

## Historied Louisiana Coastal Communities:

### Grand Isle

The only Louisiana coastal community located on a barrier island, Grand Isle at the southern tip of Jefferson Parish (county) has been inhabited for many, long centuries, first by the Chitimacha Native Americans (<http://www.chitimacha.gov/>) and then by Europeans since the 1700s to farm the land and harvest the sea. Residents have also welcomed visitors in the summer since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the presence of them every summer creates a busy mixture of residents and long-time visitors keen on beach lounging and recreational fishing. Oil and gas companies also use the island to base some of their ocean drilling activities; the U.S. Coast Guard has a station as does the La. Wildlife and Fisheries agency. As storms repeatedly challenge the island, the permanent population has declined but continues at about 1300 with all the needed institutions in place: town hall, post office, school, library, grocery store, community center, churches, shrimp “shed”, newspaper, state park, gift shops, snow ball stand, boat marinas and of course restaurants offering local seafood. Numerous fishing rodeos, a song bird festival and annual art show attract visitors and require commitments of considerable effort by the residents. The Grand Isle Community Development Team (<http://gicdt.org/>) leads the way in these activities.

Two worlds exist geographically on Grand Isle – in the stilted fishing camps strung along the beach and in the residents’ homes that extend from the beach road back toward the bay in what is called “The Trees.” Some visitors never know the rich island life that goes on in the historied homes scattered in the large live oak stand; the narrow, winding path-like streets create a web of access sheltered by the trees.

All dimensions of Grand Isle life are at risk from the possible loss to the oil leak of the pristine beaches and the rich seafood catches from the bays behind the island. The aging beloved homes of the locals, carriers of the history and beaming of the culture, are dependent on owners to be maintained and used and loved. We offer here a collection of the images of those home as a reminder of just one more part of these historied communities that is now at risk.

The photos were taken April 17<sup>th</sup>, just three days before the BP oil rig Deepwater Horizon exploded and the horrible saga of the aftermath began to play itself out.

# GRAND ISLE, LOUISIANA

April 17, 2010







































