Bienville's City Remembers

The cover

In this New Orleans port scene captured by the brush of John Stobart, widely regarded as the country's foremost maritime artist of today, the age of sail that saw the birth of America is drawing to a close, and the age of steam that witnessed the beginnings of the nation's phenomenal industrial growth is in its prime.

Capsuling as it does those two eras, the painting seems an especially appropriate opener for a July 4, 1976, issue of DIXIE devoted entirely to stories inspired by the significance of that date and published in a city founded by Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, almost 60 years before the Revolutionary War.

Stobart's work has as its most dominant feature the steamboat J. M. White, hailed in her day as "The Mistress of the Mississippi." New Orleans historian Leonard V. Huber, co-author of Tales of the Mississippi, said she was described as the "greatest, fastest and costliest" ($250,000) of the great Mississippi riverboats.

The keel of the vessel, said Huber, was laid in 1877, year after the nation's Centennial, and she was launched in 1878. Ten years later, she was destroyed by fire — with a reported loss of 28 lives — while moored at a plantation in Pointe Coupee Parish.

While he was working on the painting, one of four new ones he has done in recognition of the Bicentennial, Stobart, who lives in Potomac, Md., consulted Huber in order to make the work as authentic as possible. Huber said the scene is viewed from a point that is almost opposite Canal Street and noted the care with which not only the nautical elements but also the details of the New Orleans skyline are depicted.

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IN 1776, Louisiana was a Spanish colony that had formerly belonged to France and to which the impending Revolutionary War was primarily regarded as the threat of a British invasion; in 1876, the area was still going through the throes of the Reconstruction that followed the Civil War, a war that destroyed forever so much that was good and admirable about the lifestyle developed in the South during the preceding century; and the accelerating changes that the last two centuries have witnessed here and elsewhere in the nation certainly prompts the awesome question, "What will 2076, what will the Tricentennial Year, be like?"

It was with such thoughts in mind that Larry Bartlett, working nights and weekends for a period of months, set about assembling material for the three stories in this issue.

In his 1776 and 1876 stories, Bartlett, eschewing the typically dry historical chronicle, attempts to portray life and times in New Orleans and vicinity as they must have seemed to the average man and woman of the period.

In the 2076 story, Bartlett's sources are two Orleanians whose professional background makes what they have to say worth listening to.

BARTLETT himself was formerly a writer on the staff of DIXIE (1969-71) and is now employed as a feature writer for the University of New Orleans news bureau.

Possessor of a master's degree in fine arts, he has taught art at the college level and will have a one-man show of drawings at the Bienville Gallery in September.

In research, Bartlett was assisted by personnel of the Louisiana State Museum, including John Kemp, curator; Mrs. Ghislaine Pleasonton, associate curator of manuscripts, rare books and cartography; Mrs. Eileen Morris, librarian; and Miss Rose Lambert, assistant librarian.

Mrs. Pleasonton, by the way, is currently cleaning restoring, collating and calendaring 500,000 items from the Colonial period. When this vast collection of largely unstudied material is reviewed by historians, says Bartlett, it may substantially alter subsequent accounts of New Orleans during the Colonial period.

Assistance in assembling graphic material for the issue was also given by Collin Hamer, head of the Louisiana Division of the New Orleans Public Library.
The Way It Was

(New Orleans and Vicinity, That Is, in 1776)

By Larry Bartlett

The Gulf

ITS high noon on the docks of Havana, and a group of mulatto sailors are bickering in a diction none

rattling does - winning and losing without emotion, their eyes trained on the harbor.

But Spanish officers swagger past, imperious in uniforms of blue, white and gold. Their bearing is haughty, but their voices are subdued and a suit of formal hair braids their eyes.

In the past this world, real news in scarlet, but rumors abound. Today - the fourth of July in 1776 - the rumor is that a British squadron is closing off the coast of Cuba, and that war is about to begin.

OLD men in Havana can still remember the age of British privateers -"call'ed "seabeggars" - who raided and looted unarmed cargo ships and towns in the Spanish West Indies. Today, England is mistress of the seas, and her con victs harass regularly licensed trading ships of Spain while her own merchant ships bravely run contraband to Spanish colonies, from Darien (Panama) to Louisiana. Spanish officials estimate that England now has in the waters of North America and the Gulf of Mexico 90 vessels of war and 400 merchantmen - and an army of 25,000 men.

Cause of the present panic: England's North American colonies, with the exception of West Florida, are in a turmoil and the situation has brought a new wave of British troops across the Atlantic. The Spanish fear this response to an alleged colonial rebellion is a ruse, and that the aggressive British are actively planning to divert their troops and ships to a surprise invasion of Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and along the Gulf of Mexico. Since the overthrow of the royal house of Spain, the Indians have had nests post to the United Provinces and Arzam 1000 (Yucatan) to watch for the entry of British vessels into the Gulf.

Across the schooner La Maria, which is preparing to weigh anchor for New Orleans, Spanish provincial captain, Don Carlos Juan Capella is still wondering whether he should actually set sail. But suddenly cheers burst from La Maria's own crew and from the fencers on the dock. Far out in the harbor, they have sighted the un-

ignitary suite of El Pincion - the incident rules exactly between Havana and New Or- luans. El Pincion's hull is honeycombed with holes made by shipworms, and its protective coating of one-inch tuber and asphalt is er- nuched with a heavy layer of macerates and seaweed. If it has been able to flower along the 650-mile route from Nuevo Orleans to Havana, then the Gulf is still at peace.

NEW Orleans, the destination of La Maria, lies in the background of the world - 900 miles from the wealthy Spanish colonial capital of Mexico City, 1160 miles from the British colony of New York, and 550 miles from the fabled Spanish port at St. Louis. A British attack - if it should come - is more likely to be directed against Nuevo Orleans than against the wall protected Spanish settlements in Cuba or Mexico.

The Spanish colonial structure is a pyramid of wealth and power. Louisi an's colonial governor, Don Luis Druey-u y de Zavala, answers to the Cagan-General of Cuba, who replies to the Viceroy of Mexico, who serves the Ministry of the Indies, and that lofty bureaucratic answers to King Carlos III. The king, a cousin of the Bourbon king of France, answers only to God, and God apparently never asks him to account for the neglected colonial of Nuevo Orleans.

Captain Joel at last feels confidently upon anchor and takes the. La Maria across the harbor bar of Havana and enters the blue waters of level-1 lands that begin to sketch a shoreline at East Point. Shortly thereafter, Spanish flags come into view. They are on high piles that ring an island called "The Balize." It is the home of the Mississippi River bar pilot and an outpost of Spanish authority on the continent.

The island is little more than a dirt and dead over debris scattered an unstable base of carved canoe, roots, and dead mud. Such is the "one of the tremendous" islands in the Mississippi outwash. It appears stranded on a sea of plaid, with a weight and whatever is left on the surface will be washed into the bottomless, well of brackish mud. By untrained French officers, the Balize supports buildings and expands from Eppes, 50 feet deep, 50 feet wide, and a group of small masonry buildings, all of wood, all without windows, with poor doors that can be opened by pelicans, seagulls, curlews, and other invertebrates. Where the Spanish have returned to the Balize, underpin two story barracks of heavy timbers frames and brick masonry. There is a small chapel, a powder magazine, a brickyard, a bakery, and homes for commandants, chaplains, workmen, sailors and bar pilot. Reclining the island areounds of mud and timber supporting top-signal canons and high signal poles, flag top the poles by day, and bar- lanterns hanging from them by night. A vast covered camp has been built to col- lect water for the gunners during the dry season when this mouth of the river falls.

The island falls from the Balize looks efficient and military. But a closer look, not allowed to seamen, would reveal the island itself cannot be de- served, much less defend the entire river. Its cannon are salt-cor- rided into uselessness, its buildings are steadily smoking; and an entire wall has fallen away from a barracks, exposing soldiers to clouds of mos- quitoes. Other buildings are shot up with poles, and most of the what has sunk below water level.

When the Spanish first took control of this colony, they inspected the Balize and declared that the French had made a mistake in paying their bar pilot and river defense here. The Spaniards attempted to route river traffic through Northeast Pass, and an army of military officials and de la Pena, making their way through Lakes Borgne and Pointe-aux-Chenes, the English take more money out of Louisiana than do the Spanish.

The Balize

SAND ton at all of a thready group of ships, you would find it hard to catch them all, even if you knew where they were when New World catches you by surprise. And they leave over, flowing toward you miles from the present wind, cloaking the blue Gulf water with an immense flood of dirt, dead plankton, driftwood and debris. Two hills before you get the first glimpse of the mainland islands at land's end you are already sailing the waters of this river which disgorges European travelers have named "the river of a continent." Spanish authorities call it Rio de San Luis de Mayas, and Eng- lishmen call it the Mississippi.

The first hint of actual land are tangles of seaweed and mangroves on the peripherals of water-level islands that begin to sketch a shoreline at East Point. Shortly thereafter, Spanish flags come into view. They are on high piles that ring an island called "The Balize." It is the home of the Mississippi River bar pilot and an outpost of Spanish authority on the continent.

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But the captains of British mer- chant ships and wevers seldom do business with de la Pena, making a game of avoiding his fee by laying anchor at the Gulf until they can follow a paying customer into the river "free of charge, or taking a chance on a Frenchman's mercy or lack of it. Few vessels have chance that comes from knowing their names, the French, and Spanish are still building the Balize. Some of the mud that was drained from it during the Seven Years War in Europe (1756-60), in the Treaty of Paris, France gave half of the Balize to Spain, and with the Spanish have returned to the Balize, where they found them in- deed little and labor daily to keep the buildings from falling apart.

SAILING to meet La Maria in the Balize's launch is the bar pilot de la Pena, who is accompanied by Spanish seamen Domingo Flores, Felix Mendez y Pedro Cias. The pilot, only 26, is one of the better paid men in the colony. His salary is 200 pieces of eight (silver coins instead of issued paper money) per year, while the Balize's commandant, Domingo Flores, receives only 72 pesos per year.

As before, no one dares to go from day to day, when to sail is a safer passage through the mouth of the river. The Mississippi changes the direction of its currents every day, washing out banks and steafieldly building up hidden sandbars. The muddy river bottom is this area is like- likened to the ribs of sunk ships and the tannic-dried remains of jettisoned cannon and Spanish treasure.

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The Isle of Orleans

"The people here will remain quiet as long as they are gently treated; but if they are shown any contempt or disdain, they will resent it and fight. Their dispositions are mild but they become heated and even - here is the case - in the winter.

The climate here is not surprising: the summers are hot and humid and the winters are cool and dry. The soil is rich and fertile, particularly near the riverbanks where fruits and vegetables thrive. The rainfall is moderate and the rivers provide an excellent source of water for irrigation and navigation.

In the middle of the year, the river rises and the fields are flooded, but this is seen as a natural event that sustains the crops. The harvest season is from mid-September to late November.

The people of Orleans are known for their hospitality and their love of music. They celebrate many festivals throughout the year, including the annual Mardi Gras parade, which draws visitors from all over the world.

The economy is based on agriculture and trade, with tobacco and rice being the main exports. The local market is lively and there is a thriving community of craftsmen and artisans.

The city is connected to the mainland by several bridges and there are plans for a new bridge to be built in the near future. Orleans is a vibrant and dynamic community, full of life and activity."

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The El Rio de San Luis de Missisipy

L A MARIAS' crew lacks her slowly and with difficulty for the next three-quarters of a mile. The current, however, is strong and the vessel is at the mercy of the wind and waves. The sails are reefed and the helmsman faces the elements with determination.

Some fishermen, using their nets and lines, are attempting to catch smelt and alewives, but the sea is rough and the fish are scarce. The crew is tired and the skipper is growing concerned about the prospects of a good catch.

As the vessel approaches the shore, the crew prepares to anchor and begin unloading the catch. The sailors are hungry and thirsty, and there is a sense of relief as they see the land in the distance.

The crew is greeted by the mayor and other officials, who express their gratitude for the fishermen's contributions to the local economy.

The musicians begin playing as the crew celebrates their return. The mood is festive and the villagers are eager to hear the latest news from the sea.
most half of the income of the colony is being spent on British contraband. On the other hand, the Apiamc dancers, items of apparel reach New Orleans from many ports in the Spanish colonies of Central and South America — it is easier to buy clothing made in Peru than clothing made in Paris — but most imports come from Mexico. Rather than follow these Spanish fashions, Orleansians have local dressmakers ("couturiers"), and wigmakers imitate Parisian styles.

Pierre Marchand on Toulouse Street can create de rigueur gentleman's wigs with the clubbed effect in back (pigtails are out). A gentleman with the slightest pretensions to style must have several wigs — variously styled — for business and social occasions. Ladies wear their hair piled high and heavily powdered. Sunbonnets (capottes) of silk or velvet are worn during the day, but for carriage rides and in the evening the hair is covered with a "catagan," a gauze bonnet trimmed with ribbons.

For both sexes, costumes of velvet are preferred on all formal occasions, but silk may be worn during the heat of the summer. Ladies and gentlemen wear delicate silk shoes, currently fashionable in France. But there is a local adaptation: when walking in the filth and mud of the city's streets, the silk-clad feet are slipped in heavy "sabots" — hand-crafted wooden shoes. The latter are produced locally and are often decorated with feathers, ribbons, and inlaid gilt-work. But sabots remain distastefully clumsy and inelegant to Creole persons of fashion.

Although the well dressed Creole very closely resembles the French model — possibly half a year behind the fashion — there is an oddity to the Creole that strikes European travelers as gauche. Because a needle costs about 50 cents and a page of pins is almost unobtainable, the colonist must use fasteners made of orange wood or thorns of honey locust. This provincial custom isn't easily disguised because it takes several such to hold in place breeches, and pigeon wings of a gentleman's wig; ladies make lavish use of pins when they have them and yearn for a life in France when they don't.

When Creole ladies are in the latter mood, they shun society and spend their time sulking in "the white chapel," a local euphemism for bed. For this reason, they are pampered as if they were sick, and certainly fit for pampering. In fact, both sexes dress beyond their means — and are encouraged to tighten the privation of frontier life with a continual round of parties. Actually, the chronic shortage of pins exists because the local silversmith — Pedro Gourain — is too busy making Parisian-style tableware for parties to manufacture more practical items.

Just as the soldiers drink heavily to blur the reality of garrison life, our persons of fashion try to mask the necessities of life, swim and mosquitoes with endless parties and dances. Smartly liveried slaves wade through the muddy streets, carrying hand-written party invitations in elegant baskets. At each house receiving an invitation, the lady of the house is welcome to search for her own in the basket — providing she has a community to know who else is being invited. When the party is being held at a home within the palisades, most Creoles simply don their sabots and walk to it. If the party is at night, they are accompanied by lantern bearers and armed guards.

But some of the most lavish parties are given at the large plantations upriver and downstream from the city. Invitations to the luscious plantations of the Macarys, the Livaudais, the Larches, the Perrys, or others, brings a parade of wealthy Creoles along the levee Road. They travel by coach, berlin (a four-wheeled, closed, two-seated carriage) or chaise (open, one-horse shay), galloping grandly past the poorer class of Louisianians, who still travel by ox cart. Because a needle costs about 50 cents and a page of pins is almost unobtainable, the colonist must use fasteners made of orange wood or thorns of honey locust. This provincial custom isn't easily disguised because it takes several such to hold in place breeches, and pigeon wings of a gentleman's wig; ladies make lavish use of pins when they have them and yearn for a life in France when they don't.

The glittering social life close to the Great Cypress Swamp produces many opportunities to err through gambling, drinking, fighting, and amorous excess. Following such conduct, penitent persons may choose either a French or Spanish priest of the Capuchin order to hear their confessions. But even the Spanish administrators prefer to get their spiritual guidance from the light-hearted French fathers, and the priests and nuns sent here from Spain and Havana often lead a lonely existence. The French priests have abandoned the grim gloom of the confessional and now hear confessions in a comfortable armchair in the vestry. Spanish padres affect rough woolen robes and gloomy austerity, but the French Capuchins wear silk shoes, knee-breeches and cocked hats.

Spanish clerics are scandalized and complain to Don Santiago Hechavarria, the Bishop of Cuba, but their Gallic counterparts continue to show a marked enjoyment of cards, dancing, wine, feasting and — some say — wenching. Declaring ducks to be fish — because they swim — the French Capuchins wear silk shoes, knee-breeches and cocked hats.

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The Illustrious Cabildo (city council) hears complaints that operators of the unlicensed dives “adulterate and misrepresent the liquor they sell, exposing slaves to violent illnesses,” and that slaves are urged to steal from their masters in order to acquire the price of a drink. Some taverns have maintained a fixed price list that names the drinks a slave can receive in bar for stolen lace, handkerchiefs, napkins, silverware, pins and combs.

The underground taverns have also spawned conspiracies and riots, leading the Spanish authorities to declare: “Due to constantly recurring disorders ... supplemented by robberies and murders, the regular guards no are no longer sufficient to patrol the streets ... companies of militia (are ordered) to furnish us with a detachment of town guards to patrol all night from the time the curfew bell rings.”

The regular town guards, as a matter of fact, are not too highly regarded, either by criminals or citizens. Spanish regulations state that a man must be certified as having no useful trade or mechanical skill in order to be hired as a town guard.

Law in Nuevo Orleans is “The Law of the Indies” for whites and free persons of color, and “Le Code Noir” (the Black Code) for slaves. Many of the laws apply to free persons and are harsh, but they are seldom enforced and even less often obeyed. “He who shall revile Our Savior or His Mother within the limits - for the most part, is maintained by the unlicensed taverns greatly outnumber legally operated cabarets, and the Spanish authorities lack the manpower needed to close them down. Shanties, abandoned buildings, warehouses and stables in the poorer parts of town readily become clandestine drinking holes where vagabonds, gamblers and slaves intermingle to drink tafia, beer, sangaree punch, wine and Holland brandy.

The lawless who live within the city, there is an irregular lifestyle that centers around the billiard halls and cabarets. In order to keep down crime, the Spanish administrators have established strict regulations that govern the licensing and operation of hotels and inns, taverns, bodegones (chop houses), and gaming halls. In 1775, Governor Unzaga announced a general amnesty for runaway slaves who would return to their masters. It was a grim testimony to the hardship of life in the swamp when dozens of runaways emerged from “La Cyprerie,” naked, starving, diseased and sucked almost bloodless by mosquitoes, lice and leeches.

For the lawless who live within the city, there is a rich history of violence and lawlessness. The Spanish courts were notorious for their harsh, public and flamboyant justice. Hanging is common for slaves who commit robbery or murder or assault members of their owner’s family. Judges have ordered such slaves to be tortured — within limits — by fire or the rack.

However, the rigor of Spanish justice cannot be judged by standards of subsequent centuries, and even slaves have a right to legal counsel. Under-age ones who are accused of committing crimes are guaranteed the presence of a court-appointed custodian who guards their rights, and in the event a slave’s master will not defend him, the court provides a defender. At least one slave has demanded to be defended by the eminence Peter Cowley.

Masters will frequently defend their slaves in court, even when convinced of their guilt. One citizen has complained to the Illustrious Cabildo that masters will perjure themselves to win a slave’s acquittal because they cannot afford to have a healthy slave hanged, imprisoned, or subjected to such heavy corporal punishment that his ability to labor is lost. The Cabildo has considered a law that would put a special tax on slaves that would provide the government with funds to keep a master whose chattel has been caught up in the wheels of justice. But the tax has not been passed, and Orleanians still dread to see Militia Sergeant Enrique Medinique approach them with an official arrest order for one of their valuable slaves.

Upon conviction, punishment is harsh, public and flamboyant. It is announced well in advance, so that Creole ladies and other persons of refinement may be discreetly absent from the streets. And then ... but, look! At this very moment a crowd of seamen, soldiers, ruffians and idlers is gathering along Orleans Street to see the King’s Justice being administered, since punishments are dealt in a kind of street parade, providing the lower strata of society with a moral lesson and a free show at the same time.

Warden Francisco Munoz orders the court yard gates of the prison to be opened, and the town crier, Nicolas Jourdain, strides into the street, unrolling an official proclamation. Behind him, deputy sheriff Nicolas Froment leads out three pack horses with convicts roped across their backs. Miguel, the Negro executioner, follows behind and trails a long whip in the muddy street as the procession proceeds slowly toward the gallows. The crowd cheers as Jourdain gives the signal for the punishment to commence by reading his proclamation in a loud voice. As Jourdain reads, the executioner begins to swing the whip with regularity.

“This is the what the King, Our Lord, has ordered done in his Royal Name,” Jourdain bawls to the crowd. “For robbery on Bayou Road, the slaves Anibal, Granada and Juan shall be mounted on beasts of burden and flogged through the streets for the benefit of all the gallows with 200 lashes each. Further, their master shall work them in chains for a period of three years. He who does such shall pay such!”

The three felons are actually receiving a fairly mild dose of colonial justice. Hanging is common for crimes of violence, and convicted slaves have been tied by wrists and ankles to the tail of a horse and dragged through the mud and dung of the streets, flogged, and hanged on the gallows. Then, as an object lesson, the hands and feet have been severed from the corpse and nailed to posts along public thoroughfares. If the felon’s crime has aroused the public’s wrath sufficiently, his corpse may be further defiled by being thrown into a sewer.
The Military

STUMBLING along Barracks Street, on his way from an underworld tavern to a bordello, Sub-lieutenant Joseph Piemans lurched among packs of dogs and herds of half-wild hogs that prowled the boardwalk. His blue Army jacket is unbottoned, and white epaulettes are dappled with purple wine stains. Joseph, kin to Pedro Piemans — a frontier hero of the Yineuse territory and present lieutenant governor of the colony — is a man of such scandalous behavior that slaves hold him in scorn.

Because of Piemans' high political connections, his official dossier merely damns him with faint praise. However, in private correspondence even Governor Unzaga damns him virulently. The sub-lieutenant is that species of colonial officer who has done the unforgivable: he has gone native, abandoning lofty Spanish morality and reserve for the dozens of appealing vices that have been refined to a high degree by the local Creoles. He is a compulsive gambler who will roll dice with his own enlisted men, winning from them even their uniforms and thrashing them if he is accused of cheating. He is a tippler of almost unlimited capacity, a compulsive womanizer and a duellist. Flouting his political influence, he refuses to salute his superiors and delights in insulting fellow officers in front of their troops.

In most ways, Piemans is the typical Spanish soldier — brave, bored, insolent, dashing and louche by turns. Young lads from Creole families follow him about the city, copying his every mannerism and vice. Parents have demanded that the governor have him discharged from the service and banished from the colony before he corrupts the morals of their sons. But the sub-lieutenant is a gentleman — in addition to being a libertine, tosspot and villain — and his case will be handled cautiously. Unzaga is planning to send him to the backwater post of St. Louis, Ill. — the place that veterans have nick-named "Fort Short Bread." It is quietly hoped that the blood-thirsty Osage Indians will provide an end to this embarrassing situation.

Piemans' conduct has offended the local gentry because he has betrayed the caste of the gentleman. Drunken and licentious behavior by the common Spanish troops is accepted as normal. Orleanians are aware that — as subjects of the greatest colonial power on earth — they could be forced to accept many indignities from King Carlos' soldiers. The British have helped to bring about a rebellion in their 13 Eastern Seaboard colonies by forcing home-owners to provide living quarters and food for the Reds. In 7x0 Orleans, the Spanish Battalion is quartered in government barracks . . . away from the more sedate residential area, where their conduct cannot offend "persons of fashion."

SPAIN'S Louisiana Battalion is composed almost entirely of Creoles, and many veteran officers of the French Colonial army have accepted commissions. The battalion has attempted to enlist Acadians and German immigrants into its ranks, but with little success; those seeking a military career are likely to join a unit in Havana or New Spain (Mexico), where the salary is almost 20 per cent less than those of uniforms and equipment are provided.

Troops in the Louisiana Battalion, on the other hand, not only get lower pay, but must also furnish their own beds for the barracks room and must buy their own clothing. Lacking a uniform allowance, the local troops are not noted for their smart appearance. The blue and white uniforms, with gold buttons and trim, are expensive and usually have had three or four previous owners. But the soldiers have little cause to be worried about their appearance; they are seldom seen in the respectable part of town during off-duty hours. Merchants have been notified that enlisted men cannot be held responsible for any large debts they may incur, so credit is unavailable. Regulations also require that, when buying expensive items, the enlisted man must allow a sergeant to act as his purchasing agent.

Military duties in the village are routine and so boring that many of the troops would welcome war with the British. Soldiers are stationed at guard posts round-the-clock at the city gates, supposedly to check travelers' credentials, but actually to give strangers and spies the impression that this vulnerable area is well defended. Troops patrol the riverfront and engage in contraband trade with the British flatboats, but they are not encouraged to make arrests. Other guards are posted at the little mosquito-ridden fort by the mouth of Bayou St. John. Grenadiers with presentable uniforms are occasionally ordered to provide an escort for the town crier when he is announcing punishments or posting official proclamations on walls and fences, but most soldiers pass their duty hours in rifle drills and marching.

Nights and weekends are spent in the bars, brothels and billiard halls near the palisades. Often, the British soldiers will spend their leisure hours in rifle drills and marching.
Slavery

GRAND Louis is a slave on the de Vaugine Plantation near St. Martinville in the Attakapas district. At the age of 33, he has the absolute confidence of his master and frequently travels to New Orleans on plantation business. He wears his master's hand-me-down suits - tailor-made in Paris - and has the courtly manners needed in collecting large debts owed by gentlemen and nobility of the provincial capital. As he swaggered through the streets of New Orleans, clad in his Parisian clothes, his pockets stuffed with money, Grand Louis attracts the envious stares of poor white laborers.

Marta is a slave owned by Madame Montreiul and, in a small way, is a business woman. Madame Montreiul allows her to live in a rented room with Madame La Forest, a gypsy, and to hire herself out by the day as a domestic. A part of Marta’s salary is paid to Madame Montreiul, and the rest — above living expenses — she puts aside in the hope of one day buying her freedom. Her boy friend, also a slave, works and eats at his master’s house but spends most of his nights in Marta’s room on Dauphin Street.

Maria Juana is a mulatto slave of great beauty and charm. She was bought as a teenager by a wealthy Creole bachelor and lived in comfort as his concubine. But when the bachelor took a Creole bride, Maria Juana was reduced to the status of a domestic and fell victim to the cruelties of her jealous new mistress. Her current lover is Capt. Edward Jenkins, a retired British sea captain who lives with the wealthy Irish adventurer Francisco Murphy. Jenkins plans to buy Maria Juana — as a slave to his love — but the affair is destined to become a spicily scandalous court case.

Othello is a slave on an indigo plantation north of the capital. His ears have been cut off, his body is branded and whip-scarred, and, for being an habitual runaway, he has been crippled by having the tendons at the back of his knees slashed with a knife. Undernourished, ragged, beaten and broken, he looks at 25 like a man of 70.

THERE is a slave shortage in this colony. French settlers tried to solve it by training Indians to assume the yoke of slavery, but it was like training swamp panthers to pull a plow. Louisiana’s second Spanish governor, Alejandro O’Reilly, freed all Indian slaves about five years ago, and most colonists were glad to be rid of them.

African tribesmen, somewhat tamed by the culture shock of being transported to a foreign continent, have been more adaptable to this “peculiar institution” of slavery. But the Africans, like the Indians, have come from many different language groups and cultures; some are more adaptable to slavery than others. The fierce Nagoes and Fonds, from the interior of Africa, make rebellious slaves; so do the warlike Foulahs and Sosos. Tribesmen from the Congo are small, good-natured and hard-working; because the colonists respect them less as fighting men, they value them more highly as slaves.

Intermingled with the Congolese at the slave auction block are the light-complexioned and exotically tattooed Iboes, Mandingos (known as the merchants of Africa), tall and haughty Senegalese from Cape Verde, Agwas, Fidas, Socoes, Cotocoles and Poppoes. First-generation slaves from Africa have generally lacked the unity and cultural diversity; their American-born children — “Creole slaves” — tend to accept slavery as a natural state.

HOWEVER, there is a spirit of rebellion among the Creole slaves in the Windward Isles of the Caribbean. Louisiana administrators have long banned importation of mulatto slaves from Santo Domingo for fear that they will give rebellious ideas to the slaves of this colony. But masters in the Windward Isles are willing to sell their restless mulattoes, at low prices, so there is an active slave-smuggling market.

Louisianians, always opposed to laws inhibiting free trade, have a well-established tradition of black-marque.