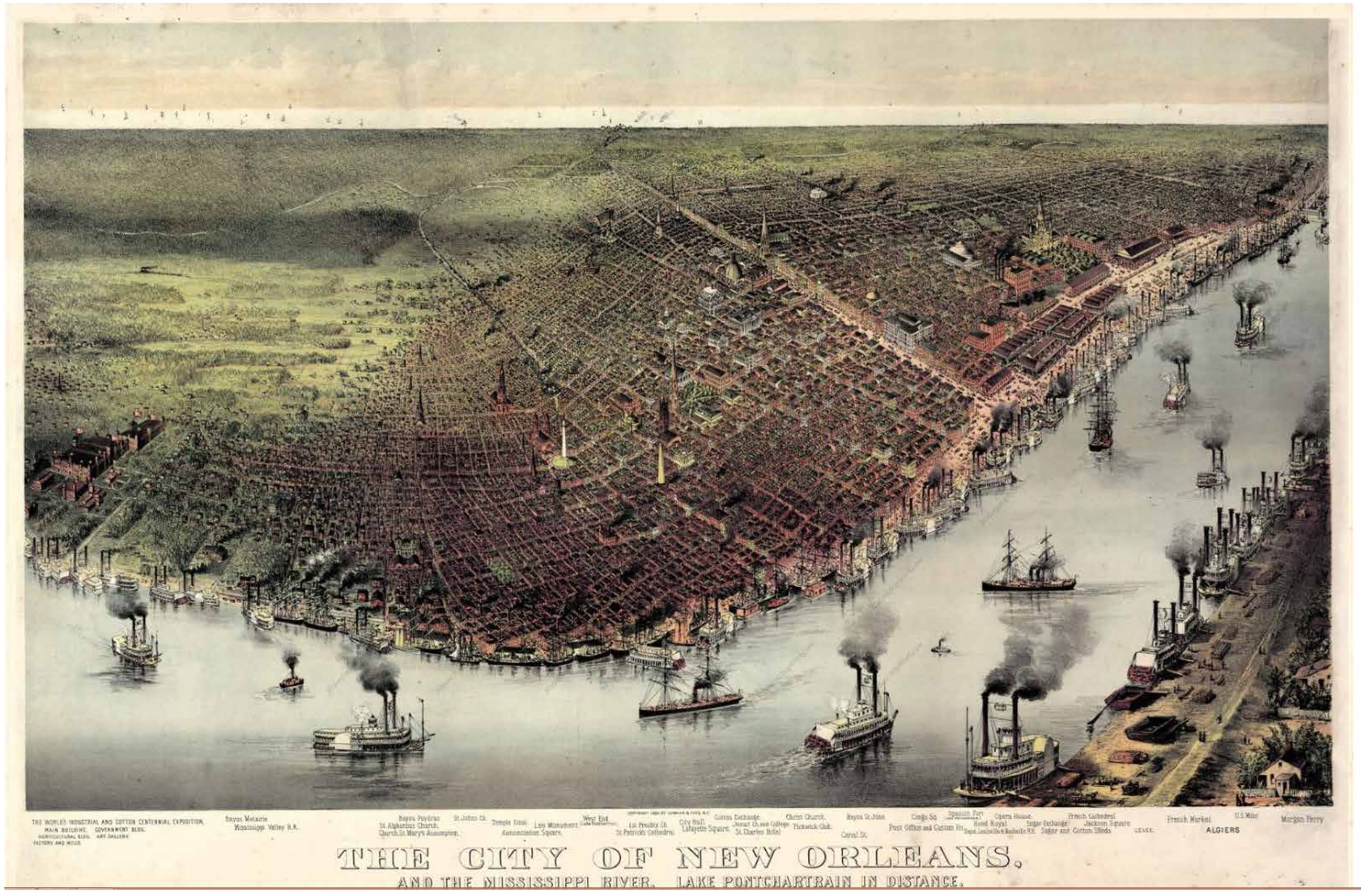
Isolating the Lower 9th Ward:

20th century developments in New Orleans

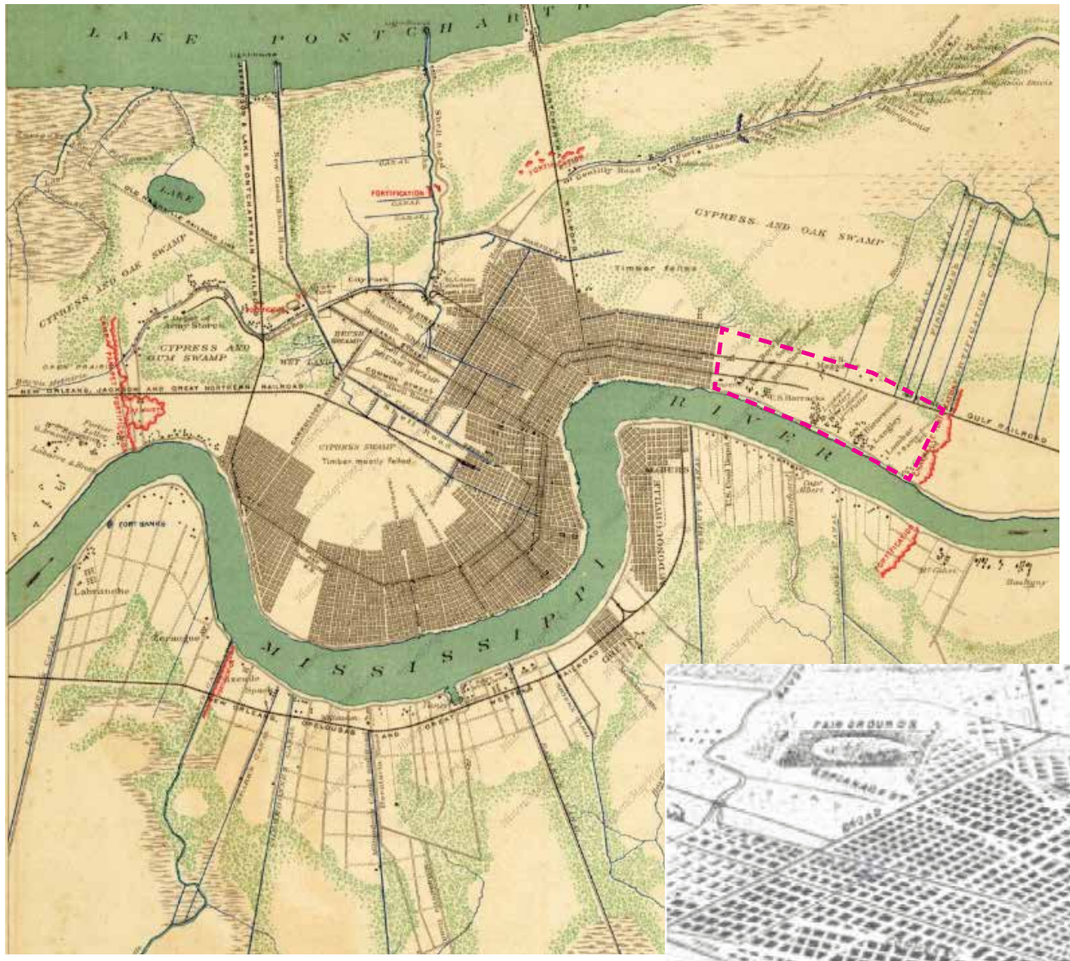
Critical Conservation
Diane Choih
Oct. 7, 2013

New Orleans - a booming port city by the end of the 19th century

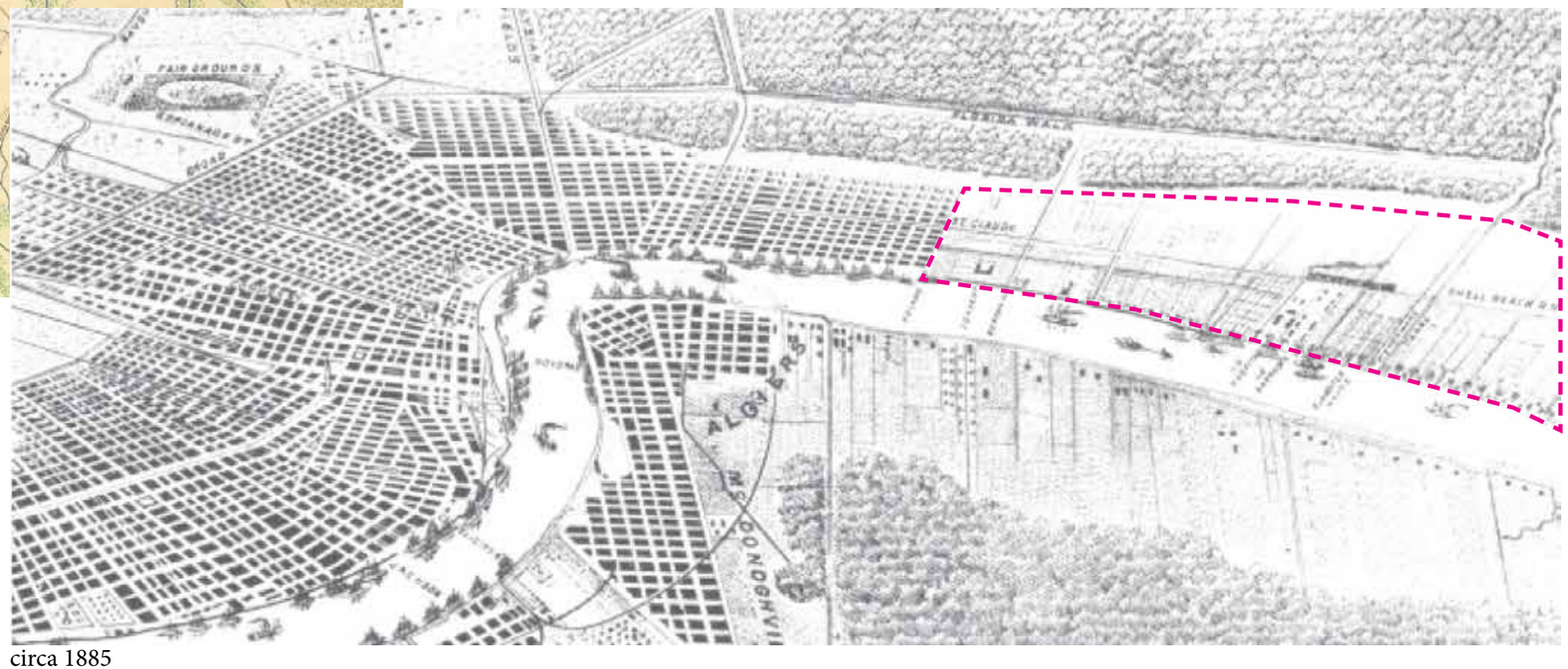


New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

The area that would becom the Lower 9th Ward was still rural at the turn of the century



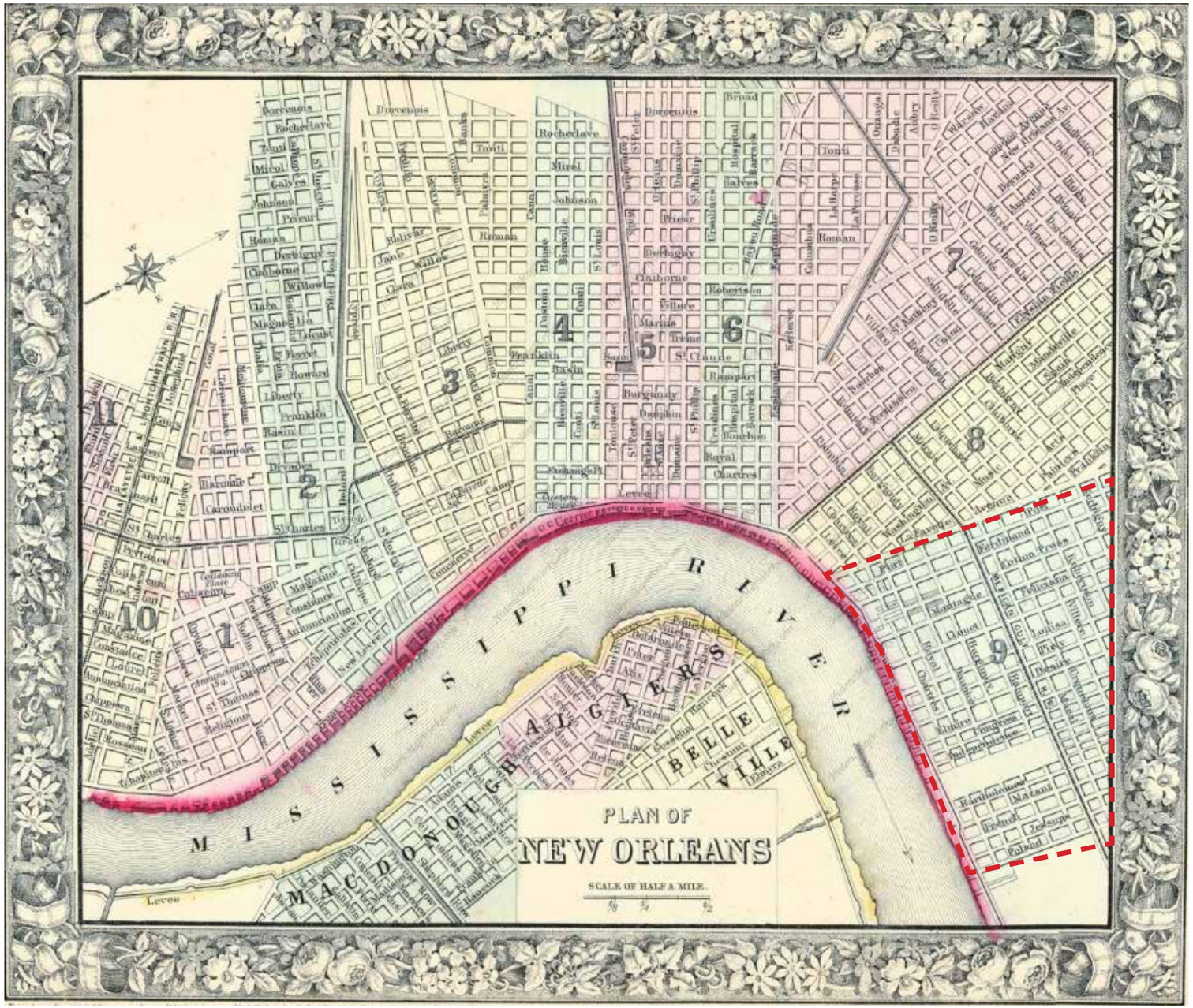
circa 1863



circa 1885

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

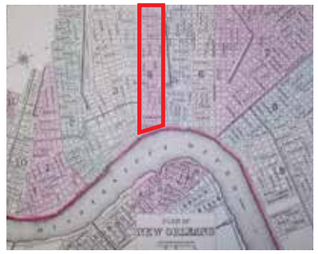
New Orleans was split into the wards we know today by 1852.



The outskirts of the city down river became one mega-ward - the 9th.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

4th Ward: The wealthy Anglo population lived up stream and on higher land, near the river's natural



1. Mostly a white population

2. Many people were foreign born, from France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and many others.

3. Occupations were mostly skilled workers (carpenters, tailors, iron workers) and people in the service industry (restaurant owners, saloon keeper, bartender). Few were working in manual labor.

4. The majority were literate.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

9th Ward: Immigrants and some African Americans found cheaper housing down river, where there were poorer living conditions.

1.

2.

3.

4.

1. A mix of white and black population.

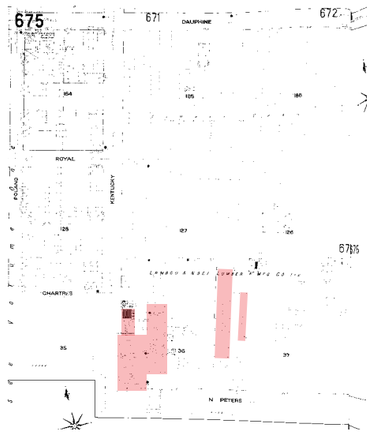
2. Many people were foreign born, from France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and many others.

3. Occupations were mostly manual labor or serving positions. However, there is also the presence of skilled workers (carpenters) clerks, and teachres.

4. Some were illiterate.

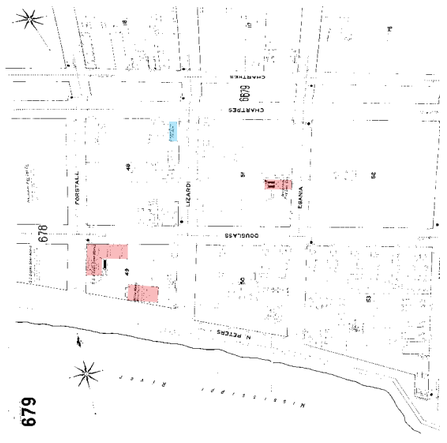
New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

Many of the city's nuisance facilities would be sent to this ward.

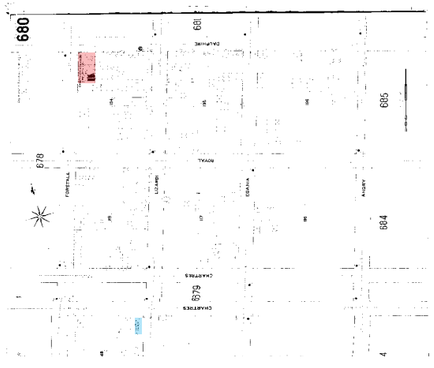


1. lumber mill

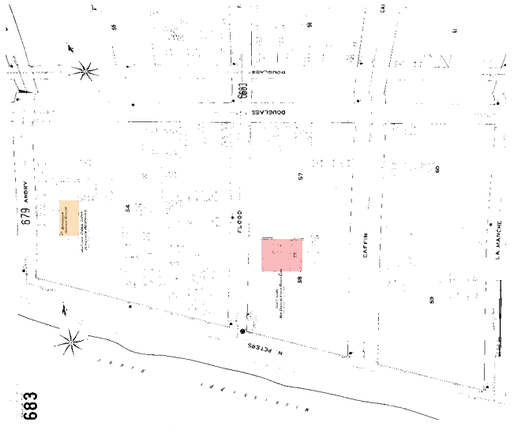
Sanborn Atlas, 1909



2. small factories



2. manufacturing

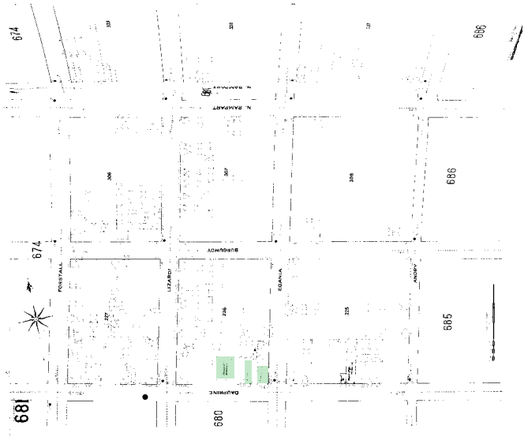


2. industrial facilities

2. slaughter house

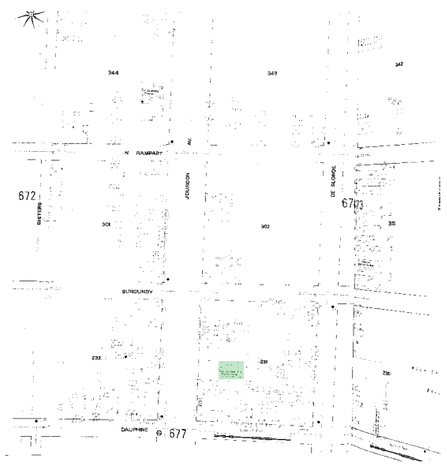
New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

But churches and shops showed signs of a tresidential community.



Sanborn Atlas, 1909

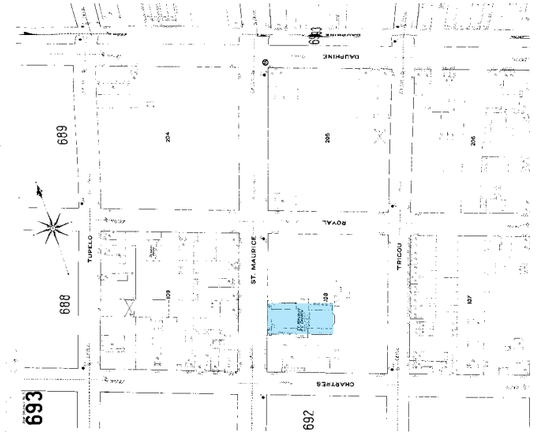
1. Market, barber, bakery



2. Social club

3. Church

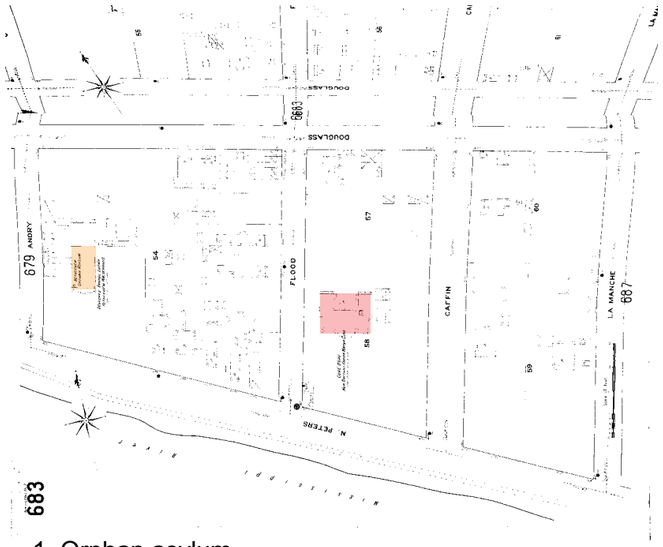
4. Church



5. St. Maurice Catholic Church

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

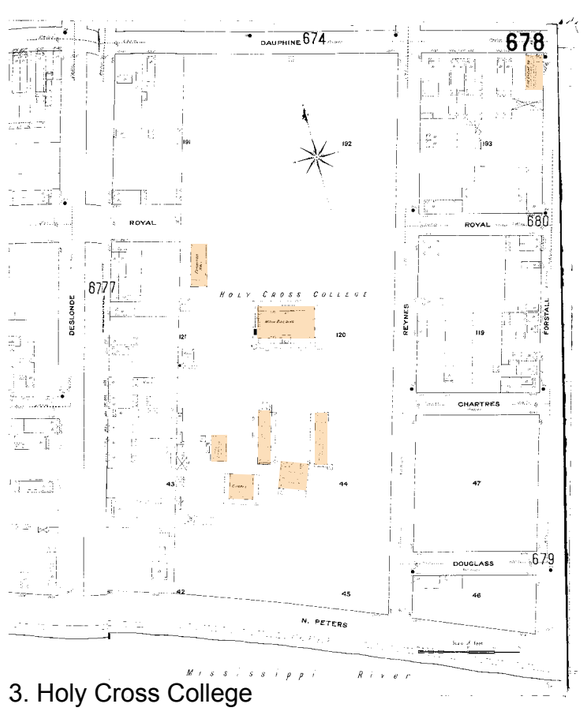
The neighborhood had strong presence of charity and educational facilities as well.



1. Orphan asylum

Sanborn Atlas, 1909

2. Ursuline convent



3. Holy Cross College

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

In the early 20th century, New Orleans faced a lot of competition from other parts of the country because of the railway.

circa 1913

New Orleans Now Looking To Great Revival in Trade

Commerce and Industry Take On Fresh Lease of Life as New Industrial Canal Nears Completion—Will Be Second Only to New York as Port, Say Business Men—Mississippi Valley Products Soon to Pour In.

By RICHARD SPILLANE.

New Orleans, Oct. 23.—The Crescent City has its hat in the ring. It is after business—big business—and is going after it in impressive form. Once the Louisiana metropolis was known as pleasure-loving, gay, insouciant. The visitor was regaled at the famous Gin Fizz, had breakfast at Mme. Begue's, looked in at the French market and the Absinthe house, was introduced at the Boston and Pickwick, went to the French opera, or saw the Mardi Gras, and when he departed had pleasant memories of New Orleans—but didn't think it was up to snuff in a business way.

Now it's different. The Gin Fizz and the Absinthe House have closed. Mme. Begue has passed on. The opera house has burned down, and the Mardi Gras isn't what it used to be.

And with the change the man of New Orleans has changed. He talks now of the industrial canal. He talks now of New Orleans as second only to New York as a port. He tells of the great number of industrial enterprises New Orleans has today, and the greater number she will have tomorrow. He talks of the redivivus river traffic and the flow of commerce to the gulf; of the 85 steamship lines operating out of New Orleans; of the amount of oil New Orleans handles; of the labor-saving machinery introduced on the river front; of the skyscrapers New Orleans possesses today—skyscrapers built on Mississippi river silt that wasn't supposed to warrant any structure of more than six or eight stories; of a commerce on the mighty river such as it never had before.

Unusual Amount of Construction.

Leading men of New Orleans say this city didn't feel the depression so much as other cities. There's nothing peculiar in that. Nearly every city markets we must curtail costs to the limit. If we are to do justice to ourselves we must avail ourselves of our waterways in our middle West.

Must Undo Wrong, They Say.

"We must undo some of the wrong done by the railroads. The maintenance of a channel in the Mississippi would cost far less each year than to maintain a single-track railroad along its shores. The carrying capacity of the river is illimitable; the carrying capacity of a railroad is limited.

"Commerce seeks the course of least resistance. The full use of the river is imperative for our national well-being. The natural economy of using the water route is going to give to New Orleans a large increase in foreign and domestic commerce. The industrial canal furnishes a short route to the sea. It gives opportunity to us to expand our industries, and at the same time give facilities to all kinds of industries not obtain otherwi

"We started thi appreciation of its benefits to New and world comm going to carry it now it is going t cess than we belie

"The Mississipp great highway of greater highway And it is about tin have permitted it It was an economi

Business Bette

As to business say it is much bet for from the cond six months ago. S debts are being feared it would t up. Liquidation, however, did not start so fully as expected. With the freer lending policy that now is possible local business will be stimu-

Must Undo Wrong, They Say.

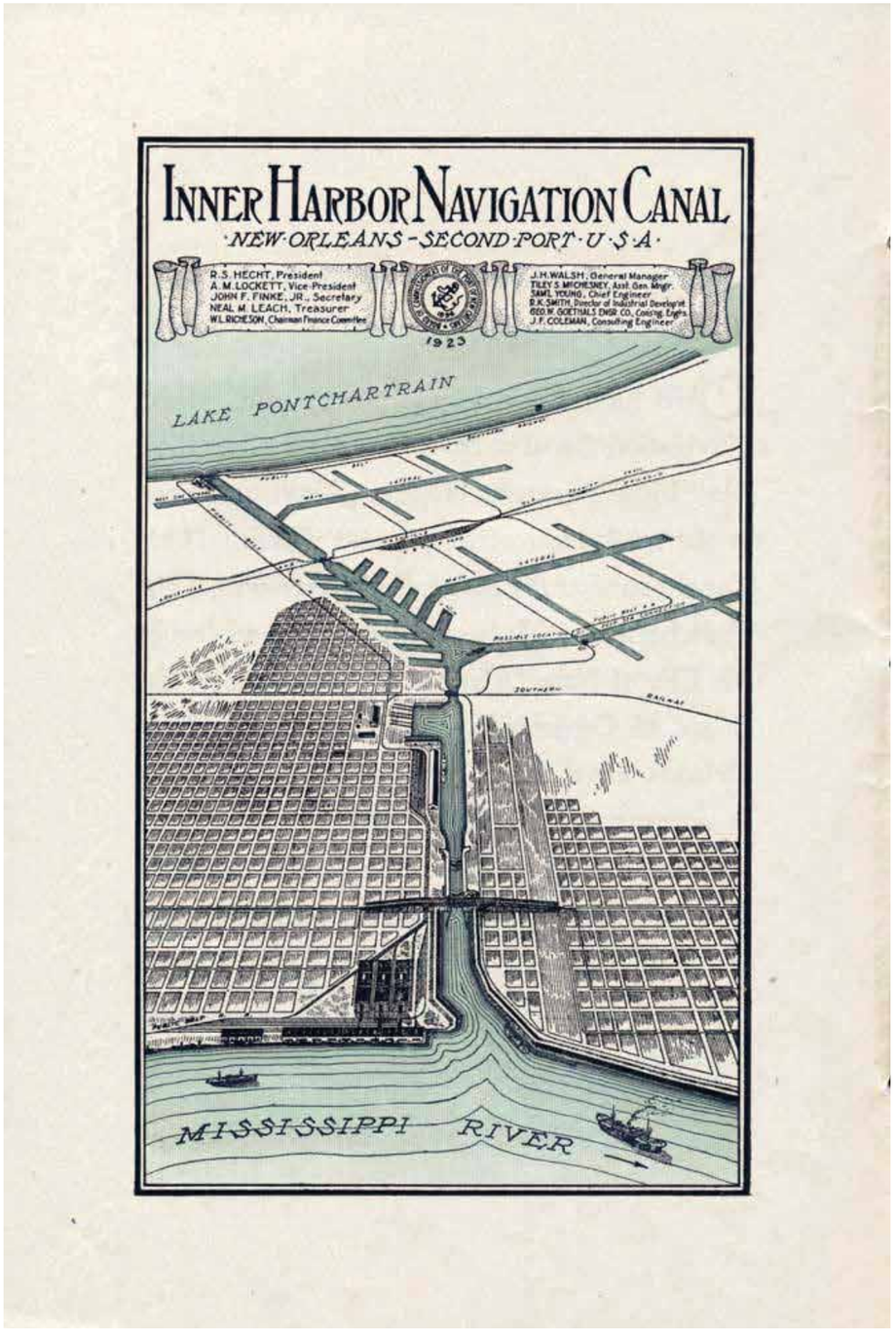
"We must undo some of the wrong done by the railroads. The maintenance of a channel in the Mississippi would cost far less each year than to maintain a single-track railroad along its shores. The carrying capacity of the river is illimitable; the carrying capacity of a railroad is limited.

The Washington Post, 10/24/1921

The construction of the Panama Canal spurred the city to revive shipping activities at its port.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

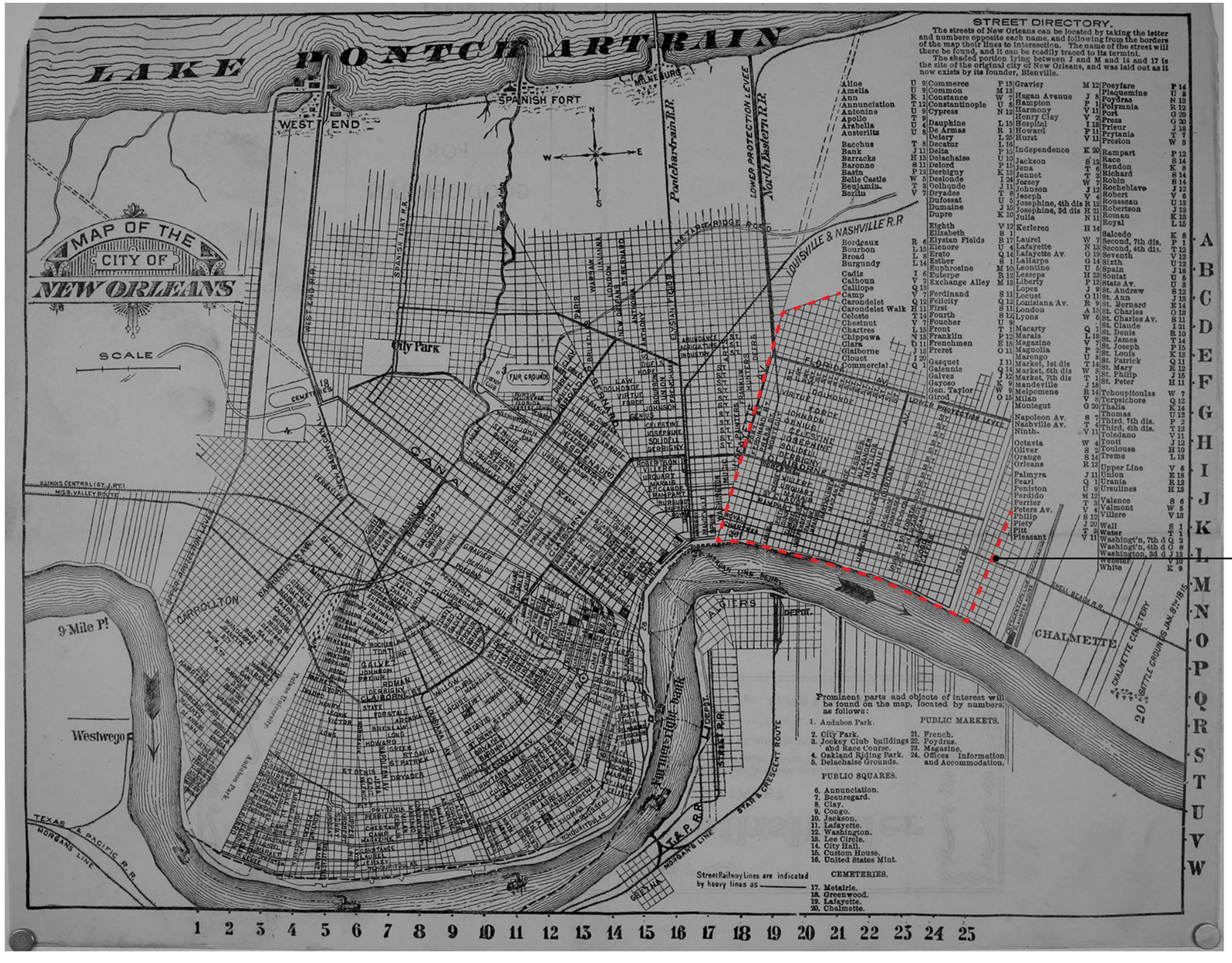
To increase space for support facilities, the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal was to be excavated.



It would also provide quick access to Lake Pontchartrain from the Mississippi River.

Dredging began in 1918.

The industrial canal was to cut through the 9th Ward, where the distance between lake and river was minimal, but severing it from the rest of the city.



New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

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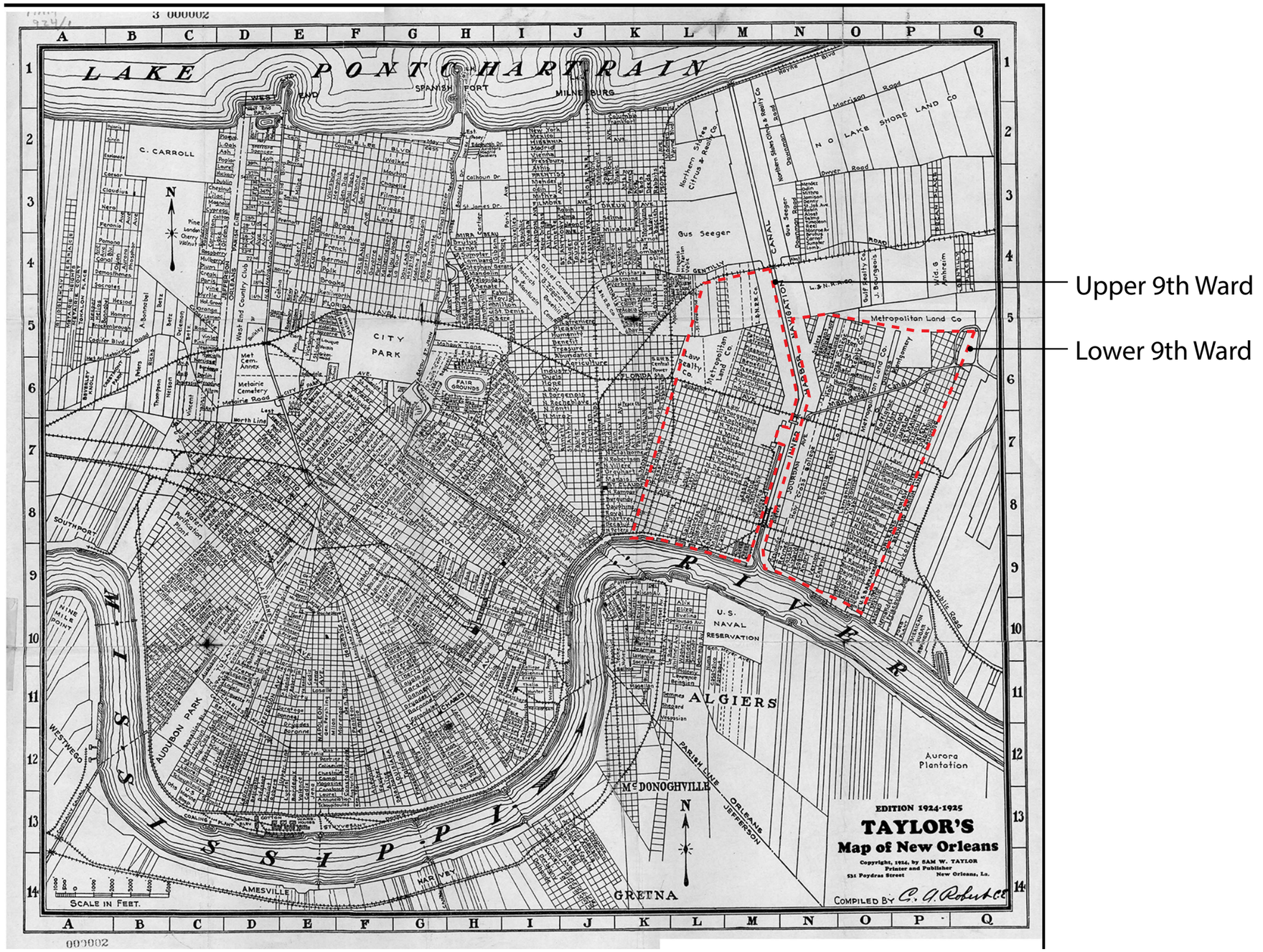
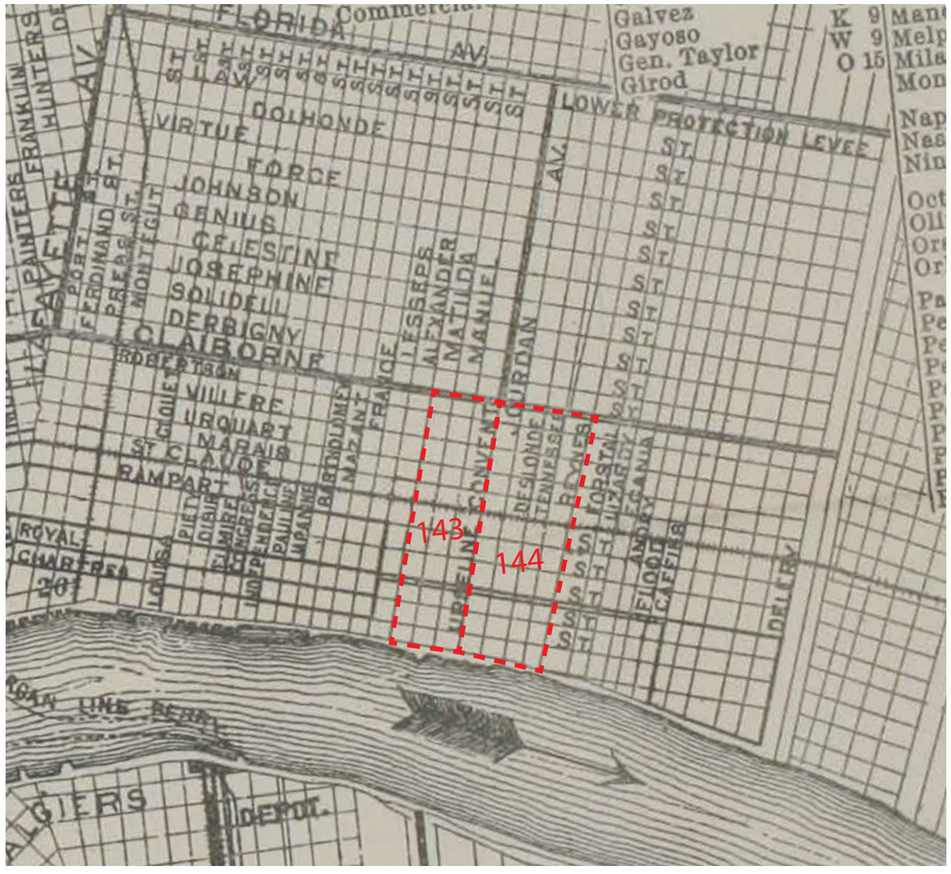
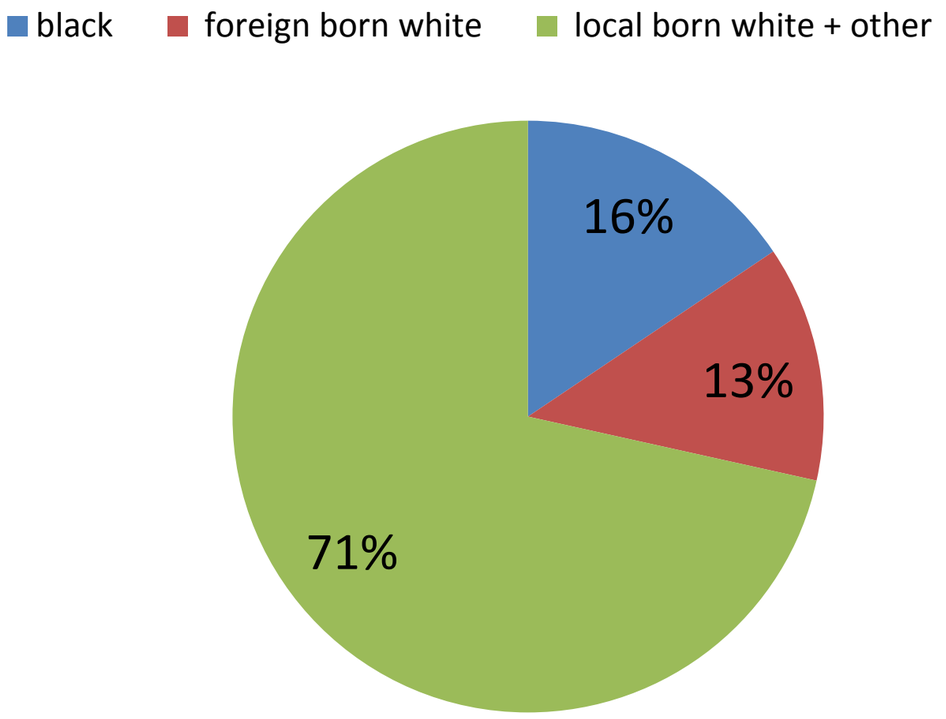


New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

Many of the residents of the area that was to be drastically altered were working class black and immigrant families, who probably did not have much power even if they opposed the project.



Total population of 143 and 144 districts: 1,478



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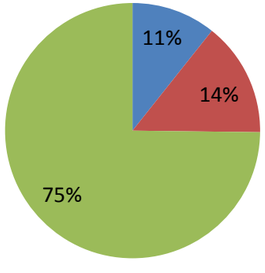
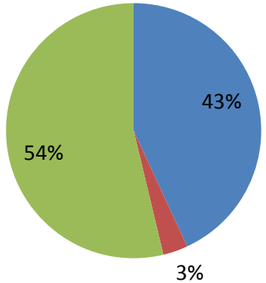
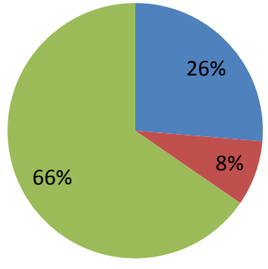


USA



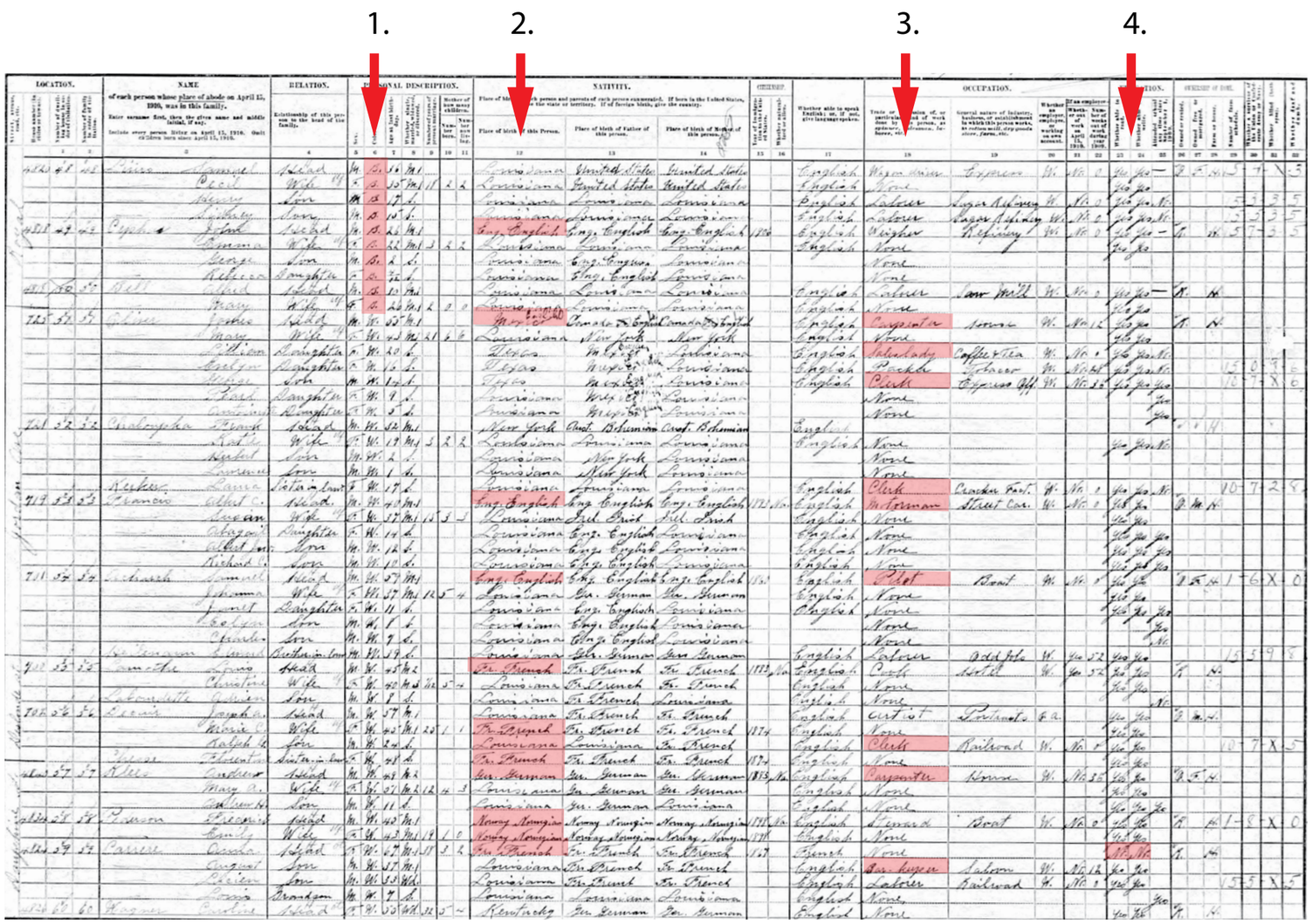
Louisiana



New Orleans

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

1910 US Census, 9th ward, district 144



1. Mix of black and white population

2. Mix of local and foreign born

3. There were many manual laborers, but also a strong presence of skilled labor (carpenter, pilot, mechanic).

4. There are a few people who are illiterate, but most can read and write.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

Local newspaper presented the industrial canal project only in positive light, including city residents' attitudes:

Letters to the Editor

Letters for this department must not exceed 300 words in length. The writer's name and address must be inclosed for the editor's information. Anonymous communications will not be considered. The Times-Picayune will publish all communications submitted in conformity with these rules that it deems available, but is not responsible for the views therein expressed. Unavailable letters will be returned, if stamps are inclosed for that purpose, not otherwise.

The Dryades Line.

New Orleans, March 19, 1918.

To the Editor of The Times-Picayune:

Allow me to make a suggestion regarding the rerouting of cars.

What is the matter with extending the Dryades line to Louisiana avenue thence out this avenue to Franklin and up that street to Louisiana avenue and in to Dryades to make connection with the present line?

This line will greatly reduce the congestion on the Henry Clay line, which is the only line convenient to the people living back of Baronne street between Louisiana and Napoleon avenues. This line will be a great convenience to what with proper street car service would become the most desirable residence section in New Orleans.

Please note that this does not reduce the service to any section but adds a very necessary service.

ONE OF THE WOULD-BE BENEFICIARIES.

The Industrial Canal.

New Orleans, March 19, 1918.

To the Editor of The Times-Picayune:

Will you kindly permit a layman to voice his opinion in reference to the use of industrial canal through Bayou Bienvenu to the lake.

From a sanitary standpoint the drainage of the entire city has only been diverted in the past week through this outfall canal and can be diverted back to the old system of drainage through London avenue, Orleans avenue, and Seventeenth street canals. This drainage water, emptied into Lake Pontchartrain from three different sources, does not cause any discomfort or objection to the people of West End, Spanish Fort and Milneburg, does not even kill the crabs. And it is a well known fact by the Board of Health and the Sewerage and Water Board that the drainage from the Third District is so free from impure matter that it has not up to a month ago affected the waters of outcall canal which has an in and outward tide to Lake Borgne.

So of this is the only obstacle in the way of construction of industrial canal and shipyard sites it can be removed at once. We want the ship yards and industrial canal completed as soon as possible. One hour is worth more now

Times-Picayune, 03/22/1918

WHAT NEW ORLEANS PORT FACILITIES MEAN TO THIS CITY AND ALL SOUTHERN STATES

(BY WALTER PARKER.)

"How will my business benefit from the industrial navigation canal, which you talk about so much?" writes a New Orleans retail merchant to the Association of Commerce.

"How soon will industrial sites on the proposed navigation canal be available?" writes a man who contemplates establishing a new factory in New Orleans.

"How soon will industrial sites on which to concentrate the output of my Ohio Valley mill which I desire to move down the river on barges, and distribute from New Orleans? If not, when will sites on your proposed industrial canal be ready?" asks a leading manufacturer of Wheeling, West Virginia.

These are merely typical letters, symptomatic of the inquiries made daily of the Association of Commerce.

A new trade economy has dawned in the Mississippi valley, and the business men from Pittsburg on the east, to Omaha on the west, and from Minneapolis to the Gulf are now looking to New Orleans for the facilities necessary to open up channels of trade which they need, and which, during the past fifty years, have been clogged to a more or less extent.

Everybody knows that certain classes of freight can be moved cheaper by water than by rail, but lack of terminal facilities for boats on the Mississippi facilities for boats temporarily robbed the river of its inherent economies, and during two generations past Mississippi valley commerce has been moved to and from the seaboard by rail, in many cases under differentials which gave New Orleans, the natural port of least resistance, no distinctive advantage over other ports.

Business economy, and the opening of the Panama Canal, have now made it necessary for the valley to use its rivers as an adjunct to its railroads in order to realize on its opportunities, and terminal facilities are being created so that modern boats can compete for the traffic.

New Orleans is being equipped as the port terminal of valley terminals.

New Orleans' industrial canal is a most essential link. It is a necessary facility, because:

First—Navigable water front industrial sites, closely served by the Public Belt Railroad, alone can develop distinct advantage over all other valley locations for large industrial enterprises.

Such enterprises cannot locate on the river front because the river front has been reserved for the development, by the public, of facilities that shall be open to all commodity handlers alike and without preference or favor.

Second—The commercial importance of New Orleans may be greatly increas-

a large way and with distinct advantage and profit whenever water front sites of the kind that the industrial canal will supply shall become available.

This will mean more factories, bigger business development in every direction, and enlarged payrolls—and more cash paying customers to patronize the retail stores.

A few days ago a Minnesot asked the Association of Com complete information about t house receipts that will be issu new Public Cotton Warehouse, a copy of the reply made:

"The warehouse will issue which will amply guarantee that exact bale called for in the receipt will be delivered on demand. Attached to this receipt there will be a certificate issued by the New Orleans Cotton Exchange showing the grade, character, condition and weight of the bale. May we ask why you are intetrested?"

To this the Minnesota banke

"From your letter I am sure Orleans cotton warehouse rec prove the highest form of c collateral, and will draw to Ne surplus funds from all parts of the country. In making inquiry I had this very thing in mind. We have surplus funds a part of each year. Heretofore we have been sending such money to New York where call loans are always saleable at one and one-half or two per cent. I should imagine cotton handlers would in normal times, be willing to per cent, even with the high collateral they will have to o the new warehouse gets in o

Here is a concrete example New Orleans' new port facil draw cheap money. Cheap m mean activity in business and industry. This activity will mean business for the retailer and for everybody else.

"How will my business benefit from the industrial navigation canal, which you talk about so much?" writes a New

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Times-Picayune, 07/25/1915

Drastically altering the 9th Ward not recognized as an issue:

> "This is a virtually uninhabited region in the Third District... There were a few houses helter-skeltered about...but the principal signs of human life were the cows that grazed..."
>
> -Thomas Dabney, 1921

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

Very few incidents of hardship expressed by the 9th ward residents were reported.

Residents of Ninth Ward Ask for Another School

Arnold C. Klein, of 931 Caffin avenue, and other citizens of the lower part of the Ninth Ward, have petitioned the Orleans School Board to establish a school in the central part of that section, to take the place of the Thomas J. Semmes School, which the petitioners say is in a dangerous location, due to the construction of the Industrial Canal. Here are some of the points they make:

"This school is practically on the banks of the canal and is surrounded by its various activities. On the St. Claude street side of the school is the approach to the bridge now under construction, and on the North Rampart street side are a steam railroad, a double-track street railway, and a boarded road, without sidewalks, to which pedestrians, cattle driving, and traffic of all kinds are confined on account of the canal construction which bars all other parallel streets. All of these conditions constitute a very grave peril to the lives of the scholars.

"The school facilities of this section are at present wholly inadequate, and the establishment of a proper school building somewhere near the center of the Ninth Ward below the Industrial Canal is badly needed."

Ninth War Drainage Petition Reaches Council

The petition of Ninth ward residents for a temporary drainage system to serve that ward until the permanent system, cut off during the construction of the industrial canal, can be restored, was submitted to the Commission Council Tuesday by Acting Mayor Ricks.

Commissioner of Public Safety Monrose introduced an ordinance to make it compulsory for operators of livery cars and autos to obtain metal plates bearing their permit number and to display them on the front of the radiators of the cars.

Commissioner Glenny favorably reported the ordinance the sale of $600,000 of Public Belt railroad bonds.

BUILDING THE LOCK

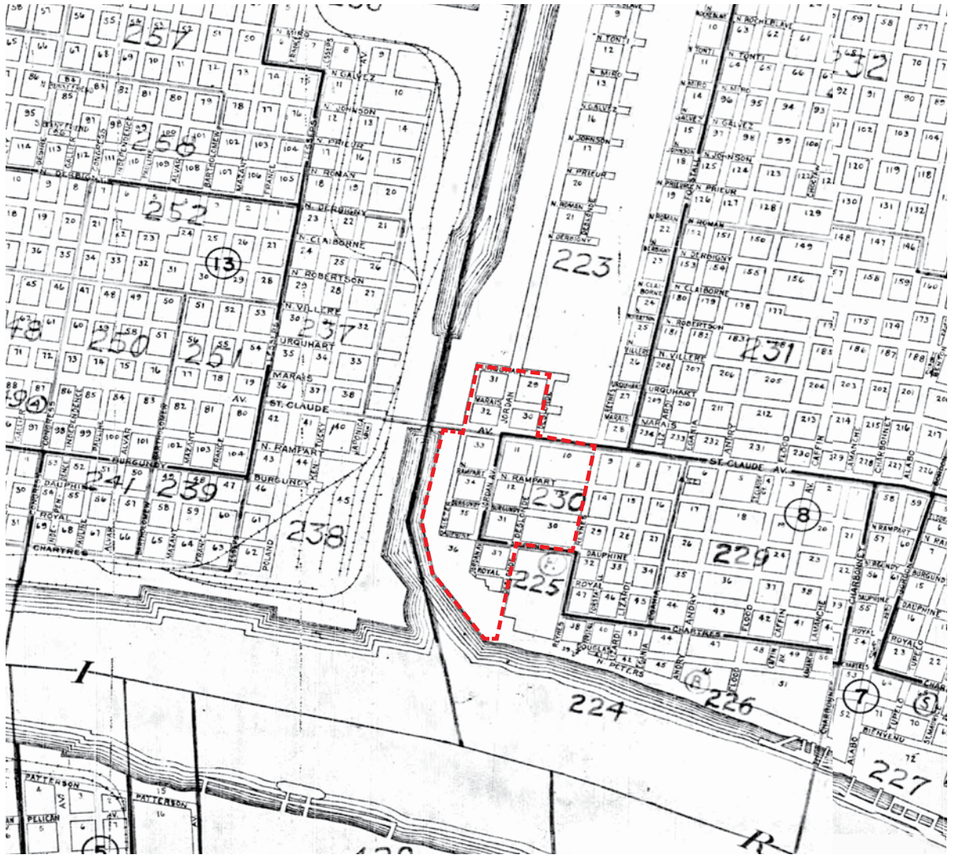
The city’s economy was indeed bolstered after the opening of the canal.

Opening ceremony, 1923.

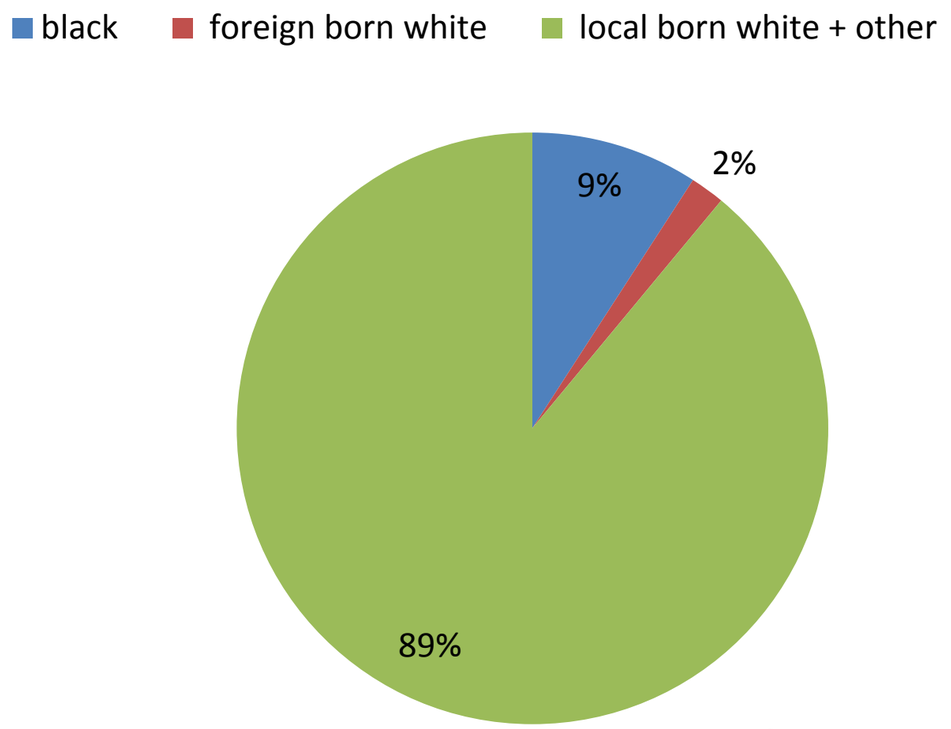
The Lower 9th Ward continued to grow, and many of its residents found jobs working on the docks.

Dock workers, circa 1941.

By 1940, development spread along the canal towards the back of the city (away from the Mississippi).
The white population stayed near the higher land, by the river (eg. ED 16-224)



Total population of selected area: 745



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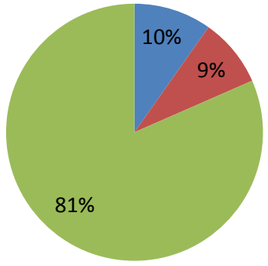
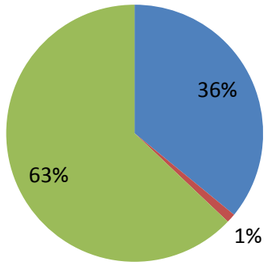
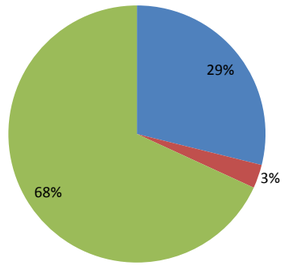


USA



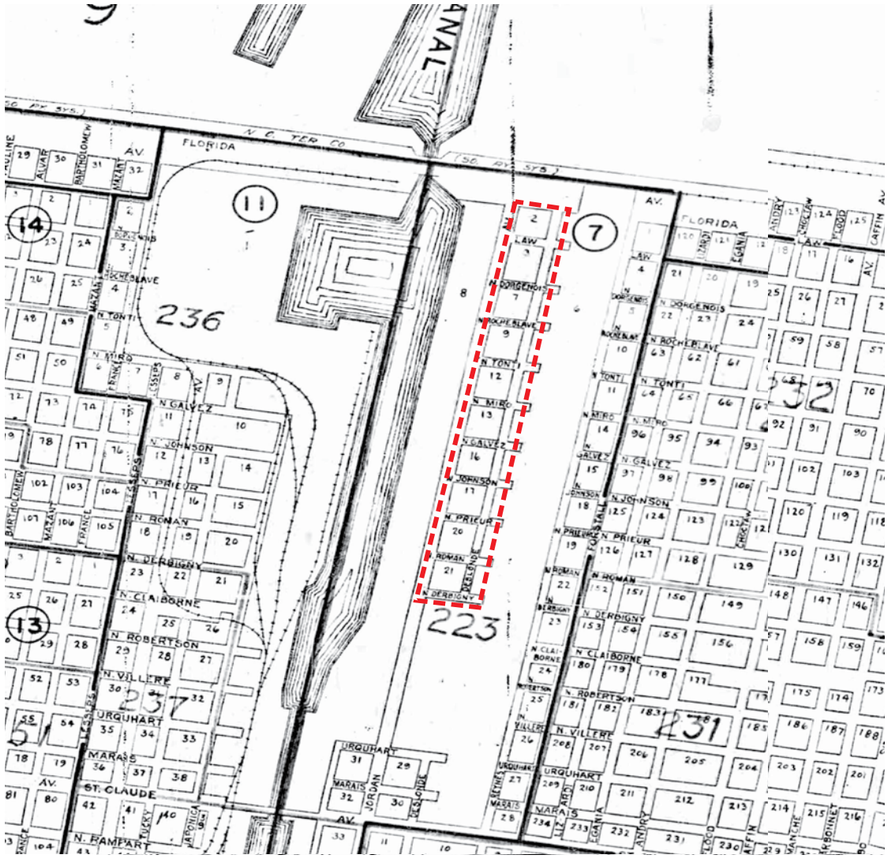
Louisiana



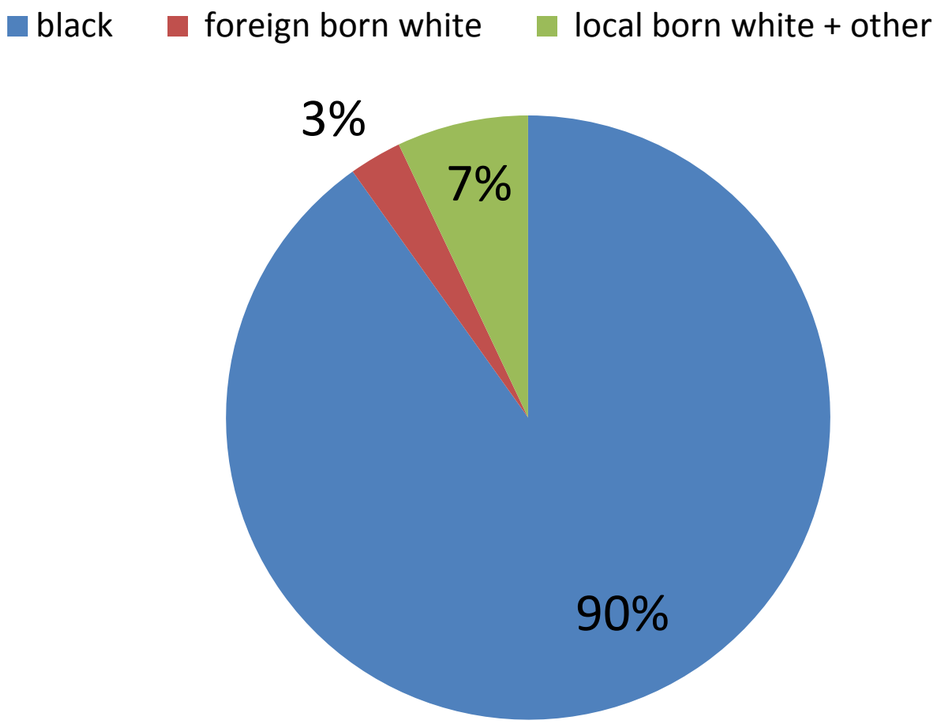
New Orleans

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

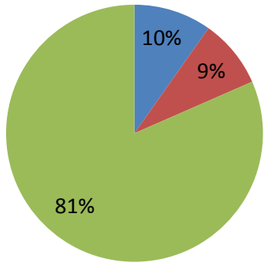
The black community started to concentrate in the areas further back (eg. ED 16-223).



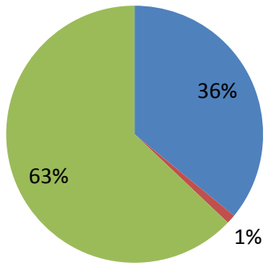
Total population of selected area: 71



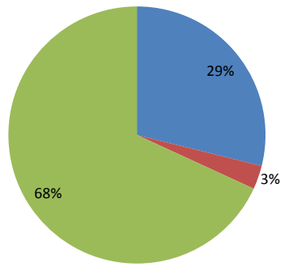
source: Social Explorer



USA



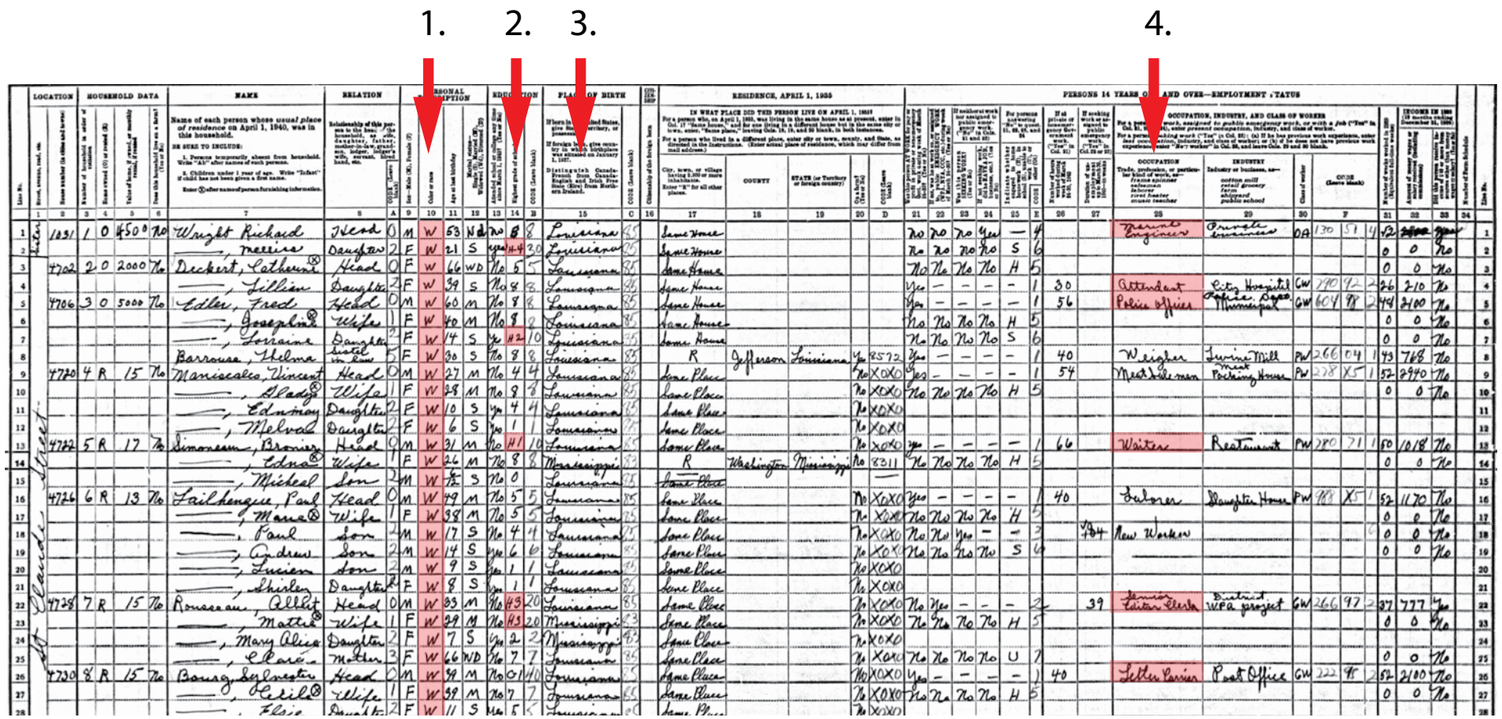
Louisiana



New Orleans

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

1910 US Census, ED 36-224 and 36-223



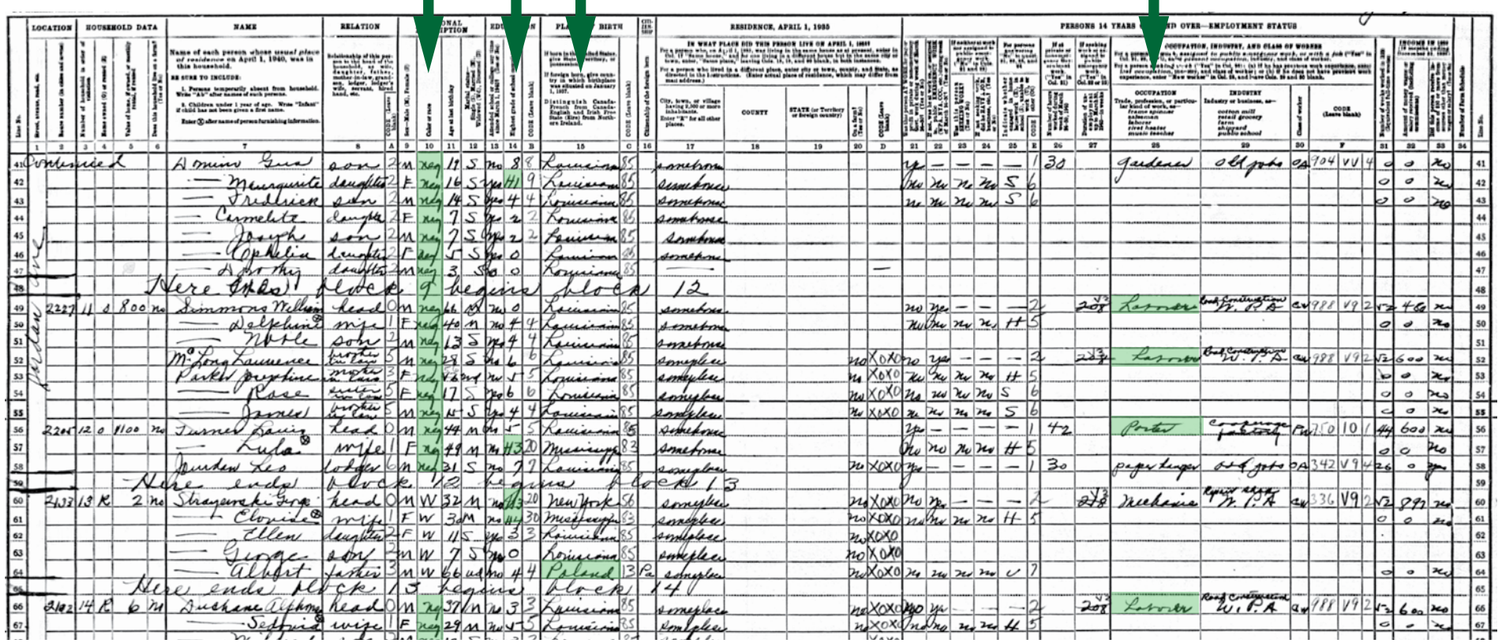
36-224, near river

1. The population near the river's edge is mostly white.

2. Some have attended at least one year of high school, though the majority have not.

3. Almost all people are local born; if they are not it is always a foreign born white.

4. Many of the occupations are skilled white collar jobs (marine engineer, senior editor clerk), positions of certain rank (police officer), or service (waiter/public servant).



36-224, away from river

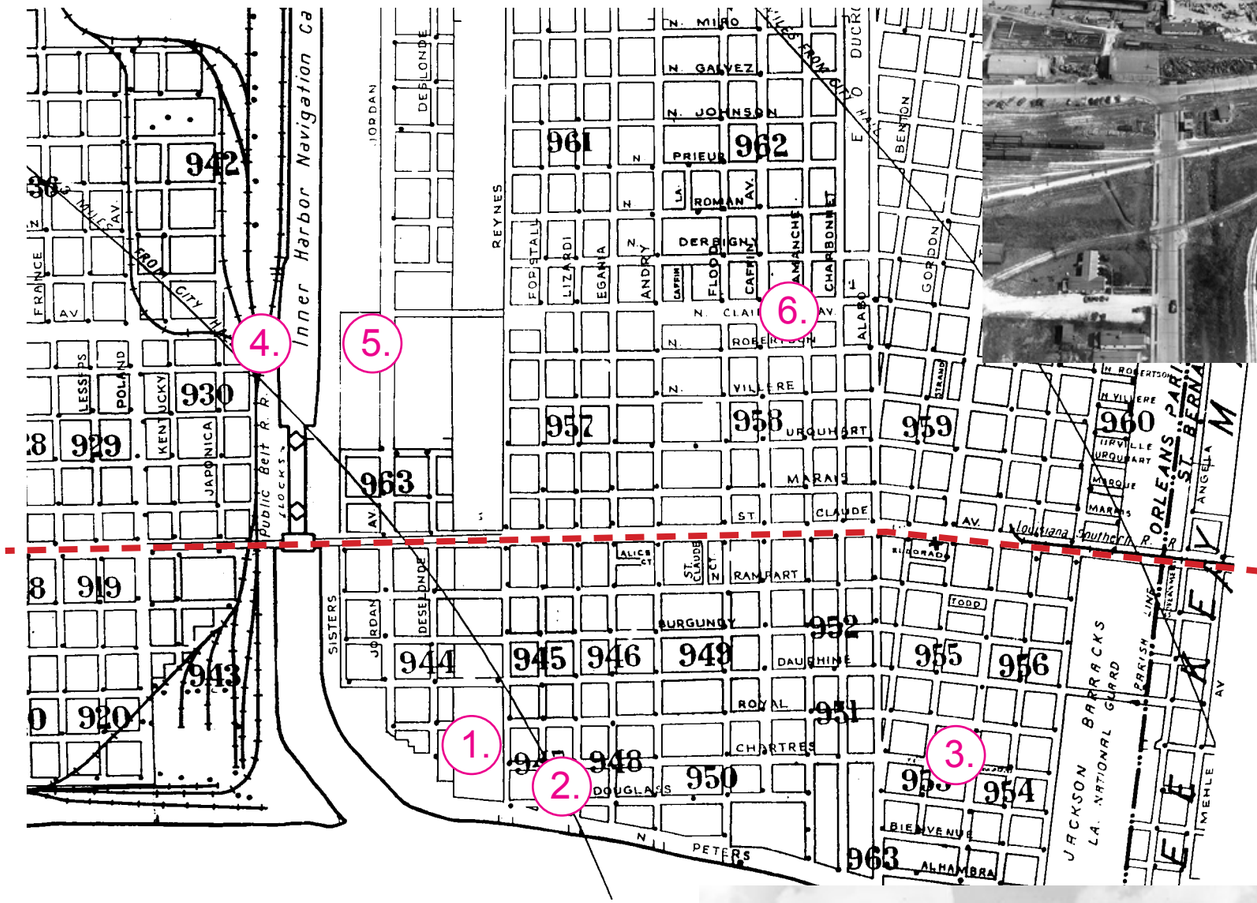
5 The population further away from the river (beyond St. Claude Ave.) are mostly black.

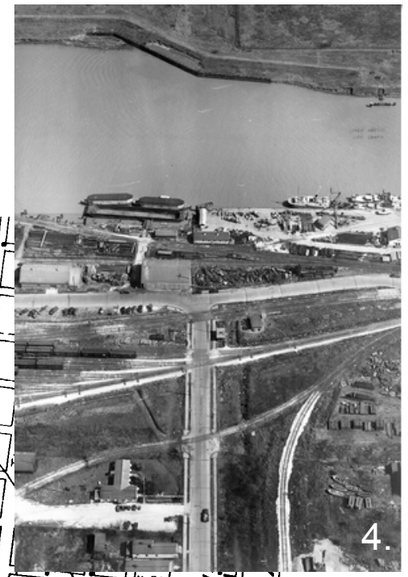
2. Some have attended at least one year of high school, and the ones that have are more often white.

3. Almost all black population is local born; very few whites are foreign born.

4. Many of the occupations are manual labor (laborer, porter).

The area beyond St. Claude Ave. begins urbanization ~80 years after the Holy Cross neigborhood.




4.

5.

6.

Development north of St. Claude Ave., between 1920-49

Historic buildings from below St. Claude Ave. (Holy Cross neighghborhood)

1.

2.

3.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

In the 1960's, the neighborhood sees difficult times, causing those who can to flee.

The Augusta Chronicle, 11/15/1960

Color bar cracked in Orleans schools

AF snags satellite capsule

Second catch over Pacific

VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. (AP) —An Air Force plane swooping over the Pacific Monday made history's second aerial catch of a capsule kicked from an orbiting satellite.

Staff-written New Orleans reports coming

Chronicle readers will get a first-hand, staff-written report on the New Orleans school crisis in the next day or two.

Carrol Dadisman, Chronicle editorial writer, will be in the Louisiana city tonight and tomorrow, following developments there and dispatching reports on the background and significance of what is taking place, particularly as it relates to the school showdown facing Georgia next fall.

Negroes escorted by federal men

Legislative order for holiday is ignored by city principals

NEW ORLEANS, La. (AP) — Four Negro girls broke the color barrier of the Deep South's largest city Monday, marching into two white schools escorted by U. S. marshals.

The two races have not been mixed in Louisiana elementary and secondary schools since reconstruction days after the Civil War.

Physical resistance to actual integration did not develop despite a gathering of 75 state policemen working for the state legislature.

* * *

City lines change out,

Norman Rockwell, "The Problem We All Live With", 1963. Oil on canvas, 36" x 58". Illustration for "Look," January 14, 1964. Norman Rockwell Museum Collections. ©NRELC, Niles, IL.

1960: First school in New Orleans that attempts to desegregate is in the 9th Ward, spurring riots.

New Orleans No City Of Joy After Betsy

By SID MOODY
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS, Sept. 10.—This city that care supposedly forgot was battered to a windblown, soggy junk yard after a final attack today by Hurricane Betsy.

Communications and power were snarled by 115 mile-an-hour winds in the early-morning hours.

Seven died during the storm, raising Betsy's toll to 13 in its 14-day, 2,500-mile voyage of destruction. Six deaths had occurred in Florida.

Heavy damage was also reported in Baton Rouge and on the Mississippi Gulf Coast around Gulfport. Numerous telephone failures slowed reports from the bayou area downriver which first was hit by the storm's top 145-mile-an-hour winds and suffered the most from its muddy, six-foot tides.

President Johnson flew to Louisiana tonight to inspect the hurrisane damage. Bill D. Moyers, press secretary, said the President would visit New Orleans and Baton Rouge and then return to Washington later tonight.

RESIDENTS were told to boil drinking water after power failure at the city purification plant. But the urgent warning was difficult to transmit in a city where 80 per cent of its power was out.

The communications breakdown also made it difficult to determine what damage had been done to Louisiana's billion-dollar offshore oil industry or the sugar crop, which was nearing harvest.

At least 350,000 phones were out in the state, 200,000 of them in New Orleans alone.

Twisted piers, sand and debris clogged the scenic U. S. 90 Gulf Route from Pascagoula, Miss., on the Alabama line, westward to New Orleans.

Biloxi, where liquor flows around the clock, was hardest hit. Damage to the Gulf playground towns will be counted in the millions of dollars.

Hurricane-Battered Stretch Declared Disaster Area

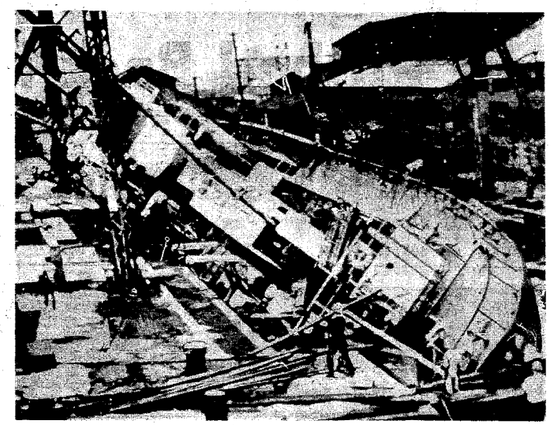
By I. J. VIDACOVICH
United Press International

NEW ORLEANS, Sept. 10.—Hurricane Betsy dwindled to a tropical storm and churned toward Arkansas with still-potent winds today, leaving a scarlike path of destruction through Louisiana from the coast up through New Orleans and the lush sugar-cane country.

The Seattle Daily Times, 09/10/1965

The Seattle Daily Times ★Second★ Front Page

PAGE A FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1965.



—A. P. wirephoto.
A WHALER, THE KYO MARU, CAPSIZED AT AN OSAKA PIER IN TYPHOON SHIRLEY

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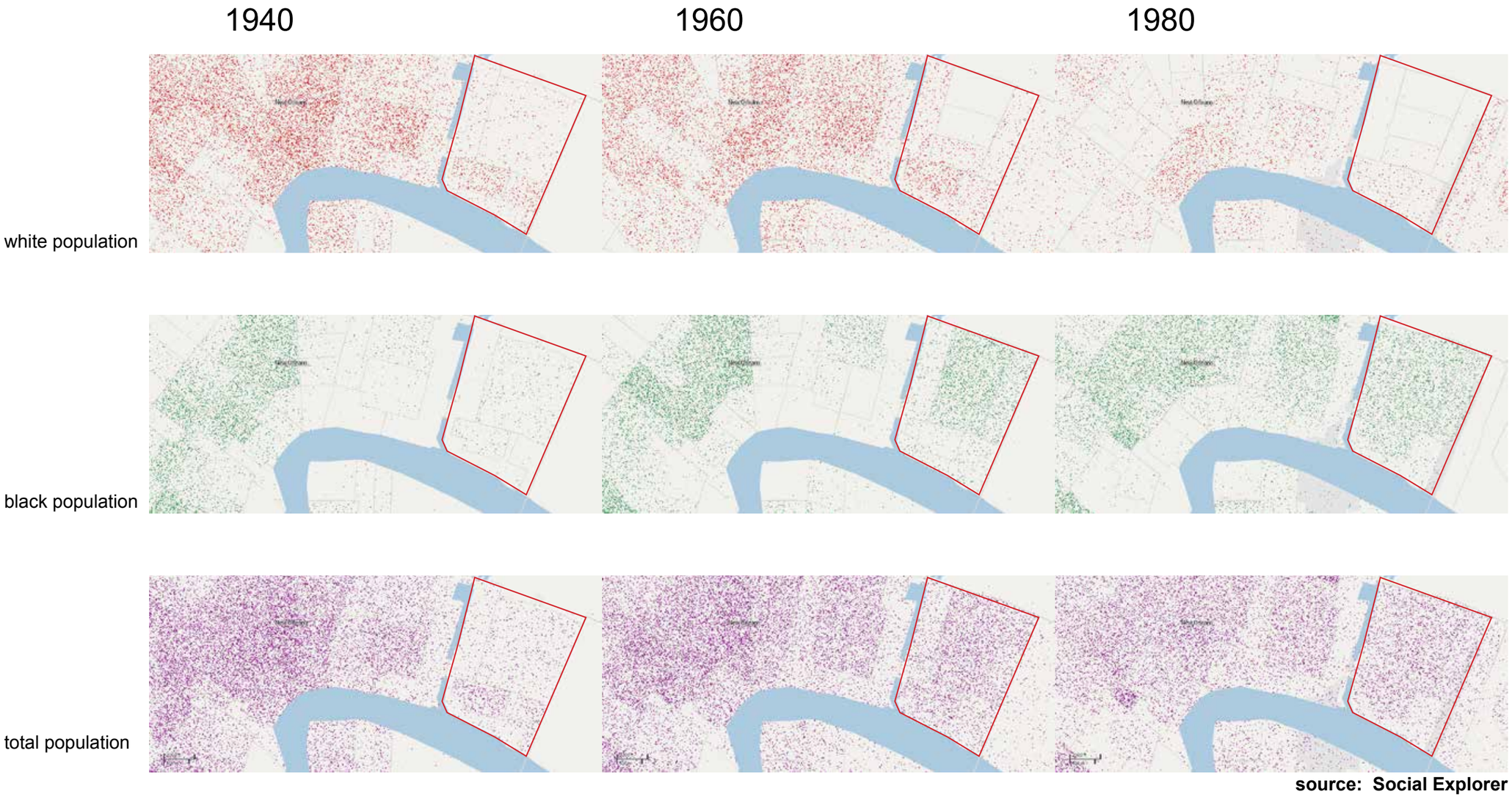
1965: Hurricane Betsy, Category 4 tropical cyclone, hits New Orleans, killing 75.

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

Population of Lower 9th Ward peaks in 1960 at 33,000; then there is a white exodus.

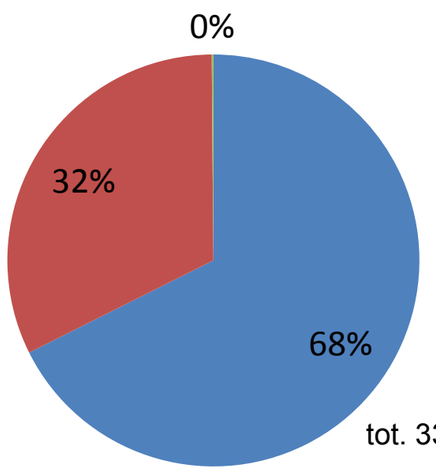


source: Social Explorer

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

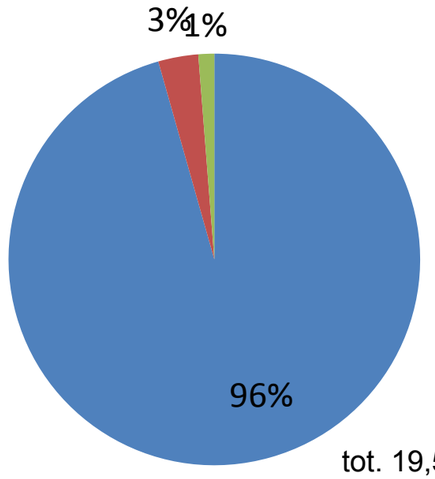
Population of Lower 9th Ward peaks in 1960 at 33,000; then there is a white exodus.

1960, Lower 9th Ward

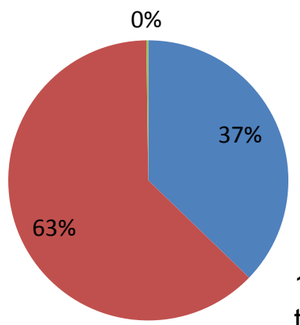


tot. 33,002

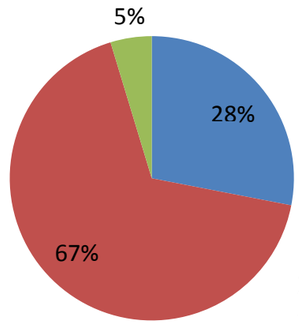
2000, Lower 9th Ward



tot. 19,515



1960, New Orleans
tot. 627,525



2000, New Orleans
tot. 484,674

New Orleans, Lower 9th Ward

source: Social Explorer