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From the Water: Interpreting the Legacy of Bayou Teche

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FROM THE WATER:
INTERPRETING THE LEGACY OF BAYOU TECHE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

in

The Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture

by
Joni Elizabeth Emmons
B.A., Louisiana State University, 2012
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ABSTRACT

The Bayou Teche, winding 135 miles from its origin in Port Barre to meet the Atchafalaya River in Patterson, has played an integral role in the environmental, economic, industrial, and cultural development of South Louisiana. The Teche has been called “Louisiana’s most famous bayou” and has been home to two Native American tribes, European settlers, Acadian exiles, African and Caribbean slaves, and American colonists, each group contributing to the dynamic identity of the region. Current bayou conditions evidence such an exchange, bearing witness to the range of values that have shaped the bayou’s ecological and cultural context since its earliest human habitation. This project aims to tell the stories of the bayou, interpreting the heritage of the waterway through design intervention. It capitalizes on a recent Teche renaissance, the most tangible expression of which has been the bayou’s designation as a National Water Trail by the Department of Interior in 2015. While that designation has been associated with an investment in recreational infrastructure along the bayou, there is a need for interpretation of the bayou’s cultural, historical, ecological, economic, and other significance – in sum, of its legacy. This project investigates the development of site-specific design to create an engaging, interpretive experience of the Bayou Teche. The primary project goal is to provide an interpretive vision for the Bayou Teche National Water Trail that effectively communicates to users the bayou’s rich, nuanced heritage through engagement with the landscape.

Though this project is focused the Bayou Teche, a particular place with particular considerations, its investigation of management practices and design as a tool of landscape interpretation may prove valuable to communities throughout the country that are looking to understand and celebrate their own cultural landscapes.

CHAPTER 1 // THE TALE OF THE TECHE

Many years ago, in the days of the Tribe's strength, there was a huge and venomous snake. This snake was so large, and so long, that its size was not measured in feet, but in miles. This enormous snake had been an enemy of the Chitimacha for many years, because of its destruction to many of their ways of life. One day, the Chitimacha chief called together his warriors, and had them prepare themselves for a battle with their enemy. In those days, there were no guns that could be used to kill this snake. All they had were clubs and bows and arrows, with arrowheads made of large bones from the garfish.

Of course, a snake over ten miles long could not be instantly killed. The warriors fought courageously to kill the enemy, but the snake fought just as hard to survive. As the beast turned and twisted in the last few days of a slow death, it broadened, curved and deepened the place wherein his huge body lay. The Bayou Teche is proof of the exact position into which this enemy placed himself when overcome by the Chitimacha warriors.¹

For centuries the Bayou Teche has captivated human imaginations -- inspiring art, shaping culture, and informing the daily lives of its residents. The bayou has a rich, layered history, and to study it is in many ways to uncover a microcosm of the cultural, economic, and industrial development of South Louisiana. From its mighty geologic formation to its colonial settlement to its agricultural revolution to its eventual Americanization, the Teche has played a critical role in the narrative of Acadiana and

¹ "The Legend of Bayou Teche." Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana. June 05, 2013. Accessed January 20, 2018. <http://www.chitimacha.gov/stories/legend-bayou-teche>.

the people who call it home. Immortalized in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*, the Teche has even been dubbed "Louisiana's most famous bayou."²

From its earliest human habitation there is evidence that the people of the Teche region have depended on the bayou not only for subsistence in the form of agriculture, hunting, and shelter, but also for cultural expression. Beginning, perhaps, with the Chitimachan origin tale that serves as an epigraph to this chapter, the Teche has served as a kind of anchor for the art, craft, and other material culture that characterizes the region. It is referenced in the world-renowned basketry of the Chitimacha, in the centuries-old medicinal practices of its settlers, in the irresistibly danceable Cajun and Zydeco music, in the contemporary artistic expressions of George Rodrigue and James Lee Burke – the waterway and its bountiful resources serve as both resource and muse for life here.

It is the purpose of this chapter to create a kind of character sketch of the bayou in order to illuminate its evolution through time. Emphasis is placed on the dynamic cultural exchange that shaped the Teche's environmental and cultural legacies. An understanding of the environmental and social construction of the waterway is a critical prerequisite for effective and meaningful interpretive design.

² Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016).

Geology

The Bayou Teche traces its origins to the early Holocene Epoch. The channel that is today occupied by the Bayou Teche was the route of the Mississippi River between 3,900 to 5,800 years ago. Prior to its occupation of the Teche channel, sea levels were much lower, and the Mississippi was deeply entrenched in its route to what is now known as the Gulf of Mexico. However, as glaciers melted and sea level rose at the end of the last ice age, the Mississippi jumped back and forth laterally across southern Louisiana, creating its characteristic meander belts.³ Evidence of this history can be found in the ridges and swales that punctuate the otherwise characteristically flat land adjacent to the Teche. After the Mississippi abandoned the Teche course, the channel was occupied for a brief period by the Red River, so-named for the color of its sediment load. Routine sediment deposits resulting from the seasonal flooding of the Mississippi and Red rivers created wide, low levee ridges along both sides of the Teche channel.

³ "The Mississippi River Delta Basin." Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act. Accessed February 10, 2018. https://www.lacoast.gov/new/About/Basin_data/mr/

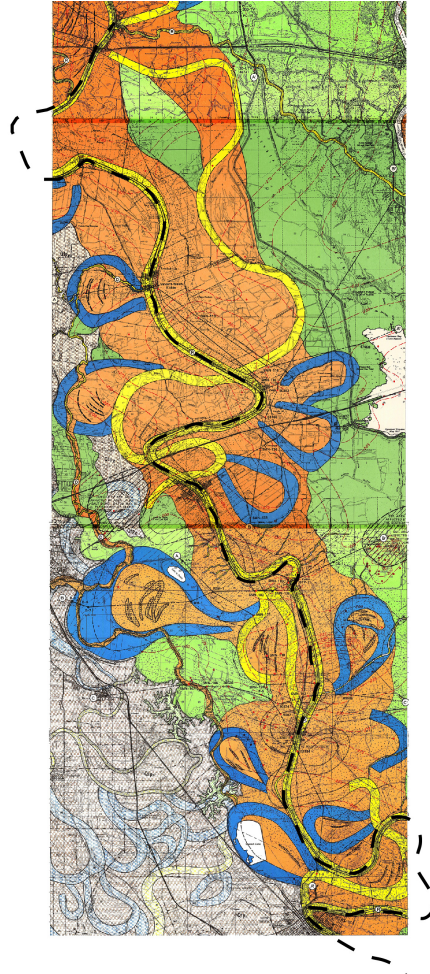


Figure 1: Harold Fisk's Mississippi meander map with Teche channel in dashed lines

The Teche is approximately 135 miles long. Its headwaters lie in Port Barre, Louisiana, where it branches off from Bayou Courtableau and winds its way southward, eventually joining the Lower Atchafalaya River near Patterson, Louisiana. The Teche watershed comprises 40,247 acres in the present-day parishes of Saint Landry, Saint Martin, Iberia, and Saint Mary. The prominent natural levees on both sides of the waterway convey most rainfall in the vicinity away from the bayou, making its watershed quite narrow. The drainage area to the bayou is generally confined to its immediate shores, reaching out about 500 meters from its banks.

The Teche watershed is located within the Western Gulf Coastal Plain Ecoregion, and 60-70% of the watershed is a seasonally wet prairie. An impermeable clay layer lies beneath most of the land adjacent to the Teche, resulting in some backswamps and also making the land well-suited for the cultivation of water-loving crops like rice and sugarcane as well as aquaculture. The bayou, however, interrupts this clay layer. Its natural levees are composed of the coarsest sediment deposited by the aforementioned Mississippi and Red River alluvial systems (mostly silts and silty clays) allowing forested bands a few hundred feet wide to hug the bayou.⁴



Figure 2: Diagram of Teche parishes

⁴ "National Register Evaluation of the Keystone Lock and Dam, St. Martin Parish, Louisiana," Prentice Thomas and Associates, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 1997.



Figure 3: Context map with Teche watershed in dark blue and parishes outlined in orange.

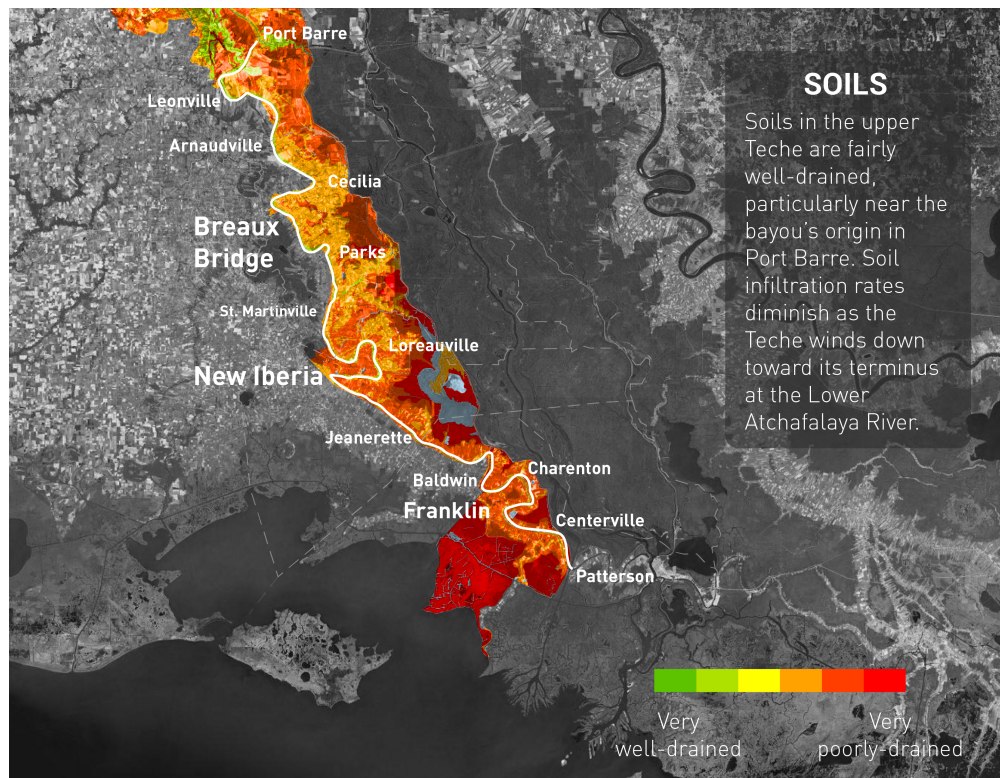


Figure 4: Map of soil permeability

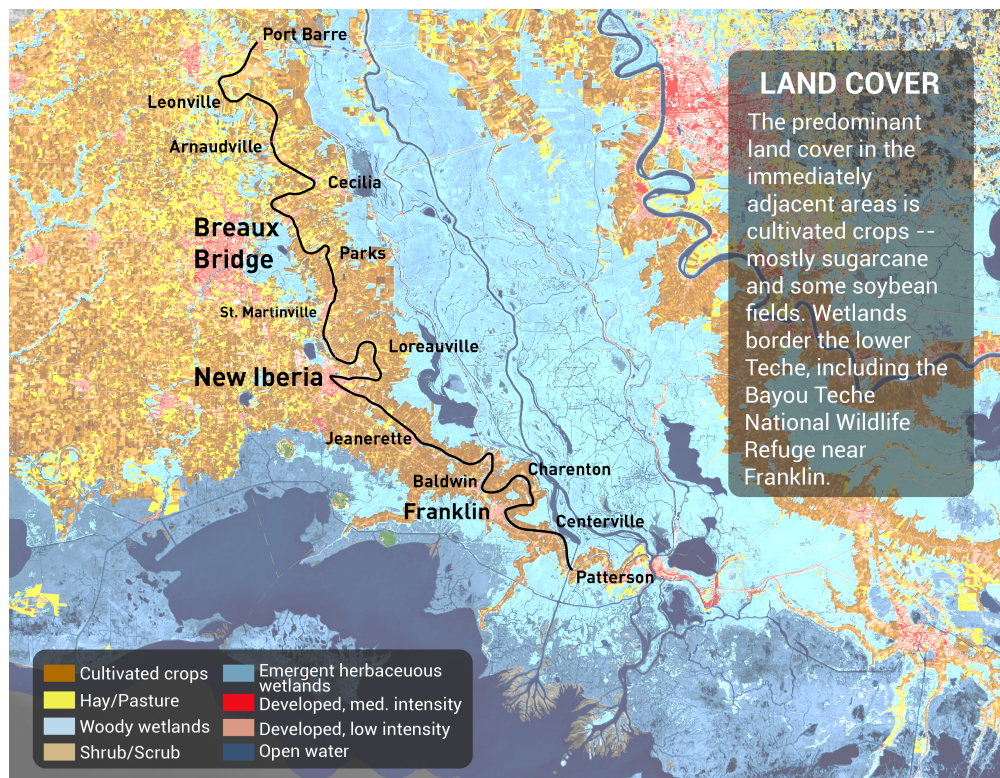


Figure 5: Map of adjacent land cover

Vegetation and Wildlife

The natural levees of the Teche support a variety of trees and understory species. Fruit and nut trees such as Sugarberry, Persimmon, Hawthorn, Mulberry, Oak, Hickory, and Pecan are quite common along the levees. Understory species consist of wild onion (*Allium canadense*), pigweed (*Amaranthus spp.*), hog peanut (*Apios americana*), maypop (*Passiflora spp.*), knotweed (*Polygonum spp.*), palmetto (*Sabal minor*), cat briar (*Smilax spp.*), brambles (*Rubus spp.*), elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), grapes (*Vitis spp.*), horseweed (*Erigeron canadensis*), yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*), Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*), and stinging nettle (*Urtica chamadryoides*).

Beyond the bayou's banks, the upper Teche (from Port Barre to just south of Saint Martinville) features distinct environmental conditions from those found in the lower Teche (from Saint Martinville to the Atchafalaya River). Treeless prairies characterize the upper Teche, stretching out beyond the forested buffer along the bayou. These prairies are occasionally interrupted by swamps or isolated stands of trees, with dominant tree species being Live Oak (*Quercus virginiana*), Willow (*Salix nigra*), Cottonwood (*Populus heterophylla*), Swamp Red Maple (*Acer rubrum var. drummondii*), Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), and Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*).⁵ In the lower Teche, poorly drained areas known as backswamps are more common

⁵ "National Register Evaluation of the Keystone Lock and Dam, St. Martin Parish, Louisiana," Prentice Thomas and Associates, Fort Walton Beach, FL, 1997.

beyond the levee ridges. Bald cypress, tupelo gum, and associated species dominate in these wide, shallow basins.

The bayou provides habitat for many waterfowl, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and migratory birds, too. Notable species include the once federally endangered Louisiana black bear, the Mississippi Kite, the American alligator, wood ducks, river otters, and a variety of turtles. The Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge, established in 2001, is one of the most productive wildlife areas in North America and also the nation's largest undisturbed expanse of wetlands.⁶

Prehistoric Settlement

Centuries of residential and economic activity along the bayou have contributed to a rich cultural heritage along the Teche. The many groups of settlers who have called the Teche their home represent a different way of relating to and utilizing the bayou. Since the arrival of the earliest Native Americans, the environmental particularities and bounty of the Teche have given rise to a variety of management practices and material cultures.

Because the wide natural levees of the Teche offered well-drained, relatively fertile land as well as easy access to the bayou's aquatic resources, they were an obvious choice for

⁶ "Bayou Teche – Trust for Public Land." Accessed February 17, 2018. <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/bayou-teche>.

human settlement. The earliest known Native American habitation of the Teche Region dates back 13,500 years.⁷ Three known Native American tribes have lived in the area: the Opelousas, the Attakapas, and the Chitimacha. The Opelousas were hunters who lived primarily in what is today Saint Landry Parish, and little has been documented about their history or customs.⁸ The Attakapas-Ishak were hunters and fishermen located throughout Southwest Louisiana and Southeast Texas; they also hold the distinction of being the most feared of the three, as they had a reputation of cannibalism. Of three tribes, the Chitimacha is the best documented and the only tribe with an organized presence along the Teche today, with their reservation located in the town of Charenton, in the lower reaches of the bayou.



Figure 6: Chitimacha snake legend monument in Breaux Bridge

⁷ Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 25

⁸ "Environmental Statement: Flood Control Mississippi River and Tributaries; Teche-Vermilion Basins." US Army Engineer District, New Orleans, 1975.

Constructing an image of the Teche and environs as it was known to the Native Americans before European settlement is a challenge, as there are few first hand accounts of their perception of or engagement with the landscape. However, hints can be gleaned from later writings kept by European travelers. In his *History of Louisiana*, Francois Xavier Martin, the state's first Attorney General and longtime Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, wrote of the land adjacent to the Teche: "The prairies in this part of the state are not natural ones: they owe their origin to the Indian practice of setting fire to dry grass during the fall and winter, in order that the tender herbage, in the spring, may attract game; this destroys young trees and the prairie annually gains on the woodland, as long as the practice prevails. When it ceases, the woodland gains on the prairie."⁹ This suggests that the Native Americans developed particular land management regimes along the Teche, manipulating the land to serve their own intentions. Fortunately, much of the tribes' traditional material culture has been preserved orally, allowing a window into the role the bayou played in generating and supporting their culture. For instance, the Attakapas have retained stories about the role of particular botanical specimens in their ancestors' lives: "Alfalfa was a flowering plant high in protein, calcium, and vitamins used to relieve digestive disturbances. Sage was used for warding off evil spirits and to cleanse the body... The women gathered bird eggs, the American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) for its roots and seeds, as well as other wild plants. The men hunted deer, bear, and bison, which provided meat, fat, and

⁹ Francois-Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana: From the Earliest Period, Volumes 1-2* (New Orleans: Lyman and Beardslee, 1827), p. lxxxii.

hides. The women cultivated varieties of maize. They processed the meats, bones, and skins to prepare food for storage, as well as to make clothing, tent covers, tools, sewing materials, arrow cases, bridles and rigging for horses, and other necessary items for their survival.”¹⁰ These oral accounts of specific utilization of the bayou’s native fauna and flora provide insight into the earliest human engagement with the Teche landscape.

The bounty of the Teche figures prominently in tribal heritage as told by the Chitimacha, too. The Chitimacha Nation is the only federally recognized tribe that continues to occupy a part of its ancestral lands in modern Louisiana. The Chitimacha legend referenced in this chapter’s epigraph explains the origin of the bayou, which lies at the center of their ancestral land. (Legend has it that the bayou’s name is also derived from the Chitimacha word for “snake.”) The Chitimacha reference the Teche not only in their oral history, but in their material history, too. The tribe is well known for its masterful basketry, using split river or swamp cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*), native to the bayou banks, to craft the baskets. The decorative patterns that characterize Chitimacha baskets formally reference some of the wildlife native to the Teche; for instance, some pattern names include *nish-tu wa-ki* (alligator entrails), *tcik ka-ni* (blackbird's eyes), and *tcish mish* (worm track). These weaving conventions showcase the physical environment of the early Chitimacha. Baskets produced by tribal

¹⁰ "History - Attakapas Opelousas Prairie Tribe." Accessed January 24, 2018.
<http://attakapasopt.com/history/>.

members today closely resemble the earliest specimens; the techniques and patterns of old baskets have been meticulously studied and serve as prototypes for contemporary weavers. Yellow, red, and black dyes are used to decorate the cane strips, and original dyes were derived from dock root and black walnut.¹¹ Other traces of the bayou's earliest residents can be found in the seventy-four known constructed earthen mounds located in the four parishes through which the Teche runs. They range in age from 400 to 1,300 years old, and some are easily visible from the bayou's banks (though located on private property). A Chitimacha mound complex exists near Patterson and consists of three mounds along with a midden of clam shells.¹²



Figure 7: Swamp cane used for Chitimacha basketry (*Arundinaria gigantea*),
LSU School of Renewable Resources

¹¹ "Chitimacha Baskets." Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana. June 05, 2013. Accessed January 20, 2018. <http://www.chitimacha.gov/stories/legend-bayou-teche>.

¹² Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 26.



Figure 8: Chitimacha woman weaving split cane baskets, McIlhenny Company Archives



Figure 9: Display of Chitimacha baskets, some featuring serpent pattern, McIlhenny Company Archives

Though the Chitimacha tribe once claimed roughly one third of what is now the state of Louisiana as their home, since 1826 the Chitimachan people have resided on a reservation along the Bayou Teche adjacent to the small town of Charenton.¹³ Because their population has been concentrated on the 963 acres of the reservation for nearly two centuries, the cultural influence of the Chitimacha is not as easily articulated as that of some tribes in other parts of the state and nation. References to the bayou's Native American history do exist today, though. The Chitimacha reservation and public museum are the most visible of these, but there are also smaller markers scattered throughout the small towns on the bayou. The most prominent is a stone monument in Breaux Bridge with an inscription of the Chitimacha Teche origin story and a long snake figure, its body contorted into the shape of the bayou, with the names of all the Teche communities listed. While their glimmers of their legacy remain, the native populations were eventually succeeded by the growing Acadian presence as the dominant cultural force on the Teche.

Colonial Settlement

After centuries of Native American habitation on the Bayou Teche, the first known European to settle along the Teche was Andre Masse, a Frenchman born in Grenoble. He arrived in the Teche region, then known as the Attakapas District, as early as 1746 during a period of French rule in Louisiana and established a cattle ranch along the

¹³ "Tribal History." Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana. June 05, 2013. Accessed January 24, 2018. <http://www.chitimacha.gov/stories/legend-bayou-teche>.

bayou's banks near present day Loreauville. Masse was also responsible for introducing another new cultural force to the Teche – African slaves. He owned about twenty slaves who worked on the ranch, many of whom he freed upon his death. Other French settlers followed Masse, but their numbers were few. In 1762 France ceded the Louisiana colony west of the Mississippi River to Spain. In response to this transition, some Spanish settlers made their way to the Teche later in the eighteenth century. They founding the Spanish colony of Nueva Iberia (present-day New Iberia) in 1779, and today it claims to be the only extant town in Louisiana founded by Spaniards during the Colonia Era.¹⁴

While there was a small European presence along the Teche before the Acadians arrived on it banks, these French-speaking exiles represented the first robust settlement of non-native peoples in the region. They came to Louisiana in exile after being displaced from their homes in the maritime provinces of Canada when they refused to pledge unconditional loyalty to England. Mass deportation began in 1755, and groups of Acadians were sent to several different colonial settlements, at least two of them arriving in Louisiana via Santo Domingo (today known as Haiti). The first major wave of Acadian immigration to the Teche region occurred between 1764 and 1788. They arrived in the city of New Orleans and traveled to the Teche region (then called the Attakapas country) by water, navigating the Mississippi River, Bayou

¹⁴ Glenn Conrad. "The History of New Iberia," 2009. <http://www.cityofnewiberia.com/site403.php>

Plaquemine, and the Atchafalaya River to finally make their way to the Teche.¹⁵ These settlers saw the advantage in making a home along a waterway and envisioned the Teche as the site for re-establishing their Acadian culture, calling the region “La Nouvelle Acadie.”

The first group of Acadians were settled by the Spanish government along the Teche near the existing settlement of the intrepid frontiersman Andre Masse. Original land grants to the Acadians were made under contract to establish cattle ranches, as Louisiana’s previous source of beef, Mobile, had recently been lost to the British.¹⁶ Relations between the newly-arrived Acadians and the established cattle rancher Masse and his business partner were rocky. Masse and his ranching partner Dauterive were quite suspicious of these new settlers and considered them trespassers. The Acadians quickly sought their own parcels of land adjacent to the Masse property for their own cattle ranching operations. The prairies adjacent to the Teche were especially well suited for cattle ranching, and their proximity to the swampy, difficult-to-travel Atchafalaya Basin made them important holding places for cattle being herded from Texas and Mexico before continuing their journey to the port of New Orleans.¹⁷

¹⁵ Lauren C. Post, *Cajun Sketches: From the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 8.

¹⁶ Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana’s Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 34.

¹⁷ Lauren C. Post, *Cajun Sketches: From the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 4.

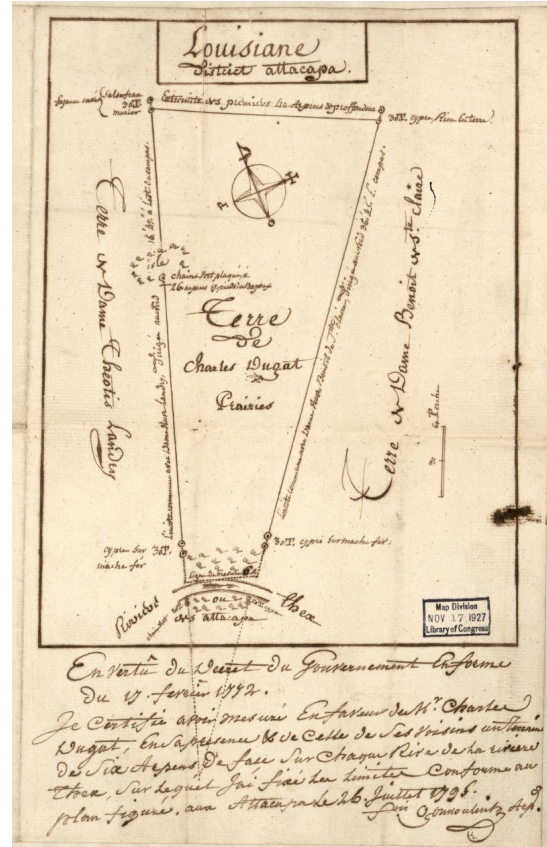
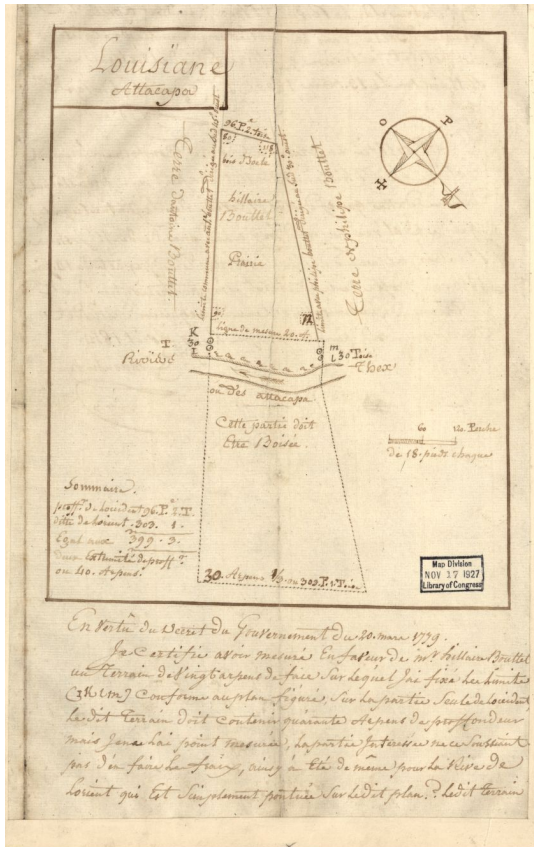
Original parcels of land granted to the Acadians by Spanish officials show standard property allotments that follow the conventions of the typical French arpent system, with all lots providing waterfront access and radiating out toward the backswamp at an angle from the sinuous waterway. This resulted in many wedge-shaped lots as the bayou winds its way down from Port Barre to Patterson. And though these lands were granted as early as the mid-1700s, original property divisions are still visible in modern aerial imagery. The earliest Acadian land grants on the Teche were typically forty arpents in depth by four to six arpents wide.¹⁸ Historian Curney Dronet describes these allotments: “Land grants were distributed along the navigable streams: Bayou Teche, Bayou Vermilion, Bayou Petite-Anse, and Bayou Tigre. Because the bayous were the only means of transportation, the grants always fronted on the water. The interior land was covered with dense vegetation, and was very swampy, hot, and muggy.”¹⁹ Though the Acadians found themselves in a climate and locale quite distinct from the one they left behind in Canada, their new Louisiana settlements were marked with traditional Acadian patterns. For instance, they established widely separated communities of family clusters, and an analysis of the Opelousas establishment reveals that 87.5% of its colonists claimed immediate family members as neighbors.²⁰ Once these familial groups had selected personal property for settlement, they would help each other clear

¹⁸ Carl A. Brasseaux, “Acadian Immigration Into South Louisiana, 1764-1785,” *The Acadian Memorial Archive*. http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore2/immigration.htm

¹⁹ Curney J. Dronet, *A Century of Acadian Culture: The Development of a Cajun Community*, Erath (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing, 2001), p. 9.

²⁰ Carl A. Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. 94.

the land as necessary, cultivate food and perhaps other crops for profit, and build houses and barns.²¹



Figures 10, 11: Spanish land grants to Acadian settlers, displaying traditional French arpent allotment technique, Library of Congress

While the Acadian settlements along the Teche developed fairly independently from those of their Acadian counterparts east of the Atchafalaya, there were spatial patterns common to all Acadian settlements by virtue of their arrangement around a central waterway. Houses were located near the banks of the Teche, and a constellation of smaller auxiliary structures were built behind it; these included summer kitchens,

²¹ Donald J. Arceneaux, "A New Look at the Initial Acadian Settlement Location in the Attakapas," *The Attakapas Gazette* 3 (2014).

chicken coops, and storehouses. Pieux fences of split cypress planks divided the farmyard into functional sections. Vegetable gardens were common, and early crops included rice, maize, citrus, squash, melons, peppers, potatoes, and beans.²² Better-drained soils near the house were used for corn and sweet potatoes while water-loving crops like sugarcane were better suited for the lower-lying back ends of property allotments. Wood for fuel was a sought after commodity as forests along the Teche were cleared for settlement, and it has been noted that many Acadians planted groves of chinaberry trees (*Melia azedarach*) near their homes.²³ Communication between clusters and towns occurred primarily by water, and families had wooden pirogues (canoes) or bateaux (flat-bottom boats) to navigate the bayou.

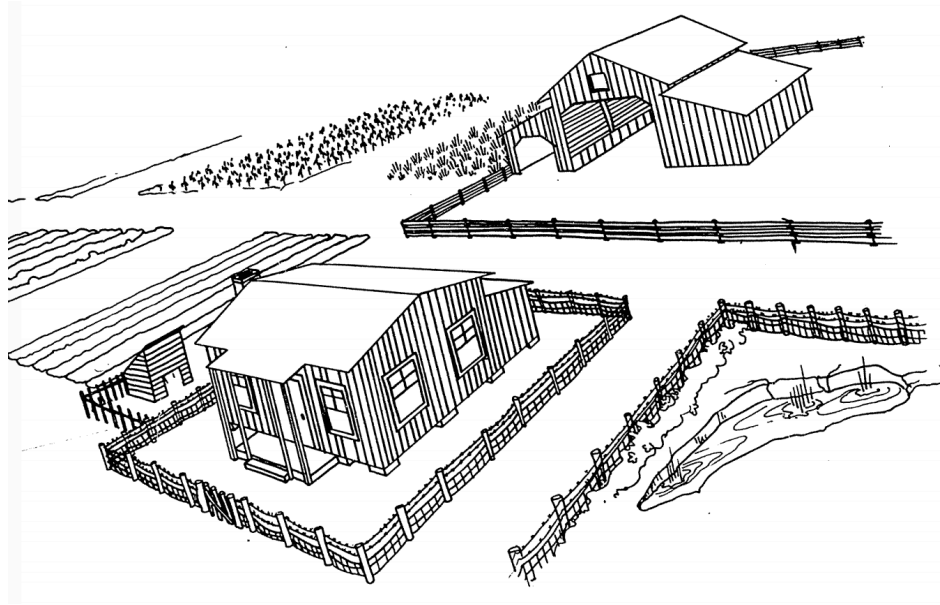


Figure 12: Drawing of a typical Teche Farmstead with house, barn, smaller structures, fences, headlands, and crops, James William Taylor

²² Barry Jean Ancelet, Jay Edwards, Glen Pitre, *Cajun Country* (Jackson, Miss: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), p. 17.

²³ James William Taylor, *The Agricultural Settlement Succession in the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses, 1956), p. 81.

Though the earliest settlers of the Teche region established cattle ranches along the bayou, they soon turned to more stable forms of agriculture.²⁴ Indigo production was the first large-scale cash crop cultivated along the Teche, with indigo plantations established on the bayou by the 1750s. Indigo plants were manufactured into a prized dark blue textile dye through a laborious and hazardous process usually carried out by slaves. However, stiff competition abroad, disease, and infestations meant that the crop was short-lived in the region, and indigo had lost its status as a major industry by the early 1800s. Cotton took its place and became an important crop by 1780. By 1825, sugarcane superseded cotton as the most significant cash crop along the bayou, particularly in the lower reaches of the bayou where the poorly-drained soils were better suited for cane than cotton. The largest, most successful sugarcane fields were developed on the natural levees, as yields were higher here and fuel supplies were more accessible. The first sugar mill was built in New Iberia. Most cane farmers were French or Anglo, with fewer Creoles and still fewer Acadians engaging in large-scale sugarcane cultivation.²⁵

Recognizing that there were fortunes to be made in crops like cotton and sugarcane, some Acadians purchased slaves to assist them in the fields. This increased presence of African slaves, most commonly from Senegal and Gambia, brought another layer of

²⁴ James William Taylor, *The Agricultural Settlement Succession in the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses, 1956), p. 45.

²⁵ Lauren C. Post, *Cajun Sketches: From the Prairies of Southwest Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 66.

cultural influence to the Teche region. “Though compelled to tame the wilderness themselves, some Acadian pioneers, by virtue of their personal initiative and unflagging industry, nevertheless managed to build modest fortunes...The gradual expansion of their farming operations as well as the establishment of large-scale, seasonal fishing and trapping operations compelled the Acadian patriarchs to acquire at least part-time or seasonal employees.” The slave population along the Teche grew considerably in the early nineteenth century; while 3.5% of landowners in the Attakapas region held slaves in the late eighteenth century, a whopping 56% of them owned slaves by 1810.²⁶ This surge in slave ownership coincides with the establishment of large-scale cash crops for export, most notably sugarcane and cotton. Growth of these industries continued until the Civil War made its way to the Teche.

A great deal of wealth and luxury came to be associated with these cotton and sugar plantations. The paintings of famed Louisiana artist Adrien Persac provide a window into the world of plantation life along the Teche. Persac painted several Teche plantations, featuring not only the glimmering, columned Greek-Revival mansions looking out onto the bayou, but also capturing telling details about the way the properties were managed and how social lives were arranged on the properties. The Teche plantation paintings include the following properties: Adeline (St. Mary Parish), Bois de Fleche (St. Martin Parish), Faye Plantation (St. Mary Parish), Lady of the Lake

²⁶ Carl A. Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. 190-196.

(St. Martin Parish), Orange Grove Olivier Plantation (St. Mary Parish), St. John (St. Martin Parish), and Shadows-on-the-Teche (Iberia Parish). The painting of the St. John Plantation, for instance, shows the back side of the property, away from the bayou. Men and women can be seen traveling by horse on the road outside of the fenced estate, all quite well-dressed and admiring the grandeur of the St. John home. African children can be seen in the foreground, standing among crop rows, presumably sugarcane, as the sugarcane refinery belches smoke at a distance from the house. Many of the plantation properties painted by Persac (and many that were not painted by Persac) still stand along the Teche today, bearing witness to an era of wealth and glamour considered by some to be the bayou's golden age.

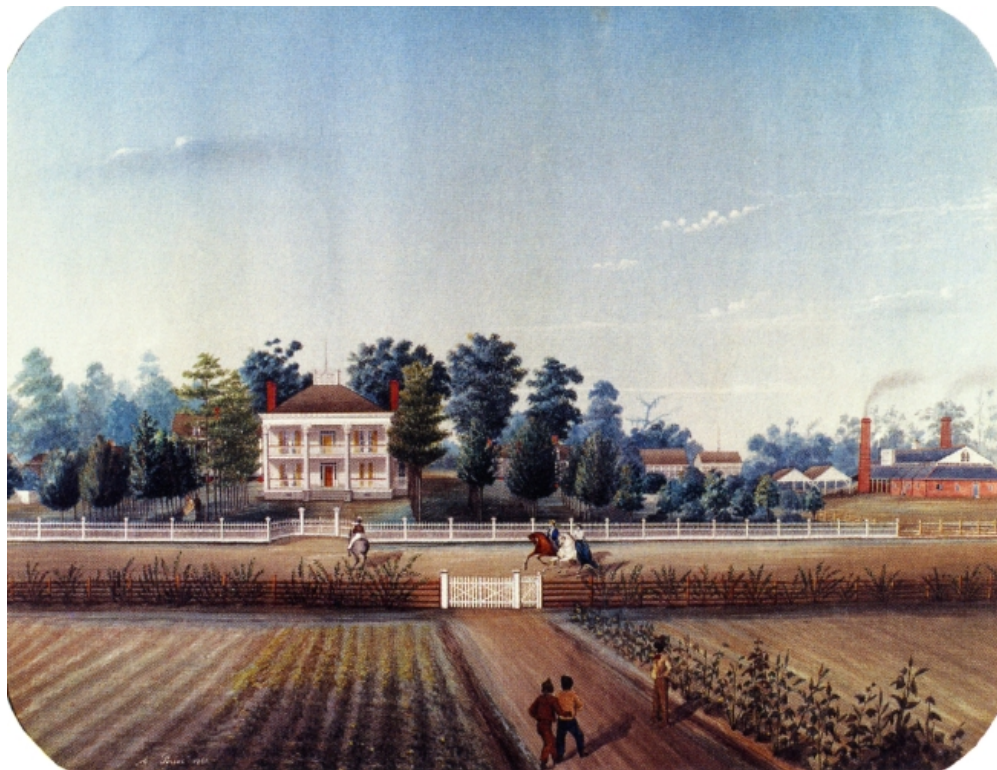


Figure 13: *St. John, St. Martin Parish* – Marie Adrien Persac, 1861



Figure 14: *Olivier Plantation, St. Mary Parish* – Marie Adrien Persac, 1861

As mentioned, many of those making their fortunes on Teche sugarcane or cotton plantations were not the Acadians, but American or European settlers. A concentration of English settlers emerged south of New Iberia, in present-day St. Mary parish, following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The town of Franklin became the epicenter of the Teche's English and Irish presence, and although their numbers were small in comparison to some other cultural groups, they exhibited a great business prowess that would help steer the economic development of the bayou. The strong bend in the Teche just north of Franklin became known as "Irish Bend," and the Weeks, Foster, and Caffery families dominated.

While settlers had been traveling down the Teche to establish homes and communities for decades, the nineteenth century ushered in a new age of transportation on the bayou. In 1819 a group of farmers began a campaign for the creation of a steamboat line on Bayou Teche.²⁷ Later that year a 295-ton steam vessel began making the routine trip down the Teche and to New Orleans by route of the Gulf of Mexico, delivering the cotton, sugar, leather, tobacco, and other bounties of the Teche region.²⁸ “In the late 1830s, steamers from St. Martinville frequently carried barrels of rum produced by a local distillery and cottonade (a coarse cotton fabric) produced by the region’s numerous Acadian weavers.”²⁹ Since the bayou was relatively small to accommodate such large vessels, bank cuts were carved out of the channel to allow steamboats to turn around. Further hydromodifications were required for the maintenance of bayou traffic; these included the removal of many low-hanging oak branches, removal of logs and stumps, and occasional dredging. The Civil War arrived on the banks of the Teche in 1863; skirmishes were fought out along the length of the bayou, and by 1865, the Union forces had defeated the South, and the Teche was clogged with sunken battleships, burned bridges, and trampled vegetation. These obstructions were mapped initially by steamboat captain E.B. Trinidad in 1869, then in detail by William D. Duke, a civil engineer for the US Army Corps of Engineers, in thirty-two-page map set that located down trees limbs, stumps, sunken battleships, and any other threats to

²⁷ Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana’s Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 70.

²⁸ Carl A. Brasseaux, *Steamboats on Louisiana’s Bayous: A History and Directory* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 2004), p. 38.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

steamboat navigability in 1870. The Corps eventually cleared the obstructions, but by 1901 the length of the Teche (as far north as Arnaudville) was serviced by a rail line connecting bayou towns to cities like New Orleans and Houston, and rail soon supplanted the steamboat industry.³⁰

³⁰ Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 114.

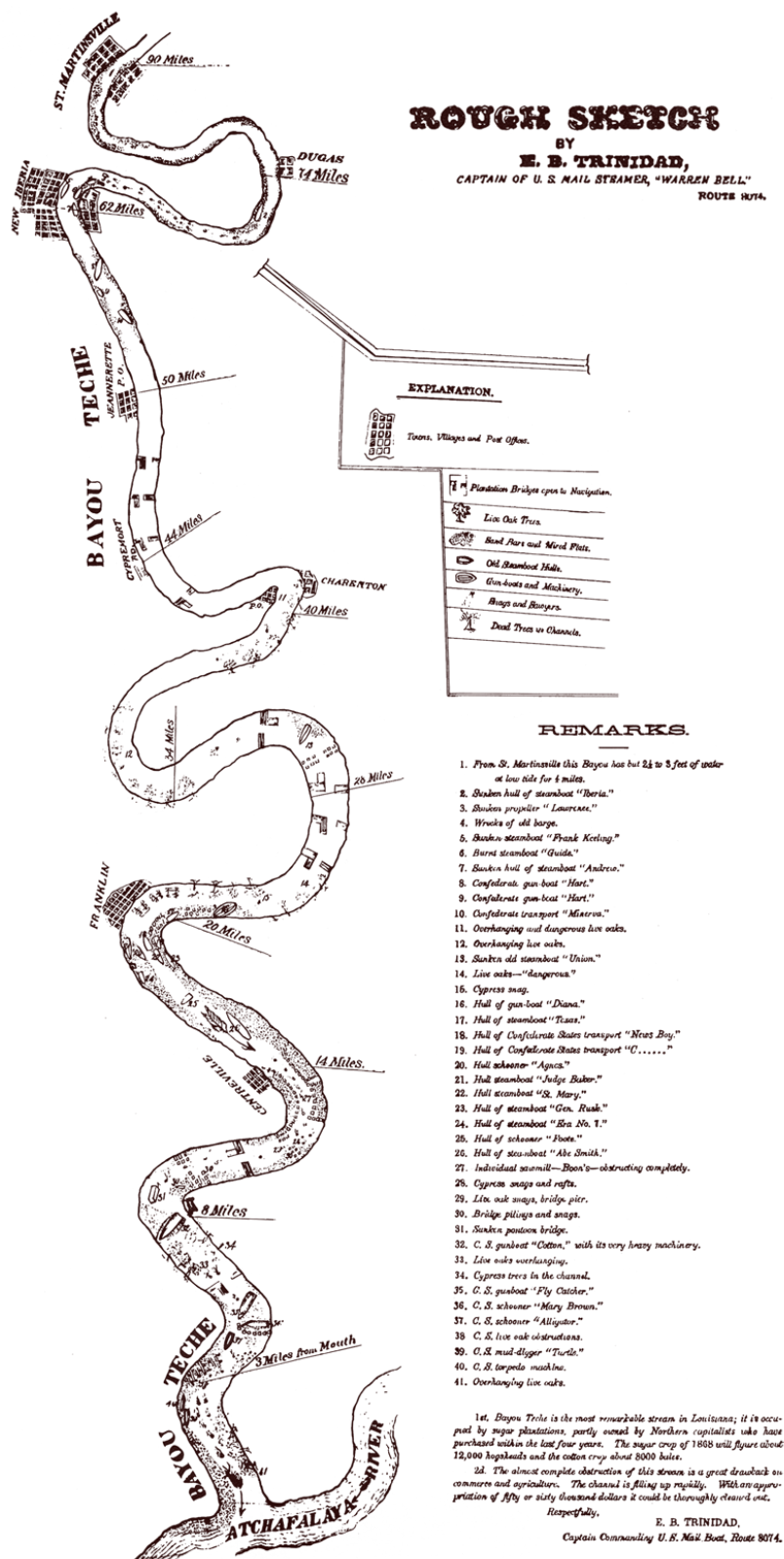


Figure 15: 1869 E.B. Trinidad map of Bayou Teche obstructions, Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou*

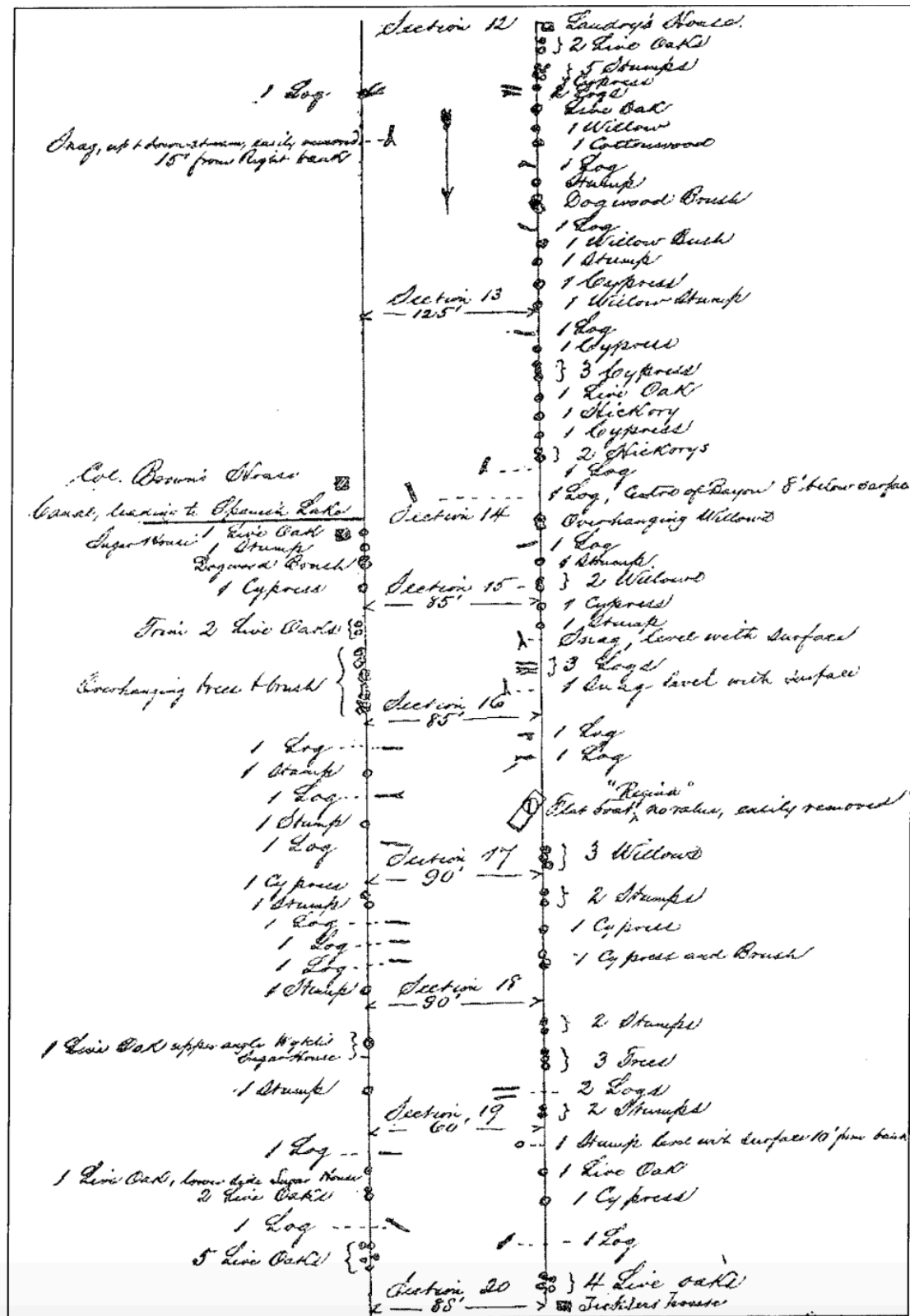


Figure 16: 1870 Excerpt of William D. Duke detail map of Bayou Teche obstructions, Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou*

The early twentieth century brought more federal improvements to the Teche. Most notably, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed a lock and dam, called the Keystone Lock and Dam after an adjacent plantation, between New Iberia and Saint Martinville. This project, completed in 1913, raised water levels in the upper Teche, significantly improving stream navigation and increasing connectivity between the upper and lower sections of the bayou. The 1920s ushered in the age of automobile transportation along the Teche and brought state and federal roads through its towns. In 1927, the Teche region, still economically depressed in the wake of the Civil War, suffered a devastating flood resulting from the swollen Mississippi River and several levee breaches in the Atchafalaya and other tributaries. Several major federal hydro-engineering projects followed the mammoth flood: the West Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee, the Charenton Drainage and Navigation Canal, and the Wax Lake Outlet, all completed in the two decades following the flood. These modifications to the bayou tell a story of negotiation between protecting residents and property from further destruction by floodwaters while also attempting to understand and maintain hydrologic systems in the region. Bernard summarizes, “Shaped by levees, floodgates, and locks, the story of the Teche in the twentieth century was one of designing the bayou to human advantage.”³¹ Though humans had manipulated the Teche for centuries to support

³¹ Shane K. Bernard, *Teche: A History of Louisiana's Most Famous Bayou* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), p. 126.

residential settlement and agriculture, these Army Corps projects introduced a new scale of change along the bayou.

As the Bayou Teche and its hydrologic systems were evolving physically in the twentieth century, so were the groups of people residing on its banks. In their adaptation to the climate of South Louisiana and their mingling with European-born Creoles, African and Haitian-born slaves, Irish immigrants, and American settlers, the Teche Acadians had evolved considerably as a group since their departure from Nova Scotia. Historian Carl Brasseaux explains:

Forced to reside ever closer to their non-Acadian neighbors by the increasing demographic congestion, the eastern Acadians, as well as those remaining along Bayou Teche, gradually found themselves adopting innovations in cuisine and material culture introduced by their neighbors. The so-called "Creole" house (a raised cottage on piers) replaced the Acadian maison de poteaux-en-terre (house of post-in-ground construction) by the 1780s; horse racing, introduced into South Louisiana by a handful of Anglo-American immigrants in the 1780s, was almost immediately preempted by the Attakapas Acadians; the Spanish guitar was adapted to Acadian music and Iberian spices entered the formerly bland Acadian cuisine in the late eighteenth century; by 1803, Indian corn and African okra had found their way into the Acadian diet, but in dishes only remotely resembling their African and Indian progenitors; and, by 1810, a majority of Acadians owned slaves, in emulation of their white Creole neighbors. Indeed, cross-cultural borrowing existed to such an extent that, by the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the basis for a new synthetic South Louisiana culture had been laid.³²

³² Carl A. Brasseaux, "Acadian Immigration Into South Louisiana, 1764-1785," *The Acadian Memorial Archive*. http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_encore2/immigration.htm

This group of people – the French-speaking exiles who relocated to the bayous of South Louisiana – were by the turn of the nineteenth century markedly distinct from the neighbors they left behind in Acadie, and they became known as the Cajuns, an Anglicized butchering of the Acadian name. Because of the cultural *mélange* of South Louisiana during the time of Acadian arrival and settlement, there has been much scholarly work dedicated to answering questions about Cajun identity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.³³

Other historical developments on the bayou contributed to this cultural reassessment of its inhabitants. “By most accounts, the modernization of Louisiana’s economy began in earnest in the 1930s following a number of earlier developments. The discovery of oil in 1901 in the eastern part of the state, the diffusion of compulsory primary education, the construction of roads and bridges by the administration of Governor Huey Long, and the electrification of rural areas all helped set the stage for the state’s economic transition.”³⁴ In 1930, 38% of employment was in agriculture; by 1990 that number had shriveled to 2.5% of Louisianians employed in agriculture.³⁵ The agricultural industries that had grown up around the Teche and employed so many of its residents became mechanized, and workers left the fields, often taking opportunities in the booming petrochemical industry. Teche residents adapted to an increasingly

³³ Scholars of particular note include Glen Conrad, Carl A. Brasseaux, Barry Ancelet, Vaughan Baker, Shane Bernard, Mark Rees, and others involved with the Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

³⁴ Jacques M. Henry and Carl L. Bankston III, *Blue Collar Bayou: Louisiana Cajuns in the New Economy of Ethnicity* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), p. 88.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

non-agricultural way of life, and the tangible, dependent connection to the land and water gradually faded. American involvement in World War II helped catalyze the cultural transitions of the Teche in the mid twentieth century. For many of its residents, wartime service meant their first exposure to other cultural influences. Post-war growth affected Acadiana much the same as other parts of the country, encouraging consumerism and ushering in a new era of modern homogenization and accessibility. Folkways along the bayou were often replaced with more standardized American practices and products.

The twenty-first century has, thus far, been marked by a renewed interest in raising awareness and promoting stewardship of the Teche. Concerned citizens have established three non-profit organizations, the most influential of which is known as the TECHE (Teche Ecology, Culture, and History Education) Project. The group has successfully led several volunteer bayou cleanup efforts, removing tons of trash from the bayou. They have also worked to obtain recognition for the Teche as a National Paddle Trail, a designation bestowed by the National Park Service. Though the bayou may not have the same kind of immediate, daily presence that it had in the lives of its early settlers, this modern renaissance of bayou-centric activity is an encouraging sign that the waterway still holds cultural relevance and recreational potential.

This renewed celebration of the cultural significance of Bayou Teche has been coupled with a newfound concern for its ecological health. Each new use of the bayou through its history (for food, shelter, craft, etc.) has had a particular set of environmental impacts. Residential development and intermittent agricultural fields characterize the Bayou Teche watershed and pose unique challenges to its long-term health and longevity.³⁶



Figure 17: Typical sections illustrating contemporary land uses

³⁶ “Teche Watershed Implementation Plan,” Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

The Teche is classified by the Environmental Protection Agency as an impaired waterway because it cannot support fish and wildlife propagation. In 2012 Dr. Whitney P. Broussard of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette conducted a year-long water monitoring project along the Teche, with the stated objective of identifying nonpoint source pollution hot spots, determining land management practices associated with those spots, and making the information available to the public. He notes surprise at finding that “the fecal coliform counts and BOD-5 (biochemical dissolved oxygen) concentrations indicate the urban/developed area of the watershed are having a substantial impact, especially the towns of Port Barre, Opelousas, Breau Bridge, New Iberia, and Patterson/Berwick.” The increased residential presence along the bayou coincides with increased hydromodification. Landowners often construct bulkheads adjacent to their houses to stabilize banks, but these structures can also destroy riparian vegetation and compromise ecological integrity.

Invasive plant species have also been found on the Teche and threaten native vegetative communities. Perhaps the species that has had the most noticeable impact on the waterway has been aquatic plant known as water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). This plant is particularly problematic because its presence has both physical and biological consequences. It can form dense mats that block the entire waterway, complicating travel by boat. Water hyacinth is known to deplete oxygen levels in waterways, making it more difficult for fish and other aquatic plants and animals in the

bayou to survive. It also sends out runners to spread very quickly. The Chinese Tallow tree (*Sapium sebiferum*) is another extremely common invasive tree and has begun colonizing bayou banks, outcompeting native species. Chinese Tallow is especially common along spoil banks.



Figure 18: Water hyacinth accumulation in Franklin, *The Advocate*

Groups like the TECHE Project are striving to educate landowners along the Teche as well as visitors about native bayou ecologies and encouraging stewardship of the waterway. These lessons are paired with information about the cultural and historical significance of the bayou, attempting to forge a link between past usage and contemporary stewardship. This message is, perhaps, an efficient summary of this chapter – many groups have contributed their various ideologies and practices to the

historical narrative and modern character of the Bayou Teche, but these groups are all unified by identification with this place. While several alternate voices have emerged in determining a set of criteria for “Cajunness,” there is much more support for an identity rooted in place rather than in pedigree. Similarly, one does not need an Acadian last name or a fluency in the native French to be considered part of the Teche narrative. Rather, identification with the Teche -- the land and the cultural particularities associated with it, is the criteria for inclusion.

CHAPTER 2 // LANDSCAPE AS AGENT OF INTERPRETATION

An understanding of the natural and cultural evolution of the Bayou Teche over time serves as the foundation for determining appropriate methods for interpreting legacy. Reimagining the Teche landscape as having the agency to communicate its legacy and relevance to modern users is a powerful idea. There seems to be great opportunity for more personal engagement with the Teche landscape given the enthusiasm of local parties and the recent cooperation of state and federal agencies to protect and celebrate the bayou. This project aims to capitalize on recent momentum and enrich ongoing Teche initiatives by articulating an interpretive vision for the Bayou Teche National Water Trail.

2.1 Project Background

In 2015 the Bayou Teche was recognized as the nation's seventeenth National Water Trail. The National Water Trails System was established by the Secretary of the Interior in 2012. In Order no. 3319 the Secretary establishes national water trails as a class of national recreational trails and directs that such trails collectively be considered in a National Water Trails System. It describes this system as follows: "The National Water Trails System shall be a distinctive system that connects Americans to the Nation's waterways and strengthens the conservation and restoration of those waterways by becoming a catalyst for protecting and restoring the health of local waterways and surrounding lands and by establishing a community that mentors and

promotes the development of water trails. Water trails are recreational routes with a network of public access points connecting people, places, and communities to the waterways that provide high quality outdoor recreational opportunities.” The goals of the Water Trails System are explicitly oriented toward recreation – it aims to connect people to identified waterways of significance by establishing a recreational infrastructure on those waterways. The experience of recreating on the water will, hopefully, inspire stewardship and promote principles of conservation among users and other stakeholders.

In reference to the Teche’s designation, the Department of Interior states that the goals of the trail are: “to provide education about the ecology, culture and history of Bayou Teche through low impact recreation opportunities...Native American, Creole, African and Acadian Communities are defined by this bayou and that legacy is celebrated.”³⁷ The cultural significance of the waterway is cited as a primary inspiration for its designation as a National Water Trail. However, there is no further discussion of how that legacy is being celebrated along the trail. There is no explicit plan for making that legacy accessible to trail users. Instead, it seems that the model for interpreting the bayou’s legacy relies solely on creating the recreational infrastructure necessary to transport people along the bayou from one town to the next. The idea is that users will exit the water at each of the small Teche towns and experience the

³⁷ "Bayou Teche Paddle Trail." National Water Trail System. January 21, 2015. Accessed February 1, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/WaterTrails/Trail/Info/52>

history and culture of the bayou there, on the land. It is the thesis of this project, though, that there is a great opportunity to bring that process of legacy exploration and interpretation to the bayou itself. To be certain, bayou accessibility is the foremost prerequisite for communicating its significance, but access does not imply understanding or appreciation.

The trail is managed by the TECHE (Teche Ecology, Culture, and History Education) Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for the recreational, cultural, aesthetic, and ecological health of the Bayou Teche watershed. The group was instrumental in getting the bayou recognized as a National Paddle Trail and has organized annual volunteer events that get the community involved in removing litter from the bayou and monitoring water quality. They have published a paddle trail map that locates access points and paddler amenities on one side and features a map of cultural and historical points of interest on the opposite side. They also have plans to install signs at each of the Teche towns with non-motorized boat access that narrate the history of the town and locate nearby amenities. These efforts have helped lay the groundwork for communicating the cultural and historical significance of certain features in the towns adjacent to the bayou. The existing map and proposed signage are, however, limited in their ability to communicate a holistic experience of the Teche legacy to trail users. Since most of the kayak and canoe access points are located in towns that lie about ten or twenty miles apart, the vast majority of time spent on the trail is between these trailheads where there is no interpretive presence.

2.2 Project Vision

This project is intended to provide an interpretive vision for the Bayou Teche Water Trail. Recent investments in establishing recreational infrastructure along the bayou have brought to light a need for a corresponding interpretive infrastructure that communicates the natural and cultural legacies of the Teche. The construction of boat launches for non-motorized vessels like canoes and kayaks has increased public accessibility and encouraged recreational activity; this project provides a vision for giving trail users access to the bayou's rich past and encouraging them to participate in its legacy. This project identifies opportunities for unifying interpretive interventions as well as site-specific landscape interventions that interpret the Bayou Teche as a heritage waterway from the perspective of the water. Rather than deriving meaning from the waterway by getting out of it and exploring the towns of the Teche, this strategy envisions the travel on the bayou itself as an interpretive experience.

2.3 Defining Interpretation

The Teche is a project site with great opportunities for interpreting both natural and cultural heritage. There is no doubt that the bayou has shaped and been shaped by the groups that settled along its banks – it is a landscape defined by culture. In order for interpretive design efforts to be meaningful, they should be informed by both an understanding of cultural landscapes and an understanding of interpretation in the context of landscape design.

First, it is useful to define a cultural landscape so as to make conclusions about why it is appropriate to think of the Teche in these terms. “The cultural landscape is by definition unique – that combination of natural landforms and buildings that defines a particular place or region. It is the creation of the women, men, and children who lived their lives within that landscape.”³⁸ While this definition is purposefully broad, it conveys the type of formative, organic presence that feels appropriate in describing the character of the Teche. A variety of cultural landscape categories have been established to make distinctions about the particularities of place and the agency of regional conditions in shaping landscape narratives. The category that I think is most appropriate to the Bayou Teche is that of “historic vernacular landscape.” This is a landscape shaped by use – one that reflects the character of everyday lives. It is not professionally designed, but it is functional, and it expresses the values, behavior, and actions of human engagement through spatial organization, land use, circulation, vegetation, structures, and objects.³⁹

Determining appropriate and effective methods of communicating the meaning of cultural landscapes, particularly vernacular landscapes, is a challenge for designers. In the 1960s and 70s those in the fields of historic preservation and museum curation

³⁸ Arnold R. Alanena and Robert Z. Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p.XI.

³⁹ Charles A. Birnbaum, “Protecting Cutlural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment, and Management of Historic Landscapes,” *Preservation Brief* 36 (1994)

started using the term “interpretive” instead of “guided” when referring to users’ engagement with resources. Though the shift may seem subtle, it marked a revolutionary way of imagining the role design could play in conveying site meaning. “Interpretation involves the revelation of connections along objects, people, activities, and ideas...History explores the “whys,” not just the “whats.” It goes beyond identification. It looks for connections and patterns.”⁴⁰ Such a philosophy is attractive to landscape designers in search of a method by which they can facilitate an understanding of complex site contexts and histories.

To make sense of the large topic of interpretive landscapes, it is useful to recognize distinct categories of interpretative interventions in landscape. Richard Rabinowitz suggests that there are three types: “First, there is interpretation constructed into the landscape, but clearly distinguished from it, like “wayside” signage. Second, there is “extrinsic” interpretation that is about the landscape but not actually set in it, like a guidebook. And third, there are ways in which the landscape can be “self-interpretive,” by incorporating elements that are not designedly informational but nevertheless convey ideas about the place, as the stones in a graveyard do.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Renee Friedman, “For the Curator of Trees and Teacups: The Landscape as Artifact,” Cultural Resources Management Information for Parks, Federal Agencies, Indian Tribes, States, Local Governments and the Private Sector 17 (1994).

⁴¹ Richard Rabinowitz, “Interpreting in the Landscape: A Hebridean Perspective,” Cultural Resources Management Information for Parks, Federal Agencies, Indian Tribes, States, Local Governments and the Private Sector 17 (1994).

The first category, wayside signage, presents a number of challenges for the landscape designer. They must be noticeable enough to gain the attention of the viewer, but not so conspicuous that they compete with the landscape itself. If they appear in regular sequence, one must be careful that the rhythmic experience of the signage does not supplant actual engagement of the landscape meant to be interpreted. Finally, wayside signage is limited in the amount of context it can provide; since it is situated within the landscape itself, there is not much that a designer can do to prepare the viewer for the information on the sign or provide a kind of threshold to the interpreted landscape. The viewer approaches the informational sign, and the designer is limited in the way he or she choreographs the contextual experience.

The second category, portable interpretive media, poses a different set of opportunities and challenges. This method of interpretation is typically the default method for situations in which it is not feasible or sensitive to physically install structures or signs into the landscape. Examples of portable interpretive media include maps, guides, or images. Though these materials have traditionally been printed, portable electronic devices offer today's interpretive designers many more platform options for delivering content to users. Maps can be difficult for users to engage; maps expect users to look at a flat plan view of the site and from it derive meaning from their personal spatial experience on-site. Guides can be more relatable, as they create a narrative sequence of spaces. Any type of portable interpretive media, though, competes with the site for visual attention from the user.

The third category is that of interpretation built out of the cultural landscape. This method uses existing site elements to create suggestive fragments of the past world. Rabinowitz cites the example of “a bronze beaver on Portland’s Morrison Street reminding Oregonians of an early export commodity, just as the Niketown store celebrates the newest variety.” This statue is successful because it hearkens to an earlier period of industrial significance and juxtaposes it with contemporary site conditions, encouraging visitors to make connections between a Portland dependent on natural resource extraction (namely lumber), and a Portland we know today as the iconic Nike shoe manufacturer. These connections engage users by asking questions about landscape values, how they change over time, and the kinds of legacies those values leave on the landscape.

Such an attempt to marry natural and cultural resource management priorities is a reaction to the conventional practice of treating them as separate and even incompatible realities. The model of interpretation proposes instead that meaningful experience of landscape comes from exposing its vague borders and boundaries. It challenges users and designers to navigate landscape semantics that are both mutually dependent and competitive. In short, it attempts to compose an honest narrative of the site, one that is inclusive and demands the participation of the user. Catherine Howett expresses this idea eloquently in her essay, “Integrity as a Value in Cultural Landscape Preservation”:

Perhaps the whole field of cultural landscape preservation needs to be renamed cultural landscape interpretation. It would be helpful, certainly, to unload the inaccurate connotations of preservation and put the emphasis on an expanded understanding of interpretation, which in fact begins with the research phase, is inseparable from every design decision, and is then documented through the interpretive program that visitors experience. Then, perhaps, the profession and the public alike will come to recognize the creative and artistic dimensions of this interpretive process – open to experiment and innovation, to critical discourse and debate...If we saw our task from the beginning as transformative – artfully to transform the raw data, the physical facts, the historical record, into a comprehensible vision with potential meaning for men and women today (even if the meaning has to do with the discovery of otherness, difference, the mysterious or finally unknowable) – we might be less afraid to expand rather than to restrict the options for interpretation.⁴²

It is with this refined definition of landscape interpretation in mind that I will design interpretive interventions for the Bayou Teche National Water Trail.

2.4 Identifying Landscape Characteristics

In order to identify opportunities for interpretation along the bayou it is first necessary to define the physical components that comprise the character of the Teche landscape as it exists today. These are the physical qualities that characterize the bayou today and bear some connection, conspicuous or otherwise, to its natural or cultural legacy.

Developing a catalog of contemporary character elements will help clarify the

⁴² Arnold R. Alanena and Robert Z. Melnick, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 207.

historical evolution of the bayou's character and determine appropriate interpretive interventions. For analytical convenience, these characteristics are divided into the following categories: natural systems and features, spatial organization, land use, circulation, topography, vegetation, buildings and structures, views and vistas, constructed water features, small-scale features, and archaeological sites. These categories, along with their descriptions, are borrowed from the National Park Service's organizational template for compiling Cultural Landscape Inventory documents.

Natural Systems and Features:

"Natural systems and features are the natural aspects that have influenced the development and physical form of a landscape. The following may be included: geomorphology, geology, hydrology, ecology, climate, and native vegetation."

The geologic history of the Teche can be read in the bayou's characteristic bends. They tell the story of the channel's previous occupation by the Mississippi – a river much more powerful and unruly than the Teche today. Lakes and marshes adjacent to the bayou also hint at this geomorphology as they often occupy ancient meanders of the Mississippi. Despite threats from invasive plants and animals, native flora and fauna still occupy the bayou and illustrate its ecological heritage.



Figure 19: Ducks in the Teche



Figure 20: Wood duck box on the bayou

Spatial Organization:

“Spatial organization is the three-dimensional organization of physical forms and visual associations in a landscape, including the articulation of ground, vertical, and overhead planes that define and create spaces. Examples of features associated with spatial organization include circulation systems, views and vistas, divisions of property, and topography.”

The primary organizers of spatial experience along the bayou are the levees that bound the waterway, rising between ten and fifteen feet above average water level in the upper Teche. The levees are not so prominent in the lower Teche as the bayou approaches its convergence with the Atchafalaya River. Width of the bayou ranges from about seventy-five feet at its headwaters in Port Barre to over two hundred and fifty feet near Franklin, creating a spectrum of enclosure and openness. From the perspective of a non-motorized boat, the surface of the water defines the ground plane. The narrow strips of tree canopy that hug the bayou serve to define the vertical plane, with grasses or understory vegetation sometimes preceding robust, shady canopy.

Land Use:

“Land use describes the principal activities in a landscape that form, shape, and organize the landscape as a result of human interaction. Examples of features associated with land use include agricultural fields, pastures, playing fields, and quarries.”

Agriculture dominates the Teche landscape, and large sugarcane fields are the most common land use type in the Teche watershed. While these fields cannot typically be seen from the perspective of the water, field equipment like tractors, combines, storage facilities, and refineries are visible and hint at the agricultural presence. Aerial photography makes clear the ways that large-scale cultivation has physically shaped the Teche landscape. Sugarcane fields create prominent linear patterns on the land; rows of cane run either parallel or perpendicular to the bayou, their angular orientation juxtaposing its sinuous curves.



Figure 21: Sugarcane harvesting equipment on the banks

Residential development is the second most common land use type along the bayou, and property divisions are often discernable from the water by changes in bank management practices. Though planned communities are becoming more common with increased urban development along the bayou, aerial photography reveals that modern residential patterns largely resemble initial parcel lines. Tree lines often divide properties along the same lines that appear on eighteenth-century land grant maps.



Figure 22: Adjacent residential properties separated by a fence

Circulation:

“Circulation includes the spaces, features, and applied material finishes that constitute the systems of movement in a landscape. Examples of features associated with circulation include paths, sidewalks, roads, and canals.”

The bayou itself is the primary circulation route on-site. Since most of the adjacent land is privately owned with intermittent public access to the bayou from Teche towns, there is no continuous land path that immediately parallels the bayou. There are two state highways, LA-31 and LA-347, which run roughly parallel to the bayou at a distance of about 1,000 feet from its banks. Occasional bridges allow vehicular and pedestrian passage across the Teche. There are fourteen designated non-motorized boat launches along the Bayou Teche Water Trail that facilitate movement of Water Trail users to and from the towns along the bayou.



Figure 23: Typical bridge across the Teche near Saint Martinville



Figure 24: Newly-installed non-motorized boat launches

Vegetation:

“Vegetation includes the deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers, and herbaceous plants, and plant communities, whether indigenous or introduced in a landscape. Examples of features associated with vegetation include specimen trees, allees, woodlots, orchards, and perennial gardens.”

One of the most striking features of the native Teche vegetation are the sculptural qualities of the live oak trees, their limbs extending across the banks and reaching out above the water, often draped with Spanish moss. Another prominent, recurring form is the cypress knee. Colonies of these knees poke out above the surface of the water near the bayou's banks.



Figure 25: Cypress trees and knees

The state of vegetation along the bayou largely depends on the management regime of private landowners. Some allow native communities to thrive while others maintain manicured lawns down to the water's edge. Riparian vegetative communities often serve as a screen between bayou traffic and residential properties, but in places where that vegetation has been removed, paddlers are able to see private residences from the water.



Figure 26: Typical residential bank management; riparian communities have been removed

Invasive species like Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) and water hyacinth are plainly visible from the water. Water hyacinth is particularly noticable to paddlers who sometimes struggle to pass through thick patches of it.



Figure 27: Native grasses and water hyacinth in bayou bend

Buildings and Structures:

“Buildings are elements constructed primarily for sheltering any form of human activity in a landscape. Structures are elements constructed for functional purposes other than sheltering human activity in a landscape. Engineering systems are also structures...Examples of features associated with buildings include houses, barns, stables, schools, and factories.”

Single-family residences are the most common structures along the Teche . Older houses are oriented toward the bayou, as it was the original transportation corridor. The homes visible from the water represent a variety of architectural styles and construction techniques. Representative styles include French and Creole cottages, Greek Revival plantation homes, Acadian homes and barns, Queen Anne style homes, and California Ranch style homes. Many houses along the Teche have been listed on the Historic Register.



Figure 28: Historic home in Saint Martinville, note orientation toward bayou



Figure 29: Typical residential construction in newly-developed subdivisions

Industrial facilities, namely sugarcane processing plants, are also visible from the waters of the Teche. Their smokestacks are visible from a considerable distance, providing vertical punctuation in this exceedingly flat landscape.



Figure 30: St. John Sugar Mill

Views and Vistas:

“Views and vistas are the prospect created by a range of vision in a landscape, conferred by the composition of other landscape characteristics and associated features. Views and vistas are distinguished as follows: Views are the expansive or panoramic prospect of a broad range of vision, which may be naturally occurring or deliberately contrived. Vistas are the controlled prospect of a discrete, linear range of vision, which is deliberately contrived.”

Given the region’s characteristically flat landscape, there are no dramatic or panoramic views available to users. There are also no vistas, as there is no coordinated

management of visual experience along the bayou at this time. Current visual experience of paddlers consists of linear ranges up and down the bayou; vision across banks is generally limited by tree cover or by the elevation gain from the water's edge to the top of the levees.



Figure 31: Typical view from the perspective of the water

Constructed Water Features:

“Constructed water features are the built features and elements that use water for aesthetic or utilitarian functions in a landscape. Examples of features associated with constructed water features include fountains, canals, cascades, pools, and reservoirs.”

The constructed manipulation of water along the bayou ranges in scale from residential drainage canals to regional hydro-engineering projects. Paddlers must portage with their boats at two points on the Water Trail: the Keystone Lock and Dam and the Wax Lake Outlet. There are other points along the bayou where manmade canals connect the Teche to other waterbodies. On a smaller scale, culverts and drainage pipes can be seen transporting stormwater and some other waste products from private property to the bayou.



Figure 32: Keystone Lock and Dam, south of Saint Martinville



Figure 33: Typical corrugated pipe draining to bayou

Small-Scale Features:

“Small-scale features are the elements providing detail and diversity for both functional needs and aesthetic concerns in a landscape. Examples of small-scale features include fences, benches, monuments, signs, and road markers.”

Small-scale features along the Teche include both functional and aesthetic insertions. Bulkheads are one of the most common functional features on the bayou; several have been constructed along property edges to combat erosion or stabilize sections of the bank.



Figure 34: Bulkhead along bayou promenade in Franklin

Standardized mile markers punctuate the bayou banks; they were installed as part of the Bayou Teche National Water Trail infrastructure. Numbers indicate the distance from the bayou's headwaters in Port Barre.



Figure 35: Portage sign at Keystone, with standard mileage sign

Private wharfs are scattered along the bayou, marking an intersection of public and private space. They are used for private leisure, often for fishing.



Figure 36: Private fishing dock

Religious statues, most commonly of the Virgin Mary, are common on residential properties and are often surrounded by shrines or grottoes for private adoration and public view.



Figure 37: Statue of Virgin Mary in Cecil Poche Park in Parks

Archaeological Sites:

“Archaeological sites are the ruins, traces, or deposited artifacts in a landscape, evidenced by the presence of either surface or subsurface features. Examples of features associated with archaeological resources include road traces, structural ruins, irrigation system ruins, and reforested fields.”

A complex of three platform mounds has been located along the bayou near its confluence with the Atchafalaya River. They are known to contain clam shells and pottery shards, but have been badly eroded by environmental conditions and human

disturbance. The sites are visible from the bayou, but they are all located on private property. An unmarked slave cemetery is located in Promise Land, near Parks.

2.5 Identifying Legacy Resources

Though the bayou and adjacent lands have seen considerable change since their first human habitation by the Native Americans, evidence of the various stages of evolution stands along the banks, and locating those resources is a critical first step in interpreting their stories. Land settlement patterns, preserved architecture, public open spaces, agricultural facilities, and other elements punctuate the Teche landscape and serve as witness to ways of life on the bayou. The following is an inventory of existing resources that help to narrate the life of the Teche. While the previous section identifies general characteristics of the bayou, the list below identifies particular resources found on its banks. The inventory is restricted only to resources located immediately along the bayou's banks or within a five minute walk of public access.

Robin House and Barn

1616 LA-31, Arnaudville, LA 70512

The house combines French Creole and Greek Revival style features and is of bousillage construction; the barn is an example of the French Creole building tradition. The house is dated to c. 1835 and the barn to c. 1820.

Shadows-on-the-Teche

317 E. Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560

Historic, Greek Revival style plantation house and gardens constructed in 1834 for sugarcane planter David Weeks. Currently owned and operated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Saint Martin de Tours Catholic Church

133 S. Main Street, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Catholic church founded in 1765 by early Acadian settlers in the Attakapas region and called the “Mother Church of the Acadians.” The church sits at the center of the historic downtown Saint Martinville, on the banks of the Teche.

Evangeline Oak Park

122 Evangeline Street, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Bayou-front public park featuring a prominent live oak tree famed for its relationship with the heroine of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s 1847 epic poem *Evangeline* which chronicled the exile and resettlement of the Acadians.

Longfellow-Evangeline State Park

1200 N. Main Street, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

A state historic site exploring the diverse peoples who have settled along the Teche. The site was once within the territory of the Attakapas Indians, then developed as a cattle ranch, then as an indigo plantation, then as a cotton, and eventually as a

sugarcane farm. Original structures, architectural reproductions, and craft demonstrations teach about the region's history.

Louisiana Sugar Cane Cooperative

6092 LA-347, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Historic sugar mill along the bayou. The mill is still in operation, producing raw sugar and black strap molasses.

Cecil R. Poche Memorial Park

Parks, LA 70582

Community park with tennis courts, pavilions, a walking loop, and public bayou access.

Promise Land

LA-347, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Historic African-American community south of Parks, Louisiana. Recently there has been archeological activity here in hopes of locating and recognizing a slave cemetery along the bayou.

Lake Martin

Lake Martin, Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

9,500 acres of cypress tupelo swamp and bottomland hardwood forest habitat.

Particularly notable for its rookery's bird watching and for alligators; features boardwalk and visitor center.

Ruth Canal

Canal constructed in 1920 between the Bayou Teche and the Vermilion River to supply irrigation water to adjacent rice fields.

New Iberia City Park

300 Parkview Drive, New Iberia, LA 70563

Community park with public bayou access.

Bayou Teche Museum

131 E. Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560

Museum in historic downtown New Iberia featuring exhibits relating to life on the Teche.

Saint Mary Sugar Co-Op

20056 LA-182, Jeanerette, LA 70544

Sugar mill specializing in raw sugar production.

Chitimacha Museum

3289 Chitimacha Trail, Charenton, LA 70523

Museum featuring exhibits of Chitimacha lifestyles, customs, and ceremonies from their earliest settlement in the region to today.

Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana

155 Chitimacha Loop Road, Charenton, LA 70523

The land of the federally-recognized Chitimacha tribe in Charenton, LA.

Hebert Washington Park

331 E. Martin Luther King Road, Charenton, LA 70523

Community park with public bayou access.

Oaklawn Manor

3296 E. Oaklawn Drive, Franklin, LA 70538

Plantation home constructed in 1837 for Alexander Porter, an Irishman who settled on the Teche in the present-day town of Franklin (thus that part of the bayou is called “Irish Bend”). Porter was an attorney and politician. Oaklawn is a white-stuccoed Greek Revival brick house with porticoes, Tuscan columns, and a pediment.

Grevemberg House Museum

407 Sterling Road, Franklin, LA 70538

Greek Revival style home built in 1851; situated in Franklin's city park and open to the public.

Sterling Sugars Inc.

611 Irish Bend Rd, Franklin, LA 70538

Established in 1807 under the name Sterling Sugar and Railway Company. The refinery was built in 1890 and specializes in the production of raw sugar.

Arlington Plantation House

11532 LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

Constructed in the 1830s by Euphrosie Carlin on a large Spanish land grant.

Arlington Plantation is notable for its cruciform plan and identical porticos.

Morey Park

1156-1198 Main Street, Patterson, LA 70392

Public park along the bayou; serves as the northern border of the Patterson

Commercial Historic District.

Lake End Park

2300 LA-70, Morgan City, LA 70380

Private park located among cypress and oak trees on Lake Palourde, known as "Clam

Lake," named by early French settlers. Features fishing and camping amenities.

Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge

1725 Willow Street, Franklin, LA 70538

National refuge area established in 2001 to manage bottomland hardwood forests, cypress tupelo blackgum swamps, and marshes. Significant habitat area for black bears, songbirds, waterfowl, and raptors.

Bouligny Plaza

128 W .Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560

Originally designed as part of the New Iberia courthouse complex constructed in 1884. The site continued to serve as a public plaza after the construction of the present-day courthouse in 1940.

Cajun Sugar Co-Op Inc.

2711 Side Road, New Iberia, LA 70563

Sugar mill along the Bayou Teche; company founded in 1964 and manufactures raw sugar, syrup, and finished cane sugar from sugarcane.

Magnolia Park

Magnolia Drive, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Community park with bayou access located near Evangeline State Historic Park.

Lever Saint John, Inc.

6142A Resweber Highway, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Sugar factory north of Saint Martinville producing raw sugar and black strap molasses.

Historic plantation structures associated with the modern sugar mill still exist adjacent to the mill.

Parc des Ponts Breaux

Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

Community park located near the vertical lift bridge of Breaux Bridge and the town's historic downtown. Serves as the site of the Bayou Teche Paddle Trail trailhead.

Bayou Teche Experience

317 E. Bridge Street, Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

A kayak and canoe rental facility located adjacent to Parc des Ponts Breaux.

Bayou Teche Visitor Center

318 E. Bridge Street, Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

Information center offering travel opportunities along the bayou.

Keystone Lock & Dam

South of Saint Martinville, LA

A lock and dam constructed in 1914 by the Army Corps of Engineers to raise water levels in the Upper Teche (north of Saint Martinville) to a navigable level.

Stephanie Plantation House

1862 LA-347, Arnaudville, LA 70512

Originally owned by Martin Milony Duralde, a French Basque native of France who arrived in Louisiana in 1769. The house was constructed on Duralde's 1234-acre tract along the Teche around 1781.

Ransonet House

431 E Bridge Street, Breaux Bridge, LA 70517

A Queen Anne style house built in 1898 by Leonce Ransonet. Currently a private residence.

Pellerin-Chauffe House

4179 Poydras St.

Built by Edmond Pellerin in 1896. Queen Anne Revival Cottage made completely of cypress. Original outbuildings on the property include a shed, cistern, well house, two barns, two chicken houses, and a feeder coop.

Burdin House

422 N. Pinaud Street, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Queen Anne Revival style house built in 1893 for John Burdin, a local lumberman and brickyard owner.

Old Castillo Hotel

220 E. Port Street, Saint Martinville, LA 70582

Constructed by local merchant Jean Pierre Vasseur in 1835 as a hotel, restaurant, and tavern serving steamboat travellers on Bayou Teche.

Lutzenberger Foundry and Pattern Shop Building

505 Jane Street, New Iberia, LA 70563

Constructed in 1880s by German immigrant F.S. Lutzenberger. Served as casting and repair shop for steamboat and sugar mill parts.

Andrew Romero House

310 Marie Street, New Iberia, LA 70563

Constructed in 1937; a two-story plaster-over-concrete block residence in the Moderne style.

Evangeline Theater

129 E. Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560

Constructed during the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century; originally was utilized as a grocery store and was converted to a movie theater in 1929, and it was renovated between 1939 to 1940 in the Art Deco style seen today.

Amant Broussard House

1400 E. Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560

Early Louisiana raised cottage constructed circa 1800. Features cypress piers, bousillage construction, and many original signatures.

Bayside

9805 Old Jeanerette Road, Jeanerette, LA 70544

Two-story white brick plantation home constructed in 1850 by Francis DuBose Richardson, a planter and state legislator. The property also features a barn, stables, and a milk house.

Hewes House

1617 Main Street, Jeanerette, LA 70544

Queen Anne Colonial Revival style house constructed circa 1895 by co-owner of the Jeanerette Lumber and Shingle Company Harry B. Hewes.

LeJeune's Bakery

1510 Main Street, Jeanerette, LA 70544

Historic bakery known for French bread and ginger cakes; established in 1884.

Albania Plantation House

1842 LA-182, Jeanerette, LA 70544

Cypress Plantation home built between 1837 and 1842 by Charles François

Grevemberg. The home features an unsupported three-story spiral staircase.

Heaton House

2194 Chitimacha Trail, Charenton, LA

Italianate villa built by Albert Heaton in 1853, was moved by barge in 1966 from Franklin and restored in its present location. The house is an Alexander Jackson Davis design which appeared in Andrew Jackson Downing's "The Architecture of Country Houses" in 1850.

Darby House

102 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538

A raised Louisiana cottage of the French Colonial style built around 1815 by Alfred Hennen. One of the nation's finest examples of French Colonial style architecture.

Birg House

LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

Also known as Columbia Hall; a massive, rambling, late-nineteenth century frame country house located about two miles northwest of Franklin amid sugarcane fields along Bayou Teche.

Hilaire Lancon House

3934 Irish Bend Road, Franklin, LA 70538

A small mid-nineteenth century frame galleried cottage moved to its current bayou-side location in 1993.

Arlington Plantation House

56 Main Street, Franklin, LA 70538

Greek Revival Plantation home constructed around 1850 with maintained gardens.

Dixie Plantation House

LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

A two-story frame Greek Revival plantation house constructed in 1845. Dixie has a long and close association with Murphy J. Foster, a major figure in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Louisiana political history.

Alice C. Plantation

10736 LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

Constructed around 1850; one of many Greek Revival Plantation homes in St. Mary Parish. The Alice C. Plantation is unique for its double gallery.

Hanson Lumber Co.

10400 LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

Established in 1900; large, two-story galleried building constructed of cypress which served as the lumber company office until the 1950s. In the "Golden Years" of the Louisiana lumber boom (c.1905-c.1925), 4.3 million acres of timber were harvested, highlighting the significance of the industry in the economic development of the Teche region.

Joshua B. Cary House

9107 LA-182, Franklin, LA 70538

Greek Revival style home constructed in 1839 by Joshua Cary.

Calumet Plantation House

LA-182, Louisiana

The residence now known as "Calumet" was the "O. and N. Cornay Plantation," built around 1860 for Octave Cornay, a sugar mill owner. During the Civil War, it was the site of a number of military engagements, most notably being the Battle of Bisland. Daniel Thompson, a sugar planter and research scientist, acquired the Cornay home

site. Harry Palmerston Williams, a wealthy lumber magnate and aviation pioneer, later bought it.

Idlewild

LA-182, Patterson, LA 70392

Raised Greek Revival plantation house constructed in 1854. The Old Spanish Trail, once the front boundary for the property, was used for horse and horse drawn vehicular travel before, during, and after the Civil War. Confederate and Union troops used this path in the Battle of Bisland and Union General Nathaniel P. Banks used Idlewild for his command post during this campaign. The property was obtained in 1872 by Union Navy Captain I. D. Seybern, who named it Idlewild.

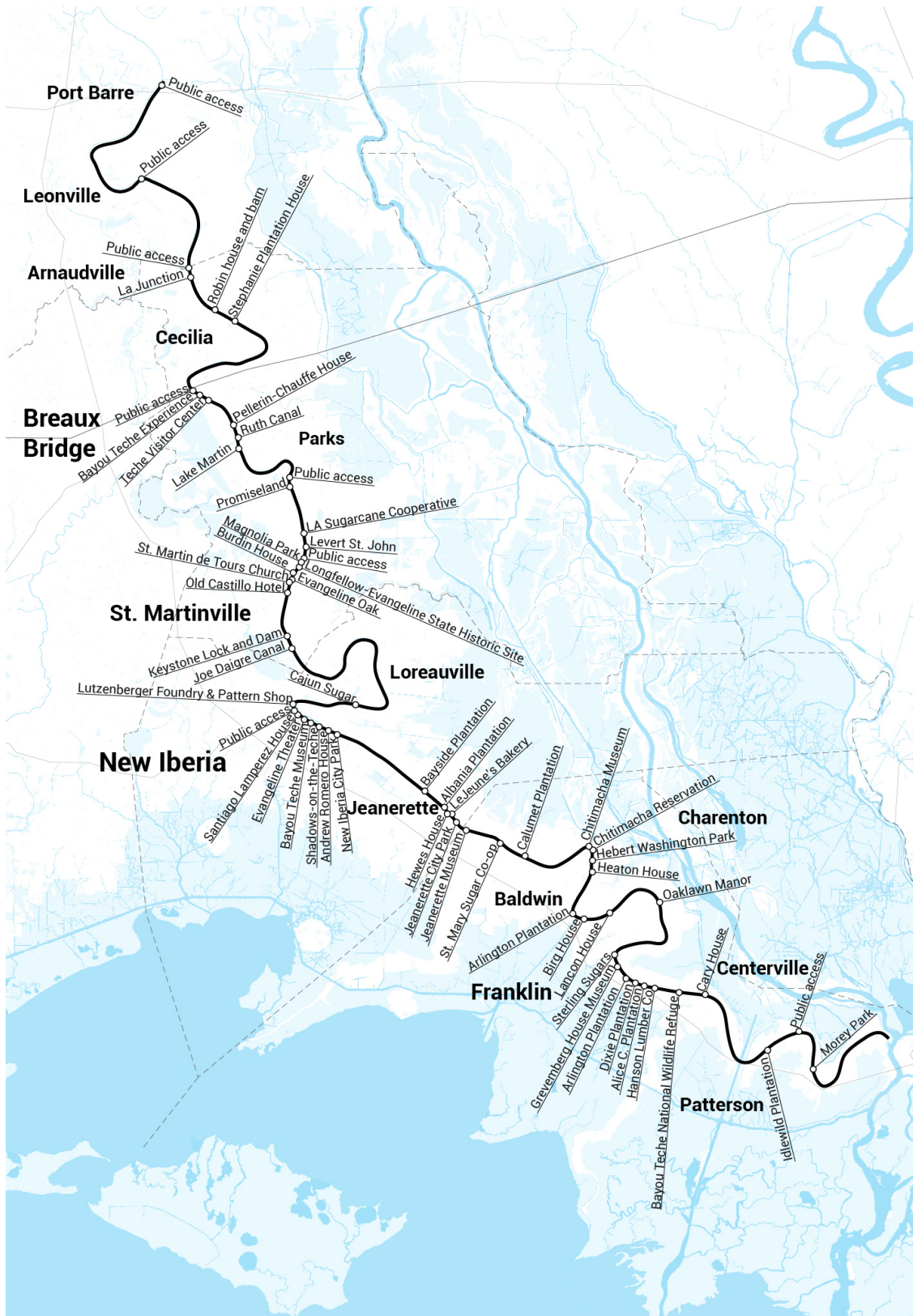


Figure 38: Map of identified heritage resources in the immediate vicinity of the bayou

2.6 Establishing Interpretive Themes

After locating existing resources that narrate the stories of the Teche, overarching interpretive themes emerged to guide the development of design interventions. All of the identified resources seemed to fit well within the following three thematic categories:

1) People of the Bayou (People)

This theme celebrates the cultural heritage of the bayou, tracing the many groups of settlers who have made their lives along the Teche.

2) Bayou as Resource (Place)

This theme recognizes the integral role the bayou has played in providing physical and economic sustenance to the region through agriculture, transportation, and other utilization.

3) Bayou Legacy (Promise)

This theme explores the long history of human engagement with the bayou and encourages dialogue about the legacy modern users will leave to future generations.

Public Access	Existing Resources					Interpretive Potential				
	Visitor Information	Public restrooms	Non-motorized boat launch	Camping facilities	Food/ restaurants	Natural legacy	Agricultural legacy	Architectural legacy	Cultural legacy	Engineering legacy
1. Port Barre			●	●	●	●	●			
2. Leonville				●		●				
3. Arnaudville				●		●			●	●
4. Cecilia				●		●				●
5. Breaux Bridge	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●
6. Parks			●	●	●					●
7. Saint Martinville			●	●	●	●		●	●	●
8. New Iberia			●	●		●		●	●	●
9. Jeanerette				●		●		●	●	
10. Charenton						●	●			●
11. Baldwin						●	●		●	
12. Franklin				●		●	●	●	●	●
13. Centerville				●			●			
14. Patterson				●		●	●			●

Figure 39: Table identifying amenities and interpretive potential at each of the existing public access points

CHAPTER 3//TELLING THE TALE

The three interpretive themes of People, Place, and Promise help establish the design priorities for the Bayou Teche National Water Trail. They provide a thematic unity that makes interpretive interventions coherent along the entire trail, bringing a sense of continuity to the user throughout his or her experience on the bayou. Since interpretation of the Teche legacy is a layered process consisting of a range of histories and perspectives, the method of intervention should be a sensitive match to particular resources.

3.1 Overview of Interpretive Strategies

In order to determine which resources are best suited for interpretation and through which interpretive interventions, the definition of a design methodology is necessary. These themes will be explored through four distinct types of interpretive interventions. Resources are coordinated with interpretive intervention typologies according to their complexity and individual site opportunities. Criteria for determining appropriate interventions include:

- Narrative potential
 - What stories does this resource tell? How complex is the story? Can it be broken down into constituent parts?
- Location

- Where is the resource? Is it located immediately the bank, or is it only visible from the water? What is its presence to the user?
- Public access
 - Is the resource accessible to the public? What is its proximity to a public access point along the bayou? Is it near an established destination?

The four types of intervention include:

1) Resource identification:

The most basic of the interpretive interventions is to identify legacy resources from the water. Variations of sign typologies allow identification of features that are immediately on the bank and ones that are visible from the water, but too distant to access.



Figure 40: Potential identification signage for bayou resources

These would be used to mark resources including, but not limited to:

- Native plants and their cultural associations
- Invasive plants and threat
- Architectural typologies
- Canals
- Natural connecting waterways
- Agricultural operations
- Representative industrial operations
- Feats of hydro-engineering

2) Bayou wayfinding:

Wayfinding interventions will help users place individual identified resources into the context of a larger bayou narrative. By better understanding their own location on the waterway, they are able to make connections during their travel.

Bridges present a convenient means of conveying location information to users on the trail.



Figure 41: Potential wayfinding mechanism on bayou bridges

3) Bank installations:

Installations on the bank allow for more thoughtful interactions with particular resources on the water. They go beyond identification, offering opportunities to

make personal connections while still remaining accessible to users while in their boats. While the function of Typology 1, Resource Identification, is quite literal, these more conceptual installations encourage personal interpretation. It also holds potential in communicating less tangible aspects of cultural relationships with the water.



Figure 42: Potential bank installations marking arpent lines of early Teche land divisions

4) Site-specific design:

The design of strategically located lands adjacent to the bayou can provide an complement to the interventions on the water. As users step out of their boats, they have an opportunity to see the bayou differently -- from a new angle and from the outside looking in. Site design offers greater access to resources on land. This

presents possibilities for forging connections between bayou conditions and engagement with the adjacent landscape. Site-specific interpretive design can be appropriate in areas with a particularly high concentration of heritage resources, in areas of particular historical significance, in areas of great visibility or easy public access, or in areas of unique user/resource engagement.



Figure 43: Potential overlook at Keystone, forging connections between agriculture and the bayou

3.2 Opportunities for Site Design

To illustrate the role site design might play in connecting trail users to Teche legacy resources and narratives, three particular areas have been identified for design interventions. These three sites reference the unifying themes of People, Place, and Promise while also taking advantage of resources and opportunities particular to that

site. Each of the three site design spots fit into the thematic schema: the Breaux Bridge Trailhead design is oriented around the bayou's future as a legacy waterway, the Keystone design is oriented around the bayou's identity as place and resource, and the Indian Bend design is oriented around the bayou's people. The interpretive opportunities identified below are by no means exhaustive; rather, they serve to begin a compelling dialogue about the narrative agency of site design and its role in the overarching interpretive goals of the Bayou Teche Water Trail. Details about the three areas identified for site design are listed below:

Breaux Bridge Trailhead

This site has been designated the trailhead of the Bayou Teche Water Trail. Founded in 1771 by Acadian settlers, Breaux Bridge is known for its Cajun and Creole heritage. The town has grown and developed much in the late 20th and 21st centuries, and it is an appropriate place to explore questions of legacy and stewardship. It is located at the foot of the iconic swing bridge from which the town gets its name. Its proximity to I-10, existing paddling infrastructure, and walkability make it well-suited for interpreting the theme of the Teche's legacy. The site defined here (2.2 acres) is known as Parc des Ponts Breaux, borders historic downtown Breaux Bridge, and is operated by St. Martin Parish.

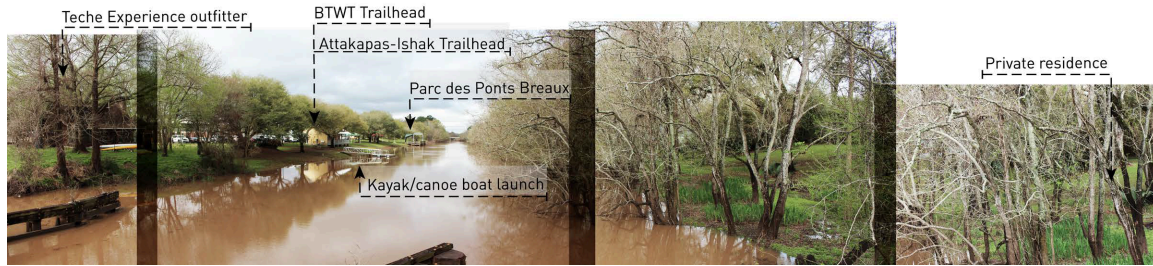


Figure 44: Photo montage of Breaux Bridge Trailhead site

- Trail to the future: Chosen as the trailhead for the Bayou Teche Water Trail and the Attakapas-Ishak Trailhead, the site has potential to interpret the past and present connections between land and water in the Teche region.
- Habitat exhibit: This border of the site is shared with an open field belonging to Breaux Bridge Junior High School. Increased residential development along the bayou has particularly affected Breaux Bridge, and a riparian habitat exhibit can educate users about bank ecology.
- Bridge installation: The town's iconic bridge, its origin stretching back to construction by Firmin Breaux in 1799, borders the site and offers an opportunity to interpret the role bridges have played in developing the Teche.



Figure 45: Interpretive opportunities at Breaux Bridge Trailhead site

Keystone Lock and Dam

Opened in 1913, the Lock and Dam allowed year-round navigation of the Upper Teche and is the oldest operating lock in the Delta Region. Its relationship with hydro-modification and commerce presents opportunities for the interpretive theme of bayou as place and resource. Since boats cannot cross the dam and passage through the lock requires Parish assistance, paddlers must portage around the structures. This provides a rare opportunity to engage both land and water. The property identified here (7.2 acres) is owned by St. Martin Parish.

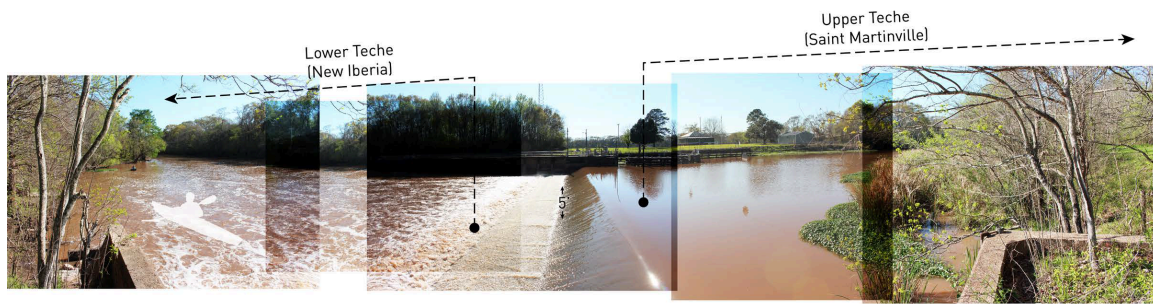


Figure 46: Photo montage of Keystone site

Some potential interpretive interventions include:

- Keystone lookout: This elevated walk allows users vantage over this characteristically flat landscape and facilitates connection between agriculture, transportation, and the Teche.
- Portage trail: Trail characterizing distinctions of the Upper and Lower Teche.
- Navigation gallery: This lockkeeper's house (1917) can be restored and utilized as a gallery exhibiting the history of navigation on the bayou.
- Native plant walk: Boardwalk trail and shady seating area featuring native plants.

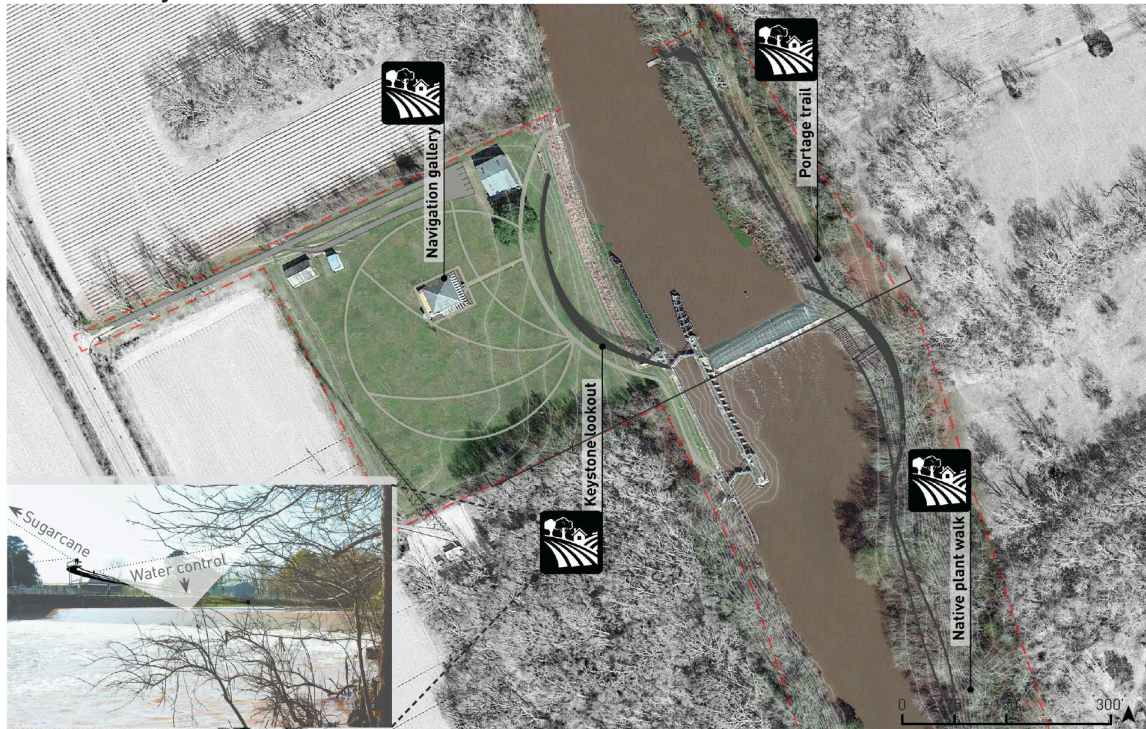


Figure 47: Interpretive opportunities at Keystone site

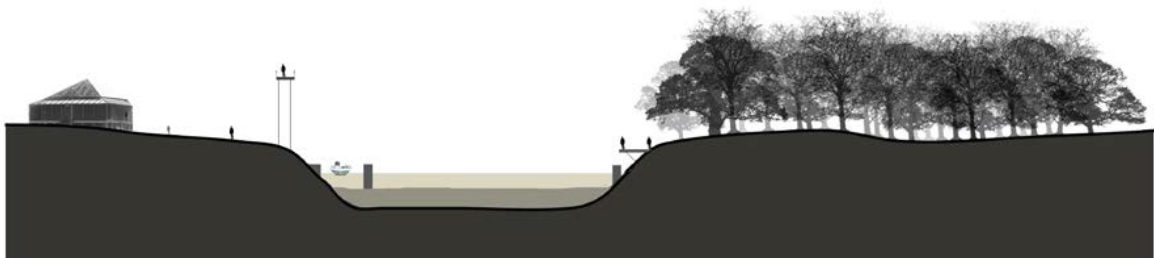


Figure 48: Conceptual section of Keystone design elements

Indian Bend

The first in a series of distinctive bends in the Lower Teche, Indian Bend is home to the Chitimacha reservation. The Chitimacha tribe once claimed the entire Atchafalaya Basin, extending from Lafayette to New Orleans and south to the Gulf. After a series of conflicts with Europeans and Americans, the tribe established a reservation along the Teche in Charenton, LA in 1826. Charenton lies at the top of a series of bends in the bayou. These bends are reminiscent of the Mississippi's channel and references the bayou's geologic past. It is connected by a canal to Lake Fausse Pointe and the Atchafalaya Basin, environments that hold tribal significance. The site's affiliation with cultural heritage makes it well-suited for interpreting the People of the Teche theme. The site identified here (2.75 acres) is owned by the LA DOT and a private landowner.



Figure 49: Photo montage of Indian Bend site

- Bend Park: This triangle parcel, bounded by the bayou, a canal, and LA-87, can serve as a resting area for paddlers. It is also well-suited for interpreting the process of meander formation.

- Basin passage: This artificial canal provides water access to Lake Fausse Pointe and the Atchafalaya Basin. These areas are culturally and spiritually significant to the Chitimacha.
- Bank restoration: The parcel east of the canal has been substantially disturbed by the construction of the canal and of highway on top of it. This is an opportunity for a bank restoration exhibit.



Figure 50: Interpretive opportunities at Indian Bend site

CHAPTER 4//SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Future Challenges as a Legacy Corridor

In order to present a coherent, sustainable vision for the future of interpretive efforts on Bayou Teche, there must be a dialogue between managers of the Water Trail and landowners along the bayou regarding bank management practices. The aesthetic character and ecologic vitality of the Teche depend largely on the management practices of private property owners who have no legal responsibility to the priorities of the Bayou Teche Water Trail. Interpretive interventions must be designed not only for visitors and tourists, but also for locals and landowners, as they are the most critical potential stewards of the bayou. Furthermore, this conversation about land management adjacent to the bayou and public versus private interests will be at the center of any future planning efforts along the Teche. Whether particular bank BMPs are to be recommended or mandated along the Teche to preserve ecosystemic health and visual integrity is bound to be a controversial but unavoidable point of discussion.

4.2 Future Opportunities as a Legacy Corridor

As the interpretive infrastructure of the Bayou Teche Water Trail is better defined and developed, there will be opportunities to establish connections with other multi-modal trails in the area. For instance, The Atakapas-Ishak Bike Trail intersects the Water Trail at Port Barre, Arnaudville, Breaux Bridge, and Saint Martinville and connects the trail to Lafayette, Henderson, Opelousas, and other communities. There may also be

opportunities to connect to the Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail, which features several natural and cultural resources that are connected by water to the Bayou Teche Water Trail.

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VITA

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