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RESPONSE OF THE UNITED HOUMA NATION, INC. TO THE LETTER OF OBVIOUS DEFICIENCIES AND SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS OF MAY, 1987

Prepared For the United Houma Nation, Inc.
By Jack Campisi and William A. Starna
Under Contract to the Native American Rights Fund
March 14, 1988

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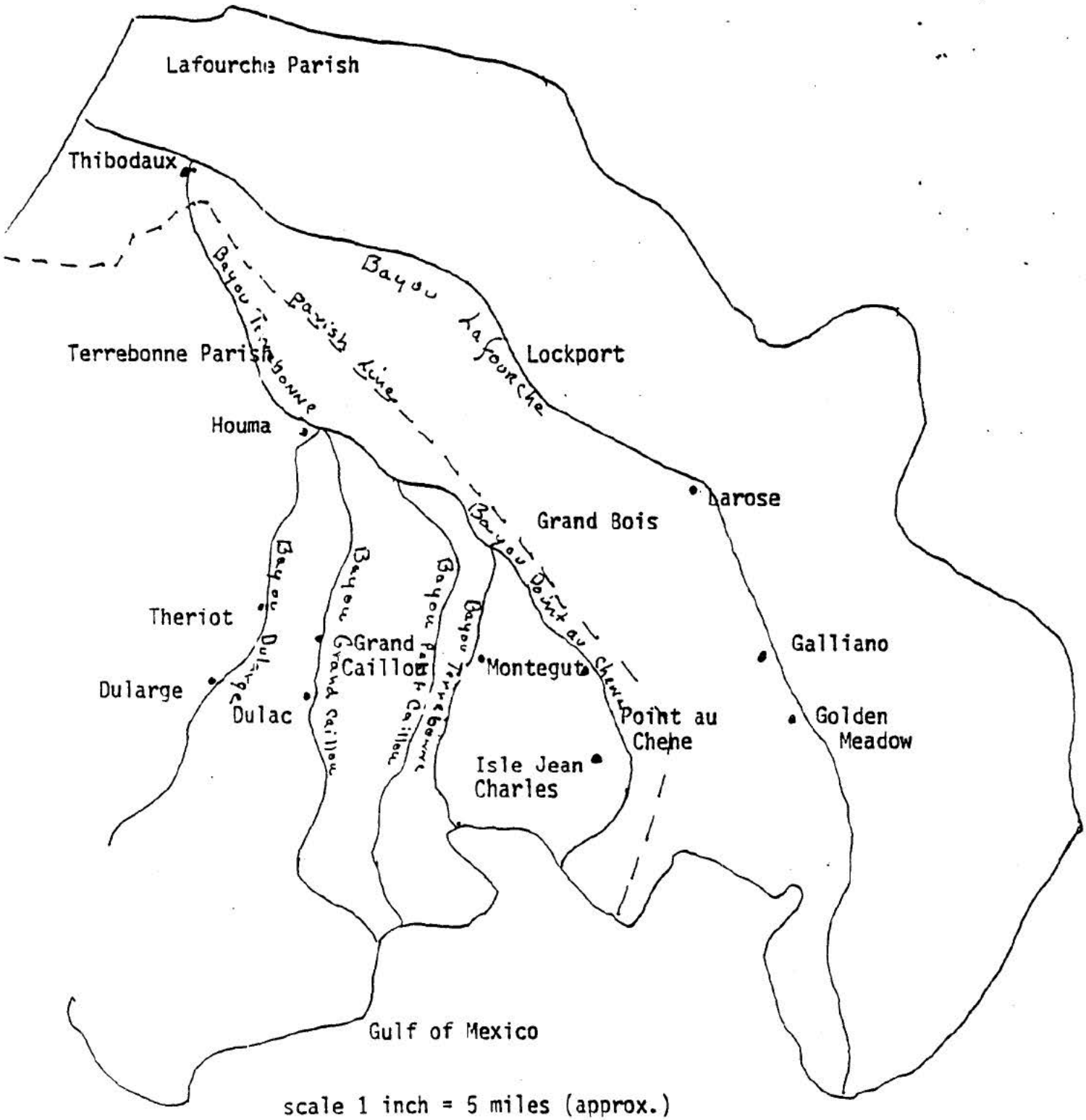
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RESPONSE OF THE UNITED HOUMA NATION, INC. TO THE LETTER OF OBVIOUS DEFICIENCIES AND SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS OF MAY, 1987

ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT

Introduction

This report is in response to the second "Letter of Obvious Deficiencies and Significant Omissions" (OD letter) submitted to the United Houma Nation, Inc., in May, 1987. In that letter the staff of the Branch of Acknowledgment and Research (BAR) raised a number of questions concerning the community and political organization cf the tribe as well as specific questions on genealogy.

The material detailed in this report is a supplement to that presented in the petition. It was gathered in four separate field research trips by the writers over a three year period. The researchers spent more than sixty days in the field, the most recent period being in May, 1987, when a total of twenty-two days was spent gathering data to answer specific inquiries in the OD letter. During the fieldwork period the researchers based themselves at Golden Meadow and Houma, Louisiana, and interviewed tribal members in each of the Indian settlements. In addition, we joined families at meals, went fishing and shrimping, attended churche services, funerals, tribal meetings, parties and family

gatherings, and in general participated in the normal, everyday activities of the Indian community. The following description of the tribal community is based upon this extensive field research.

The material presented here is organized in the form of an ethnographic report, as recommended in the OD letter. As such, it parallels one of the principal concerns expressed in that letter in that it describes the contemporary Houma community, including an analysis of the kinds and distribution of interactions and cooperative activities among members of the Houma community. This analysis supplements and supports the material contained in the Petition.

The ethnographic report also presents a discussion of the political process, including a description of formal and informal political functioning. There also is a discussion of the relationship between the Houma tribal members and non-Indians in the area. This serves as a means to define the Houma and set the tribal community apart from others.

Finally, the report responds to the specific questions raised by the staff genealogists under Criterion 25 CFR 83.7(e).

Demographics

The overwhelming majority of the members of the Houma tribe live in Louisiana, most of these in the five parishes south and west of New Orleans. This is an area of marshlands interlaced by slow moving bayous, the principal one being Bayou Lafourche. This bayou runs in a southerly and westerly direction from the Mississippi River at Donaldsonville, and divides at Thibodaux to

form Terrebonne Bayou, which in turn divides at Houma, forming Dularge, Point au Chien, Terrebonne, Little Caillou and Grand Caillou bayous. These further divide and connect with other bayous through lakes, canals and trenasses to form an elaborate water network. Most of the area is just a few feet above sea level and is flooded periodically by storms from the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, the land is subject to significant subsidence making all but the area along the bayous uninhabitable

Chart 1. Houma Tribal Population By Parish, 1987

Parish	Enrolled Members	% Of Total	Parish (sq. mi)
St. Bernard	394	3.51	514
St. Mary	845	7.52	624
Jefferson	1854	16.50	369
Lafourche	2205	19.62	1141
Terrebonne	4074	36.26	1368
All Other Parishes	1317	11.72	40914
Out Of State	547	4.87	
Total	11236	100.00	44930 (1)

(1) Total excludes 3,593 sq. mi. of inland water and 1,016 sq. mi. of Gulf of Mexico coastal water.

Source: Tribal Enrollment, May, 1987.

It is within this area that most Houmas live. The two parishes, Lafourche and Terrebonne, have a combined Houma population of 6,279, 55.8% of the total tribal population. Three

additional parishes, St. Bernard, St. Mary, and Jefferson, have a population of 3093, or 27.5% of the total. Thus 83.3% (9372 members) live in five parishes that represent but 9% of the total area of the state. Another 11.7% of the tribe (1317 members) live elsewhere in the state, and only 4.8% (547 members) live out of state. These figures are summarized in Chart 1.

The Houma Community

Over half of the tribal members live in Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes. Within these parishes the majority of the population is concentrated in eight settlements. These are Golden Meadow-Galliano, and Grand Bois in Lafourche Parish, Isle Jean Charles, Grand Caillou, Dularge, Dulac, and Montegut in Terrebonne Parish, and Point au Chien in both parishes. The most populous settlement is Grand Caillou, with more than 1100 Houmas, followed by Golden Meadow-Galliano with about 800. The other settlements vary between 200 and 600 tribal members.

There are a number of other locations with sizeable numbers of Houmas -- Cut-off, Houma, Larose, Lafitte and Lockport. However, these are not considered "settlements" by the Houmas. To the Houmas a settlement represents a place of long term permanent residence; a place where many generations have lived and where present members, although they may have left, continue, nonetheless, to feel a strong attachment to. This latter characteristic is manifested by a need to return frequently to visit family and friends. Settlement areas that Houmas tend to physically dominate -- they are the majority, or at least the

largest plurality. Also, settlements embody the tribe's historical traditions and ideological views in a way that has little to do with objective measures. For example, when asked to identify settlements, tribal members invariably include Grand Bois, but not the city of Houma. When the authors pointed out that the population in the city of Houma was larger than that of Grand Bois, tribal members brushed aside the difference reponding that 1) Houma was a mailing address that included people who actually live in Grand Caillou or other Houma Indian settlements, and 2) that Grand Bois had <u>always</u> been a settlement. "For a hundred years we've lived there." By contrast, people living in Houma (as well as other locations) identify with one of the eight settlements, even though their families may have lived in Houma, for example, for a generation or more.

Part of the difficulty in presenting a statistical and demographic analysis of resident population results from the fact that the only available source of data is the mailing addresses of tribal members. Thus, there is a distortion of the numbers residing in the various settlements. This is reflected in Chart #3, page 128 of the Petition. The chart was developed using mailing addresses. Because of this, Houma appears to have the second largest concentration of tribal members, when, in fact, that distinction belongs to Golden Meadow. Dularge appears to have a relatively small number; however, since the Houmas consider Theriot as part of the settlement of Dularge, the settlement's size is significantly greater. Grand Caillou and Dulac are physically closer to each other than are Dularge and Theriot, yet they are considered by the Houmas separate

communities.

In the following sections we present a general description of the Houma community, followed by a detailed description of each of the settlements. With each description is provided a map and a genealogical chart.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUMA COMMUNITY

Criterion (b) of the United Houma Nation Petition for Federal Acknowledgment contains an extensive description of the Houma community which is not repeated here. Instead, this section presents material of a contemporary nature that demonstrates how the various settlements interrelate and why the Houma constitute a single community.

Clearly, the single most important factor integrating the Houmas is kinship. Every Houma is tied to members in other settlements through his or her extended family. Commonly, when asked to name the immediate members of his or her family, a Houma easily provides between one hundred and two hundred names. These included siblings, parents, grandparents, uncle and aunts, great uncles and great aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces, children and grandchildren, and the spouses' family, if the spouse is Houma. The Houmas are not unique in their maintenance of extensive kin ties; the Cajuns in the area do the same. However, kinship ties to the other members of the ethnic group are of far greater importance than those of non-member spouses. Thus, in a recitation of family members, it is common for a Houma to omit a non-Houma spouse's family.

In general, Houma families exhibit two different residency patterns simultaneously. First, families have a traditional settlement, the one where the family was raised and where the grandparents and a major portion of the family still reside. These settlements have been previously identified. The maps and charts also illustrate this. Second, there is considerable evidence that shows individual family members have moved from their settlement of origin to one of the other Houma settlements. The most common reasons are they have married someone from that settlement, there is housing available or job opportuntiies. Consequently, the individual creates two sets of ties, one to the "home" settlement and the other to the settlement in which he or she resides. Those who do not reside in any one of the eight settlements, for example, those living in the city of Houma or out of state, return to their parents' or grandparents' settlement which they view as their "home."

Most Houmas make their living fishing, shrimping, and in related jobs. Many own boats or work for a percentage of the profit on boats of others. Because of factors such as insurance costs, crews are limited to close family members of families. Houmas rely on each other for help, and share information about fishing and other economic concerns more readily with other tribal members than with non-Indians. There is a strong reliance on family and on sharing. During the shrimping seasons women work in the shrimp factories "breaking heads," that is, removing the edible part of the shrimp from the rest. The shrimp season begins in late May and lasts until early July. It reopens in mid-August after the shrimp have spawned and continues until

mid-December. In recent years more individuals have bought boats and begun shrimping thereby reducing the shrimp population. The increase in the number of shrimpers has been due to a number of factors including the decline of the oil industry, the increase in the number of Vietnamese who have settled along the gulf coast, and the increased use of large trawlers along the shore. The state has reacted by reducing the number of days available for shrimping and significantly increasing the permit fees charged. This has led many Houma shrimpers to diversify. Where previously they had trapped during the winter to supplement their income, many now lease submerged land from the state on which they plant and then harvest oysters. The increased demand for land on which to raise oysters has resulted in intense competition for leases within the state. Where previously an individual could lease as much land as he wanted, now individuals will wait in line for a week to lease 100 acre lots. Often, after a long wait, they are informed that there are no more leases available. To add to the problems, the state tests the oysters from the leased area and if they find them polluted, the crop may not be harvested. Because of these factors, combined with increasing demand for oysters, there is a constant danger of poaching by individuals who cannot get a lease. An individual may find that his crop has disappeared after months of work collecting the oysters from designated public areas, and after paying the fees for the land and licenses to oyster. Despite these risks and the relatively low return on the investment, Houma boys will quit school, with parental approval, to shellfish, partly as a response to economic pressures, but also

because of the strong sense of family exhibited by the Houmas, a sense of security that goes with close kinship ties.

In addition to shrimping another example of activities engaged in by the Houyma is trapping. In the past it was common for families to move into the swamps to trap. Prior to the trapping season, a "gang" of men would go out to clean the trenasses. Each would take a "share" of a specific trenasse network and clean it out, or if need be, expand it. If one or more of the group was not there at the time of the cleaning, the rest would leave a share for them to clean at a later time. Several gangs were identified by the researchers. The gang to which Frank Naquin was a member consisted of Adam Dardar, Lucian Dardar, Alexon Dardar, Victor Dardar, Bonet Solet, and Justillian Dardar, all of the Golden Meadow settlement. Another gang from the settlement at Point au Chien was formed of the Verdin, Billiot, Leboeuf, and Roessell families, all related, and was guided by Sidney Verdin. His authority stemmed from the fact that "he knew the land, townships, boundaries, ranges, and everything ... he knew everything." Much of this knowledge came from his long experience as a fisherman and trapper as well as a lifelong interest in the area where he had grown up. Additional knowledge had been gained from a brother, Toussaint Verdin, who had worked for a period of time with a land surveyor. There were similar gangs made up of related families in each of the settlements.

Once the trapping season began Houma families would move into the swamps and establish camps near the trapping areas. The camps were near each other and there were daily visits. The work

of building the camps was shared by the families. Although no one person was expressly in charge, it appears that the senior men or those who were treaters, or had other specialized knowledge or skills, provided direction. The organization of tasks was carried out relying on their guidance as well as consensus within the group.

When asked what would happen if someone refused to do a required task (such as cleaning the trenasses) one elderly man replied: "Nothing. He wouldn't be allowed to join in at another time. But if his family had real serious problems we would help out, of course. They was our family, too." As with the irrigation systems found in the southwest and into Mesoamerica, the failure of one or more individuals to maintain and keep clean their sections of the trenasse network would render the entire system useless. Thus, by Houmas' exercising effective leadership and cooperation, the system continued to function.

In late October Houmas moved from their permanent settlements and dispersed into the swamps, remaining at their camps for several months, and returning "home" in March. The move was often a cooperative effort by a number of related families, since no one family owned enough boats or had a boat large enough in which to carry all their goods.

A family's camp consisted of a wooden frame and/or wattle and daub shelter, roofed with palmetto leaves. The chimney was also wattle and daub. The shelter generally had but one room, with an outside kitchen. Women spent most of their time in the camp. Besides the routine household chores of cooking, cleaning and caring for the children, women skinned muskrats and nutra,

stretching the pelts with boards. Men tended their extensive trap lines each day, periodically shifting their locations as areas became exhausted. Most trap lines had up to 500 traps. Normally, a trapper would take 60 to 70 "rats" a day, although catches of 100 or more were not uncommon. When not working the lines, they repaired equipment or hunted game. The low ridges that rose in the swamps provided excellent terrain for deer and feral pigs, as well as smaller game. There was, in addition, a virtually limitless supply of ducks and geese.

Prior to the "leasing" or taking of the lands by oil companies, which the Houmas had trapped and hunted for many years, there appears to have been little need to define, demark, or defend individual or family "territories." As one elderly informant put it, "There was plenty of land for everybody -- there was no need to divide things up." Men would share a large section of land on which they trapped and hunted. Each understood and recognized where the other's traps were, which were marked with colored flags.

For the most part, there do not appear to have been serious problems with the stealing of trapped muskrats or traps, nor did people use another's property without permission. If someone was caught doing so, the families in the vicinity would force this individual and his family out of the area, or would "handle it within the family," meaning the extended family. Family reputation counted highly and the fear of ostracism or other forms of public sanction was so strong that there were few transgressions. Finally, there were men in each settlement who enforced order; repeated violations of the rules would result in

a beating or being forced out of the settlement. Without access to the Houma community an individual faced a much more hostile world of racial prejudice.

While individual families were busy maintaining their camps, there was time to assist each other as needed. Most commonly, this occurred when someone had to build or repair a house or chimney. The frequent floods regularly undermined or destroyed houses, particularly those set on piers in the swamps. To take one example, if a chimney needed building or replacing, a family would invite its camp neighbors, who were usually related. The men dug a hole two feet deep by four feet square, and a mixture of mud and moss was tamped into the floor of this square. A post was set in each of the square's corners and sticks were laid horizontally against these, forming a frame. A mixture of mud and moss was plastered against the framework. The women from the camps joined in preparing food, and gathering moss. After the work was completed the families joined together in a meal, often followed by dancing and singing.

At times, gatherings were held at which people from camps in the vicinity came together to visit, relax, dance, and play music. It was at these and other social gatherings where single young men and women. Dating was a relatively formal affair. A boy would have to ask a girl's parent's permission to date. The rule was never to date a white or black. The same social rules that governed such behaviors in the camps applied in the larger settlements.

Whitney Dardar described growing up in a house that was constructed in part from wattle and daub and, in part, from

wooden planks. It was a typical Houma house with a long, rectangular floor plan, and roofed with palmetto leaves. The floor was tamped down earth. The "mud room," i.e., that part of the house made of wattle and daub, was the middle section of the house and had square openings for "windows." An open porch, also roofed with palmettoes, was at one end.

When Whitney was a teenager, his father, Ernest Dardar, Jr., a treater, purchased a new home a short distance away. This was a more substantial structure made of wooden planks with a shingled roof. It was further described as a "well-built house" with, in addition to windows, narrow strips of wood tacked over the plank joints both inside and out to seal the house, keeping out insects and drafts.

One day, Whitney's father left the house to go treating. Sparks from an untended woodstove ignited the home and it burned to the ground. The Houma community immediately came to his aid. Family members were taken in by relatives and neighbors. At the same time, adults formed a work party and rebuilt the house, very much as it had been originally.

Such support groups and shared activities were, and are, common among the Houmas. Not only did these people gather together to assist families that had been burned out, like the Dardars, but they also helped those whose homes had been damaged or destroyed by floods, gulf coast storms, or hurricanes.

In 1920 there was a yellow fever epidemic in the area and many Houmas died. Tribal members brought food to those in need, especially those families where the adults had been debilitated and could not tend to their own families. As a general tribal

value, Houmas feel that no matter what the crisis, Houma people can count on their relatives and other tribal members for aid, comfort, and assistance.

Other examples of this communal form of aid or "self help" are the building of fences to enclose livestock such as cattle and pigs, castrating bulls, "dipping" cattle into vats of insecticide, breaking horses, gathering firewood, plowing fields, and harvesting. At this latter event, Houmas gathered to assist family members and others with harvesting their crops. They were provided a share for their help. Other cooperative assistance included working on and repairing fishing boats and fishing equipment. Informants indicated that people who worked on their boats were nearly always family members and other close relatives. On shrimp boats, shares of the gross profits are divided as follows: 50 percent goes to the boat to pay for overhead expenses, and the remainder is split equally among the crew members.

Houmas gather frequently for social events. Two holidays stand out: Christmas and Easter. One elderly informant described large gatherings of Houma Indians on Isle Jean Charles during these two holiday periods. Houmas would come together from all of the settlements in the five nearby parishes. Most traveled by pirogue or in other types of small boats. One informant paddled a pirogue from Golden Meadow to Larose, then to Bayou Blue, and from there to Bayou Point au Chien, and then to Isle Jean Charles. The trip took a day. Others traveled from Bayou Dularge and Bayou Grand Caillou, through Bayou Terrebonne, and then to the island.

Just before getting to Isle Jean Charles, the boats would signal their arrival by sounding on their cow horns. People would then come out in boats from Isle Jean Charles to meet them and accompany them to the settlement. On each of these occasions, a dance was held at a hall operated by Antoine Naquin, "a respected man," from Isle Jean Charles. The hall was lighted by lamps, the music provided by an accordion player or a violin or two. People would eat, drink, visit, and dance. All were charged a nominal fee to attend the dance, most of which went to pay the musicians. Houmas who came from other settlements would either stay with relatives on the island, in nearby Point au Chien, or sleep on their boats.

Dances were held regularly in each settlement and were attended by Houmas from the surrounding settlements. Most often, they were held at someone's house. People would gather on weekends at the designated house, bring and share food, visit and dance. The next weekend the dance was held at someone else's home. According to informants, there was at least one dance every weekend throughout the winter. In addition, there were dance halls in many of the settlements. For example, in Grand Bois, Jeanne Verdin and her husband Evan operated a dance hall for many years. There was also one run by Xavier Herbert.

Today social gatherings take a somewhat different, although related form. Informants describe frequent family reunions, gatherings on holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Memorial Day, birthdays, anniversaries, and funerals. Family members from all of the settlements, as well as from other parishes and out of state, attend these. In 1983, the John Verret family at

Dulac-Dularge had a family gathering to celebrate an anniversary. About 200 people attended from all of the settlements, and New Orleans, Bayou Black, and Shriver.

Houma people still go to a newborn's house bringing food and gifts, to "see the baby." While the adults visit, children play games out of doors. In fact, children spend much of their time playing games. Houma informants described games such as the "tossing game," in which wooden pieces were tossed and counted, "throw the pick," a form of mumble-the-peg, "ring game," somewhat like a ring toss game, the "top game," where homemade tops were spun, and the "blow game," which used blow guns aimed at a target.

Visiting among family members is constant, far-ranging, and extensive. One cannot go to a Houma Indian home without encountering members of the nuclear and extended family, more distant relatives, neighbors, or just other Houmas. Phone calls are very frequent to relatives and other tribal members, especially regarding tribal matters. Resources including food, drink, household items, etc., are shared without hesitation. Generosity is a hallmark of these people, even when they have little to share.

As in the past, the practice of gathering on holidays continues. On the Fourth of July, Houmas traditionally gather for large family reunions called "cochandiliers." This is a festive occasion where the family would roast a cow or pig. It is common for several hundred to attend with relatives and Houma friends coming from all over the area, as well as from out of state. These reunions generally last several days.

Another event that the Houmas enjoyed was pirogue racing. All settlements had races. In addition, there were large races held in Lafitte, Galliano, and Placquemine Parish. One champion racer was Ursin Creppel, who competed well into his sixties. The races drew together large numbers of Houmas, both as participants and spectators, and provided another opportunity for Houmas to socialize with each other.

In recent years the Houmas have begun sponsoring a powwow. Started in 1982. The powwow is held each August and now draws over 3,000 participants and spectators. It is held at a camp ground just west of Grand Bois. Over the years it has attracted an increasing number of tribal members, as well as representives from other tribes including Alabama-Cushattas from Texas, Mississippi Choctaws, Creeks from a number of southern states, and tribes from Oklahoma and Louisiana. Many families stay at the camp grounds; the rest are taken in by Houma families. The first two years the powwow was held in Lafitte, but has since moved to its present location near Grand Bois because it is more central to the Houma population.

The powwow lasts three days. On the first day (Friday) there is a "Coming of Age " ceremony, followed by a "feed," which is, in turn, followed by games and entertainment. In the evening there is social dancing. On Saturday, ceremonies begin at sunrise with a "New Fire" ceremony, followed by a breakfast. After breakfast, there is a series of competitions including blowgun, bow and arrow, rabbit-stick throwing, and foot races. There is also a craft show and competition. In the afternoon there is a dance competition and in the evening more social

dancing.

On Sunday, there are dawn prayers, followed by breakfast and informal meetings. In the afternoon the tribal council members address the crowd to answer questions and discuss problems. Following this, there is a period of storytelling by people like Adam Billiot, Tom Courteaux, Viola Savois, Joe Billiot, and Steve Cheramie. The last two named were responsible for organizing the first powwow and are its principal sponsors and organizers.

Funerals are another means of bringing family members and other Houmas together.

In the past were held in the deceased's house. If a person was seriously ill or injured and near death, relatives and friends would go to his or her house and hold a vigil until death occurred. The person's body was then prepared and dressed in the house, where the wake was held. A tribal member would make a coffin of cypress and line it with either black or grey cloth. Its exterior would then be decorated with brass tacks, often driven so as to form a cross.

Wakes lasted a day or perhaps two, depending on the weather. The family, relatives and friends would hold the wake day and night. This was followed by a religious service and internment. After the funeral, people would gather at the largest house in the area and bring food.

During the fieldwork period the researchers had the occasion to attend the funeral of a young man (age 32) who had drowned while attempting to save one of his children who had fallen overboard from the family's boat. The funeral service was held at the Assembly of God Church in Grand Caillou, and was attended

by over 200 mourners, almost all of whom were tribal members. The service was in English, although the hymns were sung in Cajun French. After the service the mourners drove a few miles down the bayou for the burial. One tribal member summed up the Houmas' attitude toward funerals as follows:

> We have a sense of responsibility to go to the wake or funeral. Many Houmas feel the same way. My parents would drive 100 miles to go to the wake and if they could take off time, go to the funeral. It is common for Houmas to do this.

On All Saint's Day women get together at cemeteries to tend the graves. These are Houma cemeteries, with no non-Indian internments. Men do not participate in this activity. Women put homemade flowers made of crepe paper dipped in wax on the graves. Some bring cut flowers. Children attend to assist the women.

Some families have their own cemeteries. For example, the Sevegny family has a cemetery in Golden Meadow. Family members from different parishes are buried there. Families members share the expense and labor to maintain the cemetery. Mitchell Sevegney is the caretaker. There is another cemetery near Houma, on the Grand Caillou road. Finally, there is a burial mound at Point au Chien where some 900 Houmas who died in the hurricane of 1909 are interred. Houmas continue to visit this mass gravesite and pay their respects.

Since the 1920s there has been an increasing influence of Protestant beliefs on the Houmas. The early aspects of this has been described elsewhere (see 83.7(b):107-108). Since World War II this development has accelerated and led to the formation of a network of Houma Indian churches. Predominant among the Protestant churches is the Full Gospel Church. There are Full

Gospel churches in Golden Meadow, Montegut (led by Etienne Dardar), Houma (led by Earl Naquin), Isle Jean Charles, Lafitte, and Grand Caillou. Steve Cheramie, who works for a full Gospel Church in Metarie, is one of the leaders of the American Indian Church, which meets in the New Orleans area and serves several hundred Houmas and other Indians. The important factor concerning this religious movement is that the Indian religious leaders and parishioners in each of the churches interact frequently with each other. They share congregations and pulpits and mix tribal values with those of the church. There are other churches, including Catholic churches in Golden Meadow, Grand Caillou, and Dularge, and Baptist and Methodist Indian chuches in Dularge, and Dulac. The ecumenical nature of Houma religion is illustrated by the Verret family; John is a leader in the Baptist Church in Dularge, his brother Kirby is studying for the ministry and serves as a lay minister in the Methodist Church in Dulac, and their sister and parents attend the Catholic Church in Dularge. One informant reported that Houmas often went to the Catholic and Protestant churches at the same time, and many of the treaters, while Catholic, attended the Pentecostal church in their area. The effect of this is to provide the Houmas with another important social network.

Members of the Houma community share in common a number of other values. Loyalty to other tribal members is very strong. One is "raised to care for your own." Starting with the family, Houmas extend their circle of concern outward to other tribal members and then to other Indians. There is a corollary to this: "trust an Indian person before anyone else." These two values

act as a boundary mechanism for Houma behaviors and ethnicity.

The Houma tribal boundaries are reinforced regularly by the treatment Houmas have received and continue to receive from whites. As described in the Historical Narrative, treatment by whites has always been deplorable. Houmas have been subjected to the worst effects of racism. They have been denied education and jobs, and have had their land taken from them. One incident was related by Whitney Dardar and concerned the taking of land from his father, Ernest Dardar, Jr. In the 1920s a number of companies bought the swamps surrounding Bayou Lafourche and its distributaries. They divided the land into sections and leased it to individual Houmas, generally for a share of the pelts. The assignments were arranged by agents for the companies, who were usually Cajuns.

At one point, the agent went to Ernest Dardar with what he represented as a "deed" to the trapping section that Ernest customarily worked. Like most Houmas, Ernest was illiterate and took the word of the Cajun, making his mark on the document.

Some years later, after both the Cajun and Ernest had died, a question arose concerning the deed. Ernest's descendants assumed they were the heirs to the land on which Ernest's house stood, which amounted to fourteen arpents (about 12 acres). However, it was subsequently discovered that the Cajun's heirs were the owners, since what had been described to Ernest and signed by him was not his deed at all, but that of the Cajun. According to Houmas, this process was repeated in a number of settlements, in different ways, dating back to the nineteenth century and Rosalie Courteaux.

As has been previously describe (see HN:), Houmas have been the subject of exploitation and made the butt of cruel epithets, the most perjorative of which is to call a Houma a "sabine" (see HN:116-121). But the Houmas do not submit passively to this, nor do they accept it, even from close acquaintances. One non-Houma married to a Houma told us that one time, years after he had married in, he was in a bar with a number of his in-laws and other Houma friends. In the course of the conversation he referred to them as "sabines," whereupon he was taken outside and beaten. A young person told us how a few weeks before our trip she had been in a bar with other Houmas and a white had called her a "sabine." She and the others left and slashed the four tires of his new car.

As corollaries to the above, Houmas caution girls against dating whites because "they don't treat you well," to avoid, at all costs associating with blacks, and to be proud to be an Indian, particularly a Houma. In this connection, Houmas repeat the stories of Rosalie Courteaux and other early leaders of the tribe. They stress in their stories acts of defiance against white authority and oppression.

SETTLEMENTS

Explanation of Charts

A series of charts and maps accompany this section of the

report. They were compiled from field data, interviews, and an examination of the tribe's genealogical records. The purpose in providing these charts and maps is to clearly and objectively demonstrate social networks operating within and among the eight Houma settlements, as well as the other areas where Houmas live.

As has been previously explained in the petition, and in this response, the fundamental and pervasive social units of the Houma community are the extended families. It is through these and the marriages which underlie them that Houma individuals are inextricably linked to each other and to the tribe. Moreover, of all primary group relationships, the one that best demonstrates tribal community cohesion is intra-group marriage. The charts and maps speak for themselves on these matters.

There is one chart and map for each settlement. The maps depict the residence pattern of each Houma settlement; that is, the approximate geographic relationships of individual homes. It should be noted that not all Houmas living in a settlement are depicted on the maps. To do so would have been exceedingly difficult and cumbersome. Instead, only the central or core portion of each Houma settlement is represented. These are the areas of greatest population concentration. Further, each home is identified by the name of an adult resident in that household as provided by the informants. Wherever data were available concerning the names of Houma spouses, they also were included. It was from these residency maps that the accompanying genealogical charts were drawn.

The genealogical charts which correspond to the residency maps provide the name of the Houma resident, his or her spouse,

and the place of residence of their children living in separate domiciles. The charts do not show the names of other family members living in the same household.

GOLDEN MEADOW

The core of the Houma Indian settlement is on the west side of Bayou Lafourche and extends from south of the Golden Meadow bridge to just below the the Corps of Engineer's levee, a total distance of three miles. The location of 129 individual Houma residences is depicted on Map 2. There are very few non-Houmas living in this area. In addition, there is a large number of tribal members residing north of the bridge in the neighboring towns of Galliano, Cut Off, and Larose.

According to a survey taken by John Swanton in 1907, there were 175 Houmas living in 25 houses on lower Bayou Lafourche (HN:43). Ruth Underhill, who conducted a survey in 1938, placed their number at 100 (HN:60). At about the same time, Frank Speck visited the area and reported the number of households in Golden Meadow as 17, with another seven or eight families at Cut Off. (HN:63).

The common family names in this settlement are Dardar, Naquin, Creppel, Mejia, Williams, Sevegny, Verdin, Soley, and Billiot. As Chart 2 indicates, these families are intermarried and related to families in each of the other settlements. The same chart shows the extent to which present-day members of these families marry other tribal members and reside in or near the settlement. By placing Map 2 and Chart 2 together, it becomes

clear that this is a tightly knit settlement of tribal members with ties to and interactions with the other Houma settlements.

These ties manifest themselves in a number of ways. First, the principal tribal office is located in the old Indian school in Golden Meadow, below the corporation line. There is a steady stream of tribal members calling and visiting to get information and assistance. Members of the tribal staff are drawn from other settlements, such as Montegut, Dularge, Grand Bois, etc. They bring with them information from their home settlements on a daily basis. Individuals from the various settlements raise concerns over educational issues, fishing rights, health, requests for assistance with parish and state agencies, unemployment, and relief, to mention a few.

Second, there are several stores owned and operated by tribal members including Sam's Snowballs (owned and operated by Samantha Dardar), Net Shop (owned and operated by James Summergill), La Papa Noel (chocolate shop owned and operated by Dolores Dardar and her daughter Brenda Dardar Pitre), Curve Inn (bar owned by Leonard Billiot, Sr.), Tee Pee Snack Bar (owned and operated by Dolores Terrebonne), Bobby's Restaurant (owned by Linwood Naquin), and Martin's Texaco Service Station (owned and operated by Theodore and Jane Dardar). Informants tell us that there have always been stores, bars and restaurants owned by Houmas that cater to predominantly Indian trade. In large part this was due to the strong racial prejudice exhibited by whites. Until very recently, Houmas were denied access to such services. Even now, according to many Houmas, there are strong racial feelings exhibited by some merchants which prevent the full participation

of Houmas. Other Houmas suggest that they prefer to patronize businesses owned by "their people" because they are more likely to meet other tribal members and feel more relaxed. The loyalty of Houmas to other Houmas is again apparent.

A third factor is religion. While many of the Houmas are Catholic, there is a growing Protestant movement in their settlement. In Golden Meadow there are two Catholic churches, one at the bridge attended primarily by whites and one at the southern end of Golden Meadow used primarily by Houmas. In addition, there is the evangelical Lafourche Full Gospel Church in the Indian settlement. This church was started in the 1950s by Paul Cormie and Alfred R. Lovelace. They trained a number of Houmas who took over the church and started other churches of the same denomination in other settlements. The church has approximately 100 members and holds services on a regular basis. It maintains ties with other evangelical churches within the Houma community.

Fourth, the Houma living in Golden Meadow are tied together by common economic interests as discussed previously. Fifth and last, Houmas tend to socialize together. Members of the families who live in the area see or hear from each other on a weekly, if not daily basis. Those who live in neighboring parishes or in the New Orleans area, make frequent visits to friends and family. Families and friends likewise gather regularly for picnics, butcheries, crawfish boils and the like. It is very common for families to gather on Sunday for a meal. During our fieldwork we attended many such gatherings. Generally, the meal consisted of (depending on the season) shrimp, crawfish, crabs, fish, and

always rice. The eldest woman cooked the meals assisted usually by her daughters. The pattern was so institutionalized that it appeared not only routine but informal. Anyone who appeared at the house was welcomed and served. When Houmas returned from out of state there was always a round of visits and picnics. Visiting relatives in other settlements is also a common occurrence. Except for whites who have married in, and an occasional guest, the participants are strictly tribal members.

GRAND BOIS

Grand Bois is located ten miles west of Larose on Louisiana Route 24. To the north of the settlement is the Intracoastal Canal. The settlement is small, containing 40 Houma households (see Map 3). Most of the men make their living by fishing, trapping and the like, or by working in the docking and repair facilities that line the canal.

The settlement is made up of families who originally came from Isle Jean Charles, Point au Chien, and Golden Meadow-Galliano. These families began settling in the area in the nineteenth century, drawn primarily by the excellent trapping available. Sometime in the latter part of that century a canal was dug by hand to connect Bayou Lafourche at Larose to Bayou Terrebonne at Bourg. The waterway, called the St. Louis Canal, provided the Houmas easy access to their Indian settlements. One informant, originally from Point au Chien, recalls her father describing how, when he was young, his father and mother moved the family to Grand Bois to fish and trap. They stayed there

many years, her father returning to Point au Chien after he married. Her father told her that although he grew up in Grand Bois, his parents returned frequently to their home settlement to visit family and friends, attend dances, weddings, christenings and funerals. The families presently living at Grand Bois have ties to two settlements in particular, Point au Chien and Golden Meadow. The most common names are Billiot and Verdin, as can be seen from charts 2, 3 and 5.

MONTEGUT

Montegut is located in Terrebonne Parish on the east side of Bayou Terrebonne, on Louisiana Route 56, about ten miles south of Houma. The principal families are Courteaux, Molinere, and Gregoire. There are 41 Houma residences shown on Map 4, but, of course, there are a greater number who live in nearby Bourg and on the neighboring Bayou Petite Caillou. During the nineteenth century the major Houma settlement was located further down Bayou Terrebonne, at a place called Point Barre, but this area is now submerged. This was one of the areas where Rosalie Courteaux owned land; in fact, Point Barre was her last known refuge.

While Swanton does not refer to Montegut in his 1907 survey, he does provide data on Pointe Barre, which he says has 28 houses containing 165 people (HN: 43). Underhill reported in 1938 that there were 30 people living below Montegut, but her census was far from complete (HN: 59). Speck did not suevey the area when he visited in 1938 (HN:61-64).

As Chart 4 shows, individuals in this settlement are tied by

marriage to persons in Dulac, Grand Caillou, Isle Jean Charles, and Point au Chien (the last two are but a few miles away across the swamp. The road to Point au Chien and Isle Jean Charles branches off the main road (La.665) in Montegut, making communications easy. As with the other settlements, fishing and trapping are the main sources of family income, with supplemental day labor in the shipyards and on the oil rigs.

LOWER POINT AU CHIEN

This settlement straddles the parishes of Lafourche and Terrebonne and, according to informants, dates to the ante bellum period. It is largely a fishing and trapping settlement, although trapping has diminished in the last thirty years as a result of salinization caused by subsidence and the numerous canals dug by the oil companies to exploit the oil fields that surround this settlement and the neighboring Isle Jean Charles. There are 72 Houma houses in lower Point au Chien (Map 5).

Swanton estimates the population of lower Point au Chien at 36 households containing 160 people (HN:43). Underhill's numbers are much lower, only 25 individuals living along the bayou (HN:60); Speck does not mention them. Based on genealogical evidence as well as interviews, it is clear that a much larger population settled the area than Underhill determined.

Many of the residents in lower Point au Chien are related to each other through the Verdin family (see Chart 5), who are, in turn, married into families on Isle Jean Charles and Golden Meadow, as well as Grand Caillou, Dulac, Dularge, and Grand Bois.

As with the other settlements there are kin ties to every area outside the settlements where Houmas reside -- Grand Isle, Lafitte, Houma, New Orleans and its suburbs -- and like the other settlements, these families are close knit and maintain a regular schedule of visits and telephone calls. One elderly woman in the settlement said that she hears from or is visited by each one of her six children daily, and that they gather, with their children, at her house for Sunday dinner. One can find similar examples elsewhere in this and every other Houma settlement.

ISLE JEAN CHARLES

Isle Jean Charles is a small island to the west of lower Point au Chien, and it is only within the past twenty years or so that it could be reached by road. Even now, the road is frequently submerged by high tides. This has been and continues to be the most isolated of the Houma settlements and probably the closest knit. The settlement contains 73 Houma households (Map 6). As Chart 6 shows, every resident on the island is related by blood or marriage through a single extended family -- the Naquins. Many have left the island to move into neighboring Houma settlements, thus tying them together in a vast kinship network that covers several thousand people.

Paradoxically, Isle Jean Charles, despite its isolation (or because of it), has traditionally been the center of Houma community activities and celebrations. Swanton refers to the island as Champs Charles and places its population at 117, with 13 houses (HN:43). Underhill places the number of people at 132

and describes the location as "[a]n island or ridge in the swamp occupied only by Indian families, accessible only by boat" (NHN:60). Speck gives no figures. While certainly not the largest concentration of Houma Indians, it has historically been the center of Houma social activity, with frequent dances. parties, celebrations, and the like (see 83.7 (b)).

GRAND CAILLOU

Located in Terrebonne Parish, this is the largest Houma settlement containing 208 households. It extends on both sides of Bayou Grand Caillou for approximately six miles. The most densely populated area, shown on Map 7, is a four mile stretch on the west side of the bayou, although there are many families living on the east side as well. Fishing is the main source of income for the families. A few families own and operate grocery stores.

Swanton does not mention Grand Caillou or Dulac. He refers to "Bayou Sale, below Bayou Grand Caillou, at least 25 houses and 175 people" (83.7(b):75). Underhill gives a population of 100 on both sides of the bayou. Speck gives a considerably larger number; "65 family divisions with a population of 700 within walking distance of Dulac.

There are a number of churches serving the Houma population of Grand Caillou. These include the Jesus Training Center, the Living Word Church, and the Assembly of God Church. The Living Word Church has a Houma Indian minister, T. Nick Gregoire.

DULAC

Dulac appears at first glance to be an extension of Grand Caillou, but it is viewed by Houmas as a separate settlement. It is located south of Grand Caillou, below the junction of Bayou Grand Caillou and Bayou Dulac. There are 68 Houma residences in the settlement, which, except for the Coast Guard base, is entirely populated by Houma Indians (Map 8). The principal families in the settlement are Billiot, Verret, Parfait, Verdin and Lodrigue (Chart 8). The settlement contains two Indian Protestant churches, the Church of God and the Clanton United Methodist Chapel, as well as one predominantly Indian Catholic church, Couer d'ars. In addition, the tribe uses a former school building as the Houma Indian Center. It provides meals and recreation to senior citizens, houses a craft cooperative, and offers a recreation program for Houma children.

DULARGE

Dularge, which is located on both sides of Bayou Dularge, is the western-most of the Houma settlements. The principal family names are Verret, and Billiot (Chart 9). As in the other settlements, the residents make their living shrimping, fishing, and trapping.

The population of Dularge was estimated by Swanton to be between 84 and 98, living in from 12 to 14 houses (HN:43); Underhill estimates 75 individuals (HN:59), while Speck identifies 21 families (HN:63). Given the size of Houma families,

this would suggest that there were at least 150 people living along the bayou.

There are two churches in the settlement: St. Eloi Catholic Church, led by Father Roch Naquin, a Houma Indian, and the Bayou Dularge Baptist Mission.

Summary

The charts, maps, and settlement summaries presented here provide strong and objective evidence of community. The Houma Indian community is centered around eight settlements, each with multiple kin ties to the others. These ties extend outward to incorporate tribal members who live in other non-Houma communities throughout Louisiana. Tribal members frequently visit and maintain contacts with their families in the eight settlements. Further, the Houma show a strong preference for in-group marriage, and interact with other Houma Indians to the virtual exclusion of non-Indians. One indicator of the involvement of those Houmas who live outside the settlements is provision for their representation in the tribal government see below.

The distances between the settlements and the other areas where Houmas live is no barrier to the maintenance of a sense of community among the Houma. The presence of good roads and the complex network of waterways, not to mention the availability of telephones in virtually every home, make communication easy. The various forms and high frequency of social gatherings previously

discussed complement and enhance this communication.

The Houma community is more than an aggregation of Indian people and settlements. The Houmas hold values unique to them as Indian people and separate from those of their non-Indian neighbors. They are proud of their heritage as one of two Indian tribes native to Louisiana. Pride in their Indian identity is a strong, pervasive value. They revere, in particular, the memory of Rosalie Courteaux, who from their perspective epitomizes the tribe's struggle for identity.

The Houma's pride in their identity has been met with virulent racism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, but this has not diminished their sense of self. In fact, it has enhanced it and serves to maintain them as a people separate from blacks and whites in the region. As Fredrik Barth has noted: "If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion" (1969:15).

Other aspects of their ideological system include their belief in the efficacy of folk medicine as prescribed by native treaters, the complex of behaviors associated with hunting and trapping, and the values now expressed at the powwows, in addition to other ceremonies and ritual, particularly those practiced at the Indian churches. These have been described both in the petition and in this response. Taken together, these data demonstrate that the Houma tribe more than meets the criteria as a community.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

As detailed in the Houma Petition (HN:1-29) there can be no question regarding the existence and recognition of the Houma tribe from earliest contact (1699) to the transfer of Louisiana to the United States. Following the purchase of Louisiana, the United States recognized the existence of the tribe.

In 1806 two Houma chiefs met with W.W.C. Claiborne, the territorial governor. In 1811, Governor Claiborne met with a Houma leader named Chac-Chouma (HN:30-31). Chac-Chouma was succeeded by Louis le Sauvage (Louis de la Houssaye Courteaux). In turn, Louis le Sauvage was succeeded as tribal leader by his niece, Rosalie Courteaux. She remained leader of the tribe until her death in 1883. It was during this period that the tribe lost much of its land and was pushed to the extreme ends of the bayous and into the swamps where there was little land suitable for farming. The tribe was forced to shift its economic base from horticulture to hunting/gathering, and this subsistence change resulted in the establishment of a number of settlements in one region, as previously described.

Following the death of Rosalie Courteaux, tribal political influence was exercised through the heads of the families in each of the settlements. It has previously been demonstrated that these settlments were in frequent contact with each other and that the families in the settlements were interrelated through marriage. Each settlement had a number of men who acted together as an informal council. The frequent contacts among the

settlements provided the opportunity for the formation of consensus on issues of common concern. Essentially, there were two. Houmas should not interact socially with blacks and Houmas should not attend black schools. The fact that the Houmas in the different settlements and parishes refused to send their children to black schools is indicative of a political decision to this effect having been made within the structure of tribal government. There is evidence of this collective action in the repeated efforts of Houma leaders to gain access to separate educational facilities for their children (83.7(b):92-98).

During the period from the late nineteenth century to the formation of the tribal council in the 1970s, the structure of tribal government is best characterized as a series of informal consensual decisions by heads of households in the various Houma settlements. Speck has accurately described this system of decision-making as follows:

> The present non-integration of the Houma as a tribe, without headmen and council, would seem to make the question of approach to the affairs of the group a most perplexing one in any attempt to deal with it as such. A means, however, is open by which to recognize and to deal with the people as a unit. This lies in the bond of kinship. It is relatively strong.... Ties of kinship are conscientiously maintained, and marriages are contracted within them. The families mainfest pride in their names, their history and hold prestige among themselves as Houma Indians. It may be found, broadly applied, that the entire Houma group is now a distended consanguineous family (1941:10-11; emphasis added).

Decisions emerged out of what Speck referred to as the "distended consanguineous family" that constituted the Houma tribe, and these were carried out, on a day-to-day basis, by the heads of the families. Because the Houmas, as a people, were kept illiterate, and because the whites who dominated the

political structures of the parishes had no interest in the Houmas, few of their leaders' names and political decisions were ever recorded. It is not possible to provide a chronology of leadership for the separate Houma settlements. However, the names of some leaders are found in the records and allow for the conclusion that a continuity of tribal political influence did exist throughout the period. This political continuity is described in detail on pages 54 through 67 of the petition.

Contemporary Political System

With the formation of the tribal council, much of the leadership responsibilities shifted from the settlements to the districts and their representatives. The present United Houma Nation, Inc., is composed of a council of fourteen members. These representatives are distributed, according to population, among five parishes containing the majority of the tribal members. The underlying intention was to have one representative on the tribal council from each of the largest Houma settlements in a given parish. The five parishes are Terrebonne with five representatives, Lafourche and Jefferson with three representatives each, St. Mary with two representatives, and St Bernard with one representative. Within Terrebonne Parishe the representation is further broken down into what amount to districts.

Council-members (representatives) are elected every two years on a staggered basis; that is, council members from Lafourche and Jefferson parish are elected in the same year, while those from Terrebonne, St. Mary, and St. Bernard are elected the following

year. Anyone can run for the tribal council and there is no limitation on the number of consecutive terms an individual may serve. Minimum qualifications to be met in running for office are to be a tribal member for at least two years, a high school graduate, or, if the individual lacks a high school or GED diploma, a petition from at least 50% of the eligible voters in the district where the individual lives.

Officers are elected through the tribal council. There is a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, and parliamentarian. Tribal elections are announced in local newspapers listing the date and time of election. Voting takes place through ballots which are mailed out and returned to the tribal office at Golden Meadow. Prior to voting, every parish holds an open meeting to explain the election process. Public announcements are made detailing the time and place of these hearings. The hearings in each parish are organized and run by the parish representatives, although the entire tribal council attends each hearing, functioning as a support, informational, and oversight group.

The tribal council meets once a month, and these meetings are open to the general tribal membership. In the recent past parish representatives held meetings at the local level to inform their constituency about council meetings. However, in general, constituencies are today allowing their representatives to deal with most issues before the tribe on an independent basis. This seeming independence is a bit illusionary. Council members consistently report that they receive calls from constituents, and that there is a steady feedback occurring through the kin

structure that assures they are aware of the views and sentiments of those they represent.

There is an explicit policy of the tribal council not to interfere with the autonomy of parish representatatives. Members of the tribal council are careful not to intercede in the discussions and activities occurring in each others' parishes. This means that representatives have strong loyalties to their parishes, resulting in rivalries among the parishes for political leadership. This is particularly significant for Terrebonne Parish where the representatives do not compete with each other for office.

On occasion the members of a settlement will join together to support or oppose an issue of purely local concern. Such was the case in 1984 when the town of Golden Meadow sought to extend its corporate line south so as to include the area occupied by the Houmas within the town's jurisdiction. Tribal members joined together and signed petitions opposing the move. Over two hundred tribal members signed the petition. They were joined by the few non-Indian residents of the area. As a result the effort by the town was abandoned.

There are, however, conflicts among the individual representatives. Some of these are more of a personal nature. In one instance, involving a state program known as the "Crisis Intervention Program," two representatives engaged in a heated discussion over the allocation of funds. One favored limiting the availability of the program to elderly members of the tribe, while the other wanted the program to be more broadly applied. In the course of the argument, one representative accused the

other of being lazy, implying that this was the explanation for his wanting to expand the program so that his family would be eligible for the funds. The other representative reacted by striking the first. The tribal council promptly removed the aggressor and appointed a replacement.

In another instance, one member of the tribal council represented himself as a chief, and using tribal stationery, urged the governor to appoint a particular individual as the governor's Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The tribal council had previously voted to support a rival candidate. When the letter became public there was a move on the tribal council to remove the errant member. A hearing was held, and after considerable discussion, he was allowed to remain on the council, but was sharply criticized.

Sometimes the disputes facing the tribal council reflect differences between the parishes over the availablility of resources. In one recent instance, the representatives from Jefferson Parish requested that the tribal council fund a van to transport individuals to an Indian education program. After a lengthy discussion, the council decided against the proposal, stating that there was public transportation available in Jefferson Parish, and that any funds appropriated would be best used to transport people living in rural areas. Such urban-rural conflicts are not uncommon, but neither do they result in a disruption of the tribal government, primarily because the dichotomy is less important than the ties the individuals maintain with their home settlements.

Such disputes, while somewhat common, are not unexpected, nor

do they overshadow the important and continuing common efforts of the tribal council. Tribal recognition, of course, is an example of an activity that transcends any parish differences. Additionally, there is a job training program and a summer youth program that benefit Houmas throughout the parishes. The tribal council also serves as a vehicle to express concerns of its members, particularly those related to the diminishing fishing resources, the reduction in access to those resources, and the increasing costs of operation. The council members have strong interests in providing educational and health services throughout the parishes. These represent ongoing concerns of a tribal nature, concerns that are shared by all of the representatives from the different parishes.

Finally, the tribal council has sought to expand its facilities and services in two parishes, Lafourche and Terrebonne. As has been pointed out, the tribe leases the old Indian school building in Golden Meadow from the parish for use as a tribal center. The tribe also uses the Methodist school in Dulac for similar purposes, and since 1980, has owned the former Indian school in Montegut. In this case the parish had decided to close the school and return it to the family that had the reversionary rights to the land. While at the same time the tribe was using the building with the permission of the parish's governing body, the Police Jury. Kirby Verret, the tribal council chairman, spoke with the superintendent of schools about the tribe purchasing the building and was informed that there were twenty-seven heirs who would have to approve the sale. All but one agreed to the payment of $60,000 for the property.

Verret took his case to the papers and the individual relented, agreeing to a much lower price. Then Verret and the other representatives went to the Police Jury and requested a share of the federal funds to finance the purchase. The Police Jury agreed and granted the tribe $36,000. The property was the formally deeded to the tribe. Steve Cheramie, the tribal chairman at the time, signed the papers and the tribe now owns and manages the property, which it uses for a number of purposes, not the least of which has been as a pentecostal church, led by one of the tribal members.

Summary

The structure of the Houma tribe has undergone a number of changes since its first contact with whites at the end of the seventeenth century. At that time there were well established villages with formal leadership. The eighteenth century saw the movemnent of the tribe south from the area of Baton Rouge until, by the end of the century, its members were living in villages along Lafourche and Terrebonne bayous. It continued to be represented by chiefs who were recognized by the Spanish, French, English and American governments.

After the American purchase of the Louisiana Territory, and its settlement by American planters, there was an increase in hostilities between the Houmas and the new arrivals. Inevitably, the Houmas lost their lands and were pushed to the southern extremes of the bayous. During this critical period the tribe

was led by Rosalie Courteaux. After her death in the last quarter of the nineteeenth century, the tribe dispersed along the southern reaches of the bayous, establishing a number of settlements, many of which survive today. There was another significant change; the tribe shifted it economic base from horticulture to hunting and gathering. Protected by its isolation the tribe survived as a political entity made up of settlements, each led by the heads of the households. As has been amply demonstrated, these settlements were closely related by marriage and in constant contact with each other. Speck has concisely described this political structure, one common to hunting and gathering groups. Each settlement had leaders who dealt with the affairs of that settlement. These leaders were in frequent contact with each other. In addition, tribal members shared common values, which we have described in the petition and in this response.

Beginning in the 1970s there were two movements -- one in Terrebonne Parish and the other in Lafourche Parish -- for more formal organization. In time the two segments of the tribe merged and out of that merger came the present tribal organization. Decisionmaking continues to operate on the level of the settlement. At times it is necessary for the settlements to join together to deal with the parishes. Finally, when dealing with common interests at the state or federal level, the tribal council is paramount. As we have demonstrated, there has not been a period of time since first contact when the tribe was without political influence over its members. Ultimately, that influence has always seen expression through the large kindreds

that make up and bound the United Houma Tribe.

RESPONSE TO OTHER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED IN THE SECOND LETTER OF OBVIOUS DEFICIENCIES

In the OD Letter received May 19, 1987 a request was made for a complete membership list. This has been provided under separate cover, and is submitted with this response. In addition, a number of questions were raised about the criteria for membership. To clarify the meaning of the language, the United Houma Nation, Inc. amended its constitution in 1987 as follows:

Article III - Membership

Section 1(A) Criteria

All persons:

(1) who can trace descendency from a list of known Houma Indian ancestors as identified by tribal resolution duly approved by the United Houma Nation Tribal Council, and (2) who reside in the state of Louisiana, or (3) who are known to the members of the United Houma Nation Tribal Council or its delegatees, and who identify with the Houma Tribe, shall be eligible for membership.

Section 1(B) Membership

Persons seeking membership must meet the criteria stated in Article III, Section 1 of this constitution and must apply to and be approved by the United Houma Nation Tribal Council or

its delagatees. The burden of proof to establish eligibility for membership rests with the applicant.

Section 2

The United Houma Nation Tribal Council shall be empowered to establish rules regarding the enrollment of its members and the loss of membership.

Section 3

This article amends the United Houma Nation Constitution and any part inconsistent herewith is hereby revoked.

The BAR requested copies of the governing documents of the Houma Tribe, Inc. and the Houma Alliance, Inc. To date, those documents have not been found. If copies are found they will be forwarded immediately. Finally, while the tribe would like to supply an additional copy of all genealogical materials, it cannot, due to the lack of funds.



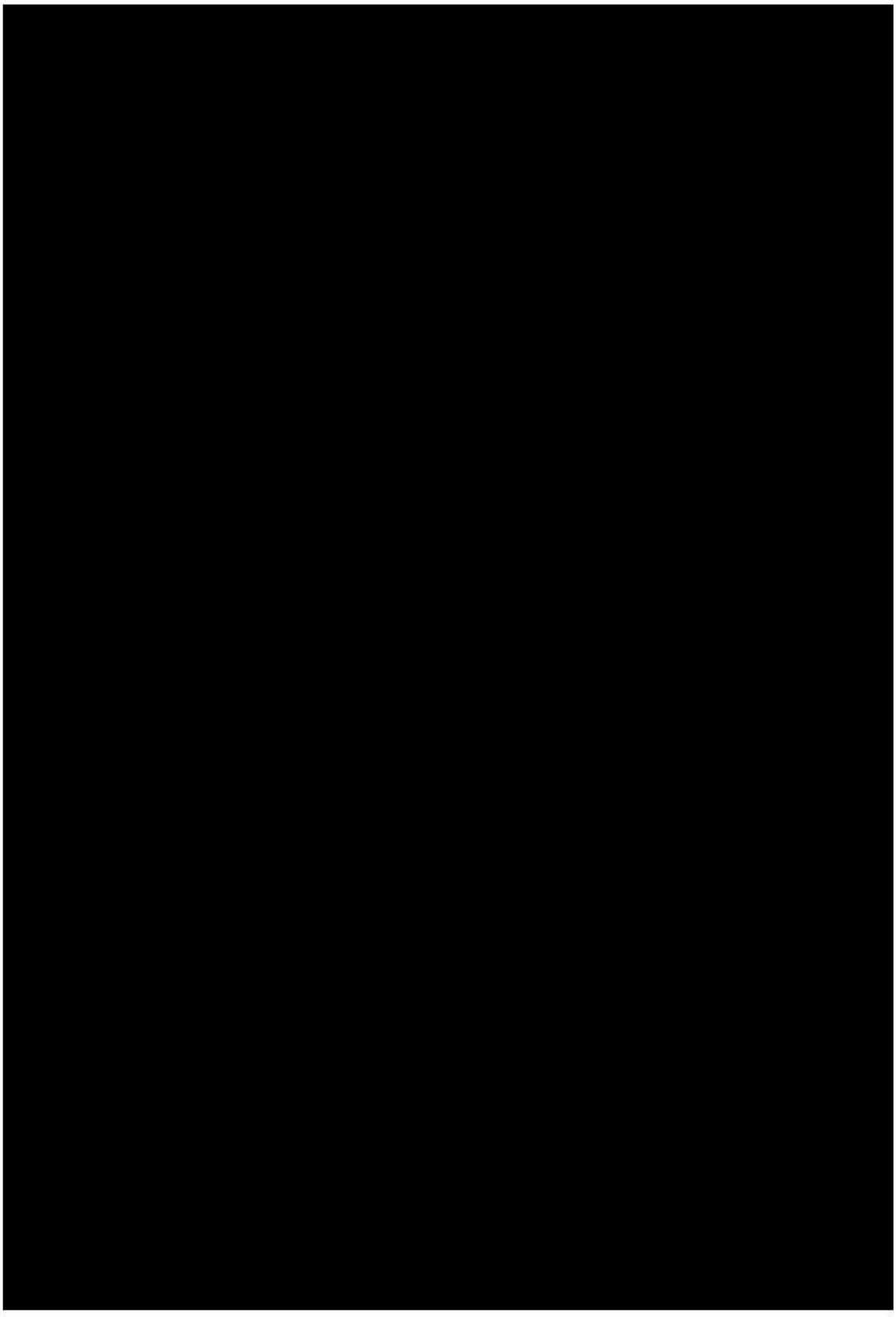
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1963-64



"5 Generations"
1983



1972

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1979