

## Grand Isle Diaries Transcripts : 02 Mosquito Swarm

1: Oh yeah, we had a lot of mosquitoes them days. Grandpa used to take the palmettos, and they'd take it, and they'd whip them. They called it a horsetail, and then, they tied string for the handles. It was a nice piece of work, and they used that, you know, to fight them off.

2: When we first moved down here, yes, they had mosquitoes. When you went outside at night after it got sunset, we had to dress like the Lone Ranger, put a mask in front of our face because we wouldn't (unintelligible) mosquitoes, and you better make sure you had good screen on your house, and a lot of people, of course, a lot of the young kids don't know what an ice pick is right now, but you had to have a ice pick in case your screen might have had a little dent in it to close that hole because they would come in that hole and at night when you never had no AC or anything like that because the power, the electric didn't come down here until the early fifties, 51 52, whenever Entergy brought electricity down here, so you had to sleep with the windows open, and you could here the mosquitoes humming outside, singing. Mosquitoes, they had, we had mosquitoes, yes.

3: But people came to Grand Isle for many years within the thirties and forties of the 1800s looking for respite from the yellow fever epidemics and the heat in the summer, and they were here. One of the stories that I've been told is that people would come from New Orleans and other areas to be buried in the sand on the beach and let the sun bake them and heat it up because it was good for rheumatoid arthritis. When Lafitte came to the Grand Isle area somewhere between 1803 and 1805 and established a colony on a Grand Terre island and he had approximately 1200 people, men, women, and children, living there at the time that General Andrew Jackson sent his troopers there to destroy Lafitte's stronghold. Whatever booty they captured was taken in to the New Orleans area around the town of Lafitte, of what is the town of Jean Lafitte now, and they would set up their market for people from New Orleans to go and choose from his merchandise. He would visit the homes of people on Grand Isle because some of the people here sailed with him. Some of the people who settled on Grand Isle originally came with him when he came from the Dominican Republic down in the West Indies and settled in Grand Isle.

4: They did have some of the people that lived on the island, they would go pirating with him, and after it was over, they would just go home, and nothing was ever said. When they used to set those ships on fire out there, then the people of Grand Isle would kind of peek through the trees and just never dare come on that side.

5: (unintelligible) whenever they land a boat

4: burn it up

6: burn it up (unintelligible) killed everybody on the boat

7: Mom would tell me about Jean Lafitte because he used to come over here and then play cards with some of island people, and one night, they were playing cards, and my dad's great-great-aunt or whatever, ancestor was baking biscuits or something for him while they played cards, and she came over to the card table and kind of laid the platter down for Lafitte to look at the biscuits if they were presentable, you know, if they were okay, you know, and the game broke up in the wee hours of the morning, and he went back to his house or wherever he was staying, and as they cleaning up, they noticed a gold coin stuck underneath the pan, and they panicked because they were afraid Jean was eating for that, you know. My great-great-great-aunt might have stolen the gold coin from him, and you didn't want to mess with Jean Lafitte, you know, so they jumped in the pirogue and paddled right away, you know, to catch up with Lafitte. "Here's your gold coin you left." He just laughed and told them to keep it, you know.