

IN MEMORIAM

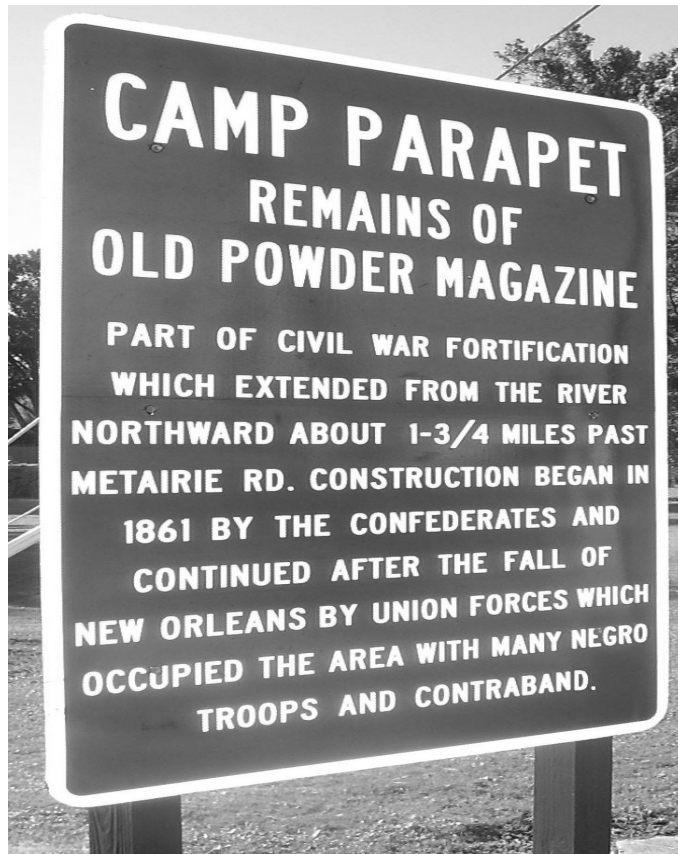
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1914—2009

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## **Camp Parapet Powder Magazine**

*A National Register of Historic Places Property*



**Arlington Street off Causeway Boulevard**

**Jefferson, Louisiana**

*The only extant fortification of the War Between  
The States in the New Orleans area.*

# Camp Parapet Day

An Annual Tradition since 2007

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## **HISTORY OF CAMP PARAPET AND THE POWDER MAGAZINE**

This powder magazine is the only surviving element of Camp Parapet, a War Between The States fortification built to protect New Orleans from an upriver attack. The fortification consisted of a zig-zag earthen embankment running from the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain, roughly parallel to Causeway Boulevard. At the river end was the Main Redoubt which contained this powder magazine, as well as three others, a hot shot furnace, an observatory, a guard house, officers' quarters, and nine heavy artillery guns. The Star Redoubt (redoubt: a portion of a fortification with cannon, powder magazine and various buildings), protected from the Lake Pontchartrain end of the fortification with the Cavalier Redoubt somewhat lakeside from it.

At the outbreak of the war, the New Orleans Common Council authorized a commission to design and build fortifications for the city. Maj. Benjamin Buisson was president of the commission and, as a former artillery officer under Napoleon, was charged with designing the fortifications. However, because of protests from the Jefferson Parish Police Jury and landowners whose property was seized, the New Orleans efforts were superseded by Confederate action.

Under Confederate direction, Maj. Martin L. Smith was placed in charge of defenses for the city. He relocated the fortifications to improve the strategic river view and the artillery fire range. On July 27, 1861, Smith and Col. Paul O. Hebert submitted final plans to James W. Burk, William Henry and Lt. B. M. Harrod as engineers and Gabriel and Correjolles as contractors.

In November 1861, Col. Alfred Mouton and his 18th Regiment of Louisiana Volunteers were assigned to the Victor Smith line to protect New Orleans and the nearby New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad. In the first few months of the war, the Camp took on a festive atmosphere with frequent barbecues and dances.

When Adm. Farragut's federal fleet ran the blockade at the mouth of the Mississip-

pi River, panic ensued, and troops, weapons, and goods were moved to the north over the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern Railroad. The swiftly approaching Federal troops prohibited the removal of artillery guns installed at Fort Morgan, however, an attempt was made to render them ineffective.

In April 1862, Federal troops took possession of the fortifications and started to complete and improve them; Fort Banks across the river was constructed. Placed under the command of Brig. Gen. John W. Phelps, the fortifications were named Camp Parapet.

Phelps, a staunch abolitionist, following the Union command policy that freed slaves and homeless blacks were to be fed and housed, encouraged them to go to the camp where quarters were established for them. Gen. Benjamin Butler, Commanding Officer in New Orleans, probably concerned about the problem of caring for such numbers of people, put the camp off limits to any unemployed persons, black or white, and did not accept Phelps's suggestion of training freed men through apprenticeship programs, and Phelps resigned.

Disease was prevalent at the fortification because of unsanitary conditions and lowlying topography. Conditions were particularly bad at the Star Redoubt, where soldiers lived in standing water. Deaths were so frequent that a cemetery was established.

From the late 1800s through the 1920s, this magazine served as the Jefferson Parish East Bank Lock-up. Prisoners were housed there until they were transported to the West Bank Jail. In 1963, the magazine was dedicated as a historical site by Jefferson Parish. In 1977, it was added to the National Register of Historic Places. It was restored in 1981.

