



Louisiana History and Culture

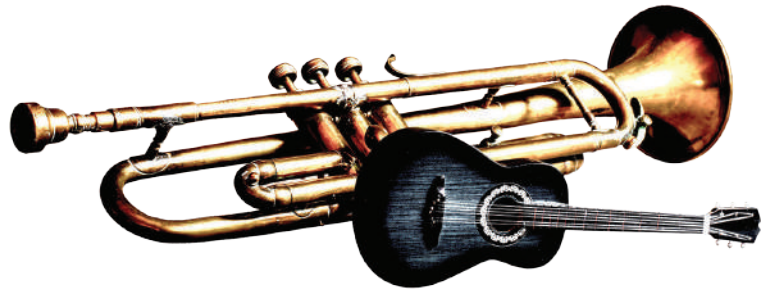
Chitimacha basket



Brown pelicans



Music



New Orleans



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Louisiana History and Culture



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Table of Contents

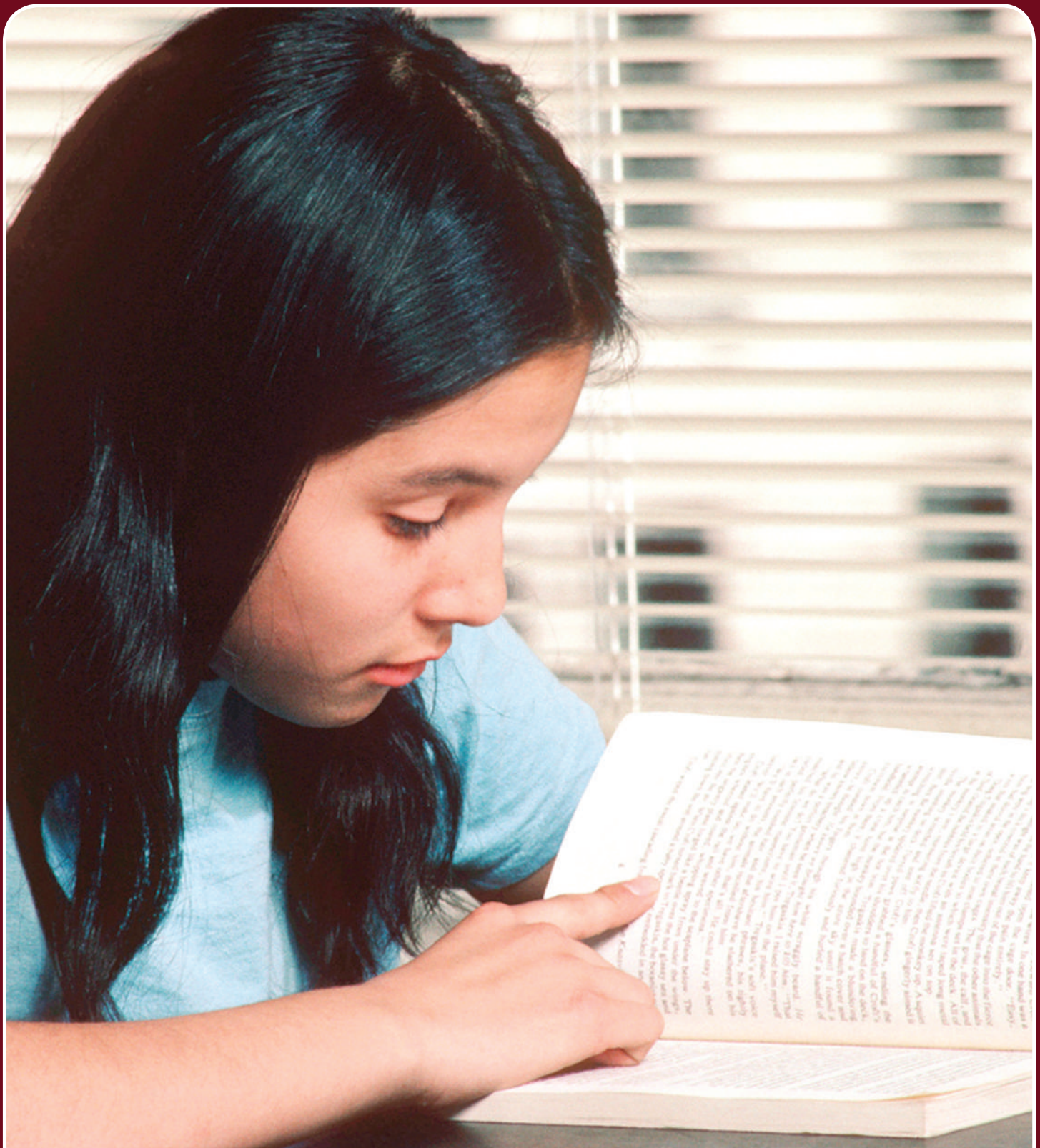
Chapter 1	Louisiana’s First Inhabitants	2
Chapter 2	Louisiana as a Colony	20
Chapter 3	Louisiana Joins the United States	37
Chapter 4	Louisiana’s Unique Cultural Heritage	54

Louisiana's First Inhabitants

Louisiana's first peoples did not leave behind any writings. However, they did leave behind things that were used in everyday life. Archaeologists look for artifacts, or objects that were made by people who lived a long time ago.



Stone tools and pottery are artifacts. They give us clues about how Louisiana's first peoples lived. By studying the clues that are left behind, we get a glimpse into what daily life was like thousands of years ago.

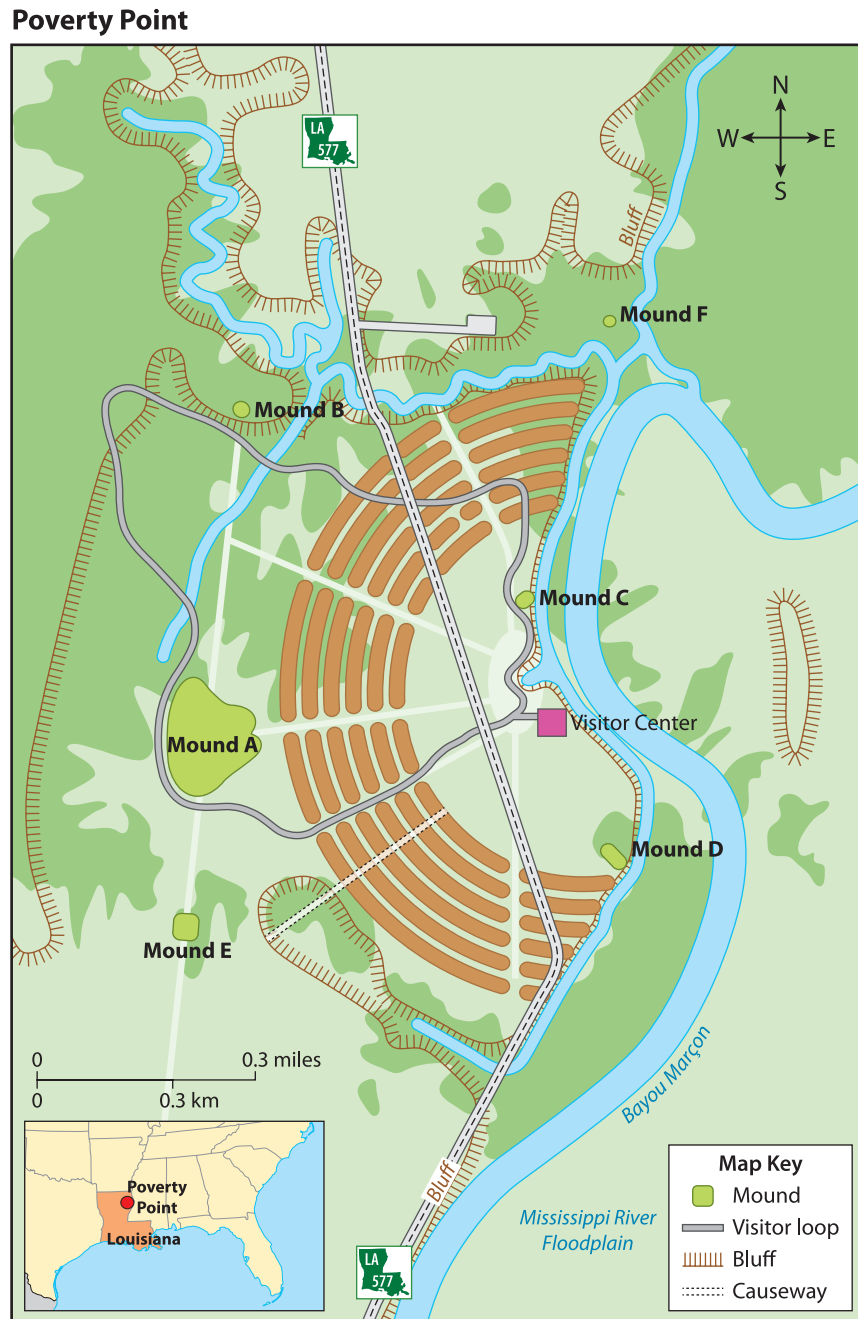


We can also learn about Louisiana's first peoples by reading what scholars and other experts have written about them.

The Clovis people were likely the first people to live in Louisiana. They lived here more than eleven thousand years ago. They were hunter-gatherers. They moved from place to place to find food. The ancestors of the Clovis people made Louisiana their home.



The Poverty Point people lived more than three thousand years ago. They built Louisiana's first large city. They were also hunter-gatherers.



Their home was on a bayou of the Mississippi River. The place where they lived had plenty of small animals, nuts, berries, and fish to eat all year.

The Poverty Point people used the Mississippi River to trade with other peoples. We know this today because archaeologists have found artifacts at Poverty Point that were made by civilizations from other parts of the North American continent.

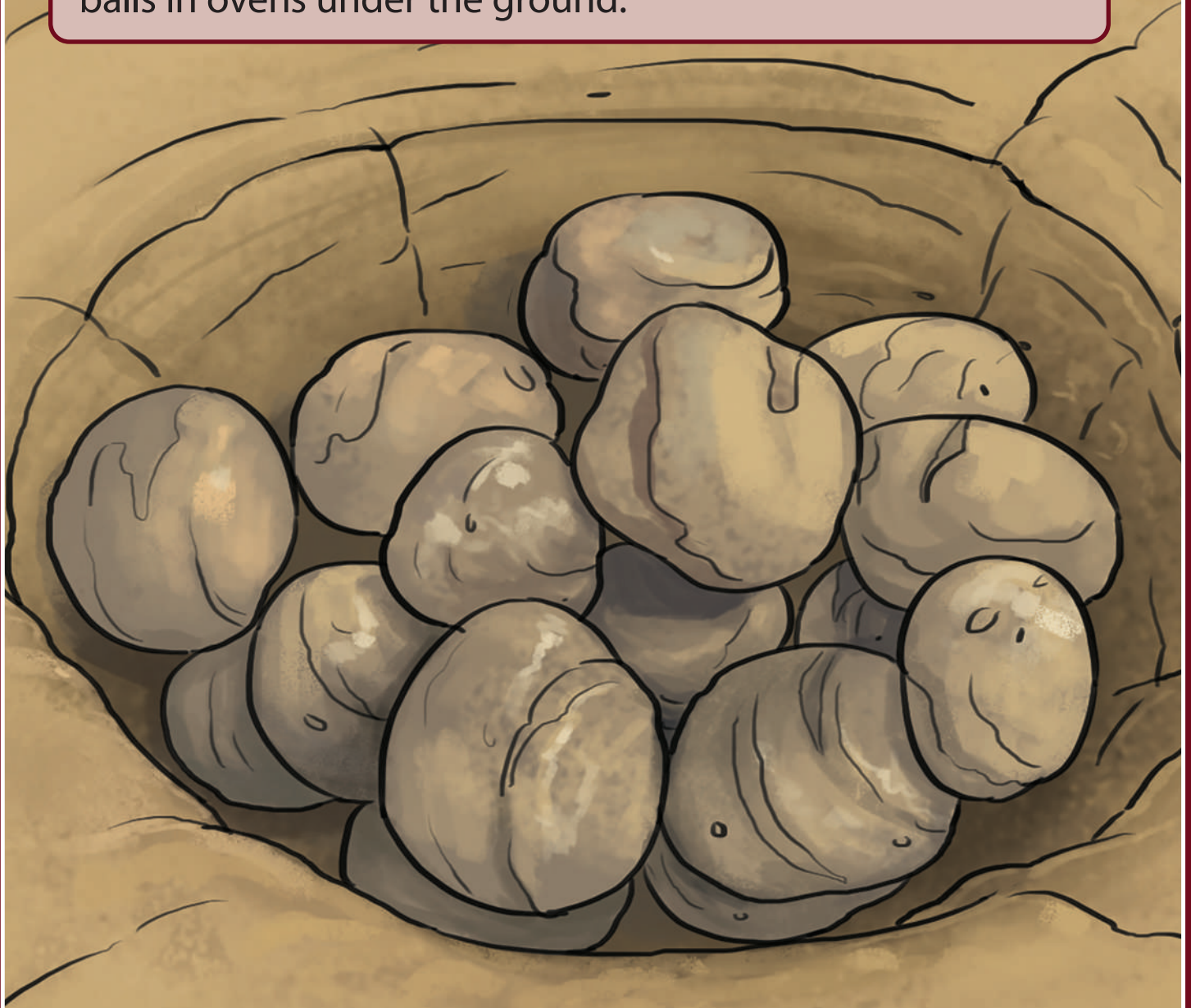


The Poverty Point people built their houses using things they could find in nature. They wove sticks and cane together to make walls. They covered the outside of the walls with mud. When the mud hardened, the inside of the house stayed dry when it rained.



What do you think it would have been like to live in a house like this?

The Poverty Point people had a special way of cooking their food! They made balls out of earth. They heated the cooking balls in ovens under the ground.

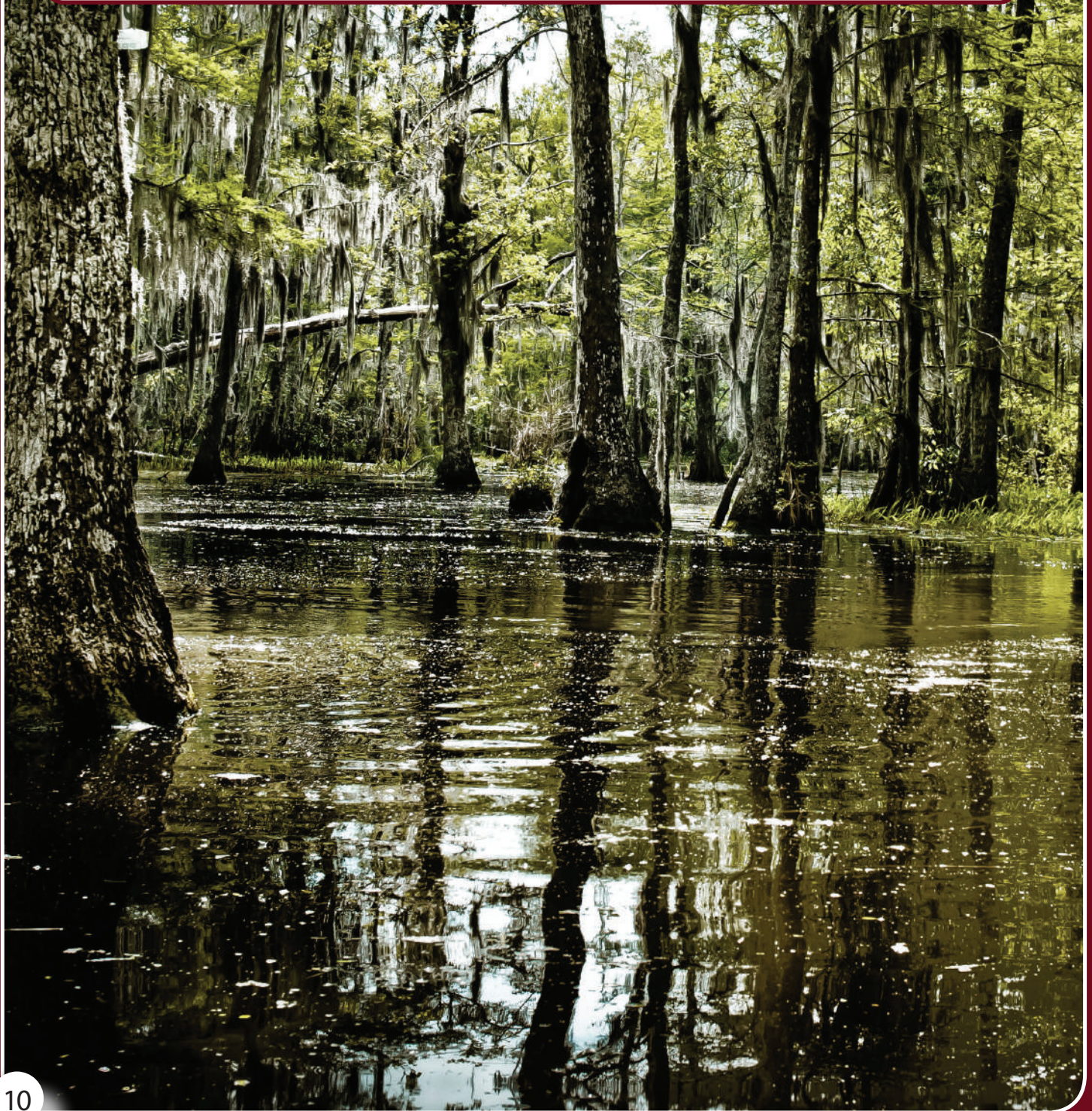


When the cooking balls were hot enough, they dropped them into baskets with water, meats, and vegetables. The heat from the cooking balls cooked the food.

The Poverty Point people were also Mound Builders. They built large mounds from many baskets of dirt. The Poverty Point people had to work together to build the mounds. They used the mounds for ceremonies and for games.

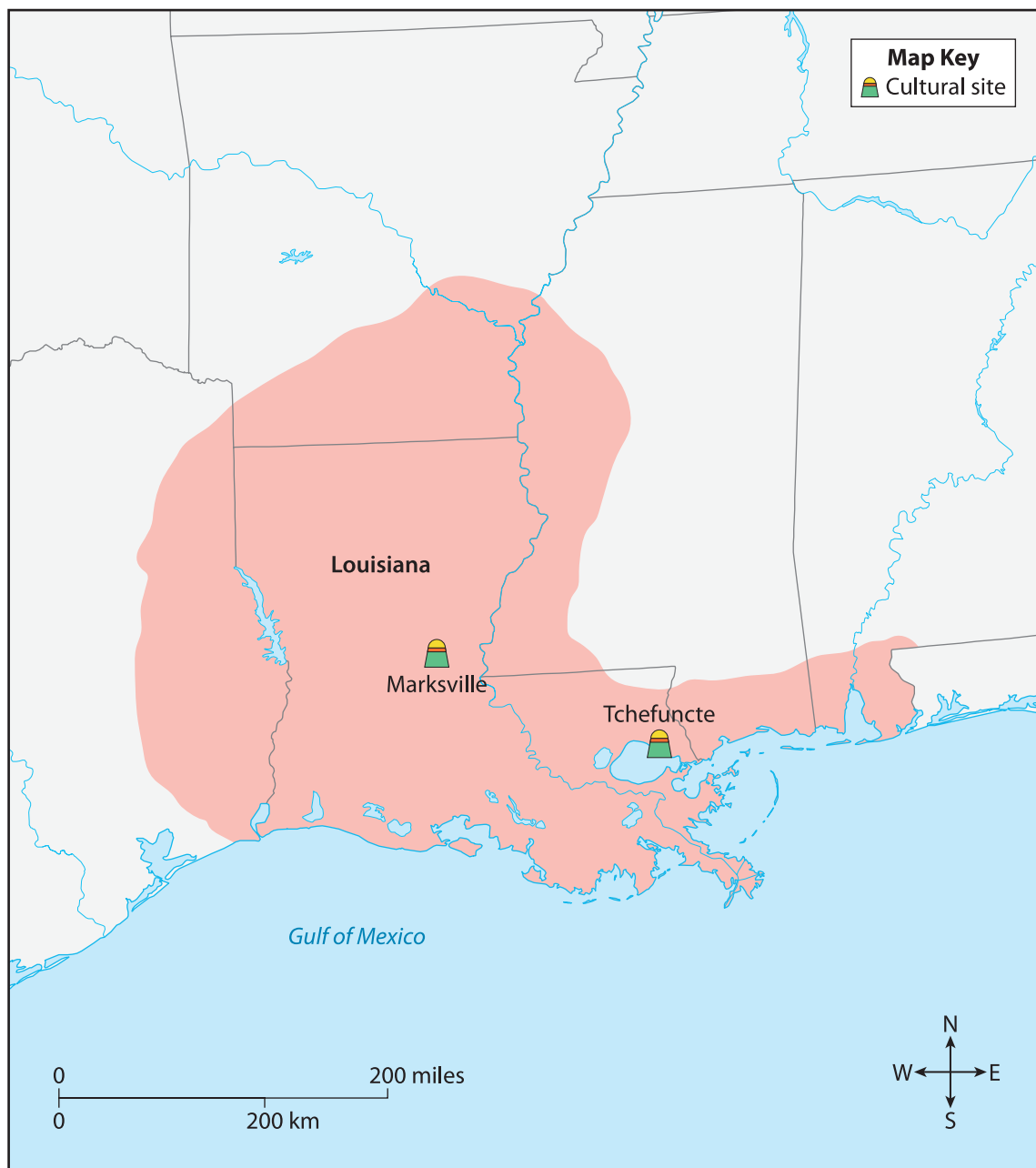


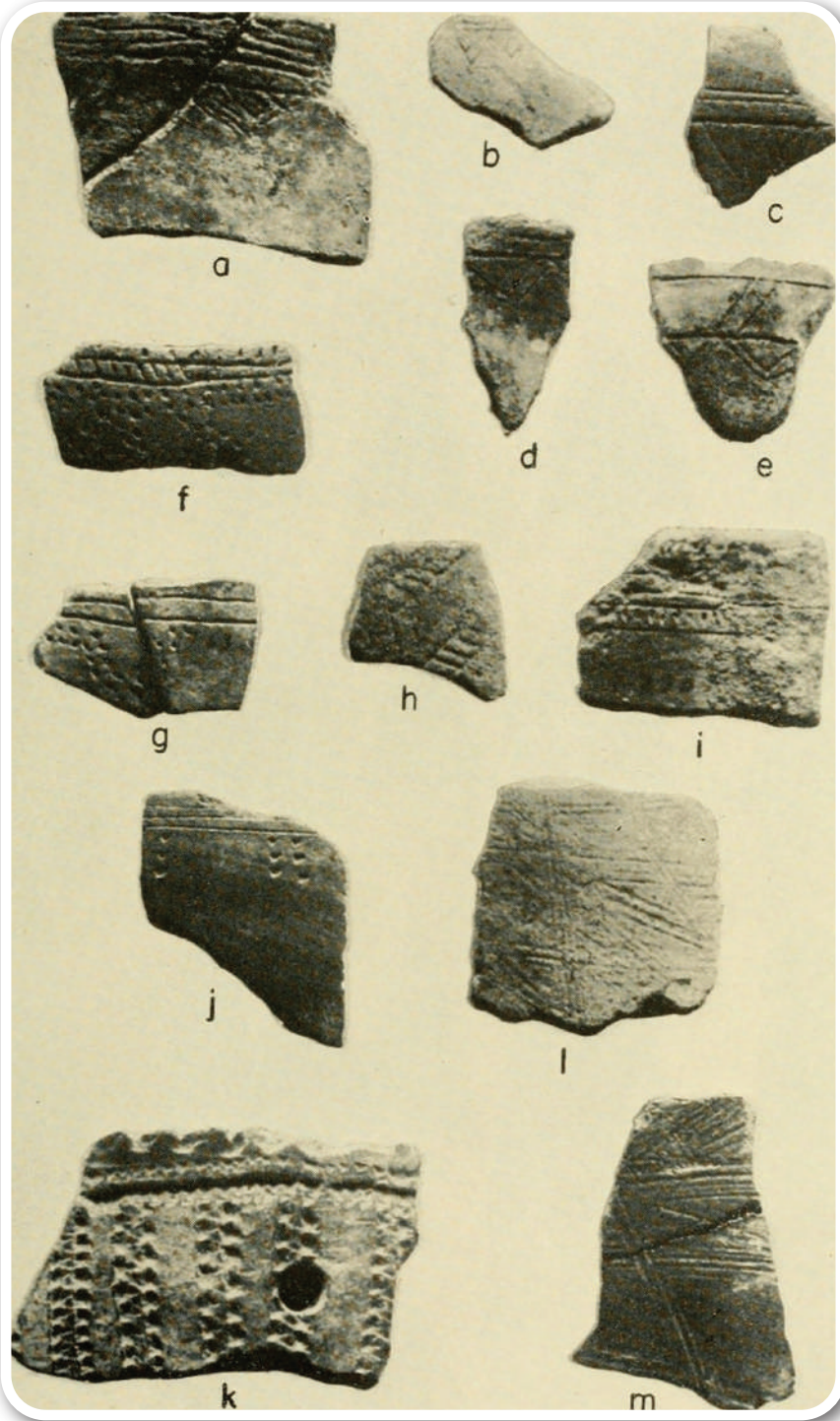
The Poverty Point civilization did not survive. Archaeologists do not know why it disappeared. One reason may be changes in the climate. Another reason may be that flooding caused them to leave their homes.



The Tchefuncte and Marksville peoples came after Poverty Point. They were also hunter-gatherers and Mound Builders. The peoples of the Tchefuncte and Marksville sites used their mounds for ceremonies as well as to bury their dead.

Tchefuncte and Marksville Cultures

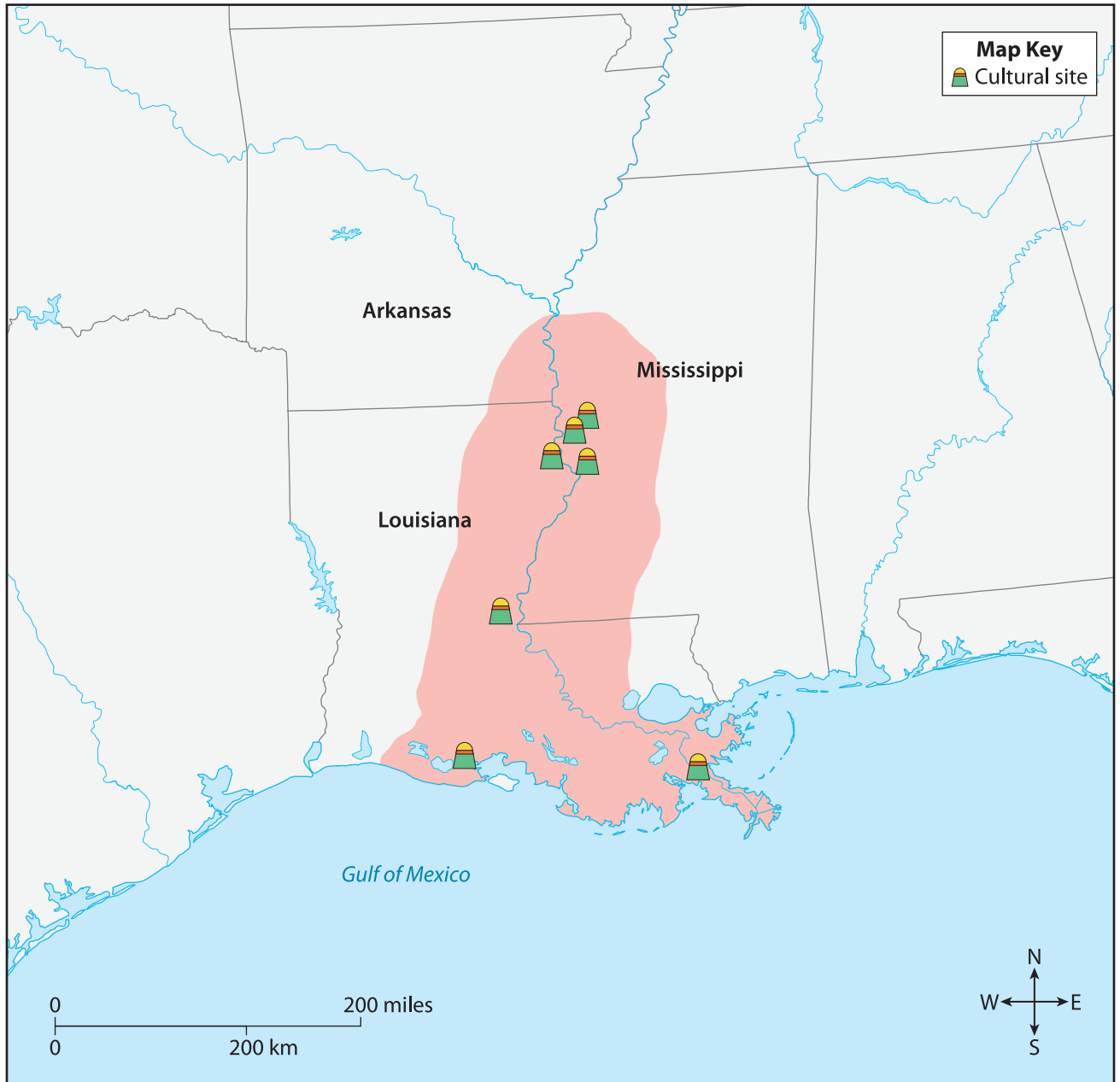




The Tchefuncte and Marksville peoples made lots of beautiful pottery. The designs on their pottery are like those from other peoples who lived in different parts of Louisiana and North America.

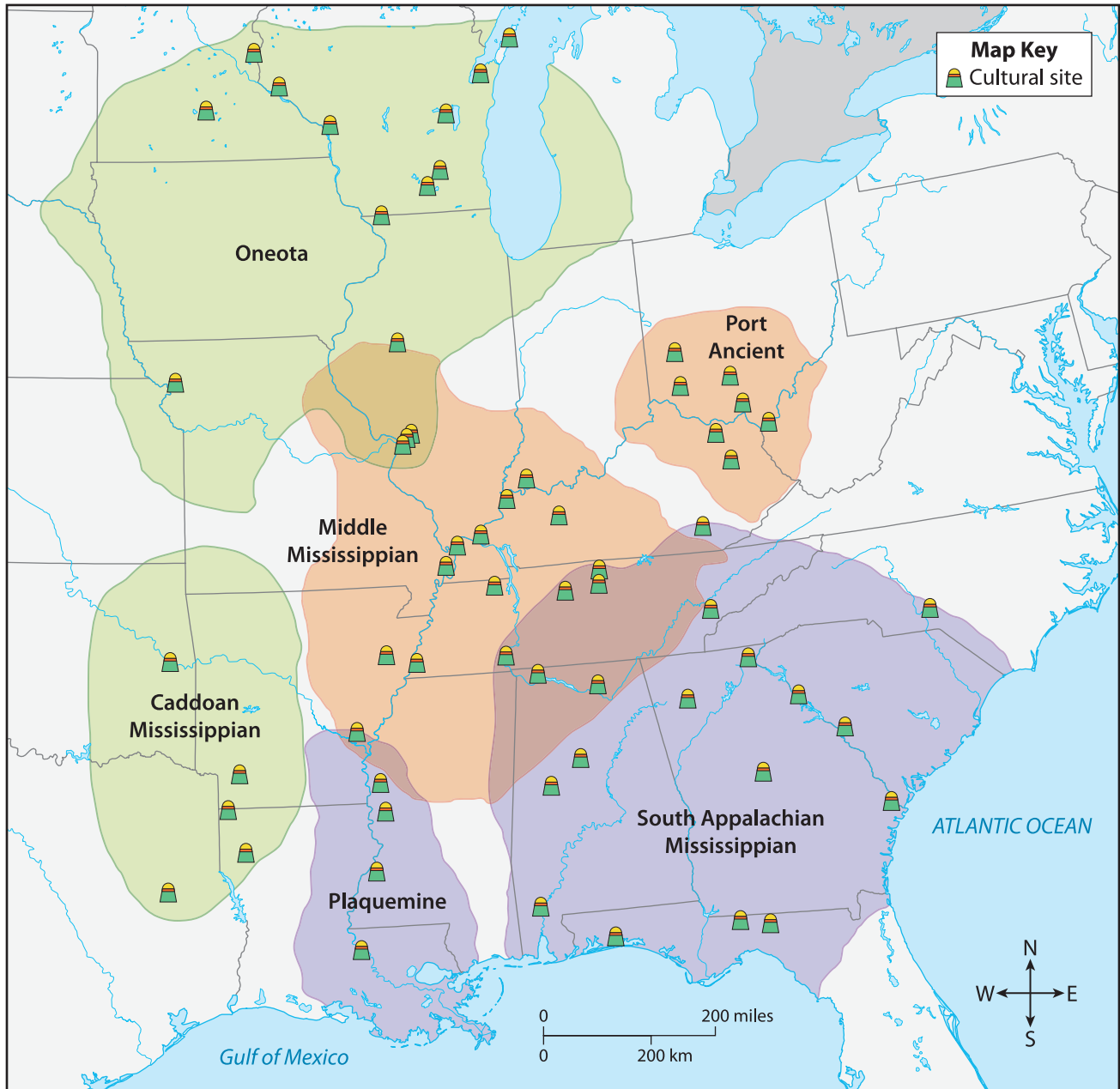
The people of the Coles Creek culture lived more than a thousand years ago. Most Coles Creek people lived in small communities. They hunted, fished, gathered, and grew small gardens. They traveled to the large mounds they built for important ceremonies.

Coles Creek Culture



The Caddo, Mississippian, and Plaquemine peoples lived in Louisiana from the year 800 CE to about 1835 CE. They had a lot in common with Louisianans from the past. They also built and used mounds.

Plaquemine, Mississippian, and Caddo Cultures



These cultures also farmed. Corn was very important to the Mississippians. They built their villages along the Mississippi River. They used the river's water to help grow their corn. The Caddo people grew corn, beans, and squash.



People from Europe settled in Louisiana in the 1700s. Indigenous people, or Native Americans, showed European explorers and settlers how to grow and cook crops such as corn, squash, and beans. They also showed the Europeans how to fish and hunt animals that lived in the area.



Cornbread and grits are two foods from Native American culture that Louisianans still enjoy today!

As more and more European settlers came into the country, the U.S. government made Native American people move away from their homelands. This made it more difficult to protect and save their cultures. Today, many Caddo and Choctaw people are working to keep their cultures alive. One way they do this is by teaching others how to speak the Caddo and Choctaw languages.



The names of many places in Louisiana come from Native American culture. The city of Natchitoches is named for the Native American people who lived there in the past. The name of the Atchafalaya River, the largest swamp in the United States, comes from the Choctaw language. It means long river.



The Chitimacha are another Indigenous people from Louisiana. They are known for their beautiful baskets made from river cane. People have made baskets in Louisiana for thousands of years.



Artists like John Paul Darden, Scarlett Darden, and Melissa Darden Brown keep the tradition of Chitimacha basket weaving alive today.

Louisiana as a Colony

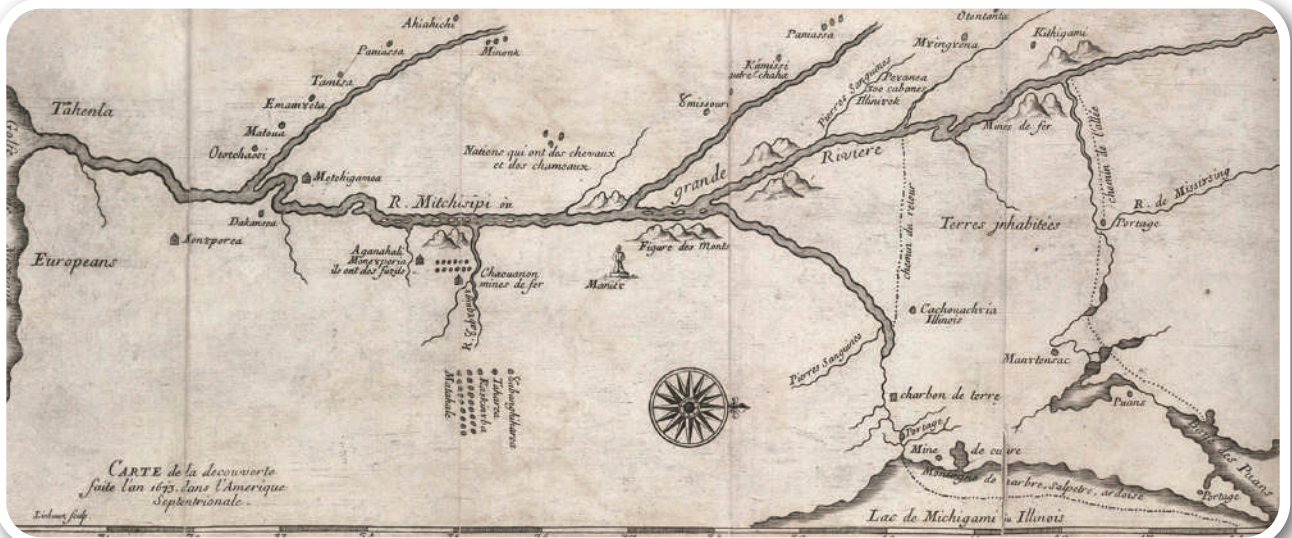
As you have learned, Indigenous people, or Native Americans, lived along the Mississippi River for thousands of years. In 1541 CE, Spanish explorers led by Hernando de Soto became some of the first Europeans to see the mighty Mississippi River.



More than one hundred years later, two French men named Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette explored the Mississippi River.



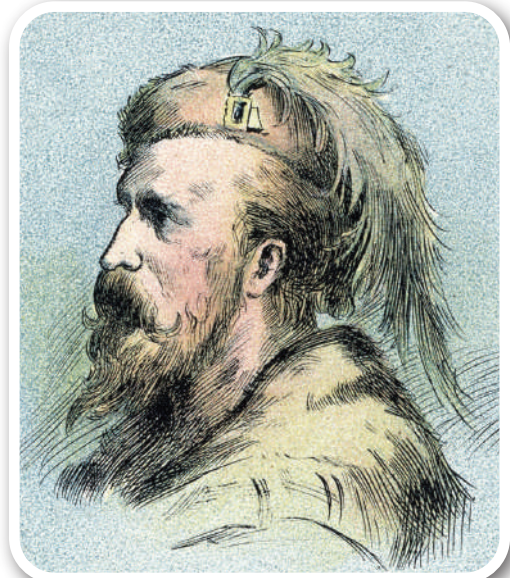
They learned that the river reached from present-day Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. Louis Jolliet took careful notes about the places, people, animals, and plants they saw.



La Louisiane



In 1684, a French explorer named Sieur de La Salle traveled down the Mississippi River. He used the information from Louis Jolliet and Father Jacques Marquette as a guide. La Salle claimed the land around the Mississippi River for France. He named the land *La Louisiane*.



Louisiana was not easy to rule from France. It was thousands of miles away, across an ocean, and not many Europeans lived there. France did not want other countries settling the land either.



Bienville *Bienville*



Le Moyne Iberville

Two brothers, Pierre Iberville and Jean-Baptiste Bienville, thought building permanent settlements in Louisiana would help solve these problems.

The first settlement they built was called Fort Maurepas. The land was not very good for farming. So they built another settlement on the Mobile River, where they grew tobacco, cotton, and sugar. They also traded furs with Native Americans.



In 1718, Bienville founded the city of New Orleans. It is called the Crescent City because it sits on a curve along the Mississippi River. Over time, New Orleans became an important city for trade. It also became a city influenced by many different cultures.



In New Orleans, Louisiana colonists could buy and enslave people from Africa, and use them as laborers. Enslaved people worked on plantations and helped build the city of New Orleans. They brought their cultures and traditions with them from Africa to Louisiana.



Free and enslaved people of color did many jobs and were an important part of Louisiana's economy. Some were carpenters, shoemakers, and silversmiths. Some free people of color owned businesses and land.

People who were born in Louisiana were called *Creole*. Some Creole people were descended from enslaved people, and others were descended from European settlers. Creole culture is a mix of traditions.

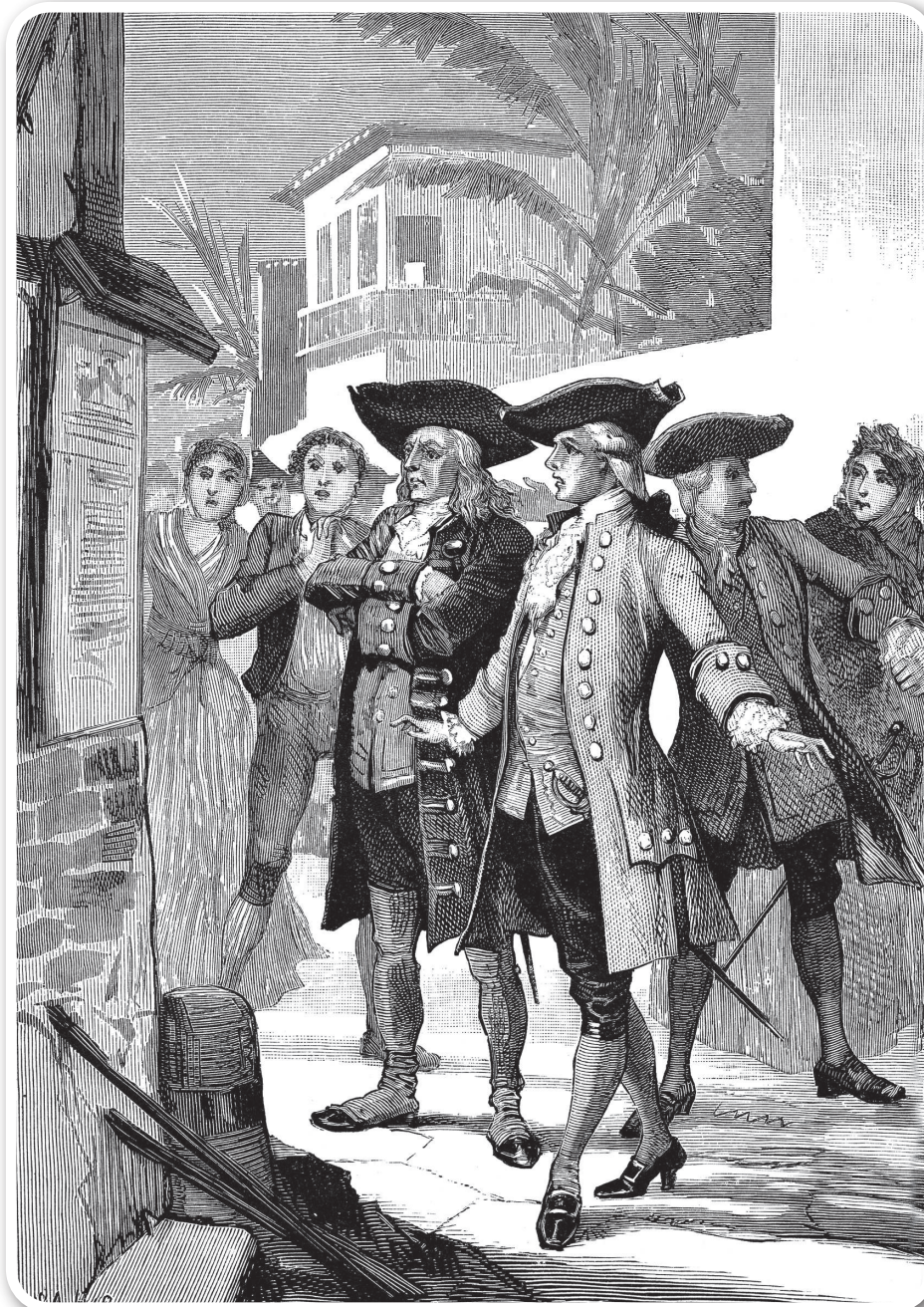


Many German people came to Louisiana during the 1700s to find a better life. Charles Frederick D'Arensbourg helped settle a place along the Mississippi River called the German Coast.



The land here is good for farming. The German settlers grew food and provided other resources that helped New Orleans succeed.

In the mid-1700s, France and Great Britain went to war with each other over which country would control the land in North America and elsewhere. When France was losing the war, it asked Spain for help. In exchange, the king of France gave much of Louisiana, including New Orleans, to Spain. Louisiana became a Spanish colony.



After the war ended, France gave its land in present-day Canada to Great Britain. The Acadians, a group of people who spoke French, lived on that land.



The British forced thousands of Acadian people to leave Canada. Many of them moved to Louisiana. "Evangeline" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is a famous poem about the Acadians' hard journey. Cajun people in Louisiana are the descendants of the Acadian people.

The Spanish government encouraged people to move from the Canary Islands to Louisiana. Many of these *Isleños* settled near New Orleans. Today, the culture of St. Bernard Parish is influenced by these settlers from the Canary Islands.



Thousands of people also came to New Orleans from Haiti during the late 1700s and early 1800s. Many of these people were free and enslaved Africans. They brought Haitian culture, such as music and dance, to New Orleans.



Antoine Morin, a free man of color from Haiti, invented a way to produce sugar from sugar cane. This brought the sugar industry to Louisiana.

Spain found it difficult to govern Louisiana because of its size and diverse culture. Louisiana was home to Native Americans and peoples from Africa and Europe. Spain decided to continue to use the French language and customs to make ruling Louisiana easier.



The Spanish built the Cabildo in New Orleans between 1795 and 1799. The Cabildo was an important government building for almost a hundred years. Now it's a museum where people can learn about Louisiana history!

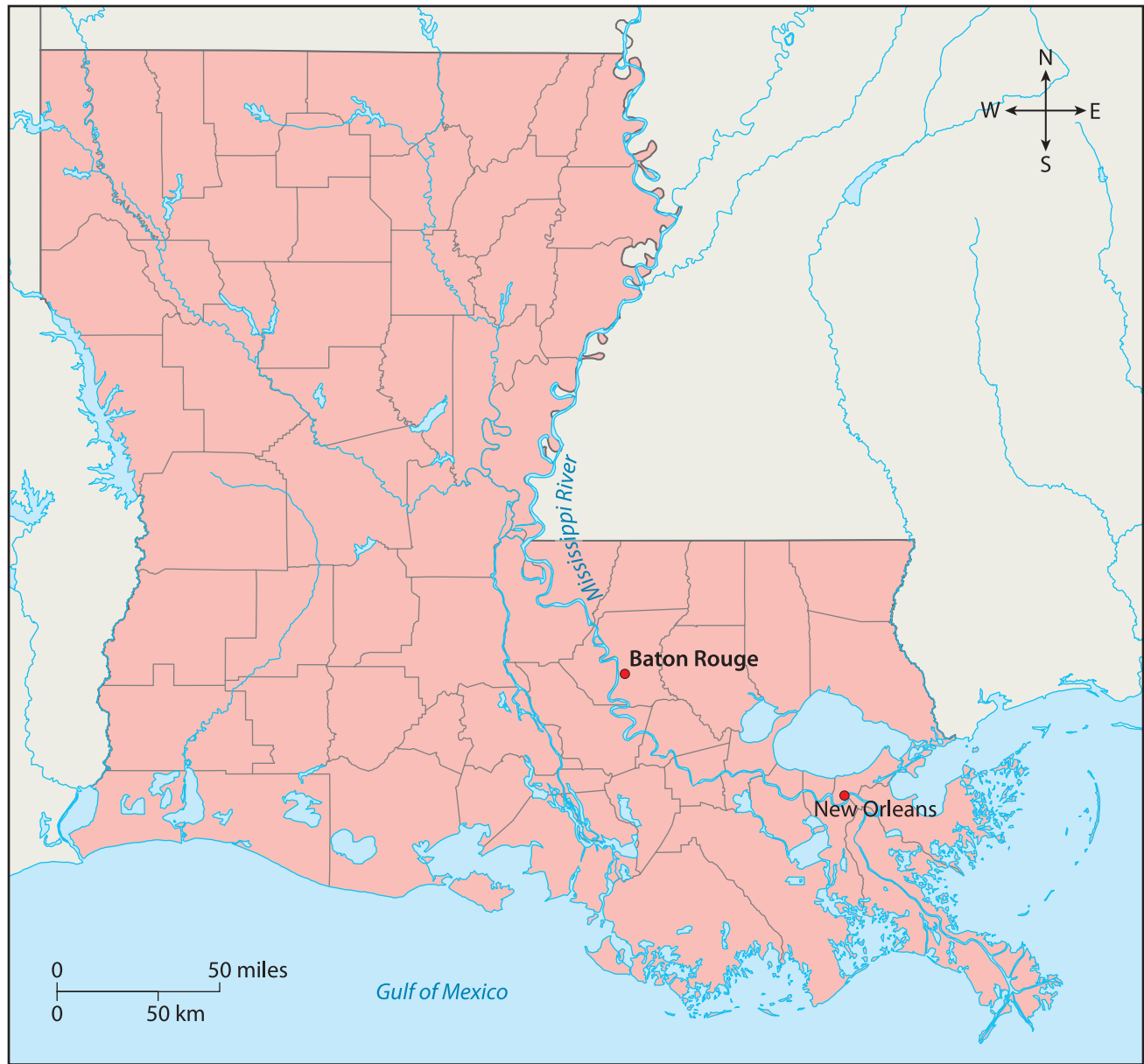
Louisiana was ruled by different countries and by many different people. Because of this, Louisiana had a different legal system from other colonies. A legal system is the way that laws are enforced in a community. In 1800, Spain gave the Louisiana territory back to France.



Today, Louisiana's legal system is different from other U.S. states because of its unique, or special, history.

Louisiana's past as a French and Spanish colony still affects Louisianans today. France and Spain were Catholic countries. The French and the Spanish brought their religious beliefs and practices to Louisiana, including the creation of parishes. A parish is an area that has a church.

Modern-Day Louisiana



Today, parishes are used to organize local governments in the state. Louisiana is made up of sixty-four parishes.

The names of many places in Louisiana come from the French and Spanish languages. The capital of Louisiana is Baton Rouge. In French, this means red stick.



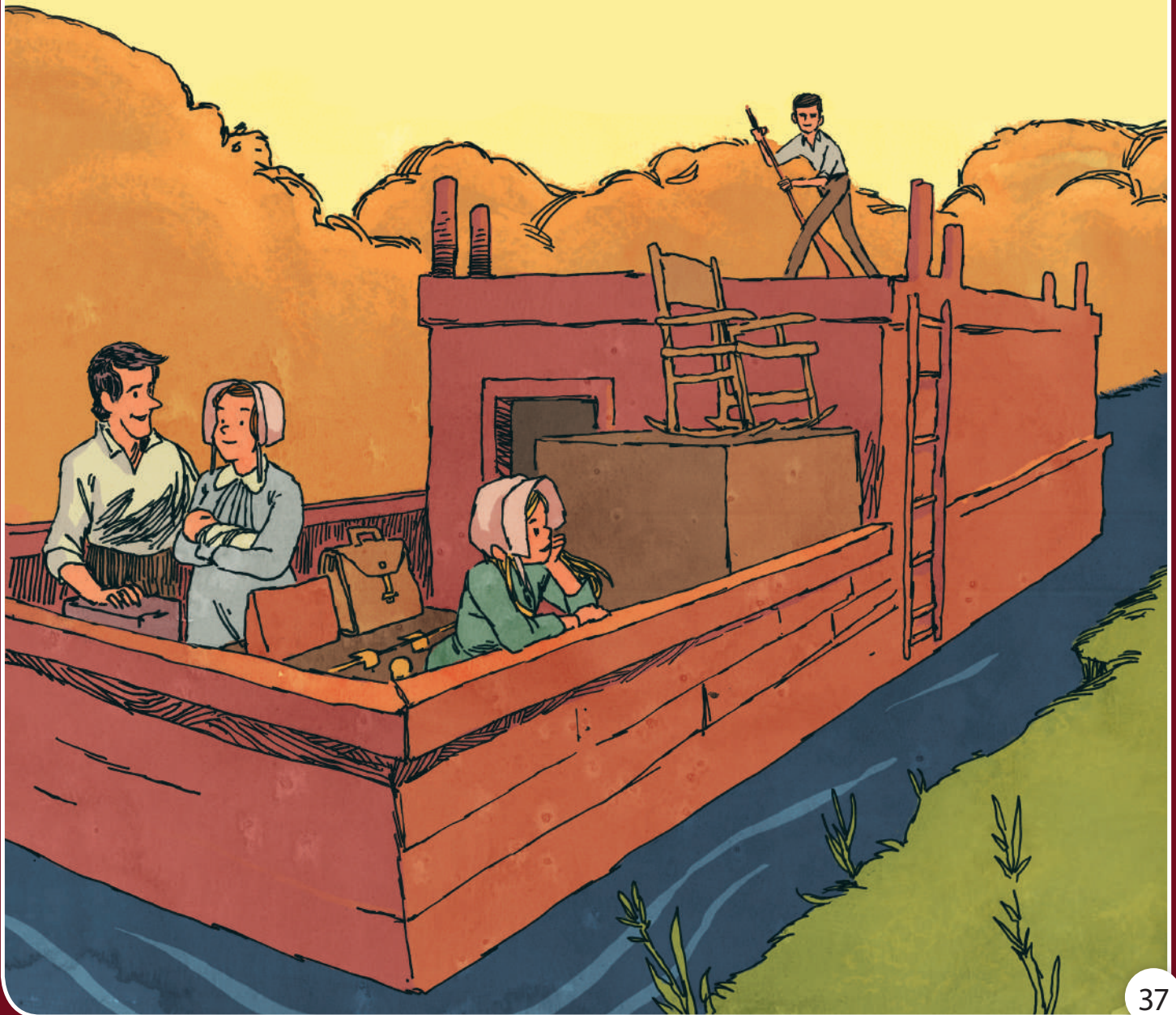
Many streets in New Orleans have signs that show their Spanish names from the past.

Today, we can visit buildings in many parts of the state that were built by the French and the Spanish. The St. Louis Cathedral was named to honor the French king Louis IX. It is in the French Quarter of New Orleans.



Louisiana Joins the United States

Imagine you live in a small wooden cabin that is the shape of a box. Inside the cabin are all the things you own. Every morning, you look outside and see deep, rolling water on all sides. Your home is a house on a flatboat that floats on the Mississippi River.





During the day, you stand on top of the cabin. You steer the boat with long oars. You drift down the mighty Mississippi River. You are heading south to the busy city of New Orleans, which will be your new home.



After sunset, you listen to the creatures of the night and watch the trees as you float along. Under the light of a glowing lantern, you write down your thoughts and dreams for your new life in New Orleans.

As you get closer to the city, you see boats carrying barrels of apples, salt, flour, and tobacco as well as stacks of wood. These are things Americans trade with one another and with people in other countries.

Boats stop at the noisy Port of New Orleans to load and unload. The port is where traders send goods to other states and across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. But there is a problem. New Orleans is not an American city. It belongs to France.

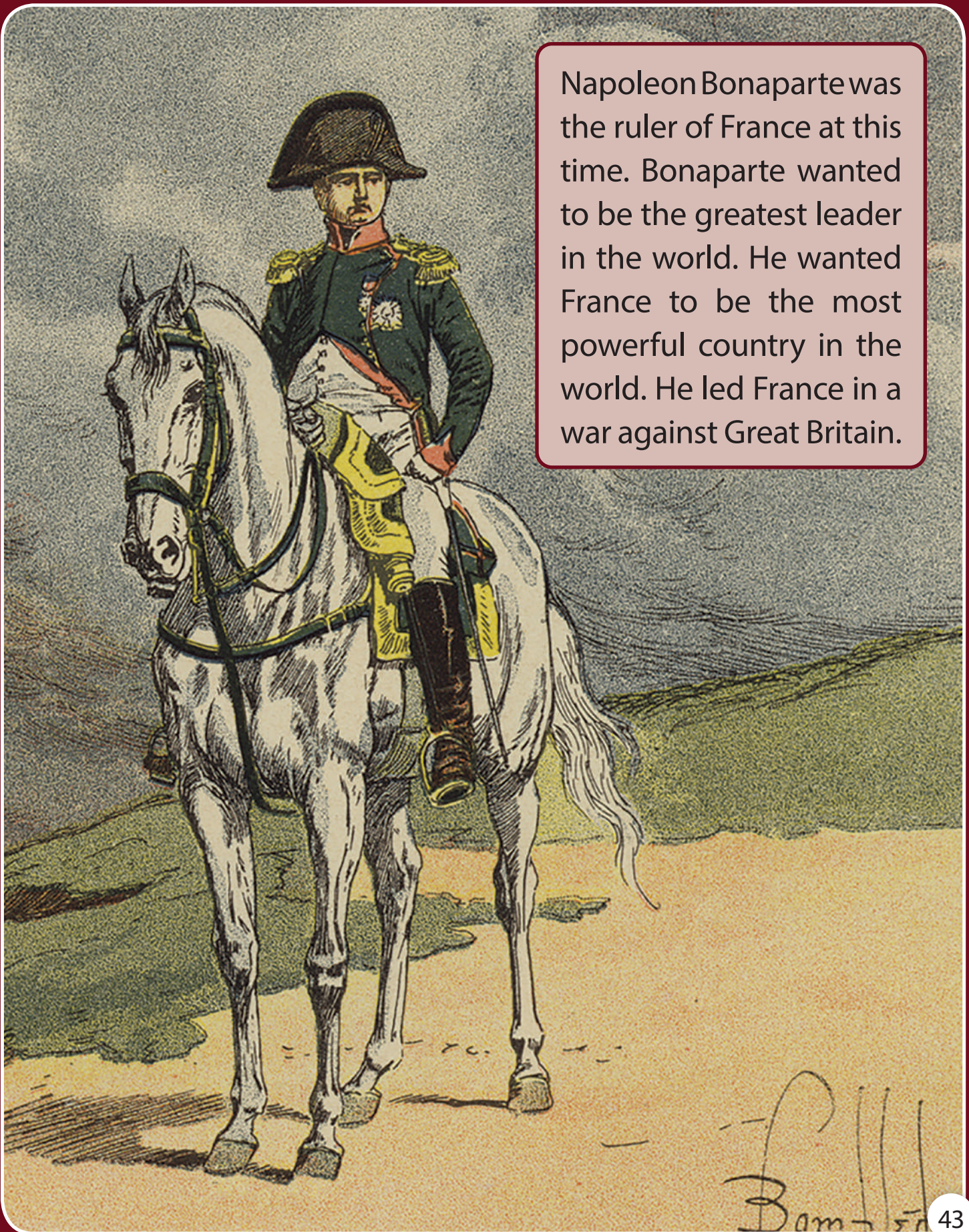


In 1803, the United States owned most of the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. But if you crossed the Mississippi River, you were standing on land owned by another country—France. France owned all the land west to the Rocky Mountains. That huge area was called Louisiana.





Thomas Jefferson, the president of the United States, wanted to buy this land from France. He wanted to make using the Port of New Orleans easier for American farmers. He wrote a letter to the French government, and he sent Robert Livingston and James Monroe to France to try to buy New Orleans.



Napoleon Bonaparte was the ruler of France at this time. Bonaparte wanted to be the greatest leader in the world. He wanted France to be the most powerful country in the world. He led France in a war against Great Britain.

At first, Bonaparte said he would not sell any of the land in North America. But he needed lots of money to fight the war against Great Britain.



So he changed his mind and sold New Orleans and all of Louisiana to the United States for \$15 million. This may sound like a lot of money, but it was a very low price for all that land!

Robert Livingston and James Monroe agreed to the deal with Napoleon. This was called the Louisiana Purchase. President Jefferson heard the good news on the night before Independence Day. Soon after, the United States took control of New Orleans.



Louisiana was at last a territory of the United States. This meant that all the different groups who lived in Louisiana had something else in common. They now lived in the United States of America.

The U.S. government did not know much about the land they had bought. President Jefferson wanted to know what people lived there and whether the land was good for farming.

The Louisiana Purchase, 1803



He asked Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to help answer these questions. Lewis and Clark led a group of people to explore Louisiana. A Shoshone woman named Sacagawea helped them on their journey. They traveled from the Missouri River, across the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean.

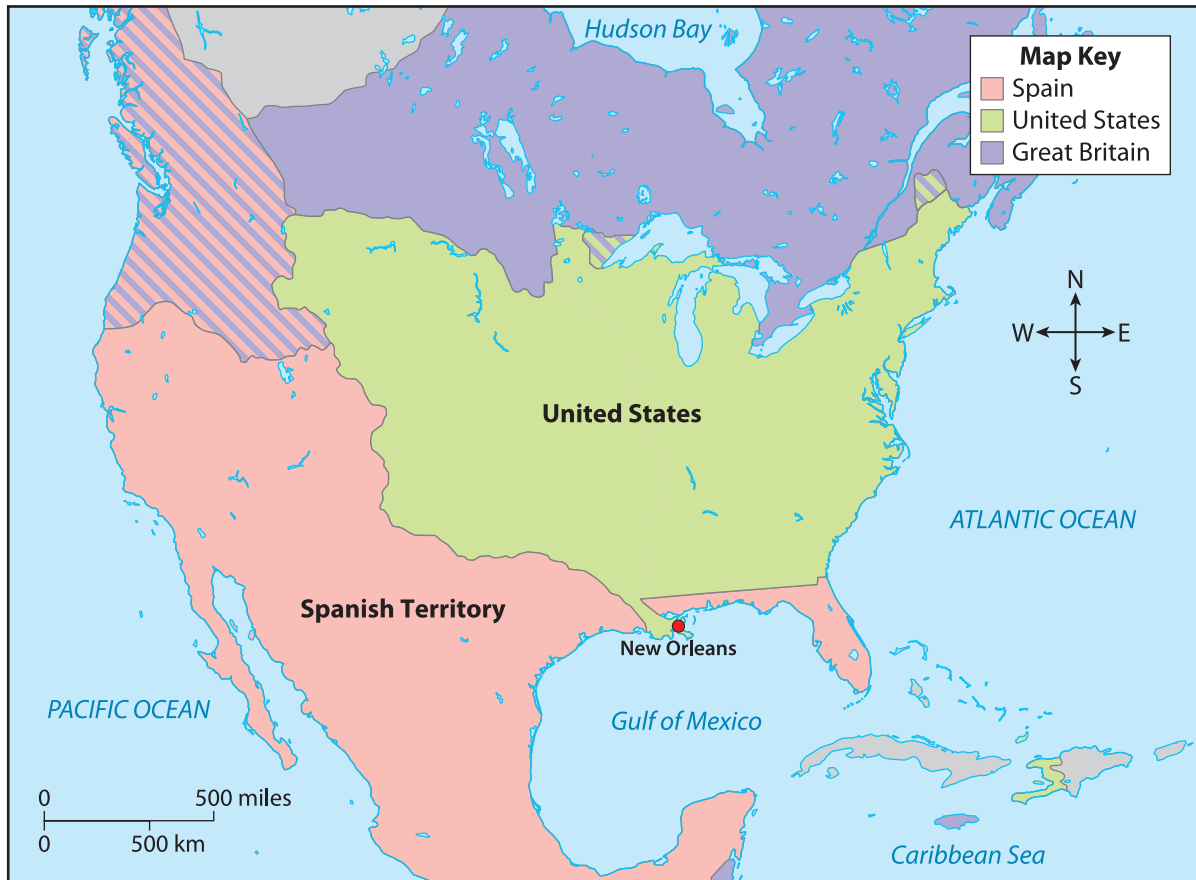


President Jefferson approved other expeditions to learn about Louisiana. William Dunbar and George Hunter traveled along the Ouachita River. They took many notes about the land and the people they met. Their expedition led other people to want to come to Louisiana.



The United States also struggled to govern the large territory. The Spanish owned land next to Louisiana. Sometimes, it was hard to tell where American land ended and where Spanish land started.

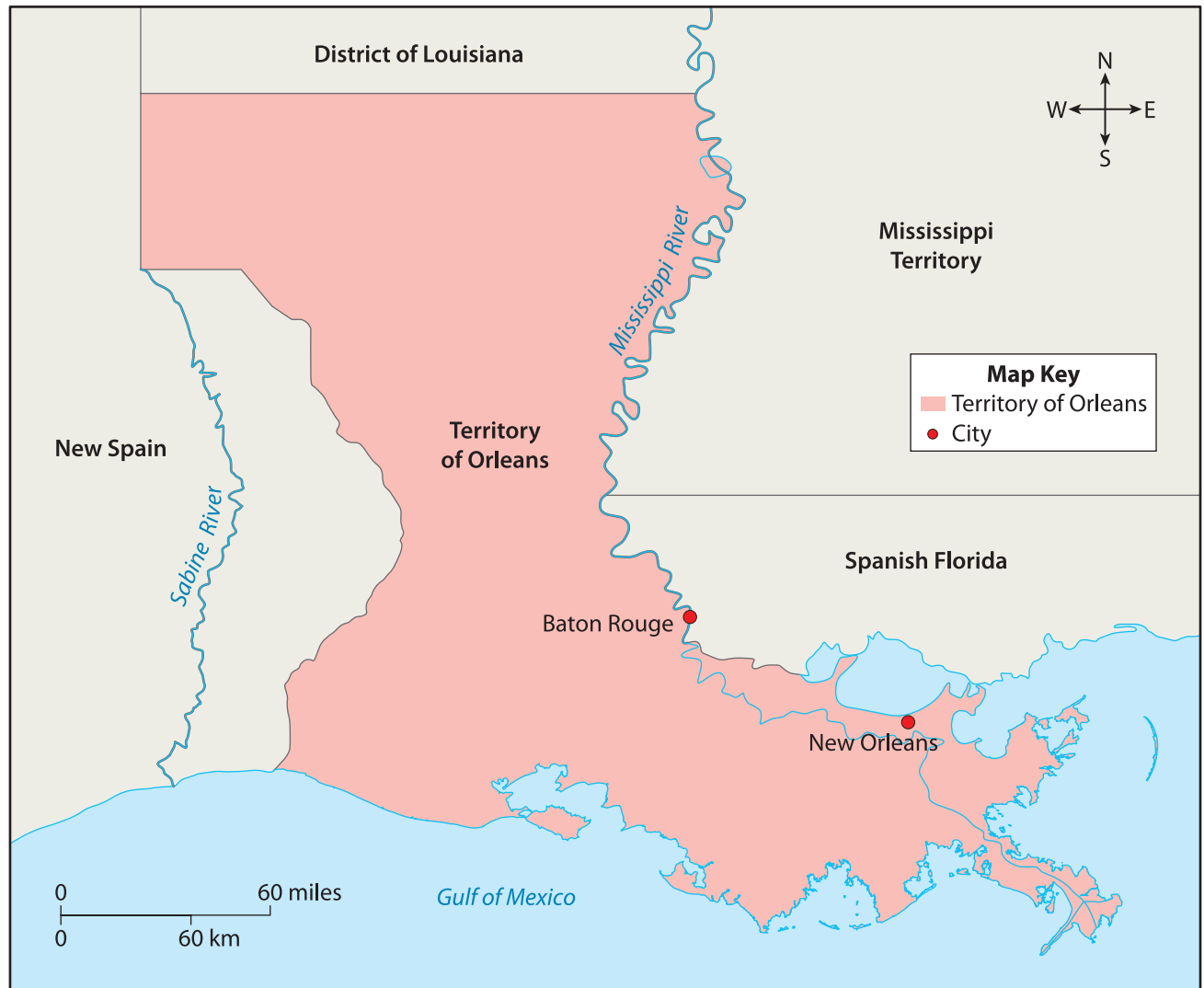
Land Claims in North America, 1803



Also, New Orleans had become a busy port city. Its population had grown, its people spoke different languages, and it was home to different cultures. Louisiana had laws made by France and by Spain. All of these things made it challenging to govern Louisiana.

To make governing Louisiana easier, the U.S. government divided the land into two parts.

The Territory of Orleans, 1806



One part was called the Territory of Orleans, and the other was called the District of Louisiana. Most of the Territory of Orleans became the state of Louisiana that we live in today!

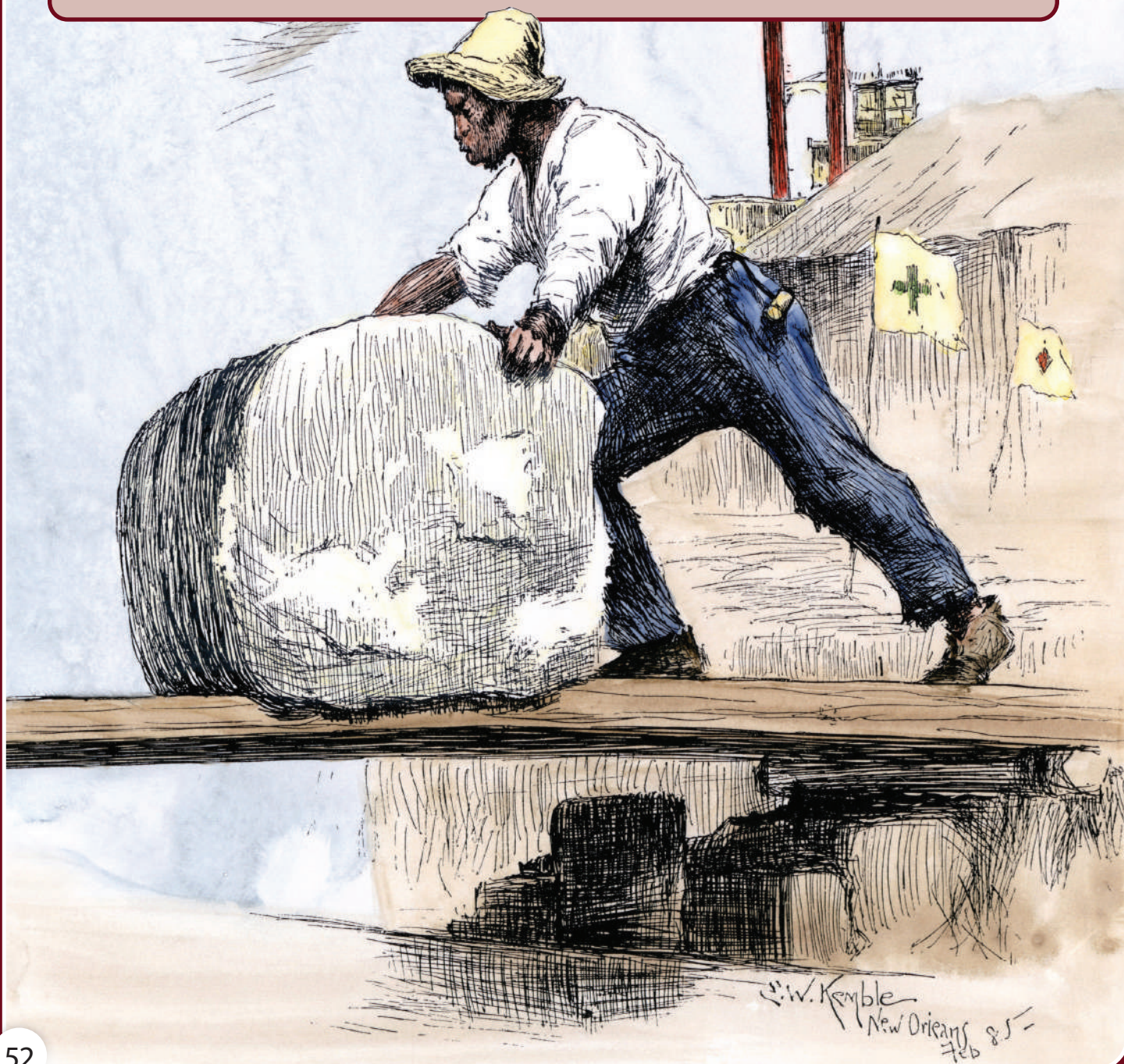
William Claiborne was the first governor of Orleans. He worked with the people of Louisiana to make a new government. They found a way to use laws from both Louisiana and the United States. As you have learned, this makes Louisiana's legal system very special!



Many more changes happened in Louisiana after it became a territory. It was allowed to have its own local government. More American goods were sent down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. This made Louisiana an important place for trade around the world. The number of people living there continued to grow. Soon, New Orleans was one of the biggest cities in the whole country!



Life for some people got harder after the United States bought Louisiana. Free people of color had fewer freedoms. Life was even more unfair for enslaved people. Restrictions on what enslaved people could do were even stricter than before. Many Native Americans were forced to leave their land to make room for new settlers.



In 1811, Louisiana finally had enough people to become a state. Leaders met in New Orleans to write a constitution for Louisiana.



Some leaders spoke French, and others spoke English. They wrote the constitution in both languages so more Louisianans could read it. The next year, on April 30, 1812, Louisiana officially became a state!

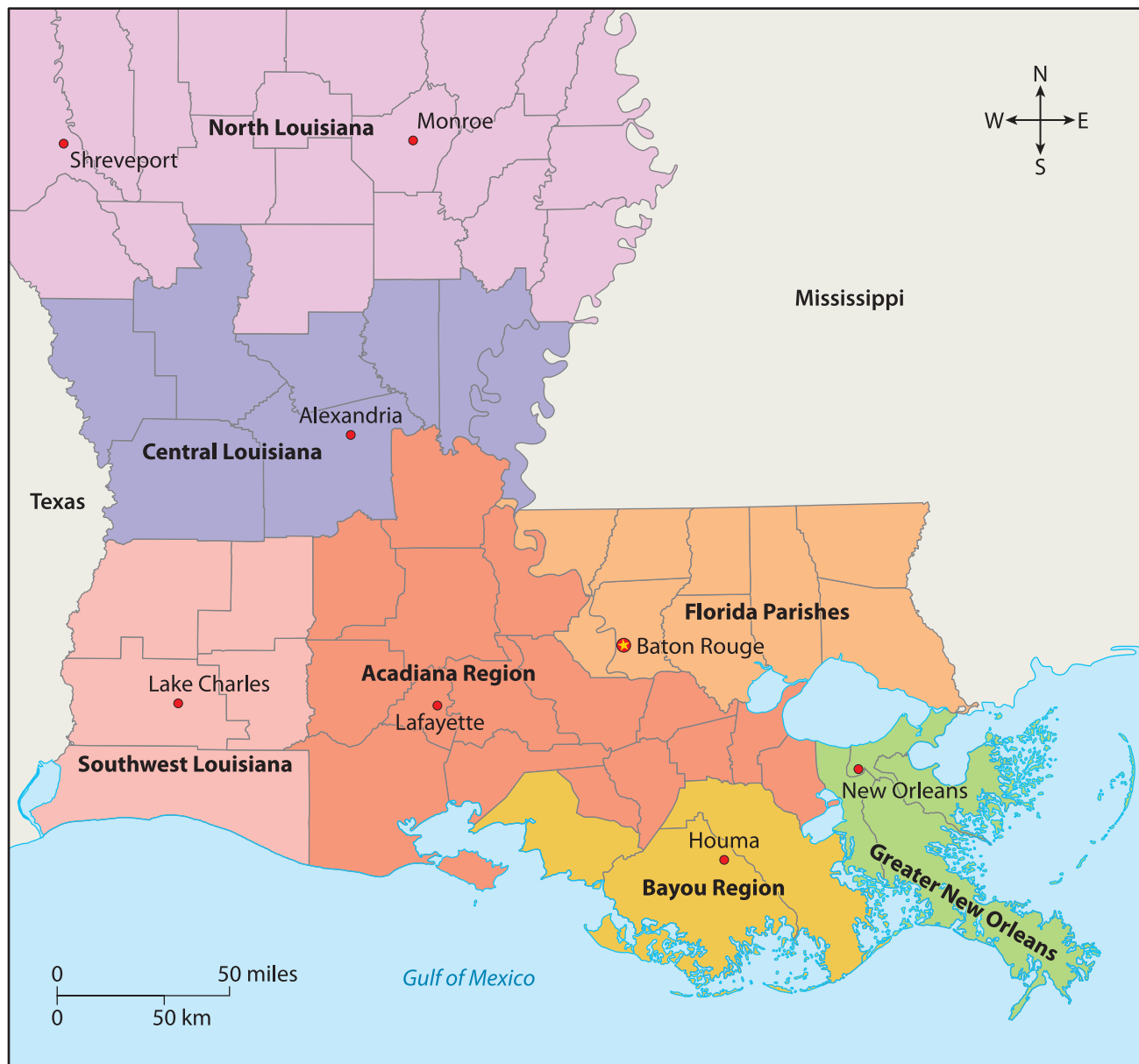
Louisiana's Unique Cultural Heritage

Louisiana culture includes many things, such as our traditions and religious beliefs. It includes the languages we speak and the clothes we wear. It also involves the foods we eat, the music we listen to, and the art we make.



Many people from different backgrounds have made Louisiana their home in the past, and they do so in the present, too. They all have helped make Louisiana's unique culture!

Cultural Regions of Louisiana



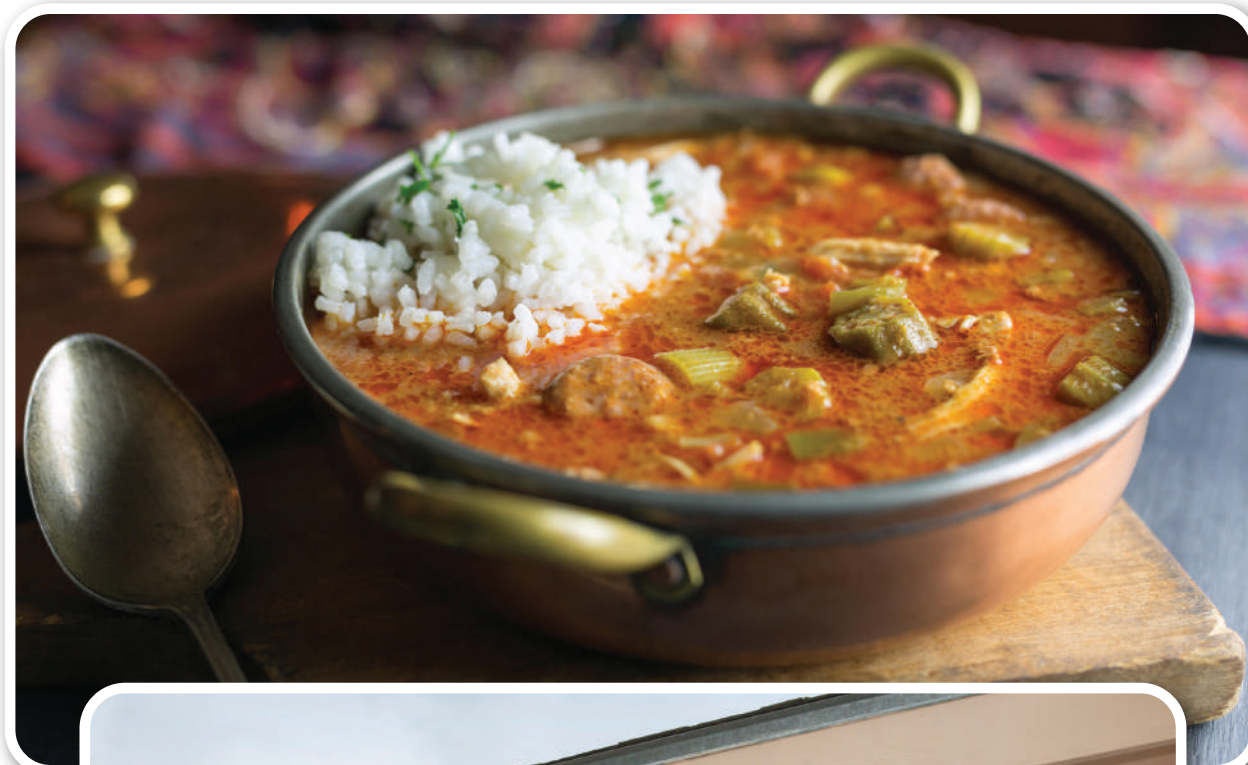
Louisiana has seven cultural regions. These are areas with cultures that are special to the people who live there. What cultural region do you live in?

The ancestors of Cajun people settled in Acadiana hundreds of years ago. They brought their way of life, music, and food to Louisiana. Cajun music is played on accordions and fiddles and is very fun for dancing!



Creole people in Acadiana created zydeco music. It is a blend of European, Native American, and African American cultures. Some Louisianans speak Creole, which is a joining of French and African languages.

When people think of Louisiana, they often think of our delicious food like jambalaya, gumbo, and étouffé. These dishes come from Cajun and Creole cultures.



Recipes for these dishes are different across Louisiana. They feature the different traditions and ingredients—like local seafood—of our state!



Tamales and bread pudding are also part of Louisiana's food culture. Tamales are made with ground corn and are stuffed with different fillings. They were brought to Louisiana by people from Mexico.



People all over the world eat bread pudding. In Louisiana, people make bread pudding with leftover French bread for a tasty dessert!

The city of Natchitoches is famous for its meat pies. They are made by frying dough stuffed with different types of meat. Louisiana meat pies are a mix of Native American and Spanish cultures. Every year, people visit Natchitoches for the Meat Pie Festival to celebrate Creole culture. Yum!



Eating red beans and rice on Mondays is a Louisiana tradition. In the past, Monday was the day Louisianans washed their clothing.



It was hard work, and Louisianans were tired at the end of the day. So that morning, they would put a pot of red beans on the fire. By dinner time, the beans were ready to eat!

Many people visit New Orleans for Mardi Gras, a celebration that starts the season of Lent. French people brought Mardi Gras to New Orleans. Today, it is celebrated by people from all backgrounds.



Eating king cake is one of many Mardi Gras traditions. A small plastic baby is added into each king cake. If you find the baby in your slice, you just might have to buy or make the next king cake!

Louisianans celebrate many holidays during the year. Some holidays are unique to Louisiana, and some are celebrated throughout the United States.

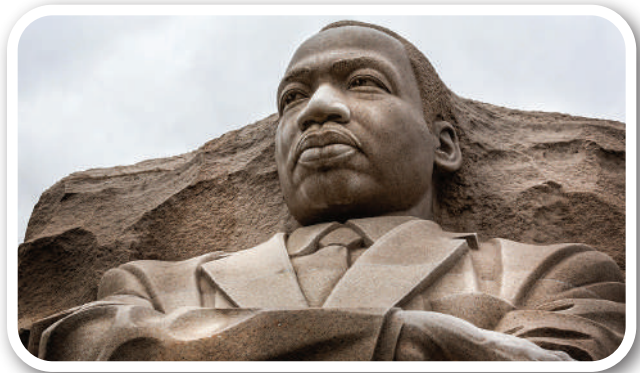
JANUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

New Year's Day is celebrated on January 1 and marks the beginning of a new year.



Inauguration Day takes place in January after a president is elected.



We honor the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the second Monday of January. He was a man who fought for everyone to be treated fairly.



We celebrate George Washington's birthday, or Presidents' Day, in February. He was the first president of the United States.



In Louisiana, Mardi Gras is celebrated forty-seven days before Easter each year.



Memorial Day in May honors people who lost their lives serving our country in the armed forces.



On Juneteenth, we celebrate the freedom of enslaved people in our country.



Independence Day, on July 4, is a celebration of the United States becoming its own country.



On Labor Day in September, we honor the workers in our country.



Columbus Day happens on the second Monday in October.



On Veterans Day in November, we honor the people who have served in the military.



Thanksgiving Day is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Many Americans gather for a meal with family or friends to think about things they are thankful for.



Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25. Many people decorate and gather with family or friends to exchange gifts.

New Orleans is an important place for Louisiana culture. Cajun store owners in New Orleans started the tradition of *lagniappe*. This is the practice of giving a little something extra, like a small gift, to customers.



New Orleans is also the birthplace of jazz, a music style first played by African American musicians. Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans and became one of the most famous jazz trumpet players.

Second line parades started as a part of African American culture in New Orleans. They are a way to celebrate special events and people who have died. During a second line parade, people dress up, dance, and play joyful music. Everyone is invited to join a second line parade!



Louisiana has many symbols. One symbol is the state flag. It shows a mother pelican caring for its young.



Brown pelicans are important to Louisianans. They are a symbol of Louisiana values like family and community.

The magnolia is the state flower of Louisiana. There are many magnolias in the state. Another state symbol is the Louisiana black bear. It became the official state mammal of Louisiana in 1992.



Buildings are another important part of Louisiana culture.



The St. Louis Cathedral and the Cabildo show how the past is part of Louisiana's culture in the present.

People visit the National WWII Museum in New Orleans to learn about an important war in the United States' past.

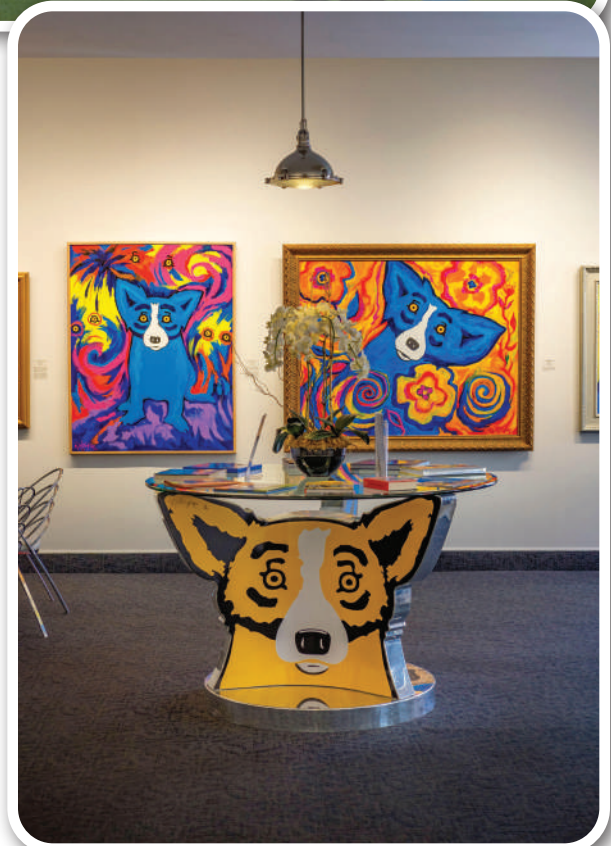


The Superdome in New Orleans is a stadium where people go to watch sports and other events. The Saints are the professional football team that plays in the Superdome. Go Saints! The Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame in Natchitoches honors important Louisiana athletes and coaches from the past and present.





Louisiana culture is also shared through art and music. Clementine Hunter was an artist from Natchitoches. Her paintings tell stories about her everyday life and celebrate African American culture. George Rodrigue was a Cajun artist. His paintings celebrate Cajun culture, traditions, and stories. Many people love his blue dog paintings.





Mahalia Jackson was a gospel singer from New Orleans. She was known around the world for her beautiful voice. She traveled across the United States singing her songs. Mahalia Jackson helped spread Louisiana culture to other places.

Then



Now





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Journey of Jacques Marquette (1637–1675) French explorer and missionary Jesuite and Louis Jolliet Canadian explorer (1645–1700) sailing north of the Mississippi in a canoe, 1673. Colourful engraving of the 19th century./Photo © North Wind Pictures / Bridgeman Images: 21a
JT Blatty / Alamy Stock Photo: 61b
Lanmas / Alamy Stock Photo: 20
Library Book Collection / Alamy Stock Photo: 12
Louisiana purchase to Spain in 1762. 1880 (engraving)/Private Collection/Photo ©Jaime Abecasis / Bridgeman Images: 28
Maggie Sully / Alamy Stock Photo: 15
Mahalia Jackson, The Queen of Gospel Singers (b/w photo)/Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA, USA/Courtesy of the Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, LA / Bridgeman Images: 72
mauritius images GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo: 35
Michael Brooks / Alamy Stock Photo: 31
Napoleon Bonaparte (colour litho), Bombed, Louis Charles (1862–1927) (after) / Private Collection / © Look and Learn / Bridgeman Images: 43
NB/FEMA / Alamy Stock Photo: 30
Nick Suydam / Alamy Stock Photo: 41
Niday Picture Library / Alamy Stock Photo: 21b, 45, 62d
Ninette Maumus / Alamy Stock Photo: 63a
NJphoto / Alamy Stock Photo: 62b
North Wind Picture Archives / Alamy Stock Photo: 23a–b, 24b, 64a
Penta Springs Limited / Alamy Stock Photo: Cover A, 19
Peter Blottman / Alamy Stock Photo: 69b
Pictures Now / Alamy Stock Photo: 25
Quality Stock / Alamy Stock Photo: 63e
Richard Ellis / Alamy Stock Photo: 54c
Rubens Alarcon / Alamy Stock Photo: 61a, 71b
Science History Images / Alamy Stock Photo: 22
Sean Pavone / Alamy Stock Photo: 54b
steeve-x-art / Alamy Stock Photo: 71a
Stephen Saks Photography / Alamy Stock Photo: 57b
Steve Hamblin / Alamy Stock Photo: 70
Teresa Otto / Alamy Stock Photo: i, iii, 6, 9
The History Collection / Alamy Stock Photo: 50
The Protected Art Archive / Alamy Stock Photo: 24a
The Yarvin Kitchen / Alamy Stock Photo: 59
Tim Hill / Alamy Stock Photo: 58b
United States, Louisiana: Young African American docker loading cotton in the steamboat of New Orleans, 1800s. Colour engraving of the 19th century./Photo © North Wind Pictures / Bridgeman Images: 52
Universal Images Group North America LLC / Alamy Stock Photo: 3
Valerio Rosati / Alamy Stock Photo: 63c
Vespasian / Alamy Stock Photo: 29
YOUNG WASHBOARD PLAYER MEETS GROWN-UP ACCORDIONIST, 1999-04-24 (photo)/REUTERS / Bridgeman Images: 56
yuiyui / Alamy Stock Photo: 73a



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