

The Westbank of Jefferson Parish: aka "The Red Headed Stepchild"

Objectives: Students will

- examine historical records concerning the development of the Westbank of Jefferson Parish
- analyze the name conceptions for each of the developing areas
- evaluate the importance of the growth of the Westbank of Jefferson Parish

Grade-Level Expectations:

- Analyze the causes, effects, or impact of a given historical event in Louisiana (H-1A-M3).
- Analyze given source material to identify opinion, propaganda, or bias (H-1A-M4).
- Describe and analyze the impact of Louisiana's geographic features on historic events, settlement patterns, economic development, etc (H-1D-M4)

Explanation of Lesson:

In this lesson students will study the historical, cultural and economic impact of the growth of the Westbank of Jefferson Parish. They will use historical records to explore unique tidbits of history concerning a growing area based on the historical term "white flight".

Essential Questions:

1. Explain how each area of the Westbank received its name.
2. Compare the unique differences between each of the named areas.

Documents:

- Photo showing an overall view of the Westbank circa 1966
- Jefferson Parish Police Jury minutes from The Historic New Orleans Collection:
F377.H57 Vol.3 118, F377.H57 Vol. 4 299, F377.H57 Vol.5 348, F377.H57 Vol.6 123,124
- Photo showing Harvey Canal and Harvey Castle circa 1858-1860
- Marrero Ferry circa 1940's



Westbank of Jefferson Parish (foreground) 1966, Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection 1984.166.2.372

Background information:

In 1833 Nicolas Noel Destrehan bought from various landowners most of what is now known as the Westbank of Jefferson Parish. He had a plan laid out in 1836 for a settlement to be called Mechanickham. It is believed the town changed its name to Gretna to bond with the Scottish town of Gretna Greens. Many young lovers came to the Westbank, or at that time the Right bank of the river, to elope. Here the marriage rules were much less stringent. One tale tells the story of a local judge who was so happily married, he didn't mind getting up at three in the morning.

In the early 1840's Destrehan had a canal dug in what is now Harvey. This was a direct route to Barataria Bay and greatly helped move products from his plantation.

In 1844 Virginia Sea Captain Joseph Hale Harvey built a beautiful Gothic style mansion for his soon-to-be bride Louise Destrehan. The mansion was built next to the canal near the Mississippi River on land given to Harvey as Louise's dowry and became known as the Harvey Castle.

Captain Harvey was very industrious and soon turned the canal into a lucrative business. Destrehan had plans drawn up for a settlement to be called Cosmopolite City, this settlement became Harvey.

Amesville, named for the Ames Plantation was renamed for L. H. Marrero who was a prominent politician in Jefferson Parish.

Westwego came by its name in the most ordinary way. Railcars were marked with the location they were headed to, so railcars headed west would be marked with the word west. As the conductors would leave the terminals they would yell “west we go”.



Harvey Canal(left) and Harvey Castle(back right) 1859, Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection 1982.32.11



Vocabulary: Use the dictionaries provided to define the following vocabulary terms. Be sure that you can use each vocabulary term in a complete sentence.

Elope _____

Stringent _____

Gothic _____

Dowry _____

Industrious _____

Lucrative _____

Prominent _____

Terminals _____

Document # 1: Excerpt from Jefferson Parish Police Jury minutes, 1858

On motion seconded the prayer of petitioners was granted. A petition from Fire Engine Company of Gretna was read asking the Jury to contribute towards buying a Lot on which to erect an Engine House.

On motion seconded it was Resolved that the President be directed to draw a warrant of Fifty Dollars in favor of the Fire Engine Company as a contribution on the part of the Jury- Mr. Lebreron voted against the adoption of the resolution & denied his vote to be recorded.

Document Based Questions:



What reason did the Fire Company list as the basis for the money requested?



Who voted against the Fire Company receiving any money?



Why would Mr. Lebreron not want his vote recorded?



Document # 2: Excerpt from Jefferson Parish Police Jury minutes, 1874

On motion of W. B. Berthoud, the following Resolution was unanimously adopted.

Resolved by the Police Jury of the Parish of Jefferson Right with the concurrence of the City of New Orleans that the exclusive privilege of keeping and running a Skiff ferry between the points of Harvey's Canal on the Right Bank to the foot of Louisiana Avenue on the Left Bank be granted to Lafayette Clay, and that this privilege is to be during the pleasure of the Police Jury and City of New Orleans.

The said Clay to maintain a sufficient number of good substantial Skiffs properly managed to afford all needful conveniences to passengers at all times. And in consideration of said privileges being gratuitous the said Lafayette Clay will provide for his property landings on each bank and enforce his rights of privilege at his own expenses. The rate of fare for a passenger shall not exceed Ten (10) Cents for each crossing.

Document Based Questions:



How much did it cost to cross the Ferry?



What type of boat was used?



Between what two points did the ferry run?



What is meant by “enforce his rights of privilege at his own expenses”?



Document # 3: Excerpt from Jefferson Parish Police Jury Minutes, 1887

Be it Resolved, That in accordance with Act No. 73 of 1877, ex session authorizing Police Juries to fix the Compensation of sheriff for keeping and maintaining prisoners in the Parish Jail: That the sum of thirty cents per day for each prisoner, be allowed by this Police Jury to the sheriff for said keeping and maintaining of prisoners in this parish.

On Motion of Mr. Hennings seconded by Mr. Bonnabel the following was adopted: Be it Resolved, That it shall be the duty of all persons before offering for interment in the potters field belonging to the parish the body of any deceased person, to obtain a burial certificate therefore from the Health Officer, and it shall be his duty to permit therein of the bodies of those who have died in indigence.

Further resolved, that all persons offering any bodies for internment in said potters field other than paupers shall be subject to charge of \$1.50 for each body interred, to be collected by the coroner and turned over by him to the parish.



Vocabulary: Use the dictionaries provided to define the following vocabulary terms. Be sure that you can use each vocabulary term in a complete sentence.

Compensation _____

Interment _____

Potters field _____

Deceased _____

Indegence _____

Internment _____

Pauper _____

Coroner _____

Document # 4 - Picture interpretation







Picture of L.H. Marrero Ferry: Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no 1981.67.12

Document Based Assessment:

Study the picture above. Choose a person from the picture and write a three-paragraph story about why you think they were on the ferry, where they were going and some aspects of the daily routine of that person and their family.

Directions: Read the selected PPIE information and complete the long term effect column using the key PPIE listed in middle column.

GLE Strands/Themes	PPIE (People, Places, Ideas, Events)	Long term effect/result
 <p>Civics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L.H. Marrero, Political Leader of Jefferson Parish • Bonnabel • Ehret 	
 <p>Economics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Hale Harvey, Sea Captain • Ferry Lease • Potters Field 	
 <p>Geography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicolas Noel Destrehan, Plantation Owner • Digging of the Harvey Canal 	
 <p>History</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws governing gambling • Naming of townships 	

Summative Assessment:

Using your notes and research regarding the development of the Westbank, students will create a full page (newspaper size) color ad from the 1950's, in which they encourage people to settle on the Westbank.