

Louisiana

Contraband camps took different forms in different places. For instance, while in Memphis camps were created, often from the ground up, along or in the Mississippi River, in South Carolina many camps existed on the same plantations where blacks had been slaves. Still other camps simply consisted of a number of blacks resident at Union encampments. Especially in the case of newly-built camps, the populations were ever-changing since fugitives arrived daily, men were recruited into service, and women were often sent to work on abandoned farms or plantations. Some of what is known about these makeshift communities comes from official record while important details have been provided through the writings of various people—often associated with religious groups or benevolent organizations—who visited them. One of the most detailed first-hand accounts is provided by Quaker Levi Coffin, who transitioned from his work on the Underground Railroad directly to fundraising for the contraband. Two other witnesses to camp life were Michigan Quaker and Underground Railroad operative Laura Haviland, and John Eaton, Jr. General Superintendent of Freedmen. In addition to narratives of missionaries, The Freedmen and Southern Society Project, through its extensive research and publication of wartime documents related to African Americans during the Civil War and Reconstruction, is the best source for evidencing the transition from slavery to freedom.

Baton Rouge

There is a photograph available of blacks living at one camp, a two-story wood structure. It is believed that some of the former slaves of Jefferson Davis resided at this camp.ⁱ Quaker Laura Haviland referred to “a few camps surrounding the city of Baton Rouge.”ⁱⁱ

Carrollton

This camp is referenced in an article by Jane E. Schultz.ⁱⁱⁱ This camp was described as large.^{iv}

Goodrich Landing

Brig. Gen. John P. Hawkins complained that proper care wasn't being taken of the contraband, who were idle in the city and were only being given rations. He stated that he was in support of putting them to work cutting wood for steamboats and settling them on Pau Pau [sic] Island. This correspondence is directed to Eaton, superintendent.^v Goodrich Landing is located approximately ten miles below Lake Providence and ten miles above Young's Point. Army surgeon James Bryan reported that there were numerous “contraband family camps” existing outside of the army encampments. These he said extended “along the shore down to Sherman's Landing.”^{vi} One official divided the living situations of blacks in this area into three categories: (1) “plantations controlled by Government lessees, (2) “infirmary farms,” controlled by “Government Agents” and (3) “the floating population,” many of them employed by the government at woodcutting.

Bryant names Savage and Front Raleigh plantations as two infirmary farms (situated on the river a mile & a mile and a half respectively below Goodrich's Landing: the others known as the Richardson Blackman, Stone, Hardison and Carry plantations, are situated west of the ‘telegraph road’ leading from Goodrich Landing to Milliken's Bend.^{vii}

Kenners

Lake Providence

Numerous references are made to a camp at Lake Providence in the northeast region of the state. U.S. Grant in fact is quoted as saying that Lake Providence would make “a suitable place” not merely for a camp but for a colony. The site was “in a high state of cultivation,” there being many plantations there. The quarters had been improved, and it was believed that the area could be easily protected.^{viii} In February of 1863, Chaplain (Rev.) Lark Southgate Livermore (5th USCT Heavy Artillery) wrote from Lake Providence that the blacks were very knowledgeable, knowing where cotton and “all sorts of treasures” were hidden.^{ix} Later, in July of the same year, army surgeon James Bryan reported to the Secretary of War that between Lake Providence and Sherman Island he had come across ten thousand women and children, roving bands that had left the plantations. They were without protection and support.

Adjutant Gen. Lorenzo Thomas reached Lake Providence in April of 1863, with the intention of raising black troops.

For information on freedmen and women registered in this area, see the work of AtlasFamily.org at <http://www.atlasfamily.org/index.php/history/ecparish-history/26-ecparish-slavery-reconstruction>. See specifically, M1905, Roll 33.

Paw Paw Island

Young’s Point

Milliken’s Bend

New Orleans

Camp Parapet: this camp was opened on the former plantation of Victor Fortier. Freedmen founded two churches on this land, Picket Shanny Ross Chapel (1863, named after its first minister, Anthony Ross) and First Zion Baptist Chapel (1864). A cemetery was constructed on the land, two portions of which were later sold to railroad companies.^x

ⁱ 1 (See http://www.louisianadigitallibrary.com/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/

ⁱⁱ Haviland, <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/wlwrk10.txt>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Referenced in *Seldom Thanked, Never Praised, and Scarcely Recognized: Gender and Racism in Civil War Hospitals* *Civil War History* - Volume 48, Number 3, September 2002, pp. 220-236.

^{iv} Referenced in *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs*, by Graham J. White. (http://books.google.com/books?id=DhIT0z9DX3cC&pg=PA101&lpg=PA101&dq=contraband+camps,+louisiana&source=bl&ots=sQ0Ws8x5Ps&sig=Um3AwzInUV5ZTDsfA0oPGKgYMv0&hl=en&ei=4H3HSt69JsqX8AbNgqThCA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=8#v=onepage&q=&f=false)

^v Simon, Vol. 9, p. 137.

^{vi} See p. 715-717 (Ref. Excerpts from Surgeon James Bryan to Hon. E.M. Stanton, 27 July 1863, B-108 1863, Letters Received, ser. 360, Colored Troops Division, RG 94 [B-612]. Cited in *The Wartime Genesis of Free Labor: the lower South*, Ira Berlin et al, eds., ser.1, v3, Cambridge UP, Cambridge, England, 1990.

^{vii} See pp. 728-730 (Ref. Major Julian E. Bryant to Captain, 10 Oct. 1863, filed as T-9 1863, Letters Received by Adjutant General L. Thomas, ser. 363, Colored Troops Division, RG 94 {V-69}). Cited in Berlin et al.

^{viii} See p. 679 (Ref. Chaplain John Eaton, Jr. to Colonel, 14 Feb. 1863, #150 1863). Letters Received Relating to Military Discipline and Control, ser. 22, RG 108 [S-4]. Cited in Berlin et al.

^{ix} *Ibid*, p. 681.

^x [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrewsbury_\(Camp_Parapet\)_Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrewsbury_(Camp_Parapet)_Cemetery).