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English 210

5/4/2012

The Great New Orleans

The city of New Orleans is one of the most significantly important cities in the world. Its effects on the South are still seen and felt throughout the world today. From French to Spanish rule and then back to French just before Louisiana was bought from France in 1803, New Orleans held a distinct culture and background throughout the years.

Before the city was established the territory of New Orleans was inhabited by Native Americans. The large Mississippi River made it an ideal area for settling and trading. In the late 1600s French trappers and traders began to inhabit the land and within ten years they establish Port Bayou St. John at the mouth of the bayou. In the 1718 the French named the area “Nouvelle Orleans” under the rule of Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville. The city was founded mainly because of its access to the trade route between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain and in 1722 it became the capitol of French Louisiana.

New Orleans remained under French control for some time until after the Seven Years War. In 1763 when Great Britain defeated France, a great amount of land east and west of the Mississippi was granted to Spain under the Treaty of Fontainebleau. In 1766 Governor Antonio de Ulloa was appointed under King Charles III. French and German settlers tried to take back control of New Orleans in the Rebellion of 1768, but within a year Spanish control was restored and the French rebellion was ended. Towards the end of the Spanish era in New Orleans, the Great Fire of 1788 destroyed over 800 buildings on Good Friday. After this disaster struck, the people rebuilt the city with brick structures instead of the weaker wooden ones. Many of the buildings reconstructed during this period actually still stand in the French Quarter today, including the famous St. Louis Cathedral. The last two decades of Spanish rule was mainly dedicated to boosting commerce. In 1794 the Carondelet canal was constructed; this connected the river along the levee to Lake Pontchartrain using Bayou St. John. In 1795 and 1796 the sugar industry also saw growth which contributed to commerce as well. At the start of the 19th century in 1800 a secret treaty called the Treaty of San Ildelfonso was signed between Spain and France. This treaty granted Louisiana back to France under a series of conditions and thus ending the Spanish era in New Orleans.

French prefect Pierre Clement de Lausset had arrived at New Orleans in March of 1803. He took control by November and created the first city council of New Orleans only to give up the city to the United States. On December 20th Napoleon sold Louisiana to the U.S. in the Louisiana Purchase, giving up a territory that consists of portions of over a dozen current states. With this purchase the United States nearly doubled their land and in 1805 a census of New Orleans reported a population of 8500, consisting of 3551 white Americans, 1556 free African Americans, and 3105 slaves. In the next few years French, Cuban, and African immigrants come to New Orleans creating a mixed culture in the city. By 1840 the population grew to around 102,000 and New Orleans became the wealthiest and third most populous city in the nation. In the mid-19th century the Civil War began and in 1862 the city was lost to the Union. After the war ended and for the rest of century it went through a major reconstruction period.

The 20th century consisted of a large growth in industry. Many canals including the Industrial Canal and the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Canal were constructed and tourism increased greatly. This period also consisted of natural disasters, mainly the Great Mississippi Flood of 1947, the Fort Lauderdale Hurricane, and Hurricane Betsy. In the beginning of the 21st century on April 29, 2005, New Orleans experienced a category five hurricane named Hurricane Katrina. This was the most destructive hurricanes ever seen there, causing more than 1,100 deaths in Louisiana alone. Today estimates say that Katrina is the costliest hurricane ever in the U.S at $100 million. Since then the city has been rebuilding in an attempt to restore greatness that the city once had.

Works Cited Page

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