



CANE RIVER

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

For Immediate Release

September 13, 2012

For more information contact:

Katherine Johnson, 318-356-5555

kjohnson@caneheritage.org

Los Adaes State Historic Site Included in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

Natchitoches, LA, September 13, 2012 – Cane River National Heritage Area, Inc. (CRNHA) announced today that anthropologist Rolonda Teal, co-founder of the heritage organization Cultural Lore, Inc. was successful in nominating Los Adaes State Historic Site to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

Teal began researching this project as part of an undergraduate class assignment. While delving through research materials, she ran across a story about freedom seekers who left plantations from the southern portion of Natchitoches Parish in route to Nacogdoches, TX. “This one story compelled me to want to know more. Was this a one-time occurrence? Did they just go to Nacogdoches?” remarked Teal. “As I attempted to find answers to those questions, a larger story unfolded that included many escape attempts - some of which were successful while others were not.”

Los Adaes State Historic Site’s successful nomination for inclusion in the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program (NURNF) is a result of more than seven years of research by Teal. The NURNF is a subsidiary of the National Park Service whose involvement with the Underground Railroad began in response to Public Law 101-628, enacted in November 1990, which directed the agency to study alternatives for commemorating and interpreting the Underground Railroad. The National Park Service’s mission is to promote programs and partnerships to commemorate, preserve sites and other resources associated with, and educate the public about the historical significance of the Underground Railroad.

Currently, there are only three sites in the state that hold this designation, one in South Louisiana known as the River Road African American Museum and the other two are located in Natchitoches Parish. In 2008, Cammie G. Henry Research Center located on the campus of Northwestern State University received honors from NURNF for its collection of archival material that supports research on slavery and attempts at freedom. The inclusion of Los Adaes SHS offers the second site in the region.

Having these two sites located within Cane River National Heritage Area offers a way to interpret the multicultural legacy of the colonial Spanish fort. In addition, residents of the parish will benefit from a better understanding of our unique - and at times difficult to understand - history of slavery in the region. Educators, the tourism industry, and state park officials can all benefit from this new perspective when discussing African American and American history in the state.

“Although it was my research that got the ball rolling, it would never have gotten the momentum to keep moving were it not for the financial and emotional backing of Cane River National Heritage Area, Inc., Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and the Louisiana State Parks.” commented Teal.

“ Los Adaes State Historic Site is one of the many historic treasures within Cane River National Heritage Area. This additional information underscores the importance of ongoing research to better understand our shared history. Teal’s commitment to her project should be commended.” remarked CRNHA Executive Director, Cynthia Sutton.

For more information contact Katherine Johnson at kjohnson@caneriverheritage.org or (318) 356-5555.

About Cane River National Heritage Area

Cane River National Heritage Area (CRNHA) begins just south of Natchitoches, extending 35-miles along both sides of Cane River Lake. The core of the area is an 116,000-acre district between Interstate 49 and the Red River, which includes most of the historic sites connected to the history of the region. Home to Cane River Creole National Historical Park, six National Historic Landmarks, three state parks, and many other special places, CRNHA is a place to experience the rich cultures that developed out of Louisiana’s colorful past.

The heritage area is governed by a 14-member Board of Directors with representatives from the area’s historic sites, cultural organizations, businesses, and government. The organization’s work is accomplished through local, regional, state, and federal partnerships. For more information, visit www.caneriverheritage.org.