

THE WHITE HOUSE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Classroom: Grades 9-12

President as Visionary: "Others Ask Why Not?"

Activity - Etouffee, eh? Multicultural Influences in New Orleans

During the time of the French and Indian War, France controlled the city of New Orleans. When the French lost the war, they ceded New Orleans and their claims west of the Mississippi to Spain. During that same war some French inhabitants of Nova Scotia were uprooted, and eventually made their way to New Orleans. Some of these "Acadians," as they were called, were the ancestors of the present-day Cajuns. Of course, in 1803, the United States acquired New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory and has controlled it ever since. To demonstrate that the cultural influences of the Spanish, French, and Acadian, [Cajun] population still abound in that region, get a cookbook that features New Orleans cuisine. Prepare a brief oral report to share with your classmates on what characterizes the cooking of that region. Team up with a couple of other classmates to prepare at least one authentic recipe reflecting each of those three cultures. Bring samples for each student to taste. (Don't forget to include the necessary paper and plastic products for serving.)

An alternative

Prepare a report about the celebration of Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Be sure you include information about the origin of this celebration and the ways it reflects French culture. If possible, talk with someone who has attended Mardi Gras. Ask him or her to fill you in on some of the colorful details, and share them with the class as well.

Another alternative

Study the origins of the jazz and blues music that characterizes the clubs of the French Quarter in New Orleans. What are the cultural roots of this music? Prepare a report to share with your class, and include recorded or "live" excerpts from typical jazz and blues musical pieces.