Celebrating the 'Glorious Eighth'

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Events still commemorate the Battle of New Orleans, which had its 198th anniversary on Jan. 8, and will continue through Jan. 12.

How did you celebrate the Eighth of January this year? If you answered, "I didn't," you're probably not alone. While the commemoration of the Battle of New Orleans is not much of a celebration today, during the 19th century up until the Civil War it was an official holiday in the city of New Orleans superseding even the Fourth of July in displays of patriotic fervor, according to Shelene Roumillat, a doctoral candidate in history at Tulane.

While it was recognized nationally, it was a particular source of pride in New Orleans, says Roumillat, who will speak about how the holiday was celebrated in New Orleans at the Old U.S. Mint of the Louisiana State Museum on Thursday (Jan. 10) at 6 p.m.

"There was a lot of skepticism about whether New Orleanians and Louisianans had developed enough of an attachment to the U.S. to be willing to defend it," Roumillat says. "This is the moment that Louisiana earned her right to be a part of the Union.

This is the claim to be embraced as an equitable member of the republic."

Prior to the Civil War, residents of the city would show up en masse to celebrate the end of the series of battles where the local forces led by Gen. Andrew Jackson routed the British just outside the city in St. Bernard Parish. It was a "festive and joyous day" that included parades and balls.

"It was very similar to what we see during Mardi Gras," Roumillat says. "People would gather early in the morning. The different militias and veterans of the battle would gather, military bands would march in the streets, flags would be flown. It was a day where the city stopped and went out to see the processions."

The "Glorious Eighth" no longer receives the same sort of treatment today, but Roumillat says annual events are held at the Chalmette Battlefield to commemorate the Battle of New Orleans.