



CHAPTER 2

BLINDY AND BENJY'S
LOUISIANA

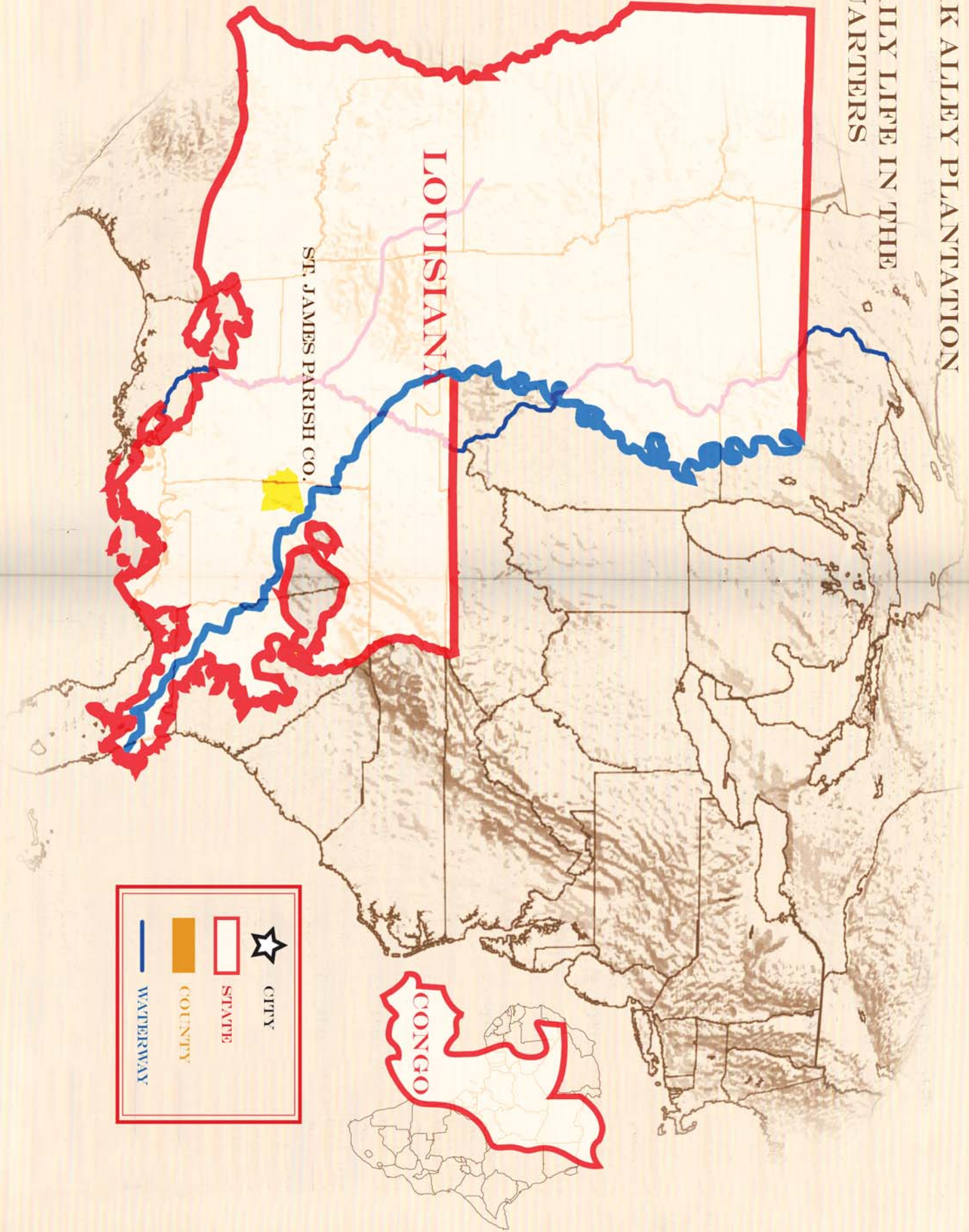
OAK ALLEY PLANTATION
DAILY LIFE IN THE
QUARTERS

LOUISIANA

ST. JAMES PARISH CO.

CONGO

	CITY
	STATE
	COUNTY
	WATERWAY



Blindy and Benjy's Louisiana

Life along the Mississippi River for African Americans enslaved in Louisiana varied based on their locations in urban or rural settings. African Americans enslaved in urban port cities such as New Orleans, were surrounded by European Americans, free blacks, enslaved African Americans from other parts of the country that worked on ships, and enslaved African Americans sent to the city to be sold. In fact, because the number of African Americans in Louisiana was so large between the 1840's and 1850's, the fear of European American enslavers that those they enslaved might get lost in the sea of free blacks and escape, was great. It was so great at this time that Louisiana laws fluctuated between requiring that free black sailors and river men coming into the state automatically be jailed to requiring them to register for passes. Other free blacks during this time were also required to register for passes or face the probability of enslavement. *The Colored American*, an anti slavery paper from New York, regularly published accounts of free blacks that visited Louisiana only to find themselves captured and then enslaved by European Americans. The Missouri legislature was not operating under unfounded fears since the runaway advertisements that dotted the papers of Antebellum Louisiana detailed the escapes of numerous enslaved African Americans that ran away from steamboats along the New Orleans levee.

The main crop that lined both banks of the Mississippi river in Louisiana was sugar. In June 1842 in St. James Parish alone, almost two hundred sugar planters "approach (ed) the representatives of the nation, in Congress assembled, earnestly to pray them to come to the relief of an industry involving an outlay of capital of \$52,000,000" by asking for an increase of the duties on imported sugar. Many of these plantation owners, such as Samuel Fagot, The Armant Brothers, G. Dupare, R. Zocoul, C. M. Shepherd, and J.T. Roman and other members of the Roman family, ran these prosperous sugar plantations that supplied the commodity to places around the United States and Great Britain.

Plantation life for African Americans consisted of grueling work from sun up to sun down. Sugar plantation work was no exception. Enslaved African Americans on sugar plantations worked in gangs (groups with specific tasks) and labored from planting in the field to processing the cane in the sugar-house. The location of sugar plantations lent enslaved African Americans easy access to the Mississippi, it also lent them easy access to free and enslaved blacks from other areas of the country. This proximity provided the opportunity for those enslaved to learn of rural enslavement in the Deep South and other parts of the United States, and it also enabled them to learn of freedom.

