

## **Level I: “What Happened” Questions: Digging deeper into the 6-W’s**

### **1. Who did what ...**

Chicago Mill and Lumber company came into the swampy lands of Arkansas in 1906. They began to cut timber and ship it out. This was done with the help of farmhands and locals. They began to plant crops because it was profitable, and as they found out, it brought settlers to the area (who would help grow the local economy, thus repeating the cycle). Since they were a lumber company, they did this as public officials. The decisions they made at this point in time and later on were both of their free will. The farmers knew that good things would come if they continued to do what they were doing, and they were right. Eventually, all the settlers who had moved there decided to try to plant some profitable crops such as sweet potatoes, cabbages, grain products, and “King Cotton”, of course.

### **3. When and where did it happen ... and why then and there?**

The first time people began to drain the area and take advantage of the fertile soil was in 1906. The Buffalo Island area, along with the areas around it, had some of the most profitable soil at the time. Due to the St. Francis River on one side and Big Lake on the other, the soil was very moist and nutrient-filled even after they drained it.

## **Level II: “Says Who” Questions: Analyzing Sources & Evidence**

### **6. How do we know? ... Is the information from a primary source (eyewitness or participant) or secondary source (commentator or historian after the event)?**

The information is coming from many different sources, but mostly is coming from local historians. They have stories, pictures, tools, and other types of evidence that help us tell the story of our land. Historians are our secondary sources. However, we also contacted older men who would recall working the land as a young boy. They tell us their firsthand memories of the farm tools and the swampy land. These men are our primary sources.

### **7. In what ways is the source biased? ... Does the source seem to have a particular point of view, and does that affect its accuracy or its trustworthiness?**

The sources have different point of views. The men we interviewed have a first-person point of view because they were there themselves. All of the other sources are third-person point of views because they are telling the story about others to us. This does affect its accuracy and trustworthiness. The men who were there and recall all of these things are likely to be more accurate than those who weren't.

## **Level III: “So What” Questions: Evaluating What Matters**

### **11. Does this event in your local history illustrate one of the “recurring themes” that historians study?**

This project illustrates the theme of “Frontiers in History.” The swampy, uninhabited lands were a frontier before they were cleared and used to plant crops. Since becoming a flat-land area with rows of fields that stretch out in every direction, the Buffalo Island area has

become one of the largest soybean and cotton suppliers in the nation. Metaphorically speaking, the wetlands of our past were a frontier that would lead to millions of people's livelihoods.

**Level IV: "What Now" Questions: Connecting History to Current Choices**

**12. In what ways is this past event in local history related to current issues or choices facing people in your community?**

The reaping of the benefits of our land is related to several current issues and choices. For example, about two years ago there was an incident where one of the workers fell into a grain bin and was unable to escape. Also, due to all of our spare land being used for farming purposes, we have gotten used to the inconveniences that come along with it. This includes having to come indoors when crop dusters spray the fields by our houses, several hundred workers being put out of business when the rain season is bad, being woken up in the late summer when the gins start up, driving through big plumes of smoke when farmers burn their fields in the spring, and many more. Some choices that people face is whether or not they should go into the farming business. If you aren't born into a family business, it's considerably harder, but it's still a choice. Also, some teenagers pick cotton as a summer job. The demographic of the land has molded the way that we all live.

**13. After learning about this event or person's story, what questions does it make you ask ... *the persons involved in the event?* ... *the person writing the document or telling the story?* ... *your classmates?* ... *yourself?***

After learning about the evolution of the area, there are a few questions I often find myself wondering. What it was like to walk through here a hundred years ago? How many generations have had to do all of the farming themselves? Do I have any friends whose ancestors were one of the clearers?