

**RESTORATION INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FORMERLY USED DEFENSE SITES (FUDS)
PROJECT FACT SHEET
ORIGINAL DATE: 10 AUGUST 1998
TAG REVIEW DATE: 27 APRIL 1999**

1. **SITE NAME:** Battery Bienvenue

SITE NUMBER: A06LA002300

LOCATION:

City: New Orleans
County: St. Bernard Parish
State: Louisiana

PROJECT NUMBER: A06LA002301

CATEGORY: OE

INPR RAC: 5

ASR RAC: 5

TAG RAC: 5

2. **POC's:**

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3. **SITE DESCRIPTION:**

The ruins of Battery Bienvenue lie at the fork of Bayou Bienvenue and Bayou Villere in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana near New Orleans. Constructed improvements remain on approximately 3 acres, although the entire military reservation consisted of

lands within 1,200 yard radius of the fort, or 934.7 acres. This includes portions of Orleans Parish.

4. **SITE HISTORY:**

Military use began in 1814 when the British created an earthwork rampart to guard the route from Lake Borgne to the Mississippi River during the War of 1812. Following the war, the U.S. planned on building a masonry battery, though construction did not begin until 1826. Only intermittently garrisoned both prior to and after the Civil War, the Army abandoned the site in 1894. The War Department declared it surplus in 1922, and the fortifications were subsequently sold in 1930. The ordnance and explosives related features included a magazine and a variety of 19th century muzzle-loading cannons. Plate 1 in the report plates section shows the general location of the site.

Battery Bienvenue began as a star shaped, redoubt known as Fort Villere. The British army built this earthwork at the fork of bayous Bienvenue and Mazant (now Villere), Louisiana, after their landing at Lake Borgne in December 1814. The British built this redoubt to guard their route from Lake Borgne to the Mississippi River bank at Chalmette, Louisiana. After defeat by American forces in January 1815, the British withdrew, using Fort Villere to guard their retreat.

The American army occupied the redoubt after the British withdrawal in 1815. In 1817, plans called for building a new, larger, masonry battery. Construction did not begin until 1826. Construction required only two years for official completion, though improvements and repairs followed for years. The battery was a six sided, open work, 140 yards long by 60 yards wide. It had a scarp wall, two and one half feet thick, and was encircled by a moat. Seven cannon mounts were built on the top of the wall that faced down Bayou Bienvenue. Structures included two cisterns, a brick storehouse, a powder magazine, two barracks, a parade ground and a bridge across the moat. An oven for heating cannon shot was added in 1835.

After completion, the battery was not occupied on a regular basis. The Army stationed small infantry troop detachments there at various times after the battery's construction. These garrisons consisted of no more than fifteen men, drawn from Fort Macomb, Louisiana. Much of the time, particularly through the Florida Seminole War and the Mexican War, it was not occupied.

On 9 February 1842, President John Tyler, ordered the creation of the Battery Bienvenue Military Reservation to include all the public land lying 1,200 yards from the fort. In 1843,

the Army revetted the interior slope of the parapet with timbers and made wooden gun traverses. They also placed a line of palisades to close the gorge at the rear of the work. Earth removed from the parapet was used to raise the parade ground. However, the parade ground's higher elevation caused water to flow into the quarters and shot furnace, causing extensive damage during wet weather. The construction of the fortification on swampland accelerated subsidence of the foundation during the 1840's. Additional renovations in 1846 slowed this subsidence. That same year on 1 June, the Louisiana Legislature ceded jurisdiction of the Battery Bienvenue Military Reservation to the United States government.

Battery Bienvenue continued to deteriorate during the 1850s and was only occupied by a civilian caretaker. In 1858, the Army constructed additional cannon platforms to the fortification. A severe storm in 1860 caused extensive damage to the battery and filled its moat with sand. They did not repair this damage, due to a lack of funds.

Confederate forces seized Battery Bienvenue in June 1861. Until February 1862, the Confederates kept a small force at the battery, which reached company size during February and March 1862. The Confederates occupied the fortification until the fall of New Orleans to the Union in April 1862. After recapture, until late 1865, Federal forces stationed successive detachments of infantry at Battery Bienvenue.

The Army ordered the post's evacuation on 22 May 1865. However, a small detachment of artillery troops occupied the battery for a short period after November 1865. With their departure, the fortification was once again left in caretaker status. During the post-war period, little was done except mowing and minor repairs. In 1877, the War Department recommended selling Battery Bienvenue, though it remained in the inventory and was reported on ordnance department reports until at least 1892. An armament return, dated April 1892, relates that there were no carriages for the unmounted cannon at the fortification, the bridge across the moat was gone and the barracks were in ruins.

The Army abandoned the site in 1894, no longer garrisoning it or providing a caretaker. The Secretary of War declared the site surplus on 20 November 1922, and the fortifications were subsequently sold on 17 December 1927. However, the purchaser did not consummate the sale and the battery was resold on 4 April 1930. It currently remains under private ownership.

5. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Entire Site: Size, Acres: Approximately 934.7
Former Use: Military Fort
Present Use: Abandoned ruins amongst
Marshy wetlands
Probable End Use: Same as above
Ordnance Presence: None

6. **CURRENT STATUS:** The Archive Search Report (ASR) for Battery Bienvenue was completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, in September 1998.

7. **STRATEGY:** Entire Site: No DoD Action Indicated (NDAI)

8. **ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** The Huntsville Center Technical Advisory Group met and discussed this ASR on 27 April 1999 and determined NDAI for this entire FUDS. This site has not seen any action in over 100 years and was last active during the Civil War. While this site was an active installation, it was primarily used for protection of the coastal waterways and the majority of firing activities were for drill purposes. Various size muzzleloading cannons (9 lb. through 42 lb.) were stored and fired at Battery Bienvenue and the ASR site investigation team found no evidence of OE on this site. This is very marshy, wet and saturated swampland and the likelihood of OE being encountered is very remote. This property is held as an estate by the descendants of the brothers who purchased it in the 1950's and no future development is anticipated.

There are known Federally-and State- listed species occurring in the site area. An on-site inspection by appropriate State and Federal personnel may be necessary to verify the presence, absence or location of listed species, or natural communities.

9. **SCHEDULE SUMMARY:** NDAI

10. **FUNDING/BUDGET SUMMARY:** NA NDAI

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