

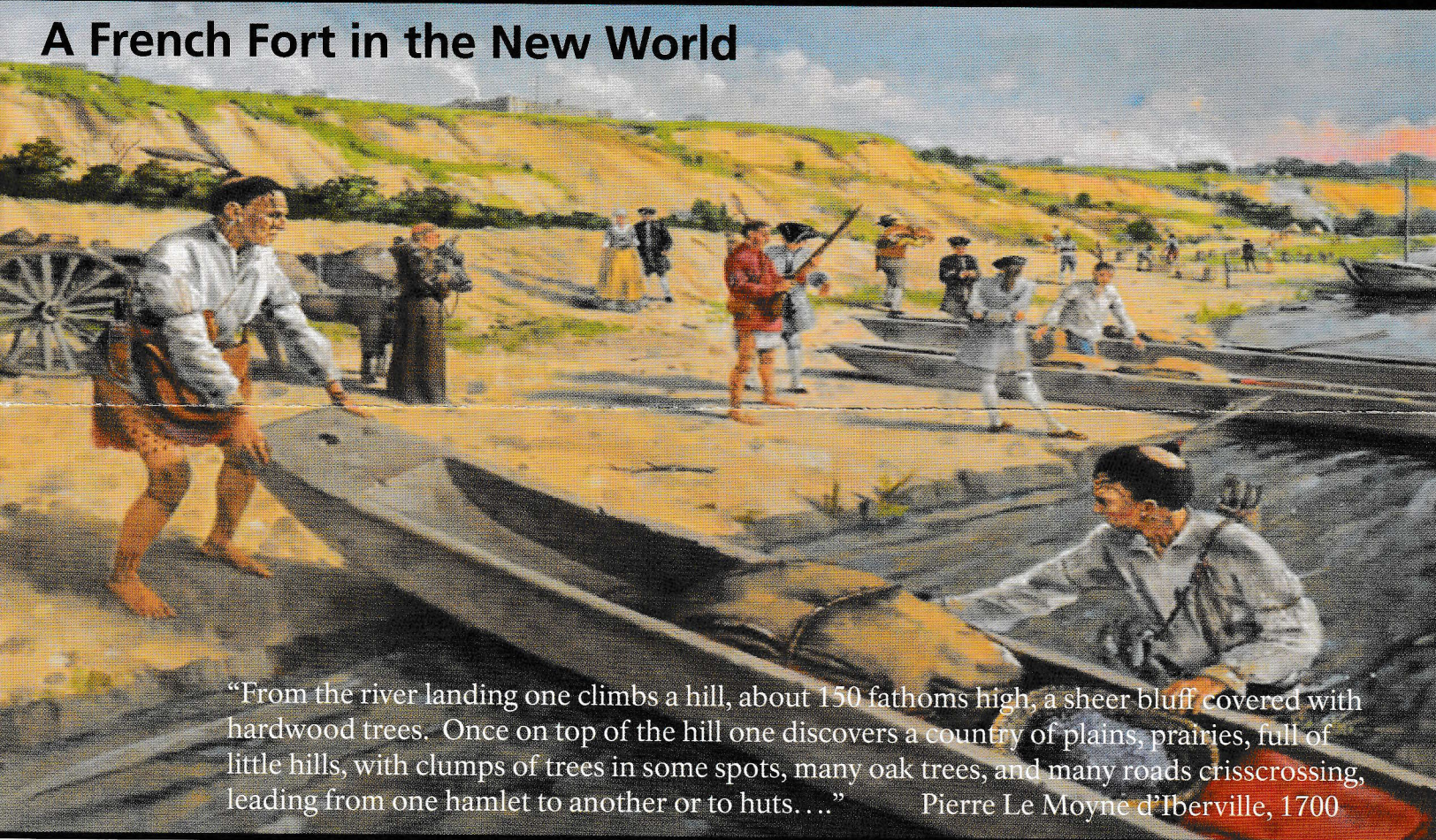
Fort Rosalie

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Natchez National Historical Park



A French Fort in the New World



“From the river landing one climbs a hill, about 150 fathoms high, a sheer bluff covered with hardwood trees. Once on top of the hill one discovers a country of plains, prairies, full of little hills, with clumps of trees in some spots, many oak trees, and many roads crisscrossing, leading from one hamlet to another or to huts. . . .”

Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, 1700

Established by the French among the Natchez people on the eastern bank of the Mississippi River in 1716, Fort Rosalie was intended to guarantee control of the largest and most navigable river in North America. The fort anchored a French colony that was the only one of its kind in the Mississippi Valley.



European settlement that survived three different periods of European rule over the course of the 1700s (French, British, and Spanish) and developed into the capital of the Mississippi Territory under United States governance at the end of that century. The settlement grew to become the town of Natchez, and the territory into the state of Mississippi in 1817.

European Beginnings



In December 1682, Rene-Robert Cavalier de La Salle and a party of 27 Mahican Indians and 24 Frenchmen or voyageurs set forth in canoes to explore the ancient waterways and land routes from Lake Michigan to the Lower Mississippi Valley, finally arriving in the area now called “Natchez” three months later in

search of trade routes, trade goods, and trade partners. La Salle continued his journey south to claim the entire territory for France, naming it “La Louisiane” in honor of French King Louis XIV. His expedition opened the door for more Frenchmen and Canadiens to follow in his footsteps.

D'Iberville's Arrival



Eighteen years later, Montreal-born explorer and soldier, Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville landed at Natchez on March 11, 1700, to establish friendly relations between the French government and Natchez people in order to forestall English expansion in the Mississippi Valley. Catholic seminarians François-Jolliet de Montigny and Antoine Davion,

however, had arrived a few years earlier and had already established missions at the Grand Village of the Natchez who lived in settlement districts stretching a distance of twenty miles along St. Catherine's Creek. Iberville took away new knowledge of a landscape and its people. He left his cabin boy behind to live among the Natchez with a mission of learning their language and customs.

The Settlement



Financially strapped after the War of Spanish Succession, France decided to privatize portions of New France to ease the crown's burden of funding all of its colonial holdings as well as counter the influence of English traders among the natives. Toward that end, in 1713, Governor of "La Louisiane," Antoine de La Mothe

Cadillac sent Marc-Antoine de La Loire des Ursins and Louis-Auguste de La Loire Flaucort to establish a trading post near the Grand Village of the Natchez where they built a house and warehouse to store animal skins and other trade items, such as brass kettles, iron tools, and glass beads.

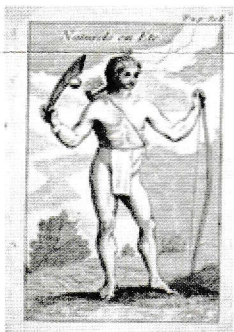
Fort Rosalie



Born from the conflict known as the "First Natchez War," the fort was completed with a combination of French and Indian labor on August 3, 1716, and named after the Comtesse de Pontchartrain, the wife of Secretary of the Navy of France. A simple affair, four-cornered construction with wooden palisades that measured approximately 150 feet

by 90 feet, the structure contained a barracks, guardhouse, magazine, and storehouse. The roof was made from acacia wood and cypress bark supplied by the Natchez. The trading post moved from the Grand Village to the protective vicinity of Fort Rosalie, and was soon followed by hundreds of Europeans and enslaved Africans who settled on small farms and plantations in Natchez country.





Over the course of the next decade, the French colony at Natchez grew to include 430 French men, women, and children and 280 enslaved Africans. In addition, 28 Frenchmen staffed the small garrison stationed at Fort Rosalie where the wooden palisade walls had deteriorated severely since construction. After a series of conflicts between the French and the Natchez

Indians, on the morning of November 28, 1729 the Natchez carried out a coordinated attack at the fort and across the settlement that killed more than 200 of the French settlers and resulted in the burning of the fort and all the French buildings. The French rebuilt the fort a few months later, an earthwork structure, one wall of which is still visible today.



Artifact hunting and use of metal detectors is strictly prohibited. Removing any artifacts, no matter how small, is a violation of federal law. Even something as seemingly inconsequential as a piece of broken glass can yield clues about the past; therefore, take nothing from the site and leave nothing behind.