/> (accessed June 1, 2013).
- Kane, Harnett T. *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945.
- Karp, Ivan, and Steven D. Lavine. eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990.
- Kastor, Peter J. *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery, 1619-1877*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003.
- Kondert, Reinhart. *The Germans of Colonial Louisiana, 1720-1803*. Stuttgart, Germany: Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart Academic Publishing House, 1990.
- Kraus, Amanda. "Extending Exhibits." *Museum News* (September/October 2003): 36-66.
- Kreyling, Michael. "The Hero in Antebellum Southern Narrative." *The Southern Literary Journal* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 3-20.
- Kutzler, Evan. "Lessons in Interrupting Controversial History as a Southern Heritage Site." *History at Work*. posted March 15, 2013. <http://publichistorycommons.org/controversial-history-at-a-southern-heritage-site/> (accessed June 11, 2013).
- Laughlin, Clarence John. *Ghosts Along the Mississippi, An Essay in the Poetic Interpretation of Louisiana's Plantation Architecture*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1961.
- Lewis, Richard Anthony. *Robert W. Tebbs, Photographer to Architects: Louisiana Plantations in 1926*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2011.
- Lynd, Staughton. *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Macdonald, Sharon. *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

- Magelssen, Scott. "Making History in the Second Person: Post-Touristic Consideration for Living Historical Interpretation." *Theatre Journal* 58, no. 2 (May 2006): 291-312.
- McDavid, Carol. "Descendants, Decisions, and Power: The Public Interpretation of the Archaeology of the Levi Jordan Plantation." In "The Realm of Politics: Prospects for Public Participation in African-American and Plantation Archaeology," special issue, *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 3 (1997): 114-131.
- McDermott, John Francis. *Frenchmen and French Ways in the Mississippi Valley*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1969.
- *The Spanish in the Mississippi Valley*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1974.
- Mellon, Matthew T. *Early American Views on Negro Slavery: From the Letters and Papers of the Founders of the Republic*. New York: New American Library, 1969.
- Modlin, Jr., E. Arnold. "Representing Slavery at Plantation-House Museums in the U.S. South: A Dynamic Spatial Process." *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 147-173.
- Modlin Jr., E. Arnold, Derek Alderman and Glenn W. Gentry. "Tour Guides as Creators of Empathy: The Role of Affective Inequality in Marginalizing the Enslaved at Plantation House Museums." *Tourist Studies* 11, no. 3 (2011): 3-19.
- National Park Service, "Making Visible the Peculiar Institution: Interpreting Slavery at the Sotterley Plantation," Civic Engagement Case Study, 2004.
- Nichols Jr., Charles H. "Slave Narratives and the Plantation Legend." *Phylon* 10, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 1949): 201-210.
- Paquette, Robert L. "Slave Insurrection of 1811." In *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*, edited by David Johnson. Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 2010—. Article published January 10, 2011. <http://www.knowla.org/entry/756/>.
- Pitre, Glen and Michelle Benoit. *Country Roads of Louisiana*. EBook printer 3/19/2013.
- Pustz, Jennifer. *Voices from the Back stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historic House Museums*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010.
- Rehder, John B. *Delta Sugar: Louisiana's Vanishing Plantation Landscape*. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Rose, Julia. "Collective Memories and the Changing Representations of American Slavery." In "Museums of Memory," special issue, *The Journal of Museum Education* 29, no. 2/3 (spring/summer-fall 2004): 26-31.

- Schlereth, Thomas J. "Collecting Ideas and Artifacts: Common Problems of History Museums and History Texts." *Roundtable Reports* (Summer-Fall 1978): 1-3, 9-12.
- Sterkx, H.E. *The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana*. Rutherford, New Jersey: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1972.
- Strait, Kevin. "Presenting Race and Slavery at Historic Sites: Arlington House, Robert E. Lee National Memorial." Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2004.
- Sternberg, Mary Ann. *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.
- Surrey, N.M. Miller. "The Development of Industrious in Louisiana during the French Regime 1673-1763." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 9, no. 3. (December 1922): 227-235.
- Theobald, Mary Miley. *Museum Store Management*. 2nd ed. New York: AltaMira Press, 2000.
- Thomson, Ron and Marilyn Harper. *National Register Bulletin: Telling the Stories: Planning Effective Interpretive Programs for Properties Listed in the National Register of Historic Places*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register, History and Education, 2000.
- Trépanier, Cécyle. "The Cajunization of French Louisiana: Forging a Regional Identity." *The Geographical Journal* 157, no. 2. (July 1991): 161-171.
- Turner, Suzanne Louise. "Plantation Papers as a Source for Landscape Documentation and Interpretation: The Thomas Butler Papers." *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology* 12, no. 3 (1980): 28-45.
- Tyler, Norman, Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009.
- Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Big House: the Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- Wall, Bennet H., Light Townsend Cummins, Judith Kelleher Schafer, Edward Fittas, and Michael L. Kurtz. eds. *Louisiana: A History*. 5th ed. Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2008.
- Wallace, Mike. *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

VITA

Stacey Wilson was born in Metairie, Louisiana on December 10, 1987. After completing her work at Destrehan High School, she entered the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Class projects and various internships have allowed her to gain experience in exhibit research, design, layout, and interpretation. She received her Bachelors of Arts from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in May 2010. She set out a semester to participate in an internship at the National Museum of American History in Fall 2010. In January 2011, she enrolled in the Public History Program at Texas State University-San Marcos.

Permanent Email Address: stacey.marie.wilson@gmail.com

This thesis was typed by Stacey Wilson.