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## Milneburg, New Orleans: An Anthropological History of a Troubled Neighborhood

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Milneburg, New Orleans: An Anthropological History of a Troubled Neighborhood

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
In  
Urban Studies

by

Elizabeth A. Smallwood

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## Abstract

For nearly 200 years, there has been a neighborhood in New Orleans, Louisiana named Milneburg, which has been constantly reimagined by its inhabitants and others. From its inception as a port of entry in 1831 until the 2011, it has been called a world-class resort, the poor-man Rivera, a seedy red-light district, a cradle of jazz, a village, swath of suburbia and a neighborhood. It has been destroyed eight times due to storms, fires, and civic or governmental neglect. Each time its residents have rebuilt it. In its last iteration as a post-Katrina neighborhood, the residents reestablished the Milneburg Neighborhood Association in order to define its boundaries, gain control of its redevelopment and restrict who lived there as well as what activities were permitted. This is a case study of the trajectory of Milneburg and the cultural adaptations of its residents to keep it distinct, vital and respectable.

Keywords: neighborhood, post-disaster response, Hurricane Katrina, neighborhood control, history of New Orleans, urban development, activists, Jazz, neighborhood association

## Chapter 1 – Introduction

This is a case study of Milneburg, a distinctive urban neighborhood of New Orleans, Louisiana. For almost two centuries it has repeatedly awakened due to external forces until it lost its identity entirely only to reemerge in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This case study illustrates how a neighborhood sustains itself through cultural re-inventiveness in the face of natural disasters such as fires and hurricanes, political ineffectiveness of local as well as federal leaders, and the onslaught of the American suburbanization movement. The study demonstrates the method used by a neighborhood's residents as they strive to overcome these external forces, to maintain the neighborhood's own distinctive identity and to control its boundaries as well as its residents. Several other salient themes emerged from this research. There is an ongoing tension between commerce and respectability throughout the years of development and decline in Milneburg. It started from the very beginning with bordellos and continues until the present day with residents trying to control what businesses will be allowed to open. Also, the impact and importance of suburbanization on Milneburg's history cannot be understated. It was both the mechanism used to eliminate Milneburg at one time and the reason for its re-emergence in its latest iteration. Additionally, Milneburg's role in the birth and development of Jazz has been sorely neglected in past research. Studies have focused on Storyville and Congo Square, but have failed to give Milneburg its due.

### *Rational, Significance and Research Methodology*

After Hurricane Katrina, I enlisted for a two-year term of service in the United States Peace Corps in Armenia. This research was conceived when I returned to New Orleans to attend the University of New Orleans to pursue a Master's of Science degree in Urban Studies. I rented a duplex in Milneburg, but I did not know that the neighborhood had a name at that time. As I

got to know my neighbors and began participating in neighborhood activities, I realized that this small neighborhood was part of a two-hundred year pattern of cyclical adaptations to the ravages of nature and time. The patterns of development in this neighborhood are a good example of a case study in urban anthropology that shows the cultural adaptations that individuals and groups aspire to in order to maintain their sense of identity and place in a dynamic, dangerous and ever changing environment. As a neighborhood, it is a perfect subject for urban studies research and analysis.

Few neighborhoods in America that have undergone such violent and turbulent upheavals over a 180-year period as has Milneburg. Many older neighborhoods are gentrified or fall into squalor over time. Milneburg has re-built itself on numerous occasions to form new identities with a distinct nature and style. This is a case study of an individual neighborhood of New Orleans that has sustained itself through cultural inventiveness for almost 200 years.

Post-disaster research has implications locally, nationally, and internationally. Ingram, et al, point out that “following disasters, governments often clamor to quickly reduce risk, rebuild communities and restore permanence (2006: 1).” Any lessons learned from what has taken place in Milneburg in terms of recovery after fires, floods, storms and eventually Hurricane Katrina would be applicable to similar situations whether the crisis happens close to home or not. This can be of particular interest in developing countries where governments may be far less effective than local grassroots movements in coping with the aftermath of a disaster.

This research is also important because it addresses a theme that has not been studied in the past. It shows how the geographic size of “neighbor concern” expands after the loss of the status quo. “Neighbor concern” is a term used by the author to describe the unease one has concerning the actions and attitudes of one’s neighbors.

I utilized a wide range of research tools conducting this study. I used participant observation by becoming active in the neighborhood and joining the Milneburg Neighborhood Association. I performed qualitative research between March, 2010 and August, 2011. I performed twelve individual interviews. Ten of the interviewees currently live within the boundaries of the Milneburg neighborhood. Two are the owners of a rental property in Milneburg who live outside of Milneburg. I performed semantic analysis on the transcriptions from these interviews to get a better understanding of the resident's beliefs. I quantitatively analyzed the census data from the 2000 and 2010 United States Census. America's Historical Newspaper Database was mined for primary source material on Milneburg's past. From over 3,000 hits in this database using the search term "Milneburg," I gleaned over 100 relevant and non-duplicated articles, advertisements, notices and images. However, there are shortcomings using any scanned database due to image scanning errors. Although I tried to minimize the omission of data by modifying the spelling of "Milneburg," it is very likely that references were missed because the search term did not scan accurately. Finally, I performed a review of the literature to provide a firm theoretical base for the research.

#### *Overview of the Milneburg Case Study*

The story of Milneburg is the story of a village that refused to die. Fires burned it down, floods drowned it, and hurricanes blew it away, yet each time it was rebuilt. In its diverse history, Milneburg served as a noisy port, an internationally renowned, upscale resort, a rowdy brawling den of iniquity, and a music-filled cradle of Jazz. The same can be said of its mother city, New Orleans. The New Orleans geographer, Pierce Lewis, called New Orleans "*the impossible but inevitable city*" (Lewis 2003: 19) referencing its strategic location but one at the

mercy of storms, hurricanes and floods as well as fires. New Orleans has been essentially rebuilt on several occasions just as Milneburg.

Milneburg's past falls into four chronological periods: 1831 until 1888, 1888 until 1939, 1940 until 2005, and 2005 to the present. The beginning of the story of Milneburg starts with the purchase by the Lake Pontchartrain Railroad Corporation from Alexander Milne of land along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain for the establishment of a port and the terminus of a railroad line into the city of New Orleans 5 miles south. From a port of entry, Milneburg quickly grew into a world-renowned resort with a wide boardwalk, hotels, restaurants, gardens, bathing houses and attractions. It eventually had its own opera house. It attracted visitors from all over the world. After dining there, William Makepeace Thackeray even immortalized its cuisine in a novel. The resort and the village that grew up around it were destroyed four times during its first 46 years by fires and storms. It had to deal with being occupied during the Civil War years. The intrepid residents and business owners would rebuild each time, always with the desire to attain a level of respectability and style. With each reinvention, however, Milneburg lost a little bit of its grandeur. It always remained a very popular entertainment destination, and very distinctive in character, but it became less and less elegant. Articles and advertisements document its decline from a world-class resort, to a very popular national tourist destination and down to a "the poor man's Riviera." During that same time period, the residential village attached to the resort area also grew. It gained its own schoolhouse, post office and fire department. Still, it was neglected by city officials. Bulkheads and levee protection were often withheld and a paved road was not built between Milneburg and the New Orleans for many decades. In spite of everything, Milneburg retained its identity as a highly distinctive New Orleans neighborhood with a reputation for fine entertainment and a sense of refinement.



The next period for Milneburg is from 1888 through 1939 during which Milneburg was destroyed by fires and storms three times. Hurricanes (although not referenced by that name) hit Milneburg in the late summers of 1887 and 1888, virtually wiping out the resort. The wharf was heavily damaged, bathhouses destroyed, and the hotels were submerged. By the summer of 1889, a variety of activities and events reportedly took place at Milneburg. Though rebuilt after each of these disasters, such investment never restored Milneburg to her former glory. It was popular as a local entertainment venue. Additionally, Milneburg faced local competition from the entertainment venues of West End and Old Spanish Fort. Milneburg endured a very marked slide from respectability during these years. Articles warned young ladies about the possibility of losing their virtuous reputation if they attended the raucous parties held in Milneburg. Neighborhood associations were formed to address the quality of life problems and the first female police officer in New Orleans was assigned to Milneburg to help control the area. It was believed that a female officer would better serve the young ladies who visited Milneburg. Yellow fever also took a toll on the village during that time. As an entertainment destination, Milneburg was quite popular, but it was the types of entertainment that had changed over the years. People still took the steamboats on excursion rides across the lake, and restaurants and saloons attracted large crowds, and the vacation shanties, called camps by the locals, that lined the shoreline were populated at all hours of the day and night.

The camps became a very important part of the history of Jazz because live bands and combos supplied music in these camps. These bands had popular, informal and loud competitions as the musicians developed the new styles of playing that was the birth of Jazz. Jellyroll Morton immortalized this era by writing “Milneburg Joys” that was in contrast to the blues being played elsewhere in New Orleans.

In the 1920s, officials in New Orleans set in motion a plan to build a seawall 3000 feet from the existing shoreline and fill in the area to create new residential land. The project would necessitate tearing down Milneburg completely and relocating the current residents. By 1930, Milneburg was completely dismantled and over the next decade every vestige of its existence, except for the lighthouse, was erased. When the Milneburg bus line was renamed the Pontchartrain Beach bus line in 1939, the name Milneburg was no longer used in the present tense.

After World War II, New Orleans, as well as the rest of America, experienced a huge population surge in city suburbs. Baby boomers wanted modern homes and growth moved away from city centers. The New Orleans plan to create new space along the lakefront destroyed Milneburg. From 1940 through 2005, what had been called Milneburg was absorbed into the wide swath of suburban growth in New Orleans, specifically into the suburb named Gentilly. This was a time for building strip malls, tracts of homes and new schools for the growing families of the baby boomers. New neighborhoods along the lakefront were built such as Lake Oaks and Lake Terrace, but Milneburg as a distinct entity disappeared due to forces outside of its control.

Milneburg, it appeared, was destined to be an historical reference. However, Hurricane Katrina ushered in the reemergence of Milneburg as a named, however, not very distinct New Orleans neighborhood. As has been done for almost 200 years, the residents of Milneburg rose up to rebuild their neighborhood. In early 2006, Milneburg's residents decided to form an official neighborhood association to serve as a mechanism for combating the negative forces on local as well as federal levels. In the immediate aftermath of the failure of the levees, none of the residents in the area were able to return home. They were scattered across the nation along

with most of the residents of New Orleans. Neighbors began talking to neighbors trying to decide the best course of action, if they were going to return and, if so, when. In the mean time, the city of New Orleans was making its own plans on how to proceed on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. The residents decided the best course of action would be to form their own neighborhood association so that they were not lumped into the much larger suburban area.

According to the 2011 residents, Milneburg is very different from the Milneburg of 2004. Today there is “more crime,” a less than acceptable quality of life, problems with less-than-attentive landlords and dozens of blighted and uninhabitable residences. It should be noted that the “rise in crime” in Milneburg is more of a perceived threat than might actually be the case. The residents’ belief that “crime’ did not exist before Hurricane Katrina was certainly not totally accurate. The Milneburg Neighborhood Association was formed to address these issues and to try to gain control over the inner workings of their neighborhood. In so doing, Milneburg is a geographically bounded area once more and has residents who are concerned about what transpires within those boundaries. They are proactive in challenging the issues that threaten their perception of a high quality of life in a highly respectable neighborhood.

## **Chapter 2 – From International Resort to Obscurity**

This chapter charts the trajectory of Milneburg's history and shows how this distinctive neighborhood was conceived and then had to use various cultural adaptations to reinvent itself after being destroyed a number of times in the process due to a series of natural and man-made disasters. From its inception in 1831 until 2005, Milneburg was destroyed and rebuilt seven times, each time with a little less attention to opulence and glamour. Milneburg started out as a formal port of entry for goods and people to travel to New Orleans. The immediate area around the port quickly was transformed into an elegant, internationally renowned resort destination. It grew in size and popularity until being destroyed in 1857. The neighborhood struggled to rebuild but was heavily impacted by the yellow fever epidemic, the years of Civil War occupation and a major storm. In 1870s, however, Milneburg was again touted as an upscale tourist destination that attracted visitors to its delights from all over the country. It was still quite distinct, but did not achieve its former height of elegance. In the late 1870s, Milneburg was again destroyed by a fire followed by a major storm. Again, Milneburg was renovated, rebuilt and was hailed as the Poor Man's Riviera for the next decade only to be ruined by yet more storms at the end of the 1880s. Much of this destruction was also a product of governmental neglect because Milneburg was not part of the flood protection system implemented for other parts of New Orleans. This, too, was a pattern that reoccurred and greatly affected the trajectory of Milneburg.

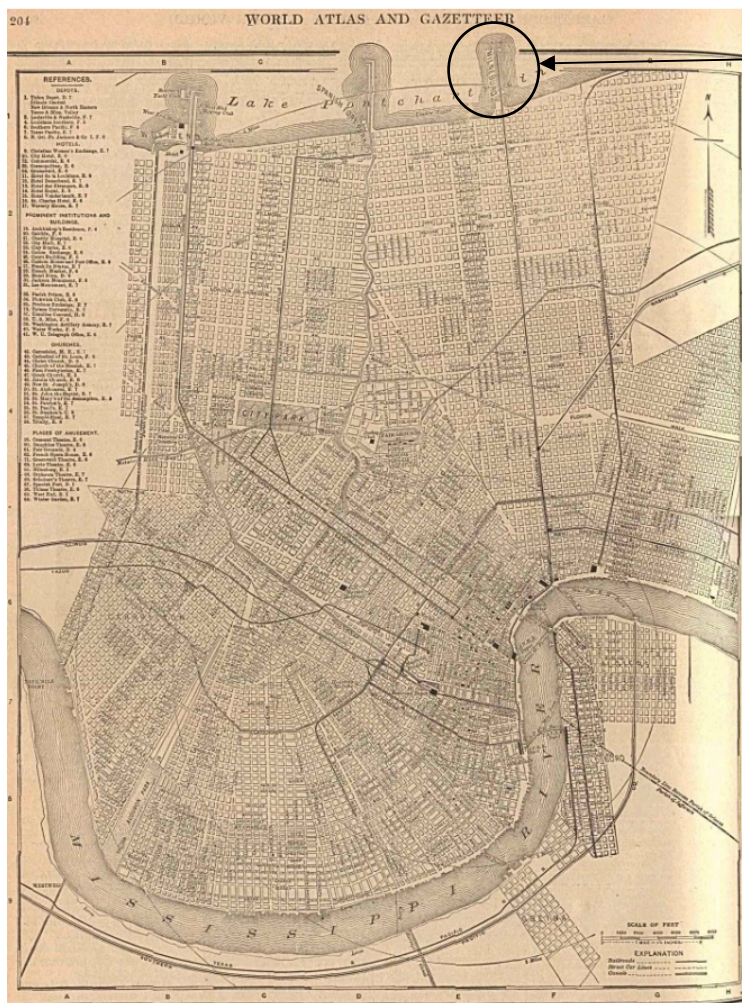
The resort was rebuilt, as was the neighborhood that grew up around the attractions. This iteration of Milneburg was decidedly less glamorous. Its distinctiveness made it a favorite entertainment destination for locals, but there was a steady decline in its reputation and elegance over the next twenty-five years. Part of the problem was the development of other entertainment venues along the lakefront as well as benign neglect at the older resort. Not to be outdone,

Milneburg became an integral part in the development of Jazz owing to the abundance of dance halls, bars, and private parties held at the numerous camps that flanked the resort area. It was the need for more residential land that would ultimately bring about the razing of Milneburg.

Beginning in the 1920's, plans were made to build a seawall and fill in the land between that seawall and the existing shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain to create residential properties.

Milneburg was in the way of that progress and was dismantled to eventually become simply an unnamed swath of land within a large suburban area of New Orleans named Gentilly.

### *Milneburg, The Beginning (1831 – 1857)*



1908 Map of New Orleans. Note the Milneburg wharf in the upper right. The shore of Lake Pontchartrain was at Leon C. Simon. (Figure 1)

(<http://pontchartrain.net/templates/System/details.asp?id=40334&PG=album&LID=4570>)

Milneburg's first incarnation was as a port. In the late 1820's, there were two ways to get people and goods into the city of New Orleans that arrived by ship in the Gulf of Mexico. One was to come up the Mississippi River and the other was through the Rigolets, an 8-mile long strait, into Lake Pontchartrain. Once in the lake, cargo and passengers were transported into Bayou St. John and then into the Carondelet Canal to the city proper. This route was shorter and safer, but tolls were high and the "twisting, shallow channel of the connecting bayou slowed vessels to a crawl (Campanella 2006: 143)." In 1829, a group of New Orleans entrepreneurs wanted to change that. They formed The Pontchartrain Railroad Corporation, and within a year, they had legislative authorization to build a rail line from the New Orleans riverfront to Lake Pontchartrain. The significance of this cannot be understated. This was only the second railroad to be started in the United States and the first one built west of the Alleghenies (Kmen 1969: 17).

The 1831 charter of The Pontchartrain Railroad Corporation gave it the "right to develop a harbor, pier, and warehouses at Lake Pontchartrain (Campanella 2006: 144)." The route they chose for the new railroad was along what is now Elysian Fields Avenue because "this route minimized the distance from river to lake (4.96 miles of track were needed), and maximized the use of well-drained high ground" (Campanella 2006: 144).

Alexander Milne, a wealthy, red-haired Scotsman who made a fortune selling bricks for the rebuilding of New Orleans after the fires of 1778 and 1794, owned the land along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at the end of the proposed rail line. According to Campanella, Milne readily sold the land to the Pontchartrain Railroad Corporation and "profited handsomely when he subdivided the adjacent area for the future community of Milneburg (2006: 144)."

The United States government declared that there would be a port of entry on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain at the terminus of the railroad line and it opened on April 23, 1831. The next

day the railroad was open for passengers. The steam engine that was being delivered from England for the Pontchartrain Railroad was delayed so the six coaches of the railroad were drawn by horses. They arrived at the port at the time the sidewheel steamboats arrived from Mobile. At the time, Milneburg consisted of a long trestle and wharf that extended one-half mile over Lake Pontchartrain over which the trains connected to the steamboats. The next month, the New Orleans City Council adopted the official plan for Milneburg. (The Times-Picayune December 31, 1922: 53)

Below is the oldest reference found about Milneburg. It is a notice of “Rapid Improvement” published in *The Spirit of the Times* newspaper in Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1831.

A tract of land situated on the margin of Lake Pontchartrain whence the Rail Road from New-Orleans reaches the lake, has in consequence of the rail road and the establishment there of a port of entry, been divided into town lots by Mr. Milne, the proprietor and recently sold at auction in New-Orleans. The sale amount to \$259,257 (sic). It is said that the site of the town, which is called Milneburg, and a body of land adjoining, extending about nine miles towards Lake Borgne, was bought of the Spanish Government for \$105. (The Spirit Of The Times 6/22/1831: 3.)

People immediately started building homes and camps along the lake at Milneburg. Campanella explains that because of the sudden success of the rail line, Milneburg grew rapidly and the “structures were clustered around the tracks, which extended out into the lake upon a wooden pier (2006: 149).”

Milneburg quickly became a favorite destination for locals and tourists alike. The oldest reference found of the name Milneburg in the *Daily Picayune*, precursor of the *Times-Picayune*, was on June 30, 1838. It was in an advertisement about the upcoming Fourth of July celebration dinner to be held at the Washington Hotel in Milneburg.



**ANNIVERSARY DINNER.  
CELEBRATION OF THE COMING  
FOURTH OF JULY.**

**A** PUBLIC DINNER in celebration of the anniversary of our National Independence will be given at the Washington Hotel at the Lake end of the Railroad, at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of the 4th July, to all these gentlemen who may furnish themselves with tickets on or before Monday, July 2.

Tickets at \$5 each—may be had to Monday evening, July 2, on application to the Bar of the City Exchange, St. Louis st; Exchange Hotel, St Charles st; City Hotel, Common st; Taylor's Merchants' Exchange, Royal st; Planters' Hotel, Canal street, and at the Washington Hotel in Milneburg.

june29      **GEORGE ARMSTRONG**

Figure 2. (*Daily Picayune*, 6/30/1838: 3)

Reading the accounts of Milneburg from that time in the *Daily Picayune*, it is often difficult to tell if one is reading a news article, a personal account or a thinly veiled advertisement for the entertainment at the resort. One article in 1839 describes Milneburg as a “truly republican stomping ground, where all classes congregate, and where each moves about in its own particular orbit.” It goes on to indicate that it is a place “where everyone seems to say, ‘I’ll just do as I d---n please,’ and where, notwithstanding no one intrudes on his neighbor.” In the article, all the pleasures of Milneburg are extolled. There is O’Triggers where one can practice shooting a pistol. In other places, people are bowling, playing dominoes and billiards. Music ranges from “two-stringed violin sawed by semi-Paganini” to a cracked tambourine. The lake is “literally alive with people luxuriating in the cool water.” In Armstrong’s bar strange words are being tossed about, “juleps, toddies, and sangarees.” Groups of people crowd around tables dining on fish “cooked up in exquisite style.” There is even a man “stirring up rousing a big bear with a long pole.” (*The Daily Picayune*, 6/12/1839:2) The entertainment at the Armstrong Hotel included a fish dinner with Burgundy that is “the best that can be found” along



with “a Herculean American” who ascended a rope from the ground to the hotel roof. (The Daily Picayune, 6/20/1839: 2).

However, even in the heady, early years, Milneburg’s distinctiveness was not without its seedier underbelly. There is, an apparent, letter to the paper suggesting that Milneburg’s attractiveness is in danger.

[It] will pass away unless the energetic arm of the law drive away from Milneburg, and that speedily, the profligate and abandoned characters who have settled there. If the loose and abandoned females who now inhabit the hovels of Milneburg be permitted to poison the atmosphere with their presence, the time will shortly arrive when none but characters as deeply steeped in vice and iniquity as those degraded beings are, will visit the lake, fearful of the moral contagion. (The Daily Picayune, 5/30/1840: 2)

To get to Milneburg, one took the Milneburg and Pontchartrain line of the Pontchartrain Railroad that was most famously known as the “Smokey Mary.” During the summers, the train ran from the corner of Canal Street and Chartres on the hour from 6:00 AM until 10:00 PM for the one-half hour ride. The cost was twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children. The following is a typical Milneburg train schedule that was published daily in the newspaper for almost 100 years.

SUMMER ARRANGEMENT.			
<i>Fare Reduced to 25 cents, Children 10 cents, from 1st</i>			
<i>Murch, 1844.</i>			
MILNEBURG AND LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN.			
PONTCHARTRAIN RAIL ROAD			
COMPANY.—The Cars leave			
NEW ORLEANS.		THE LAKE.	
At 6 o'clock, A. M.		Half-past 5 o'clock, A. M.	
At 7 " "		Half-past 6 " "	
At 8 " "		Half-past 7 " "	
Half-past 9 " "		At 9 " "	
At 11 " "		Half-past 10 " "	
Half-past 12 " "	P. M.	At 12 " "	M.
At 2 " "		Half-past 1 " "	P. M.
At 3 " "		Half-past 2 " "	
At 4 " "		Half-past 3 " "	
At 5 " "		Half-past 4 " "	
At 6 " "		Half-past 5 " "	
At 7 " "		Half-past 6 " "	
At 8 " "		Half-past 7 " "	
At 9 " "		Half-past 8 " "	
At 10 " "		Half-past 9 " "	
Cars on Sunday leave every hour.			
An Omnibus leaves the corner of Canal and Chartres			
streets every quarter of an hour for the Depot.			
The WASHINGTON HOTEL is now open, under			
the direction of Mr. C. L. BELL.			

Figure 3. (Daily Picayune, 2/25/1844: 1)

By 1849, there is evidence that Milneburg had a growing, stable population that included families with children. It was reported in 1849 that at the Third Municipality Council meeting “Mr. Soloman offered a resolution authorizing the Surveyor to receive sealed proposals for the erection of a school-house at Milneburg – adopted (Daily Picayune, 4/17/1849: 2).” Another indication of the growth of Milneburg was the advertising of the Milneburg Fire Company (Daily Picayune, 3/3/1852: 2) and its inclusion “as one of the celebrants at the seventeenth anniversary party of the New Orleans Fire Department (Daily Picayune 3/4/1854: 3).” Three years later, the first of many serious fires at Milneburg was reported. The fire that occurred on October 17, 1857 destroyed the Washington Hotel (Daily Picayune 10/17/1857: 1).

#### *Milneburg Struggles (1857 – 1868)*

The next eleven years were a struggle for Milneburg, although the area showed its capacity to remain a vital part of New Orleans. There was not much activity in Milneburg during the Civil War years from 1861 through 1865. Milneburg was mentioned in the Philadelphia Inquirer in 1862 a few months before federal takeover. There was a worry that if the U.S. troops who were quartering at Biloxi, MS at the time would be decimated if they landed on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain’s west side “anywhere from Pitre to Milneburg (The Philadelphia Inquirer 1/20/1862: 5).”

Milneburg is only mentioned 17 times in the local papers during the war years and a number of them were for people being arrested there. A typical mention in the paper for “occupied” New Orleans was when “Mrs. Jacobs, arrested at Milneburg under the suspicion of being insane, was sent to Capt. Gros’s establishment for 6 months (New Orleans Tribune 12/22/1864: 2).”

Milneburg was also the birthplace of the famous and infamous. In 1865, the beautiful, talented and controversial actress and adventurist Adah Isaacs Menken, who was “born in a shack in Milneburg” in 1835 (Dixon 1975: 2) was mentioned in the local paper. The paper indicated that the “very much married acrobatic horseback actress, our former townswoman,” Adah Isaacs McCord Menken Heenan, etc. had been erroneously cited as the new bride of a Mr. Davenport, when, in fact, she had married a Mr. James (The Daily Picayune, 06/23/1865: 4).

On October 4, 1868, *The Daily Picayune* ran an article about a serious storm surge flood that had started the day before and affected much of New Orleans. The Milneburg area was certainly not spared.

At 5 o'clock in the evening, the water from Lake Pontchartrain, in the lower part of the city, had reached Gentilly Road, completely inundating the railroad track, and submerging the lower floors of the houses. As far as the eye could reach a lake of water met the vision. The houses, against which the rising and falling waves beat pitilessly, looked like a city built in the Lake. Many small ones were floating, the inmates having abandoned them, or still clinging to their houses were floating around at the mercy of the wind and waves. At the Lake End the saw mill and bath houses were washed away, as was also a part of the celebrated restaurant kept by Boudro. The smaller houses extending up the principal street are gone, some of them floating in the Lake...The water at Milneburg is at least two feet in depth, and most of the houses are utterly untenable. The inhabitants have left them, or are doing so in boats every hour. Many of them, however, have floated off, and women and children are mingling their cries of horror with the roar of the rushing flood. (The Daily Picayune 10/4/1868, p.1)

Milneburg struggled to come back after the flood, but did not always get the help it wanted. The December 1868 Board of Aldermen meeting resolved that all of the levees and wharves in the First through Fourth Districts should be repaired immediately. “Mr. Poynot urged that the levee of Milneburg be included and offered an amendment to that effect. The amendment was carried, but upon a motion to reconsider, was lost (The Daily Picayune, 12/2/1868: 2).”

*Milneburg, A National Resort (1869 – 1878)*

Improvements were made the following year. The Board of Aldermen made a resolution to extend “the Breakwater at Milneburg, from St. Anthony Street to St. Bernard Street, and also that new pilings and new sheathing be added to the old bulkhead (The Daily Picayune 4/28/1869: 6).”

By the next summer, Milneburg was ready for its resort visitors. The resort catered to those people who could not visit resorts in the North. In an advertisement disguised as a news article, the “The Can’t-Get-Aways, - Ladies and gentlemen who cannot go to any of the Northern fashionable summer resorts, will do well to take the Pontchartrain Railroad cars and go to Milneburg.” They are advised to go directly to the Washington Hotel where they will be greeted by E. T. Denechaud, a “handsome gentleman with black moustache and prepossessing appearance.” The hotel is describes as a beautiful two-story house with wide veranda on every side surrounded by a lovely garden and fine shade trees. Then the dining experience is extolled.

In a few minutes after giving your order, a repast fit for the gods will be spread on a snowy tablecloth and pure wines of different vintages and of the best brands will be placed at your order. After enjoying all the delicacies of the season, you touch a small bell and your bill is presented. Astonished at the small price charged, you ask the proprietor if he has not made a mistake, but you are informed that his prices have been placed at the lowest possible rates. Much pleased with your dinner, as also with the cost, you mentally resolve to patronize the Washington Hotel again. (The Daily Picayune 8/22/1869: 2)

Rebounding from the 1868 flood, Milneburg was in a building phase again and by the spring of 1870, a number of improvements were being touted. Along with older bathing houses being renovated, two new large ones were being constructed. There were already several restaurants ready for the summer tourist season. The gardens surrounding the restaurants “have put on their holiday dress in the shape of nicely trimmed plants and many-colored and many-

scented floral treasures.” The paper indicated that the cars of the Pontchartrain Railroad had been crowded all day the previous Sunday and “everything looked as if the time for again regularly seeking recreation at the lakeshore had fairly commenced.” (The Daily Picayune 4/5/1870: 10)

The summer of 1870 saw Milneburg as a very popular destination. According to the paper, people were thronging to Milneburg daily to enjoy the attractions. There were excellent bathing houses, cool breezes and “sheds where ladies and children can enjoy themselves in true pic-nic style.” Boats could be rented for rowing, sailing or fishing. There were “famous restaurants where no delicacy is unknown.” Jaeger and his famous brass band played music for evening concerts at Denechaud’s great pavilion and promenade. Steam boats made excursions into the lake hourly from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. (The Daily Picayune 7/13/1870: 1)

Milneburg, once more, was suffering from municipal neglect. At the end of 1871, the people living in Milneburg, whose residential population was growing, were upset by the lack of public roadways linking them to New Orleans proper. One editorial letter in particular voiced their opinion. The writer pointed out that there was no public highway linking Milneburg to the city. The number of residents living between Bayou St. John and Milneburg was said to be about one thousand “and as, in their capacity as taxpayers, they contribute their share to the treasury of the city.” The writer claims that they “are entitled to means of communication with the city independent of the Pontchartrain Railroad and the toll road of the Bayou St. John Company.” (The Daily Picayune 5/27/1871: 4)

In the summer of 1871, the Eureka Gas Light Company “lit up” Milneburg for the first time (The Daily Picayune 7/20/1871: 4). By the next summer, the resort was still in its glory with happy and well-behaved crowds enjoying boating, fishing and bathing among other

entertainment. In an article that seems more like an advertisement, the crowds at Milneburg are deemed “unprecedented”, and “entirely free from rowdies and bad characters.” It indicates that Milneburg “is much visited by ladies and children, who chiefly congregate on the immense wharf and covered pier during the heat of the day, and at the village in the cool of the evening.” (The Daily Picayune 8/11/1872: 10)

The popularity of Milneburg as a destination prompted major renovations to the Pontchartrain Railroad in 1875. The depot was renovated thoroughly, the cars were painted and all the seats were replaced, the engines were repaired, the crossties and worn out rails were replaced, and the grade was elevated. It was reported that “when the repairs are complete, the road will be so smooth that the cars will run without a jolt (the Daily Picayune 4/29/1875: 1).”

Several steamboats carried passengers and provided excursions between the south shore and north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. The *Camelia* was the one that docked at Milneburg. Her inaugural run is compelling described. She “leaves the pier at the Lake End at half past seven tomorrow morning for Mandeville and Lewisburg, and returns in the evening, thus, affording those who desire, a splendid opportunity of enjoying a cool sea breeze from the decks of a first class steamer (The New Orleans Times, 7/24/1875: 1).” In 1878, the *Camelia* was replaced by the *New Camelia*. The new vessel, “like a Phoenix,” is fresh in every timber, every rail and all other things, will doubtless prove more fast, more profitable and more lucky than the old.” The passengers are told that they will “enjoy once more the pleasantest and cheapest traveling in the Union (The New Orleans Times 3/9/1878: 4).”

The following is a typical *New Camelia* schedule that ran periodically in the *Daily Picayune* for over 30 years. The other destinations listed for other steamship companies within

this advertisement included South America, Central America, Mexico and New York, among others.

**LAKE SHORE.**

~~~~~

**MANDEVILLE AND COVINGTON.  
UNITED STATES MAIL STEAMER  
NEW CAMELIA.  
WINTER ARRANGEMENT.**

 Will, on and after NOVEMBER 1, 1881, leave MILNEBURG on the arrival of the cars from Mobile Passenger Depot, head of Canal street.

**TUESDAY**, on arrival of ..... 12 M. train

**THURSDAY**, on arrival of ..... 12 M. "

**SATURDAY**, on arrival of ..... 8 P.M. "

For Mandeville, Lewisburg, Madisonville and Old Landing.

**RETURNING:**

Leaves Old Landing—

**MONDAY** ..... 5 A. M.

**WEDNESDAY** ..... 7 A. M.

**FRIDAY** ..... 7 A. M.

Stopping at all way points.

Fare each way **ONE DOLLAR.**

Freight received daily at Louisville and Nashville Railroad Freight Depot, head of Girod street.

Excursion every **SUNDAY** on arrival of 8 A. M. train. Fare round trip, \$1.

W. G. COYLE, Agent,  
88 Carondelet street.

27-14

Figure 4. (The Daily Picayune 4/11/1882: 2)

In the summer of 1875, Milneburg hosted a number of interesting events. On June 25, 1875, the New Orleans Times published an article entitled “Fetish Worship. St John’s Eve at Milneburg. A Voudou’s incantation. Midnight Scenes and Orgies.” The article states that hundreds of people, some true believers and some just onlookers, attended the late night ritual celebration. “About midnight Wednesday the village of Milneburg became exceedingly animated. Every hotel and restaurant was brilliantly illuminated (The New Orleans Times 6/25/1875: 2).” The article proceeds to describe in detail the rites and rituals associated with St. John’s Eve. This celebration may be related to the fact that Marie Laveau built a house on the Lakefront just west of Milneburg after she became voodoo queen (Moore 1987: 23). In July 1875, Milneburg hosted the annual yacht regatta of the Crescent City Yacht Club. “The yacht regatta to be sailed to-day on the lake at Milneburg, will be a notable event in the annals of aquatic sports (The New Orleans Times 7/29/75: 1).” In September, there were still “thousands

of pleasure seekers, who trooped forth in merry spirits toward the suburban resorts, where delightful recreation awaited the weary denizens of the town. The Lake End at Milneburg was liberally patronized (The New Orleans Times 9/7/1875: 8).”

Milneburg experienced a number of setbacks in 1876 and 1877. On March 6, 1876, a fire caused by sparks from the New Camelia steamer burned one hundred and fifty feet of the wharf (The New Orleans Times 3/7/1876: 1). Later that month, a storm ravaged the resort. The railroad track and the wharves were washed away. Half of the bathing houses were severely damaged. The breakwaters in front of the public school and in the rear of the Washington Hotel were destroyed. (The New Orleans Times 3/22/1876: 1)

In late September 1877, another storm hit the New Orleans area. At first, it appeared that little damage had been done. Milneburg, however, was devastated, once more. The railroad track was torn from the wharf and the bulkhead was badly damaged. The residents are reported “to be entirely despaired, and apprehend that this most ancient suburb of New Orleans will never fully regain its quondam attractions (The New Orleans Times 9/28/1877: 8).”

Once more, in plans to improve drainage and flood protection as well as in transportation, Milneburg was neglected. Milneburg struggled to regain her footing after these storms. In November 1877, the city made plans to build a ballast wall from Milneburg to Bagatelle Street along Lake Pontchartrain for flood protection (The Daily Picayune 11/8/1877: 2). However, it appeared that little had been done by the spring of 1878. An article, that read more like a commentary, was printed in the New Orleans Times and began by showing how the resorts along the lakeshore were booming, except of Milneburg. The paper reported, “The most beautiful, popular and attractive of all our suburban watering places, is being allowed to fall into decay for want of proper facilities for reaching it. The Pontchartrain railroad has reduced its trips to



Milneburg to four or five per day and they stop short of the Lake. The Washington Hotel stands vacant.” The writer proclaimed, “Milneburg is by far the most elegant and sightly of our Lake suburb.” The magnificent gardens were said to have “all the rare plants and flowers possible to be grown in this climate.” The restaurants were said to be celebrated the world over and the bathing facilities are described as superior to many of the most well known in America. The writer blamed the city authorities as well as the management of the Pontchartrain Railroad. He concluded by stating “to destroy the usefulness of this place to the people by neglecting to afford proper facilities for reaching it, is a crime against the public which should not be permitted.”

(The New Orleans Times 4/8/1878: 2)

*Milneburg, The Poor Man’s Riviera (1879 – 1888)*

The following year brought some good news. A new railroad line was started that would run east / west along the lakeshore between Spanish Fort and Milneburg, a little over a mile in length (The Daily Picayune 5/22/1879: 2). By 1881, people were determined to revive Milneburg once more. First, the railroad was upgraded so that trains from Mobile could reach Milneburg and new coaches were built for the Pontchartrain line (The Daily Picayune 3/9/1881: 2). In June of that year, The Washington Hotel was renovated and the grounds redone. The hotel and its famous restaurant was “painted, papered, decorated and furnished from top to bottom, making it look like a new place entirely.” Although there were still the remnants of wrecked bath houses and burned buildings, the proponents of Milneburg show their ever present optimism indicating that “its possibilities are great, and the rehabilitation of the ancient burg appears to be fixed for the near future.” (The Daily Picayune 6/5/1881)

Ten days later, The Washington Hotel was “christened” by a “large party of representative business men of the city (The Daily Picayune 6/15/1881: 4).” The train schedule

was revamped to accommodate the expected crowds for Milneburg with trains running “to this old-time and delightful summer resort every hour from 5 o’clock in the morning until 2 o’clock in the afternoon, when trains will be run every half-hour (The Daily Picayune 6/16/1881: 8).” The bath-houses were rebuilt and a telegraph line was installed at Milneburg (The Daily Picayune 7/3/1881: 11). The “Summer Arrangement” schedule for the steamer New Camelia returned to the Daily Picayune (9/2/1881: 2). The next spring, a locally well known duo named Miguel & Trisconi leased the “Washington Hotel, its grounds and all its appurtenances.” Again, in an advertisement, loosely veiled as a news article, the new renovation plans were announced. The hotel was completely redone and refurnished. The gentlemen’s and ladies’ bath houses were nearing completion. Miguel was at his post again as the head chef. He was welcomed with the invitation, “Let the gentlemen of New Orleans who have known him for years visit him once more.” Attached to the restaurant would be an exceptional bar-room “containing the best liquors and wines” as well as a beer garden described as being “unsurpassed.” (The Daily Picayune 5/23/1882: 1)

More summer offerings at Milneburg were announced in July of that year calling the venue “The Best Attraction in the City.” Every night there was going to be a “grand tightrope ascension, trapeze performance, negro minstrelsy and pantomime together with a first-class band.” (The Daily Picayune 7/28/1882: 1)

That same year, there was a problem with the residents’ and business owners’ mail delivery. The people were not picking up their mail, even though it was advertised in the daily papers several times. The “good people of Milneburg” were called careless and the carelessness was wide spread according to the news account. It extended to the “merchants, saloon-keepers

and business men generally of the old and respected watering place.” (The Daily Picayune 12/10/1882: 6)

In July of 1884, the Milneburg Opera House opened, the Grand Vaudeville Company started its free season, and Prof. J.B. Vogols Grand Brass and String Orchestra performed. Prof. Palatte made nightly balloon ascensions in a sixty foot high, forty-foot wide balloon in which, “The Aeronaut makes this ascension with no other support than a single trapeze bar (the Daily Picayune 7/10/1884: 2).”

The summer of 1887 was a banner year for the resort at Milneburg. According to the article, “This ancient village, almost totally destroyed by fire ten years ago, has risen from its ashes and regained this summer its old time popularity. It was reported, “Thousands of people go there every evening.” Trisconi, of the Washington Hotel, was extolled for his catering, the bathing was excellent, and “the free performances nightly at the beautiful new opera house are novel and very enjoyable.” (The Daily Picayune 8/13/1887: 3) Known as a “real fisherman’s paradise” and a “poorman’s Riviera” you could get a schooner of beer and a “poor boy sandwich” for a nickel and just fifteen cents for a round trip on the “Smokey Mary” (Dixon 1975: 2).

Just 5 weeks later, another storm hit New Orleans and Milneburg was badly flooded. “At Milneburg the water was over the village, and the tracks of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad to Gentilly Ridge were overflowed (The Daily Picayune 9/21/1887: 2).” Then another storm is reported in the summer of 1888. According to the article, Milneburg had not recovered from the 1887 storm when the two largest bath-houses had been washed away. When this storm hit it was reported that there was “nothing left to destroy on the side of the wharf which is exposed to its

fury.” The gardens at the Washington and Boudro’s hotels were submerged and the streets were only navigable by pirogues. (The Daily Picayune 8/20/1888: 1)

*Milneburg, A Favorite Local Destination (1889-1900)*

So, once again, Milneburg succumbed to the ravages of nature. But as always, she shows her resiliency. The following summer it was reported that there was an “Italian Day” at Milneburg, when a “larger gathering than usually is seen there filled the gardens and gave the suburb a gala appearance.” There were fireworks, a ball at Boudro’s garden, and a banquet at the Washington Hotel where “members and invited guests sat down to one of the greatest successes in culinary art of the famous Trisconi” (The Daily Picayune 6/3/1889: 4). In July, the Milneburg Steam Fire Company No. 1 gave a “Grand Picnic” at the Washington Hotel which included a “Fine Band” and a “Grand Shooting Match” all for the price of a twenty-five-cent ticket, and “Ladies Free” (The Daily Picayune 7/6/1889: 5).

There is not much in the newspaper about Milneburg for a decade. The New Camelia schedules are regularly placed as are the time schedules for the Pontchartrain train line. There are the usual references to Sunday picnic notices, reunions, a few arrests for public disorder, drownings, property notices, obituaries, aldermen meeting notices, etc

In a feature entitled “Woman’s Way” in an 1897 Daily Picayune, readers learned that the lighthouse at Milneburg was assigned a new keeper, Mrs. Margaret Dimitry Norvell. She was transferred there from another Louisiana lighthouse. The paper called this one of the “newest of new woman occupations” and one that is an occupation “surrounded by a halo of romance and memories of Grace Daring and deeds of heroism (The Daily Picayune 1/24/1897: 26).”

In March 1900, the “oldest resident of Milneburg,” Mathew Leininger, who had lived there since 1839, died and the Daily Picayune had an extensive obituary stating that Mr.

Leininger's life was "intimately identified with the rise and progress and gradual decadence of Milneburg (The Daily Picayune 3/21/1900: 10). Evidently, the preceding decade had not been very good for Milneburg.

In August 1900, one of the worst storms to date hit Milneburg with residents who had lived there thirty-five years saying they had never seen that much water. All of the "clubhouses" were destroyed or severely damaged and the 800 foot wharf was almost completely lost (The Times-Picayune 8/16/1901: 2). Boudro's Garden and Pleasure Hall was particularly hard hit as the foundation was "literally washed away from his buildings." According to a Mr. Chapotel, "had it not been for the trees which were planted along the shore about seventy-five years ago by old Mr. Boudro, the entire resort would have been destroyed." Even the breakwater and bulkhead were washed away. (The Times-Picayune 8/18/1901: 7)

*Milneburg Suffers from the Competition of Newer Local Resorts (1900 – 1915)*

By 1904, the articles seem to give a mixed message. In June, an article states, "This decidedly popular resort was especially well patronized yesterday, and from an early hour in the afternoon immense crowds thronged the piers and various clubhouses" (Times-Picayune 6/20/1904: 12). However, in August, 1904 things had deteriorated to the point that an article was published entitled "Hoodlums Menace to Milneburg Peace" followed by "And a Determined Effort at Suppression is Started, Seven Alleged Disturbers Facing Second Recorder's Court." The article goes on to explain, Milneburg had been "at the mercy of a band of hoodlums who have started in to break up the resort." Ladies and children were reported to be afraid to go there. The article makes a plea to the police to intervene regain control or the resort would be "destined to lose its popularity as a place of recreation on Sunday". (Times-Picayune 8/16/1904: 4)

Later that same year there was a bad fire when Milneburg “had a narrow escape from being destroyed by fire yesterday afternoon.” It was a bucket brigade by the workers of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad along with the firemen that got the blaze under control. The landing dock for the New Camelia was destroyed along with 800 feet of the pier and the railroad tracks. Moreau’s Saloon was destroyed and his restaurant badly damaged. (Times-Picayune 10/21/1904: 4)

In April 1905, a letter to the Mayor of New Orleans from a group named The Milneburg Protective Association was printed in the Times-Picayune. It was an urgent request for protection from “threats of wholesale incendiarism and police inefficiency.” The writer of the letter described how four homes were burned down by arsonists in Milneburg on one night. The writer asked that the city provide more protection now instead of waiting for the summer resort season to open. The city was asked “to restore our part of the city to good and law abiding behavior” (Times-Picayune 4/28/1905: 5). The Mayor’s response was printed just below the original letter and asked the Association to immediately get in touch with his office to start formulating a plan. Later in 1905, improvements are announced for the “Milneburg Line” including some new, more comfortable coaches and new engines that would make “the little line” better than it has been in years (Times-Picayune 7/6/1905: 11).

That year was also a bad year for yellow fever. It was reported that Italians were being imported “from the fever district” to Milneburg and that was a “rather serious complication” for Milneburg (The Times-Picayune 7/30/1905: 5). The Fort Worth Telegram picked up on the story.

The board of health today dispatched a squad of inspectors to Milneburg, which is situated on Lake Pontchartrain, in the suburbs of the city. Several days ago about 150 Italians emigrated from the fever section of the city to Milneburg and there

has been some fear the sickness will develop there. (The Fort Worth Telegram August 2, 1905: 1)

The story continued in the Biloxi Daily Herald which reported a victim of yellow fever from Milneburg had died in charity hospital (9/4/1905: 1).

In 1909, there was an announcement that New Orleans Railway and Light Company was going to build a rail line from West End to Old Spanish Fort that would be developed as another resort. The line would then be extended to Milneburg. Accordingly, “the Railway Company would have a complete belt system, covering as fine a resort territory as can be found in the world (Times-Picayune 5/26/1909: 5).” A few weeks later, an editorial spoke of the problems implementing that plan, but extolled the potential it possessed. The new line that would extend to Milneburg would extend past Milneburg and meet the projected Franklin line to the east. The results would be astonishing according to an article in the Times-Picayune.

On the lake shore line of the new road from West End to Milneburg there will be redemption of all the remaining swamps back of the lake shore, to the inhabited part of the city. There will be the homes of a new people along the lake shore, and it will be a beautiful shore. The sea wall will be the barrier against the lake, and all of that land on the shore line will be filled with the fresh sand from the outer lake, and the black and soft slush eliminated forever, and where it stands to-day there will be trees, plants, flowers. No more of the flow from the sewers and drains of New Orleans into the lake. The drainage is to go to Lake Borgne, and the sewage to the Mississippi River, and it is going now. The time is coming for the white sand of the gulf to reach the shore, the same as at the gulf resorts. The beginning of the day that is to make the shore of Lake Pontchartrain the summer capital as well as the winter capital of the country is dawning fair. (Times-Picayune 6/13/1909: 42)

On the same page of that paper there was a notice about the opening of the new pavilion at Milneburg which was erected by Mr. Quarella and that the “first public picnic given at Milneburg in a number of years took place” the day before (Times-Picayune 6/13/1909: 42). On

the downside, however, the owner of the New Camelia put in a petition to “abandon Milneburg and make her landing instead at West End (The Daily Picayune 3/10/1909: 13).

1911 was a busy year for Milneburg. In January, new plans for the resort were announced. As a result of the new developments at other resorts along the lakefront, the residents of Milneburg decided to completely redo the resort for the opening of the 1911 spring and summer season. It was announced that a new boardwalk would be built that would run east the length of the shoreline from Milneburg to Franklin Avenue, a distance of almost one mile. It would be up to ten feet wide and be raised ten feet off the ground. It was to “resemble the famous board walk at Atlantic City.” It was intended as an access for the owners of the resort’s camps along the shoreline. (Times-Picayune 1/26/1911: 5).

In February, over one-hundred of Milneburg’s permanent and summer residents held a meeting to announce that they were going to form a “permanent progressive and improvement league” in March. The February meeting was described as “one of the most enthusiastic held at the resort and many years” and where a number of issues were discussed including better fire protection equipment, better police protection and attempt the removal of the fence around Washington Garden so the grounds could be made into a public playground (Times-Picayune 2/20/1911: 5). (As an aside, exactly a hundred years later, the current Milneburg Neighborhood Association was asking for better police protection and help with playgrounds in the area.) In March, “The Milneburg Civic Improvement League was organized at that thriving suburb of New Orleans (Times-Picayune 3/6/1911: 3).”

Marking the fifty-fifth anniversary of the dinner given in the Boudro Garden for William Makepeace Thackeray, the Times-Picayune included a piece that traced the history of Milneburg. The original dinner was on March 28, 1856 and it was celebrated in Milneburg annually because



Boudro's "famous 'cordon bleu' of the time served the bouillabaisse that Thackeray makes immortal in 'A Mississippi Bubble' (Times-Picayune 3/26/1911: 36)." Thackeray was quite taken with the evening's entertainment. This is what he said.

At that comfortable tavern on Pontchartrain we had a bouillabaisse than which a better was never eaten in Marseilles; and not the least headache in the morning. I give you my word; on the contrary, you only wake with a sweet refreshing thirst for claret and water. (Times-Picayune 3/26/1911: 36)

The article goes on to give the history of Boudro Garden, which was Carrau Garden in 1911, as the Carrau family inherited it, and the pavilion in which Mr. Thackeray dined was still standing. In 1911, "old-fashioned flower-beds" were described as exuding "fragrances of orange blossoms, jasmine and narcissus; roses climb in riotous profusion on the trellises and commingle their perfume with the mignonette" (Times-Picayune 3/26/1911: 36).

The fate of Milneburg itself was later discussed in the article.

There are interesting landmarks and relics of antiquity in and about Milneburg. The fascination of its rural and aquatic charm causes the question to arise: Shall Milneburg be doomed to a continued decadence. For years past its popularity has been declining as a place of resort. It has not been able to compete with the superior attractions of West End, Spanish Fort, after twenty years of neglect and decay, it is being put in order and promises to resume its former splendid place among the lakeside pleasure grounds of the Crescent City. But Milneburg, with a site superior to them both, and with a history as interesting and brilliant as the city itself, sees no promise of renaissance. (Times-Picayune 3/26/1911: 36)

The Civic Improvement League of Milneburg was eager to better their fair village. At their April, 1911 meeting a number of issues were discussed including better fire protection and better train service, but the main topic of conversation concerned the condition of Elysian Fields. According to the article, owners of the saloons along Elysian Fields were piling empty kegs on the sidewalks all weekend and refusing to pick them up until Monday morning. It was suggested that the Sunday visitors to Milneburg were "insulted by the unsightly conditions." It was decided

“to give the executive committee authority to take such steps as it may see fit.” (Times-Picayune 4/3/1911: 13)

Also in April 1911, Board of Fire Commissioners met at City Hall to discuss a petition from the Milneburg Civic League asking for better fire protection. “The Fire Board discussed the request and was favorably impressed, but before apparatus and men could be provided, it would be necessary to have an engine-house. The matter was referred to the City Council (Times-Picayune 4/20/1911:5).” Later in the year, The Milneburg Civic Improvement League announced that they were going to have a large delegation at the State Railroad Commission meeting in order to discuss improvements in the Pontchartrain Railroad service. They wanted a new station to be built at the resort that would be large and modern enough to take care of the passengers who were awaiting their trains. They also urgently wanted an agent assigned to sell tickets as well as receive freight that was often left unprotected and stolen. (The Daily Picayune 10/6/1911: 16)

The Milneburg Civic Improvement Association met in December 1911 to discuss improvements including the proposed streetcar line. The proposal was for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company to drop the end of the line that goes to Milneburg and turn those tracks over to the Railway Company for street car use (The Daily Picayune 12/10/1911: 25).

In October 1914, Moreau’s dance hall and one-hundred feet of wharf were destroyed in a fire. It could have been much worst. Before the fire could do any more damage, “a switch engine of the Pontchartrain Railroad was run out to the end of the wharf, and under a full head of steam the crew of the engine began throwing a big stream of water on the burning structure.” (The Times-Picayune 10/27/1914: 1)

Near the end of 1914, the Pontchartrain Line to Milneburg was to become electrified and that would greatly change the suburban growth along that route. The plan was to obtain electricity from the New Orleans Railway and Light Company, and use it for operating the cars. The article said that would mean the end of the “Smoky Mary” within three or four weeks. It was said that this was of “special interest to those who are looking toward purchasing home sites in the new residential subdivision of Lake Shore Park Place.” (The Times-Picayune 11/1/1914: 21) The changes, evidently, did not take place because the “Smoky Mary” continued her usual run for another twenty years.

The summer of 1915 was not a good season for Milneburg. First, Moreau Bath House was destroyed by fire (Times-Picayune 5/31/1915). Then the resort was having a lot of problems with disorderly people, but Night Recorder Chamberlain had a plan.

“I intend to break up all rowdyism (sic) and hoodlumism at Milneburg this summer,” he said. “There shall be no disorder there if I can help it. Every person brought before me from Milneburg, or the Milneburg train, and shown to have been disorderly, either will go to jail or pay a fine. That place must be kept decent for decent people.” (The Times-Picayune 6/14/1915: 9)

Later that summer, the welfare committee of the City Federation of Woman’s Clubs met to discuss numerous complaints about Milneburg. The camps along the lakeshore were being rented out by the hour and the “boys and men were said not to be making the best use of them.” Additionally, when young women accepted invitations to go to Milneburg, they were under the impression that Milneburg was similar to West End and Spanish Fort. However, “the unsuspecting were said to be in danger from lack of protection at the Milneburg resort.” The committee decided to make a request to Mayor Behrman “that a matron be appointed at this place, whose duties it shall be to investigate conditions and to protect the younger girls who may be induced to visit the resort.” (The Times-Picayune 7/13/1915: 16)

At times, the rowdiness was so bad that a one-man jail on wheels would be hooked up at the end of the “Smokey Mary” to handle the overflow from the Milneburg jail (Souchon 1953: 4). Later that month, a raid on Milneburg netted fourteen men and women who were arrested for misconduct. On the same morning that those fourteen were facing a judge, Mrs. Alice Monihan, New Orleans’s first policewoman, was being sworn in. She was assigned to Milneburg (The Times-Picayune 7/27/1915: 4). However, these efforts to clean up Milneburg were not universally favored. According to the paper, the erstwhile “Mayor of Milneburg,” John Quarella, was “on the war path.” He was described as the “first victim of the ‘wave of respectability’ being shoved upon the lakeside resort by Mrs. Alice Monahan, the city’s new police woman.” His barroom, dance hall and restaurant were closed “while the indignant proprietor stood upon the front steps venting his outraged feeling.” However, others were not affected. Numerous other “thirst Parlors” remained open for business. An “atmosphere of restraint” seemed to be in effect in contrast to the “devil may care days of the past.” Quarella was infuriated when an order reached him to “move the beds from those rooms in the women’s bathhouse.” (The Times-Picayune 8/2/1915: 5)

In August 1915, there was an entire article devoted to the good work of Mrs. Monahan. She was deemed Milneburg’s “principal attraction.” Her efforts to clean up Milneburg were hailed. On the Sunday in question it was noted that every business was open and “there were no pajama parades along the boardwalk or on the galleries of the many cottages.” A number of orchestras were playing into the night, “but everything was conducted in an orderly manner.” It was noted, “If a stranger had visited Milneburg Sunday, he would have been convinced that Sunday school parties had taken possession of the resort.” (The Times-Picayune 8/9/1915: 13)

Then just as things seem to be looking up, Mother Nature stepped in and sent another hurricane. Milneburg was one of the hardest hit areas and its buildings were “generally destroyed,” with “water pouring into Milneburg,” and “as many as fifty camps destroyed” (The Times-Picayune 9/30/1915:7).

*Milneburg, The Years of Decay and the Rise of Jazz (1915-1939)*

The history of Milneburg is also entwined with the history of Jazz. Milneburg was where “a new art form and a way of life merged in the warm summer air to form a very significant part of American Music.” Jelly Roll Morton’s “Milneburg Joys” immortalized the old resort area. (Leuin 1975: 1)

On the weekends, you might find upwards of sixty jazz bands (black and white) playing along the piers of Milneburg (Offbeat 1995: 67).

Joe Oliver, Jack Laine, Nick LaRocca, Louis Armstrong, Armand Piron, Buddy Petit, Papa Celestin, Alphonse Picou, Paul Mares, the Schillings, Gishers Brass Band, the Brunies’, Tom Brown, Johnny Provenzano, Big Eye Louis Nelson, Sharkey and many other are names to conjure up in a picture of Milneburg when that tune is played. “Cutting contests” across the water from one camp to another were frequent. Sometimes one camp would have a famous white band playing there, while across the water a few yards away would be an equally famous Negro outfit. If a new tune was played, they aimed it loud and hot across the waves at the other camp. Next week, it would come back at them in a version or interpretation that was changed by style, or memory, - but equally as good! (Souchon 1953: 5)

The late Dr. Henry A. Kmen, a New Orleans musicologist and historian was a proponent of the association of the roots of Jazz and Milneburg.

But most of all, as the people and the place changed, there was a change in the sounds heard at Milneburg. A new and strange kind of music was beginning to be played there. To those who could remember the older Milneburg, the new sound was disturbing. As one wrote: “No more the guitar and violin; enter the trombone and snare drum.” It seemed to him that what he now heard were “blatant raucous noises and revelries,” and that the minuet, lancers and quadrilles had given way

to “swaying, swaggering dances.” Others called it “discordant ragtime” and yearned for the “tender rhythm of the waltz. But those “raucous sounds” were, of course, the sounds of early jazz, sounds that were to be the real glory of Milneburg and to keep its name alive long after the place itself had passed from the map. Milneburg became a haven for the developing jazz bands which were hired to play as often as possible. (Kmen 1969: 46)

In 1917, the last advertisement for the New Camelia Steamer was published and the other steamboat destinations in the advertisement had changed dramatically. Instead of being associated with ports in Central America, South America and Europe, the destinations are Baton Rouge, Donaldsonville, Morgan City, and only as far north as St. Louis (The Times-Picayune 4/112/1917: 29). 1917 also brought news of a proposed shipyard to be built at Milneburg. It would be a federal shipyard “with a payroll of thousands of dollars” and would be built in six months. The Milneburg shipyard was to be named the Star Shipyards and its first contract was for six wooden merchant vessels costing \$400,000 each. (The Times-Picayune 5/16/1917: 9) The shipyard was never built and its plans were never mentioned any later than that month in the local newspaper.

In 1919, owners of the camps between Milneburg and Little Woods (to the east) organized the Milneburg Civic Club in order to raise money to “to spend on the improvement of the road between the two towns (The Times-Picayune 4/20/1919: 4).” In 1920, the prized Washington Hotel was torn down. It was hailed as “a world renowned relic” where Thackeray ate Bouillabaisse, and where the fashionables of the country enjoyed cooking that gave New Orleans the reputation that survives.” (The Times-Picayune 1920: 13)

There was continued bad news in 1921. All seven “negro dance halls” at Milneburg “have been ordered suppressed by the police department” because of “recent disturbances and near clashes” (The Times Picayune 4/30/1921: 15). In the fall, the father of the Margaret

Norvell, the lighthouse keeper, Thomas Norvell, wrote a pleading letter to the editor addressing the lack of adequate transportation to Milneburg.

Will you kindly publish this letter, as something should be done to make Milneburg within access of the rest of civilization. Old “Smoky Mary” has changed its schedule as it has done for past fifty years, cutting off the people of the lake from all transportation to and from the city, on weekdays at 7 p.m. and on Sundays at 8 p.m. Think of it! When the place is not four miles from the city and there is hardly a chance for anyone to use the Villere line, it being entirely too far, and then its terminal is in the thickest of the woods. It was my lot to have to pay a visit to my mother at the lighthouse at Milneburg last night, and having a light car thought that I could make the trip easily, as it is only two miles of actual road from Gentilly to the lake. You could never dream of the awful ride that I undertook for those two miles – holes that you could bury a Ford in, much less ride over, and so many that it was impossible to keep steady at the wheel without stopping. Now, sir, just imagine anyone taking seriously sick at Milneburg during the night. What doctor or ambulance could navigate such a road? Or if a fire should break out and heavy apparatus be forced to use this road. With the “Smoke Mary” tied up in the city what chance have the people of Milneburg, that is not over four miles away from our city, got. (The Times-Picayune 9/24/1921: 8)

The following day a story ran about the women of Milneburg forming a civic league to fight the same bad road conditions described in the letter above. The meeting of the women was lead by Mrs. Margaret Norvell, the keeper of the Milneburg lighthouse (The Times-Picayune 9/29/1921: 7). The meeting was held a couple of days before the article was published, so it is presumably that meeting that brought Mr. Norvell out to Milneburg.

For Milneburg, 1922 was not any better. First, was the devastating news that the entire town of about 1600 people had to be moved because of the upcoming West End Seabrook beach improvement plan. A delegation from Milneburg attended a levee board meeting to express their disapproval of the plans. The residents explained that they had paid taxes for up to fifty years and were entitled to their land. They were told “that the convenience of the small number of

persons along the lake front must give way to the progress and development of a great city for many.” (The Times-Picayune 11/16/1922: 2)

The next day the Times-Picayune printed some opinions on the decision to move Milneburg. One was particularly damning.

[Milneburg] has been the dumping ground for the scum of the city. The people have tolerated this condition, tolerated immorality, shown hostility to progressive strangers and in general retarded the growth and improvement of the town. I do not wish to harm anyone, or cause suffering of any kind, but it would be a wonderful thing if a great storm or a big fire would destroy all of those unsightly camps that are a blot to the natural beauty of the lake. (The Times-Picayune 11/17/1922: 13)

A Milneburg resident describes the pall that has come over the town.

Milneburg mourns. They see the passing of their colorful town. They say they do not know where they will go but all declare they will stick till the bitter end. The evening sun sinks in the west of a city wrapped in solemnity. Dogs bay mournfully at the moon. Silent figures move here and there but there is a noticeable absence of life and gaiety. Milneburg is doomed. (The Times-Picayune 11/17/1922: 13)

The following month, The Times-Picayune ran a long story on the history of Milneburg written by Lillian Norvell Mejia (daughter of Margaret Norvell, the lighthouse keeper). The article started by looking at the two sides the story facing Milneburg in the face of the proposed seawall. “To the financier, iconoclast progressive citizen there is the magnificence and congratulation that the utilization of this vast expanse of un-reclaimed land, non-revenue producing and for the most part water-encroached, will be held the most beneficent results.” Mrs. Mejia suggests the other side of the argument is the “sorrowful outlook for those now unfortunately allied with the little village whose life interests have centered within its confines.” She goes on to describe the residents of Milneburg as “sturdy fisher and seafaring forbears, ruefully contemplate the severing of ties, a situation akin to the one happy colony pictured by



Longfellow in Evangeline.” (The Times-Picayune 12/31/1922) It seems unfathomable to Mrs. Mejia that after so many years of regeneration and resilience, that this distinctive and, in her mind, vital neighborhood would be lost forever. In fact, she still has hope in its continued revitalization.

Milneburg, one of the old-time show-places of the South, will arise from the ashes of the past, from a somnolence that has thwarted its career these many years though changed in name, geographical significance and landmarks, it will become a show-place, a glorified reincarnation, and by those once familiar to be recounted to another generation. (The Times-Picayune 12/31/1922)

When the board of commissioners met in the summer of 1923, they “urged the removal from Elysian Fields avenue of the tracks of the Milneburg railroad” in order to facilitate a safer venue for the proposed Elysian Fields street car line (The Times-Picayune 7/17/1923: 39).

A Judicial Advertisement in 1925 announced that “without limit or reserve, fourteen lots of ground in the town of Milneburg on Lake Pontchartrain” were to be auctioned (The Times-Picayune 2/15/1925: 39). That same year, in an article about property development in the area, there is a reference to “pleasure resorts soon to be established at Milneburg” (The Times-Picayune 8/30/1925: 40). In addition, there was another homage to Milneburg.

Fading fast is the glory that was Milneburg. Soon the last saxophone will have wailed a requiem for the final “camp.” The vast scheme for the Milneburg that was it spells only doom. The Lake Pontchartrain settlement, to which runs (see it and believe) one of the most ancient of railroads, long ago had its day of fashion and outgrew it. Then came its day of jazz and that we still have with us, although levee board dredges will soon have buried it with sand and convention. (The Times-Picayune 12/13/1925: 147)

In 1926, there was an advertisement inviting the “fishermen and campers” to buy a lot on the Seventeenth Street Canal after the New Orleans levee board tears down “all the camps from West End on to Milneburg” (The Times-Picayune 12/19/1926: 85). Then in 1928, during the process of making bathing beaches along the lake front, the destruction of the camps at

Milneburg is completed. An article describes the levee board's powerful dredges lifting "sand from the lake bed and spreading it over the entire area one occupied by the Milneburg camps. And it is the line of trucks bringing the salvaged material from the camps being razed at Milneburg that become the "most striking sign of the progress that is being made on the levee board's \$41,000,000 lake shore development." (The Times-Picayune 7/22/1928: 28)

Throughout the 1930s, the Times-Picayune reports the slow dropping away of the last vestiges of Milneburg. In 1930, it is announced that, "Actual construction of a concrete sea wall along Lake Pontchartrain from West End to Seabrook is underway. The former site of the Milneburg camps has been selected as the base of operations (The Times-Picayune 7/2/1930: 6)." Then, the Louisville and Nashville railroad received permission to close the Pontchartrain line that ran to Milneburg from "the Interstate Commerce Commission (The Times-Picayune 8/26/1930: 25). "Old Milneburg" is described in an article the next month.

The Orleanian who has not been to Milneburg for a few years would not recognize the old spot which for more than a century was famous for its wharf which extended far into the lake, flanked by camps, restaurants and cabarets. That Milneburg has completely disappeared. The lakefront has been filled in with sand for several hundred yards, and where most of the wharf used to be there is now a great plant manufacturing long, square pilings and great sheet pilings of concrete. (The Times-Picayune 9/21/1930: 29)

In March 1932, the "Smoky Mary" made her last run to and from Milneburg. A string of passenger coaches was added for the trip to accommodate the throngs of people "from all walks of life" who "wanted that last ride to hold as a memory." This marked the end of passenger service of the old Pontchartrain railroad. It was said that the filled coaches "were reminiscent of the days when Milneburg was a popular resort and gay couples and families went out to celebrate." (The Times-Picayune 3/16/1932: 1)

In 1934, there was an article that indicated there was an inconsequential fire in the old recreation center of Milneburg that attracted no attention. In the same article, the effects the “consolidation” that was going on in New Orleans neighborhoods was discussed. For New Orleans in 1934, “Milneburg is now only a vague designation for a part of our city and not, as then, a distinct village of individuality and importance.” (The Times-Picayune 4/15/1934: 37)

The Pontchartrain School at Milneburg was closed in 1935 and the 57 pupils would be bused to Jefferson Davis School starting the next school year (The Times-Picayune 7/13/1935: 1). An article in 1936 refers to Milneburg in the past as “what was known as Milneburg on the lakeshore (Times-Picayune 11/18/1936: 37). In 1938, plans for a \$400,000 new lakefront amusement park were announced “at Milneburg” and will be three times the size of the existing “Pontchartrain Beach” (The Times-Picayune 8/17/1938: 1). Finally, in 1939, it was announced that “beginning Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, the name of the Milneburg Bus line will be changed to the Pontchartrain Beach Bus” (The Times-Picayune 8/5/1939: 5). With that change, the name of Milneburg and the entity that was Milneburg was relegated to an historical reference.

#### *Suburbanization Along the Lakeshore (1940-2004)*

Due to the Great Depression in the 1930’s, the United States Federal Government put into motion several programs that fostered that next wave of suburbanization across America. According to Bauman, et al., Washington launched major programs beginning in the 1930s and burgeoning after World War II that assisted middle-income and upper-income citizens who wanted to move to the suburbs. “It can be said with considerable truth that the vast landscape of suburban ranch houses and apartment complexes that sprawled outward from every U.S. city during the late 1940s, 1950s, and beyond was no less than the grimmest public housing project - “federally subsidized housing.” (Bauman, et.al 2000, p. 164)

New Orleans participated in these trends along with the rest of the country. In fact, there is evidence that New Orleans was ahead of the curve. According to the Greater New Orleans Center for Data Collection,

Prior to the 1920s, the lakefront was largely marshy swampland comprised of scattered fishing shacks and camps. In an effort to develop strategies for eliminating unhealthy conditions that existed in the marshes and for providing improved levee protection from flood disasters, the Louisiana legislature named Colonel Marcel Garsaud to be Chief Engineer of the Orleans Levee Board in 1924. He was commissioned to plan and implement the reclamation and improvement of the lakefront. In 1928, the compromise plan that was adopted included provisions for a public park area between the lake drive and the lake, recreational features and residential development with one section of homes fronting on the lake. The principal reason for the adoption of this plan was its potential for generating revenue to make the project self-supporting.

(<http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/5/35/snapshot.html>, accessed October 9, 2010)

Pumping and draining of the swamps along with the seawall construction actually began in 1926, prior to adoption of the compromise plan. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) completed much of the work after its creation in 1935.

The new lakeshore consisted of a stepped concrete seawall built 3000 feet out from the shore with a filled area raised five to ten feet. Above the lake level were a beautiful public waterfront, beaches and parks. This transformation of the lakeshore allowed for the construction of the Lakeshore/Lake Vista and Lake Terrace/Lake Oaks neighborhoods.

(<http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/5/35/snapshot.html>, accessed October 9, 2010)

The name of Milneburg was not included in the plan. “Milneburg” as an entity disappeared and was absorbed into the wide swath of New Orleans suburbia along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

From 1940 onward (other than an obscure and anachronistic 1981 subdivision advertisement), the name Milneburg is never used in the present tense. That is until The Milneburg Neighborhood Association was reformed in 2006 after Hurricane Katrina.

### **Chapter Three – From Obscurity to Semi-Obscurity**

This chapter continues the trajectory of Milneburg as it reemerges from the obscurity of suburban New Orleans as a direct result of the destructive forces caused by nature, bad engineering of the levee system and misguided government bureaucracy in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This, most recent iteration of Milneburg is an example of the various adaptation strategies utilized by the residents of this neighborhood to establish a separate identity from the surrounding neighborhood and attempt to control the processes and directions of its recovery. But why study a neighborhood? Neighborhoods, according to Kearns and Parkinson, are quite valid areas of study and hold a wide range of research topics.

We can see that the neighbourhood is significant in a number of ways, such as being: an important component of a competitive social and economic world; a reservoir of resources into which we can ‘dip’ in pursuing our lives; an influence upon our lifestyle and life-outcomes; a ‘shaper’ of who we are, both as defined by ourselves and by others; and an important arena for public policy intervention. There is much here for future urban research to pursue. (Kearns and Parkinson 2001: 2109)

The rebuilding of the Milneburg neighborhood is illustrative of a variety of research topics as well as adaptive strategies utilized by residents in the aftermath of disruption. First, there is the concept of neighborhood identity which touches on how and why a geographic area becomes a bounded and named entity. Next, the processes that led to the creation of a bounded neighborhood meant that the individual residents altered their geographic area of concern. Then there is the actual effect that a neighborhood has on its residents. A formal neighborhood association becomes a vital tool in the rebuilding process and a mechanism for exercising power within the boundaries of the neighborhood. The roll of activists is essential for the successful navigation of post-disaster relief efforts. Finally, it is the ultimate goal of neighborhood control that is the aim of the activists and their supporters. Whether real or imagined, the perceived

viability of the neighborhood rests in the belief that power can be wielded to control who lives in the neighborhood and to sustain a quality of life that is deemed respectable.

### *The Pre-Katrina Neighborhood*

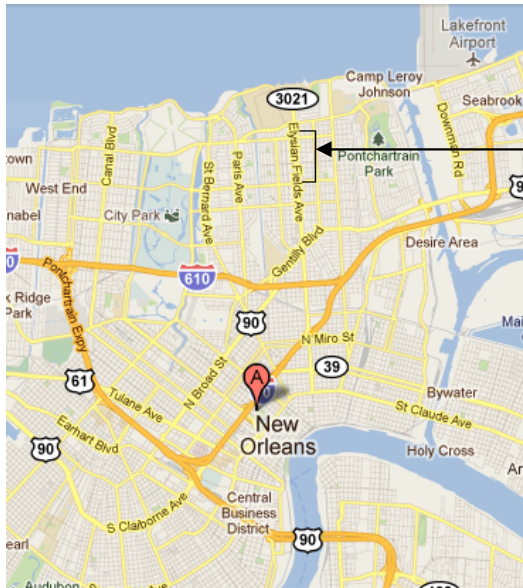


Figure 5. (@Google – Map data)

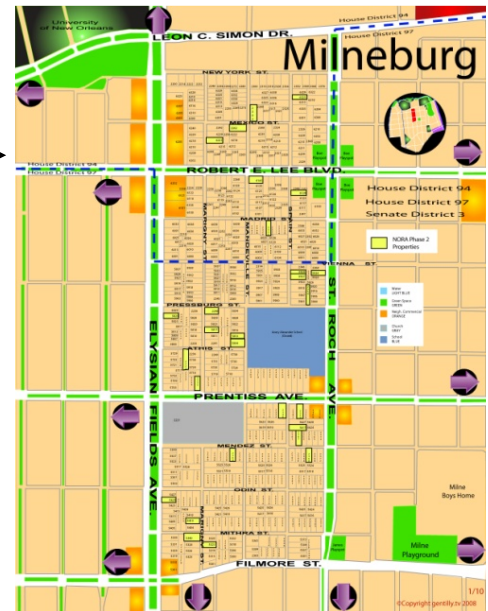


Figure 6. (Courtesy of Gentilly TV)

The suburb area that is now named Milneburg is four blocks wide and nine blocks long with the boundary streets of Mexico on the north, St. Roch on the east, Filmore on the south, and Elysian Fields on the west. Prior to Katrina this area of New Orleans was mixed in racial terms, but predominately African American. The income levels ranged from working class to upper middle class families. There was some rental property but generally the renters had been there so long that they were thought of as the home's owners. It was, by all collected accounts, a quiet, clean and very safe place to live. One person interviewed said, "The people we bought the house from said they never locked their doors."

Another interviewee described it this way.

Before Katrina it was a very quiet neighborhood, tree lined streets, a varied neighborhood, white, black, Hispanic, working class, middle class, upper middle class pretty much all mixed in. It was the kind of neighborhood that people were

trying to have, are trying to have now. We had a lot of elderly people, people who had built the houses and were still living in them. We had a lot of college professors who worked at any of the colleges that were nearby, UNO, Dillard or SUNO, lots of teachers that worked at the area schools. Very quiet, very little crime. I mean if we had an incident occur, it was rare, we had pretty much a crime free neighborhood.

There was no Milneburg neighborhood association in the summer of 2005 just as there was no Milneburg neighborhood. It was just part of the suburbs. A few of the residents were involved in the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association (GCIA). As one person said, “For me, it was just Gentilly.” Another said “It was just part of Gentilly and our big association with the neighborhood when we needed to place it, it was near St. Raphael Church.” Another put it this way. “It was very much a family neighborhood, but we didn’t really necessarily have a neighborhood association. But there was really no need for it. We didn’t have the crime like it is now. There were no quality of life issues.”

### *Disruption*

All that changed on August 29, 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Most of the neighborhood’s residents evacuated their homes before the storm. Some had to be rescued from their rooftops surrounded by as much as 15 feet of water and transported out of the city to a safe haven. At least one woman drowned in her home.

Natural and manufactured disasters have been interrupting the status quo of cities and neighborhoods around the world forever. Recent examples include the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, 1989 earthquake in San Francisco, as well as the terrorist attacks in New York City in 2001. Each of these horrific events brought death, devastation, destruction and a massive disruption of the status quo. New Orleans joined those cities in 2005 due to levee failures and flooding after Hurricane Katrina.

These fabricated and natural disasters do far more than just destroy lives and buildings. They disrupt the very nature of what we define as “neighborhood” and “home”. Chamlee-Wright and Storr point out that,

Natural disasters (like hurricanes) and man-made disasters (like terrorist attacks) can dramatically alter the physical and social landscape and, as a consequence, can force individuals to reassert or alter their sense of place...Disasters can act to close off a category of past experiences. They are disruptions that can bring to the fore the unconscious meanings and significance that an individual has associated with a particular site. (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2009: 618)

The data collected in 2010 and 2011 indicated that the disruption after Hurricane Katrina caused a host of new problems, concerns, and issues to bombard the residents of New Orleans. One resident described the early planning time as being “like the wild west.” Another complained about the response by the government.

“Then another part of me began to feel like, wait a minute, this is the city and these United States of America, my tax dollars go to build cities clean across the world and you can’t put my city back together, well I guess it is like a person being fired, you learn there is no job security in America. And so what I learned was that whether if it happened here or it happened in Chicago or someplace else I’d be facing the same thing. So you can run but you can’t hide. So why should I have to give up my rights and I think that was the prevailing thought of most of the people who got into, to lead the charge to get it back together.”

For the hundreds of displaced Milneburg area residents who watched the drama unfold on televisions far away, basic decisions had to be made. Could they return to their homes? Would they return to their homes? And if so, when? For many it was just a question of economics. Would their jobs still be in New Orleans? Would insurance pay for home repairs? As the weeks passed the city authorities talked of turning much of Gentilly into “green space” and simply bulldozing the houses. As one Milneburg resident explained, they were very worried about this proposal. They started getting in contact with their immediate neighbors who were now



scattered across the country in order to find out what each person knew about the situation in New Orleans and discussing their own plans. Others made their decision quickly. “There was never a question about it. We would not think of going anywhere else.”

### *Neighborhood Identity*

Many studies have focused on how a neighborhood identifies itself. Recently, Campbell, et al. (2009: 461), suggest that four factors appear to influence how people define the boundaries of their neighborhood. The first includes “physical and institutional characteristics” which encompasses the streets, buildings, businesses and homes. The second factor is “its class, race, and ethnic composition.” Third is the “perceived criminal threats from within and outside the neighborhood” which can cause people to constrict their neighborhood boundaries outside of high crime areas. “Symbolic neighborhood identity” is the final factor. This is when residents expressed views that their neighborhood “represented a way of life and a set of unique value.”

“Neighborhood” is a term used in this paper that is user-defined and represents the speaker’s concept of a geographically bounded residential area. It may be named or unnamed, but always has boundaries. Its size and boundaries can vary between persons and between situations. This chapter is concerned with the currently named and officially bounded neighborhood of Milneburg, which, prior to Hurricane Katrina, was more fluid in terms of its boundaries and its self-proclaimed residents.

For the residents of Milneburg, all four of these factors mentioned by Campbell, et al. (2009: 461) changed as they rebuilt their lives in what had been an unnamed area within the suburban landscape of New Orleans. First, the tidy, tree-studded area was turned into a flood ravaged wasteland where virtually every home had to be gutted and rebuilt. According to the survey conducted in the summer of 2011, 13 percent of the houses are still classified as blighted.

Blighted property is defined as residential or business property that has not been restored after Katrina and is unusable in its present state. In order to confront the challenges of rebuilding their neighborhood, they created a bounded physical area and gave it the name Milneburg using the name of the previous neighborhood association in the area.

Changes in the physical and demographic factors can be seen through examination of census statistics. In 2010, Milneburg was comprised of thirty-six census blocks within census tract 25.01 in Orleans Parish. Combining and comparing the data collected from these thirty-six census blocks from the 2000 U.S. Census and the 2010 U.S. Census revealed the following changes that can be directly attributed to the effect of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Table 1. Comparison of 2000 and 2010 Census Data for Individuals in Milneburg

|                 | 2000 Totals | 2000 Percent | 2010 Totals | 2010 Percent | % Difference |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Individuals     | 1321        |              | 923         |              | 30% fewer    |
| White           | 406         | 31%          | 78          | 8%           | 23% fewer    |
| Black           | 803         | 61%          | 738         | 80%          | 19% more     |
| Hispanic        | 113         | 9%           | 66          | 7%           | 2% fewer     |
| Asian           | 9           | 1%           | 10          | 1%           | no % change  |
| Pacific Island  | 1           | 0%           | 0           | 0%           | no % change  |
| Other           | 23          | 2%           | 16          | 2%           | no % change  |
| 2 or more races | 23          | 2%           | 16          | 2%           | no % change  |
| Over 18 (age)   | 1034        | 78%          | 728         | 79%          | 1% more      |

(United States Census, 2000

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/AGSGeoAddressServlet?\\_lang=en&\\_programYear=50&\\_treeId=420&\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/AGSGeoAddressServlet?_lang=en&_programYear=50&_treeId=420&_sse=on)  
Accessed May 4, 2010

US Census Data. 2010. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?ref=addr&refresh=t>.  
Accessed May 31, 2011. )

Table 2. Comparison of 2000 and 2010 Census Data for Houses in Milneburg

|              |     |     |                              |     |           |
|--------------|-----|-----|------------------------------|-----|-----------|
| Total Houses | 620 |     | 498                          |     | 20% fewer |
| Owned        | 536 | 86% | 2010 Data<br>Not Available * |     |           |
| Rented       | 178 | 29% | 2010 Data<br>Not Available * |     |           |
| Vacant       | 45  | 7%  | 132                          | 27% | 20% more  |

(United States Census, 2000

[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/AGSGeoAddressServlet?\\_lang=en&\\_programYear=50&\\_treeId=420&\\_sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/AGSGeoAddressServlet?_lang=en&_programYear=50&_treeId=420&_sse=on)  
Accessed May 4, 2010

US Census Data. 2010. <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/searchresults.xhtml?ref=addr&refresh=t>.  
Accessed May 31, 2011. )

\* As of November 1, 2011, the 2010 Census data for ownership and rental information was still incomplete.

Twenty-two percent of the residential dwelling standing in the year 2000 became vacant lots by 2010 and of those still standing, almost one-third were still vacant in 2010. That means that only a little over half of the number of residential dwellings in 2010 Milneburg were occupied compared to the total in 2000.

The third factor, perception of criminality in the area, also changed for the residents of Milneburg. The residents of Milneburg, who lived there prior to 2005, perceive that crime is a new threat to their neighborhood that did not exist prior to Hurricane Katrina. One resident who has lived in the neighborhood since 1994 expressed her concerns this way.

The thing is nobody needs to live in an area where your neighbors steal from your house when you're not home. And we have had some of that in the neighborhood since the flood. In fact, the people we bought the house from said they never locked their doors. That has changed, of course. The element has changed. You've got people from all over the city that's looking for housing. There's section 8 and their taking the properties and harming them. Now, I'm not saying that all section 8 people are bad. But there are some. It only takes a few to make a bad name for everybody else. Just two or three weeks ago, I was standing at my front window and watched two boys break into the house across the street at 10:15 in the morning on a Saturday. It was teenage boys, 14 or 15 years old. And that would never have happened before.

According to the Housing and Urban Development website, the term “Section 8” is defined as their program that “pays rental subsidies to owners of multifamily properties that provide rental units to low-income households.” (Housing and Urban Development, Section 8. [www.huduser.org/portal/publications/PUBASST/evalm2m.html](http://www.huduser.org/portal/publications/PUBASST/evalm2m.html), accessed April 4, 2010) However, interviewees used it as a pejorative term for the renters who were receiving the subsidies. The “section 8” renters as well as landlords were considered by the interviewees to be generally “undesirable.” As one resident stated, “Some of those [Section 8] landlords don’t care. That check goes right to them. As long as they get their money, they don’t care. A lot of times they won’t even fix things.”

Some of the long time landlords started renting to Section 8 tenants for the first time after Hurricane Katrina and had to qualify. One resident also became a Section 8 renter for the first time.

I really wanted the house, but I told her that she wasn’t on Section 8. Then she said, then I will put it on Section 8. It took two months to get the paperwork. There were problems, she had never dealt with them before, I had never dealt with them before. The people came out and inspected. I really wanted to move here. I knew it would be more quiet and safe. Where I lived before, I had to watch so many children get killed. My little nephew got killed up there. One of my little grandsons got killed and I was just frustrated. They were renovating where I was renting, but I could not afford to come back. So I told them if they could keep me on the voucher program, I could keep this house. I love the house, I never been in so much peace in my whole life.

The forth factor is the symbolic identity of the neighborhood. Several residents expressed a much-heightened level of concern for the “quality of life” that they perceive is now threatened.

I think we have a higher population of non-owner-occupied homes now than we did before the storm. And in my personal opinion that has created more of an issue of quality of life kind of thing than anything else.

But its tenants brought with them some quality of life issues. Where they disturbed people in the neighborhood. And so it think you have more of that in these occupied properties than not.

And I have concerns for quality of life issues. People understand your going to like your neighborhood a lot better if it's not better if it's not dirty, you're going to like it a lot better is the cars are on the street and not on the grass. If I don't impinge on your life style and you don't impinge on mine. And by that I'm a huge Ray Charles fan and that doesn't necessarily mean that you are. So you don't need to hear Ray Charles every time I want to hear Ray Charles and I don't need to hear your music every time you want to hear it. This is the United States of America and you are free to do anything you choose to do so long as it is legal, but at the same time it all works so much better if we respect one another. So when I entertain at my home I make sure my guests don't disrupt my neighbors'

#### *Area of Concern*

The effects of Katrina also caused the geographical expansion of "neighbor concern." In this paper this term is used to describe the unease one has concerning the actions and attitudes of one's neighbors. Before Katrina, the individuals who now comprise the active members of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association were friends with and knew only the other members who were immediate neighbors. Before Katrina, the entire area that is now referred to as Milneburg was, in the opinion of the residents, crime free, quiet and a wonderful place to live. However, each person's area of concern was quite small. It was generally their immediate block or even less than a block. There was little concern for what was happening a mere few blocks away. As long as their own small island was safe and happy, that was all that mattered. However, after Katrina when the quality of life in their tiny area of concern became threatened, they were forced to feel concern for and join forces with people with whom they had not been acquainted before the effects of Katrina. It became necessary for this larger group of people to band together in

the fight to bring back the former status quo that they had individually cherished, and had taken for granted before Katrina.

Before Katrina our route was pretty much from here to UNO. So the corridors we used to get to UNO we were aware of. My grandmother lived right off of St. Roch and Athis which is just around the corner from here. I had friend all the way down to Odin, so I knew pretty much Odin to Athis. And from Elysian Fields to Franklin on Prentiss. And of course the main corridor up, you know to get to Schwegmann's. Up St. Roch and Franklin where Rouses is now. That used to be a Schwegmann's. But now all of Milneburg is in my area. But that is because I am proactive in the community now passing out flyers, doing the blight surveys, double checking blight survey data so that when we send them in it is accurate.

### *The Neighborhood Effect*

There is currently a large body of research on the phenomena called “neighborhood effect.” Sampson, et al. (2002, 444) point out that so many of these studies were launched in such a short period that the “study of neighborhood effects, for better or worse, has become something of a cottage industry in the social sciences.”

Permentier, et al., discuss the effect that the neighborhood has on its residents. They suggest, “The perceived neighborhood reputation is indeed a significant predictor of moving intentions, even after controlling for neighborhood satisfaction and neighborhood attachment (Permentier, et al., 2009, 2162).” The current residents of Milneburg who were here prior to Hurricane Katrina expressed a pressing need to have the reputation of their neighborhood restored to “its former glory” and not have it further decline due to the influence of, what they termed “disruptive elements.” “Disruptive elements” is a term used by the persons interviewed to describe residents who have acted in a manner not consistent with the views of the current residents. One talked about the how the neighborhood was so good that they did not want people to think Katrina was an excuse to leave. “Our experience had been positive in our home and in our neighborhood overwhelmingly. So there wasn't any reason ... it wasn't as though it had been

a horrible neighborhood pre-Katrina and like this was our opportunity to get out. It has always been a really good neighborhood, we always felt safe there.”

It was the good reputation that was growing in the Milneburg neighborhood that influenced other residents to return. As one resident explained,

So I think that is our biggest attribute that we were able to put out such a reputation that people wanted to return because some people did return after they saw the progress of the neighborhood.

### *Neighborhood Associations*

Theodore Bestor (1989) has done a great deal of research on neighborhood associations, their importance and their impact. He points out that they are “a means of sustaining local community solidarity in the face of rapid population turnover (69),” and in “social, political, and economic turmoil ... a means of maintaining order (75),” as well as a mechanism for “creating and maintaining the fabric of local social life (121).” After Hurricane Katrina when the population was totally in a state of flux, the residents realized that a formal neighborhood association would give them an organizational foundation to help their neighbors return. It was also used as means of controlling who would be permitted to return. The neighborhood association disallowed a bar to reopen and a tattoo parlor to be built. Its monthly meetings are continually used as a platform for strengthening the ties between the residents and ensuring that there is compliance with the association’s rules.

Donnelly and Kimble’s research in 2006 shows the success that neighborhood associations can have on a community making it safer place to live as well as to galvanize issues and methods. They showed that “actions instigated and promoted by neighborhood association members enhanced the quality of life for neighborhood residents” (Donnelly and Kimble, 2006).

The creation of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association shows how a group of residents rallied around the issue of their neighborhood's very existence and the continuation of their perceived safe quality of life. It was the possibility of a large swath of Gentilly becoming "green space" that really prompted residents of the area to start getting formally organized. "Green space" was a term used by the persons interviewed as well as officials of the city of New Orleans to refer to areas of the city that would be bulldozed, not be rebuilt and retained as undeveloped property. The Gentilly Civic Improvement Association board members encouraged the displaced residents from the neighborhoods in the immediate geographic area to form their own neighborhood associations, if one was not already in place, in order to be more effective in controlling their neighborhood's future.

A few of the displaced residents of the Milneburg area joined forces to do just that. The process of formalizing a neighborhood association began with informal conversations about intentions. One resident put it this way.

So I began talking with my neighbors, are you coming back? And, have you heard from anybody else? And that was how organizing, as far as I knew, began. And so it began in that form while many people were still away and very few were still back. So we campaigned to get our neighbors back.

The next step was to define the boundaries of the neighborhood. As one resident said, "The issue then became what are these areas, define the area." Then a few neighbors decided on the plan to organize a formal neighborhood association.

I looked on the state's website and saw there once was a Milneburg Neighborhood Association and found out what I had to do to reenact that and .... so that Milneburg could actually be a legal body. So I contacted the state, I filled out the forms, I sent in the check and we incorporated.



The Milneburg Neighborhood Association was officially re-incorporated in October 2, 2006 and their first motto was “Milneburg: Clean, Quiet, Safe.” However, the Association had already become a functioning entity much earlier in the year.

Marcia England’s research suggests that neighborhood associations result in “exclusion of those who are seen as outsiders and the reification of narrowly defined ideas of neighbors and neighborhoods (England, 2006).” England’s research is suggested by the shifting boundaries of Milneburg. The boundaries of Milneburg shifted several times until they stabilized into the 2011 boundaries. The process included eliminating areas as well as some people opting out of the newly formed neighborhood.

And then came the issue about what was Milneburg. And Milneburg had somehow been lumped into Seabrook. And Seabrook was saying there really is no Milneburg, then they acknowledged there was a small corridor. OK, so then Seabrook had to acknowledge that Milneburg began at St. Roch. So on this side, if you walk down Robert E. Lee you get to St. Roch and this side of the neutral ground, or island as I call it or medium, is Milneburg, when you cross St. Roch that is Seabrook. Then the people on New York Street, we acquiesced, they didn’t want to be part of Milneburg, so let them out. They really are technically, you look at the city map, they petition, and you know we don’t want them in, I’m good with them not. And you know the prevailing thought was just let them out, redraw the map.

By definition, the neighborhood association is a working group and a network which can have a self-confirming effect on the desires of its members. “Social externality” is a term used by Galster to show how “one set of potential neighborhood effects occurs when the characteristics, behaviours or attitudes of one neighborhood resident has a direct influence on (at least a portion of) his or her neighbours (Galster 2007, p. 21).” Milneburg’s “social externality” is exemplified by the neighborhood association. With the formalization of the association came the adoption of standards of behavior. “Social externality” in Milneburg is the way residents

make their neighbors adhere to these rules of the neighborhood such as no parking on the grass and no loud music after 10:00 PM.

Martin uses the term “placeframe” to define how neighborhood associations form a “legitimate” arena in which they “use their territorially bounded political identities to constitute a justification for place-based action and to foster concern and community at the scale of the neighborhood (Martin 2003, 746).” Milneburg’s physical “placeframe” is identified by the new signs that were erected at the boundaries of the neighborhood. Additionally, residents started to verbally describe where they reside as “Milneburg.” There is the distinct belief that this sense of a distinct place is due to the Milneburg Neighborhood Association.

Yes, I absolutely think that it is because of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association that people actually say they live in Milneburg now. I think the signage, the awareness is there. And I think that is true all over the city actually. People start to identify where they live by the name of their neighborhood association. And the level of engagement has gone up.

Putnam (2007) explains that a social network has a value. He thus describes social capital as the "social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness (Putnam 2007, 137)." Milneburg’s social capital can be seen in a number of ways. The “phone tree” that has been created demonstrates Milneburg’s “social capital”. If one resident sees a crime being committed, they will call two neighbors who will then call two other neighbors and so on. Then all of those people will call 911 to report the crime. It has had an effect on the response time by the police to crime in the area. Another example is the way the residents get together to show solidarity. They participate in the annual Night Out Against Crime as a neighborhood. Even the flyer for the first Night Out Against Crime shows the desires for a united, good quality of life. The flyer reads, “Milneburg – Clean, Quiet, Safe - Where renters and homeowners are treated with the Same Respect, Held to the same Standards.”

### *Activists*

Smith points out that there have been decades of research to support the claim that “that residents who become active in local voluntary organizations are quite unlike residents who remain inactive. Activists are a small, self-selected minority of residents who on the whole are better educated, of higher socioeconomic status, less transient, and more likely to be homeowners than those whom they represent (Smith 1985, 421).” The activists in the Milneburg Neighborhood Association have precisely these same characteristics.

The two major players in the formalization of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association were not born or raised in the New Orleans area. They were born and raised in Illinois and Ohio. One had relatives here but did not move into Milneburg until the 1994 and the other moved into Milneburg in 2002, just 3 years prior to Katrina.

### *Neighborhood Control*

The issue of neighborhood control is a major focus of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association. The residents of Milneburg have acted as a unified body to force a bar and a tattoo parlor to move out of the neighborhood. They openly express an opinion that their neighborhood has less crime (although more than before Hurricane Katrina) than the surrounding neighborhoods. The Milneburg Neighborhood Association has a membership that is very active in trying to control crime and quality of life issues of their neighborhood. They are quick to call the police and provide evidence of criminal activity. They will openly point out to their neighbors any action that they feel is not appropriate to the standards of the neighborhood.

With our neighborhood, the tenant was parking across the grass. Well first of all their children were playing on our gate. So I asked them not to do it. So they went and told their Mom I told them they couldn't play in the yard. So I went down there and I said, HI, And I said Why are you parking on the grass. And the guy said, this is my car!!!! And I park here because it doesn't look good, we have

already had a break in and to have a tenant park a car across a lawn. I'm sorry that is ghetto, that is ghetto fabulous, that is straight up a hood mentality. We have home owners, we have renters in this neighborhood, and they respect this neighborhood. And that is all we are asking him to do. The landlord said he would go ahead and put some dirt, and he did. And you know what he did, after the guy was shoveling and putting the dirt there, he parked across the grass again. So you know what I did, I walked up the street with my camera and took a picture of it and texted it to him and said, despite your hard effort, your tenant is still parking on the grass. He texted me back and said he was sorry and that he would go back out and fill it with gravel and dirt. And that is what he did, so I want it known that you can work with them... And then the one across the street, they got chickens in the yard that are pooping all over. So I called 311 to complain.

After the establishment of the formal association, members began an active and still ongoing campaign to control both the residential and business makeup of Milneburg. They barred some incoming business from buying in the area, derailed plans for others to rebuild and invited business interests that they believed would be beneficial to the neighborhood. The same can be said for the effect on the residential property in Milneburg. They stopped the buying of land for multi-unit housing, forced some residents to move out of the area and actively attracted homebuyers and renters who followed the rules of the neighborhood. In the beginning, there was no guarantee that this Association would have any actual control over these issues or if it would even continue to exist.

The members of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association attempted to control who was expelled from and who was admitted to their neighborhood. First, there was the issue of the residents who lived on New York Street. One Milneburg resident stated, "Then the people on New York Street, we acquiesced, they didn't want to be part of Milneburg, so let them out." In another instance, they were able to keep several businesses from opening. "We kept monitoring the businesses that are coming in, good or bad. We've stopped a lot of things like a tattoo parlor and a bar." Then there was the issue of a multi-unit apartment complex.

She dug and dug until she found out who owned those houses. Because he quickly tore them down and cleared the lot. He wanted to build on the property but he wanted to build multi-units. And my guess is, the issue was low income housing. And that in a concentrated area, first that is not enough real estate for that. That was not the desire of the people. Is not the zoning law. So we made it perfectly clear to our representation that we were not be in any favor or in any way support any type of zoning change that would allow multiple units beyond dual, duplex. So we will never support that, and as a result, he has not built. You have to ever stay vigilant and you have to always pay attention to what's going on.

They were able to make some people who were incompatible with the neighborhood philosophy to leave. One resident said, "But its tenants brought with them some quality of life issues. Where they disturbed people in the neighborhood. My neighbor asked some other questions of the people, he may have been visiting, you know, and they probably have asked him to leave."

They also actively worked to attract businesses and residents who they thought would be compatible. One resident explained, "I have solicited businesses to come into the area. We are going to get a Wendy's." Neighborhood control is a top priority to the members of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association.

## **Chapter 4 - Conclusions**

Milneburg is the story of two centuries of post-disaster cultural adaptations. Its trajectory brought it from a port of entry, through its glamour years as a resort, into its decay and decline into suburban obscurity and, finally, to its post-Hurricane Katrina reemergence as a named and bounded neighborhood. As is usual for Milneburg, its residents have rebuilt their beloved neighborhood. This time it was through the efforts of a formal neighborhood association that proved once more that grassroots efforts are the most effective in post-disaster rebuilding. The residents formed the Milneburg Neighborhood Association in early 2006, and in so doing, Milneburg once more showed its own resiliency as it reemerged.

By the sixth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in 2011, the Milneburg Neighborhood Association has become a thriving entity. Meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month and there is an active membership. They host neighborhood events such as “Night Out Against Crime,” block parties and door-to-door visitations. The neighborhood itself is still struggling with flood-related problems. According to one resident, and the census data, less than fifty percent of the original neighborhood residents have returned to their homes. Blighted properties account for thirteen percent of the residences in Milneburg. That means that no one is living there and they have not had any repairs since Katrina. Alexander Avery School, the elementary school that served the neighborhood, is still unopened. Many of the streets are still in need of repair. There are many “quality of life” issues as current residents stated. One of the most troublesome complaints is the preponderance of non-owner occupied households. In the past, renters had lived in their homes so long that they were thought of as home owners. The new renters seem to be the source of these “quality of life issues.” Reported incidents of “non-conformance” to the neighborhood’s new rules range from mere disturbances and loud parties to break-ins and thefts. Very recently, the neighborhood association was able to hire a security

service to begin partial patrols of the neighborhood thanks to legislation that dedicated a portion of the tax millage of the Milneburg property owners.

Residents also report success, such as attracting the “right kind of business” to the area and seeing the population move, albeit slowly, in a positive direction. The Milneburg Neighborhood Association is fully responsible for the successful reestablishment of this neighborhood. The two individuals who initially took over the task of spear-heading the work of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association were both born and raised outside of New Orleans. They were voluntary transplants to New Orleans prior to Katrina but now consider New Orleans their home. After learning of the devastation and destruction of their homes and neighborhood, they immediately started the ball rolling to find a way out of the morass and back to their beloved adopted city and to their specific neighborhood, as well. There is a saying in New Orleans that is used to describe why at times local residents will not actually do things that need to be done if there is effort required on their parts. Locals call it “Mardi Gras mentality.” It is the notion that one will be able to get something for nothing. In the wake of Katrina in the Milneburg neighborhood, it was the nonnative-born residents who jumped in right away, got the neighborhood association incorporated and became the focal point for helping their entire neighborhood start on the road to recovery. The designation of some of the activists being “non-native born” is an observation on my part, only. The activists did not make this distinction about themselves nor did the other residents of Milneburg. In fact, I do not believe that the individuals who are most responsible for the development of the Milneburg Neighborhood Association would even call themselves “activists.”

Throughout the history of Milneburg there has been a palpable tension between commerce and respectability. As a business, the resort attracted elegant and refined crowds along

with a far more sordid element. The newspapers told of the operatic offerings and stylish dining while at the same time demanding that the beds be removed from the women's bathhouses. The saloons that lined Elysian Fields were hailed for their popularity, but chastised for leaving the area to look trashy. Beginning with the village that was established next to the resort onward until the present day Milneburg, residents formally organized neighborhood associations to combat people and activities that threatened the respectability of their reputations. In post-Katrina Milneburg, a bar was not allowed to reopen and a tattoo parlor was banned all in the name of respectability. Ironically, in 2011 the residents believe that a Wendy's fast food restaurant adds to the propriety of the neighborhood.

Although it was storms, floods and fires that destroyed Milneburg the many times, it was the very American process of suburbanization that forced Milneburg into obscurity for the longest amount of time. The efforts to provide baby-boomers with enough housing and shopping areas along with the associated trends toward urban renewal put Milneburg directly in the cross-hairs. Milneburg was standing in the way of progress and had to be removed. From 1939 until 2005, the name Milneburg was only used in the past tense. It was, however, also the love of suburbia that brought Milneburg out of the shadows. When the suburban life that so many current Milneburg residents described as ideal was threatened with annihilation by bureaucratic decree and the institution of the Green Spaced plan, they rose up to fight. They formed the Milneburg Neighborhood Association to show the city officials that theirs was a real neighborhood that was vital and could not be eliminated. So suburbanization eradicated Milneburg, but its residents brought it back as a tool to fight city hall.

I believe that the existence of Milneburg along with its camps were more important to the development of Jazz than Storyville, the red-light district in New Orleans that is known for its



contributions to that musical art form. Storyville's bars and brothels were the musicians and bands played were enclosed buildings where performers patronized and played while combining and comparing the new musical styles being developed in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. The camps as Milneburg that numbered over fifty were lined up along the edge of the lake and provided a long venue for open air competitions. Combos could play their versions of music and get real time auditory critiques from scores of other groups who gathered as entertainment at each of the camps. More than the brothels, taverns and dance halls, Milneburg's camps provided the best studio for experimenting and perfecting the new Jazz sounds that originated in New Orleans.

Neighborhood associations were organized four times in Milneburg prior to Hurricane Katrina. The first one, The Milneburg Protective Association, was organized in 1905 in response to incidents of arson and the lack of police protection. In 1911, The Milneburg Civic Improvement League was organized in order to deal with a playground issue and demand better police protection. In 1919, owners of the camps between Milneburg and Little Woods (to the east) organized the Milneburg Civic Club in order to raise money for road improvements between the two communities. According to the Louisiana Secretary of State Corporations database, articles of incorporation were issued for the Milneburg Civic Improvement Association in 1921. This was the group spearheaded by Mrs. Norvell, the lighthouse keeper, to deal with the deteriorating conditions and lack of governmental assistance in Milneburg. This was the entity reinstated by the Milneburg residents officially in 2006, although they use the name Milneburg Neighborhood Association. In all instances, it was believed that a formal organized association would be more effective in addressing civic and community issues. Squatters have no voice in these matters. To prove your validity, you must be a member of an organization.

Analysis of the data collected from the interviews and through participant observation brings forth three other conclusions. The first is that there was a crisis-induced expansion and solidification of the boundaries of the “neighborhood.” Second, a formal “neighborhood” association validates the subsequent introduction and use of controlling methodology. Finally, the “area of concern” for the residents has expanded which leaves the impression that prior to Hurricane Katrina there was little or no crime in the area.

The residents of Milneburg have quite frequently said that they want their neighborhood to return to its former respected and glorified status. Some have even said that they believe it will, in the coming years, become an even more highly regarded residential enclave. If the past is any indication at all, Milneburg will survive, but its trajectory was never overly progressive. With the new demographics of the neighborhood and the substantial rise in criminal activity, Milneburg will most likely maintain its status quo, at least until it is destroyed again.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A –1867 Graham's Crescent City Milneburg Directory

Notice the number of restaurants that had become famous by that time: Boudro House, Washington Restaurant, and the aptly named Phoenix House.

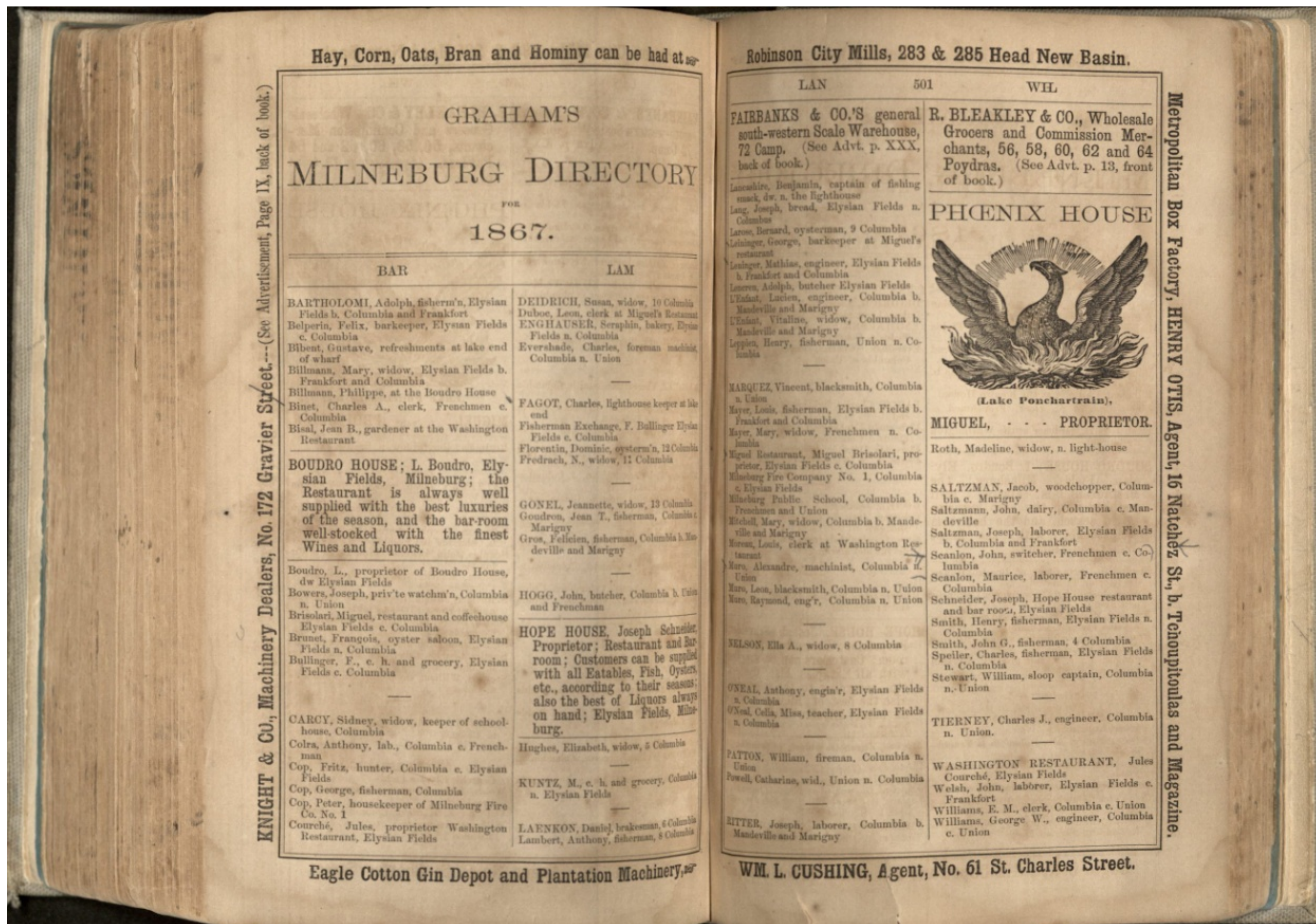
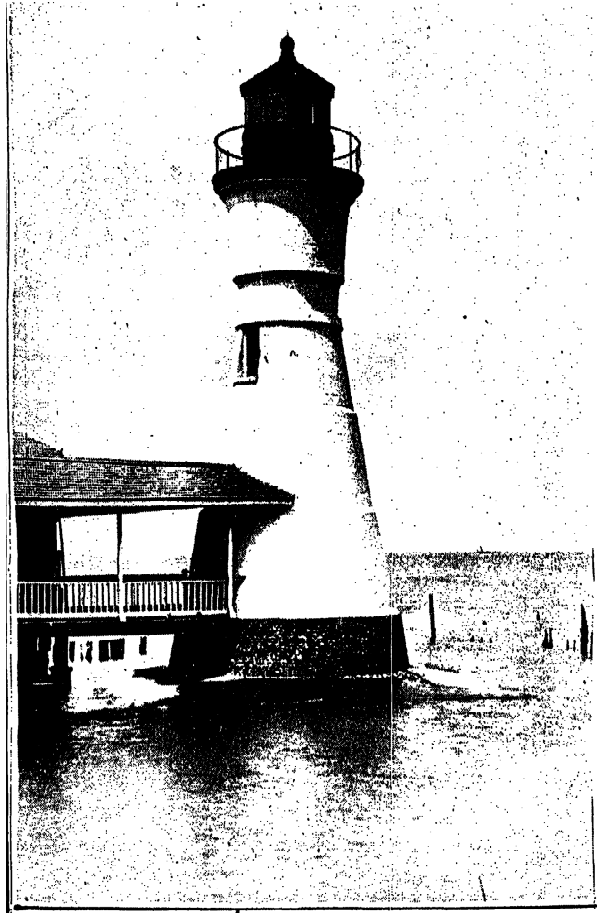


Figure 7. (Graham's Crescent City Directory 1867: 501-502)

Appendix B - Milneburg Lighthouse - 1909



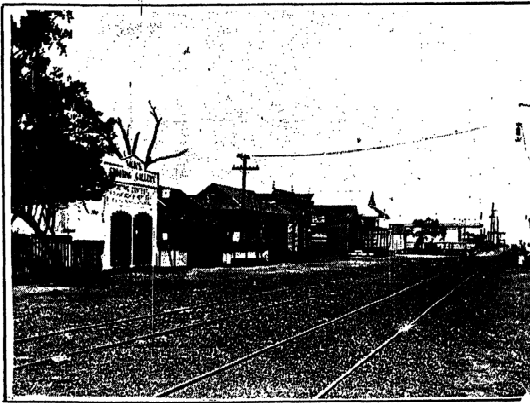
THE LIGHT HOUSE

PHOTO'S BY H.H AHRENS

Figure 8.(The Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)

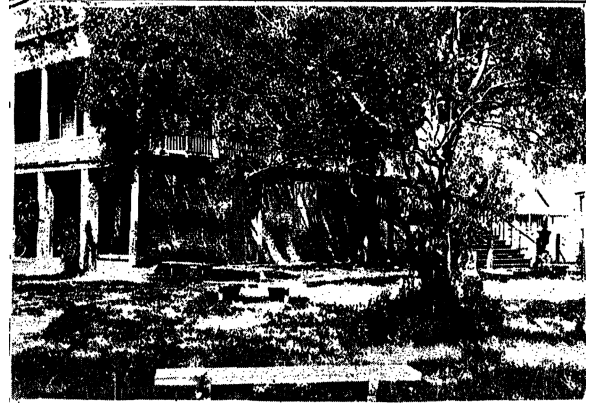


Appendix C – Photographs of Milneburg published in the Daily Picayune in 1909.



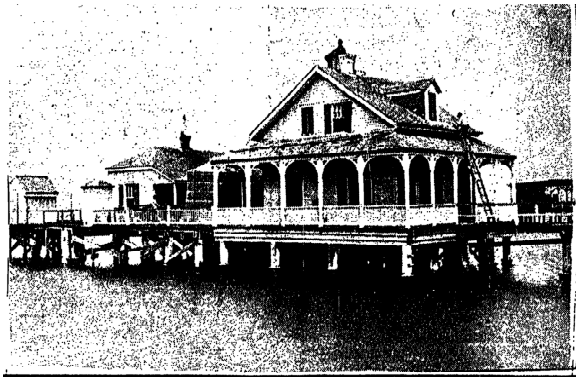
GENERAL VIEW OF MILNEBURG

Figure 9. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)



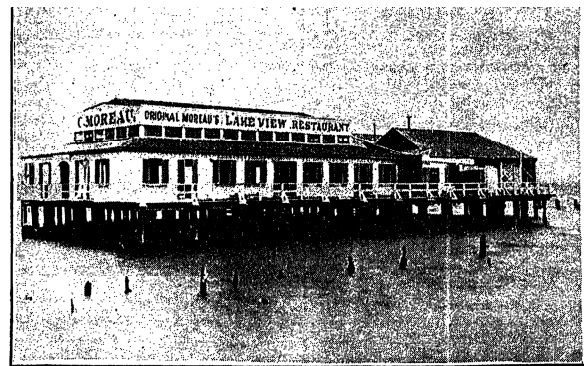
THE OLD WASHINGTON HOTEL

Figure 10. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)



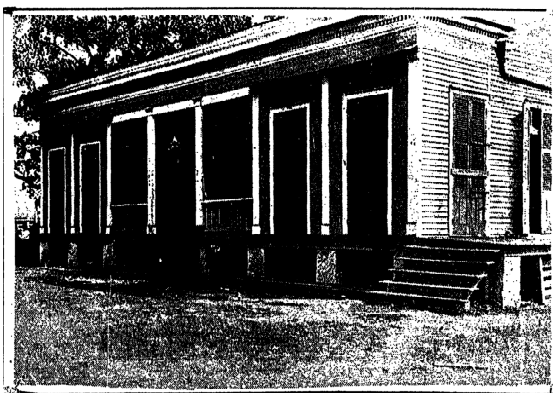
THE LIGHT-HOUSE KEEPERS HOUSE

Figure 11. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)



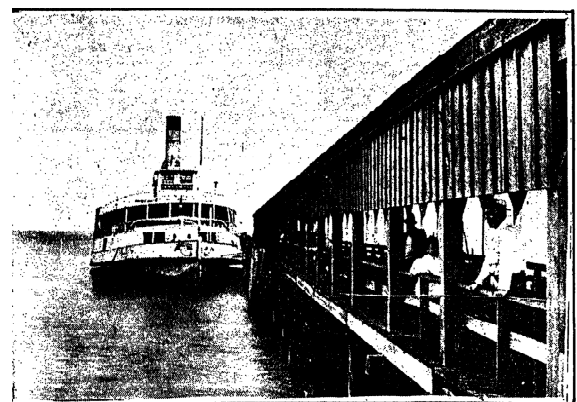
RESTAURANT OVER THE WATER

Figure 12. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)



WHERE WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY DINED

Figure 13. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)

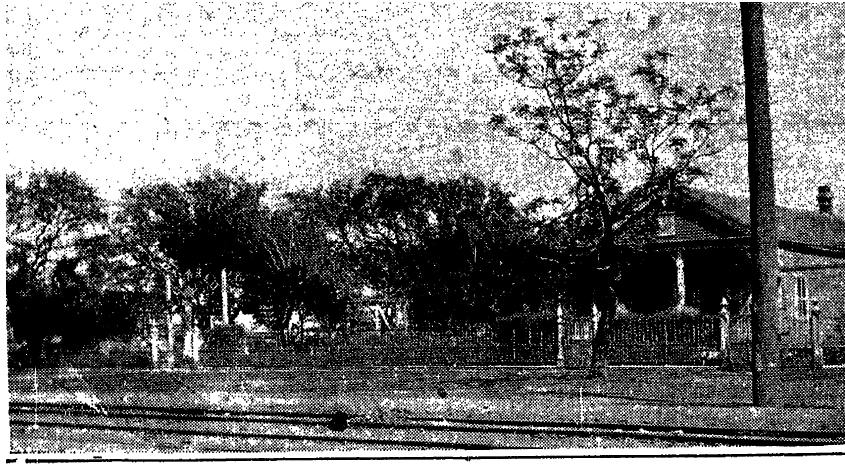


NEW CAMELIA

Figure 14. (Daily Picayune 2/7/1909: 54)

Appendix D – 1911 and 1922 Photographs of Milneburg

Boudro Garden 1911



GENERAL VIEW OF HISTORIC BOUDRO GARDEN.

Figure 15. (Times-Picayune 03-26-1911: 36)

Milneburg Wharf 1922

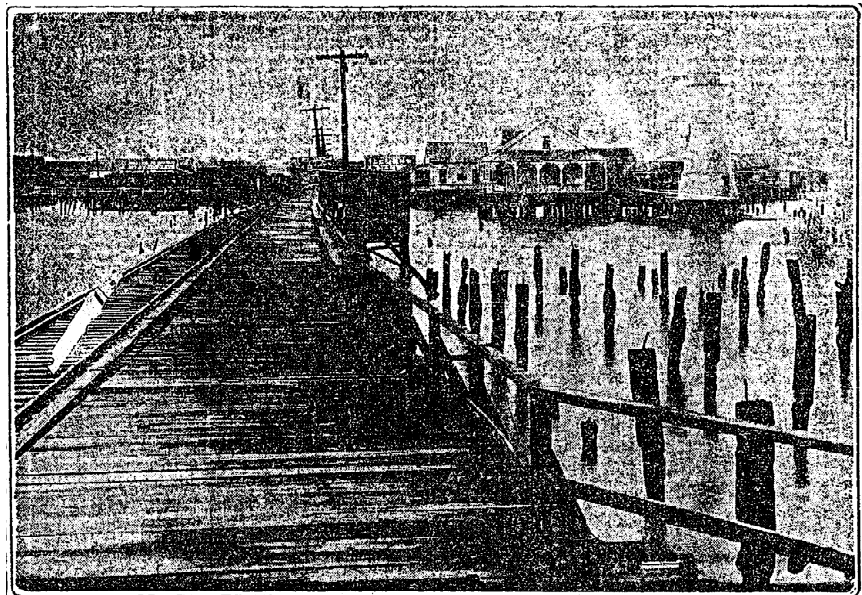


Figure 16. (The Times-Picayune 12/31/1922: 53)

## Appendix E

Boardwalk at Milneburg in July, 1931.



Figure 17.  
Joseph Bauer Collection (MSS 165), Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K.  
Long Library, University of New Orleans

Appendix F – 2011 Photos of Milneburg

Milneburg Neighborhood Association Signage 2011



Figure 18.

Milneburg Rebuilt Duplex 2011



Figure 19.

## Milneburg Blighted Property 2011



Figure 20.



## Appendix G – Permissions for Use

### Permission to use Special Collections photos in Master's Thesis

Sybil A Boudreaux [SBoudrea@uno.edu]

Actions

To:

Elizabeth Ann Smallwood

Cc:

Lisa Gandolfi Werling [lwerling@uno.edu]; James F Lien [jlien@uno.edu]

Tuesday, August 30, 2011 12:19 PM

Dear Ms. Smallwood,

I am pleased to give you one-time, non-exclusive permission for the reproduction of the two photographs from the Joseph Bauer Collection (MSS 165) in your Master's Thesis. This collection is located in the Louisiana and Special Collections Department at the University of New Orleans and digital images also appear in the Louisiana Digital Library, Joseph Bauer Collection, p. 45.

Please cite these photographs as follows:

Joseph Bauer Collection (MSS 165), Louisiana and Special Collections Department, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans

Please let me know if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Sybil A. Boudreaux

Chair

Louisiana and Special Collections Department

Earl K. Long Library

University of New Orleans

Permission to use Gentilly Civic Improvement Association / Gentilly TV map  
in Master's Thesis

david welch [wink511.david@gmail.com]

Wednesday, August 03, 2011 7:16 AM

Yes. Wouldn't mind a copy if possible. Any references to Gentily, GCIA, [gentilly.tv](http://gentilly.tv) are great.  
Good Luck, Again if you need any alterations...

David Welch

to: david welch [wink511.david@gmail.com]

Sent Items

Tuesday, August 02, 2011 9:01 AM

May I use the maps in my master's thesis?

Betty

From: david welch [wink511.david@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, August 02, 2011 7:44 AM

To: Tina Marquardt

Cc: Elizabeth Ann Smallwood

Subject: Re:

This map and maps of all Gentilly Neighborhoods are free to download from Gentilly.tv. As soon as I get my computer fixed I hope to make some updates and you can help me with any corrections.

## **Vita**

A native of New Orleans, Louisiana and a survivor of Hurricane Katrina, the author relocated to Nashville, Tennessee in June 2006. In 2007, she began 27 months of service in the United States Peace Corps in Armenia as an Environmental Education and Business Development volunteer. While in the Peace Corps, the author's successful grants earned over \$30,000.00 in funding for her projects in Armenia. She returned to New Orleans in 2009 and moved into the Milneburg neighborhood in order to attend graduate school at the University of New Orleans in the Urban Studies Department to pursue a Masters in Urban Anthropology. The author earned a BA in Anthropology from the University of New Orleans and has previously studied Anthropology at the graduate level at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. She also has over 10 years of experience as a technical writer and researcher in various fields.