CONTINUITY OF CASTE: FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE VIEUX CARRÉ OF NEW ORLEANS, 1804-1820

Nicholas Foreman, BA

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2012

APPROVED:

F. Todd Smith, Major Professor
Harland Hagler, Committee Member
Jennifer Jensen Wallach, Committee Member
Robert McCaslin, Chair of the Department of
History
James D. Meernik, Acting Dean of the
Toulouse Graduate School

Foreman, Nicholas. Continuity of Caste: Free People of Color in the Vieux Carré of New Orleans, 1804-1820. Master of Arts (History), May 2012, 90 pp., 3 tables, 3 illustrations, bibliography, 43 titles.

Because of its trademark racial diversity, historians have often presented New Orleans as a place transformed by incorporation into the American South following 1804. Assertions that a comparatively relaxed, racially ambiguous Spanish slaveholding regime was converted into a two-caste system of dedicated racial segregation by the advent of American assumption have been posited by scholars like Frank Tannenbaum, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, and a host of others. Citing dependence on patronage, concubinage, and the decline in slave manumissions during the antebellum period, such studies have employed descriptions of the city's prominent free people of color to suggest that the daily lives of non-whites in New Orleans experienced uniform restriction following 1804, and that the Crescent City's transformation from Atlantic *society with slaves* to rigid *slave society* forced free people of color out of the heart of the city, known as the Vieux Carré, and into "black neighborhoods" on the margins of town.

Despite the popularity of such generalized themes in the historiography, however, the extant sources housed in New Orleans's valuable archival repositories can be used to support a vastly divergent narrative. By focusing on individual free people of color, or *libres*, rather than the non-white community as a whole, this paper seeks to show that free people of color were self determined in both public and private aspects of daily life, irrespective of governmental regime, and that their physical presence and political agency were not entirely eroded by the change in administration. Through evaluation of the geography of free black-owned properties listed in the city's notarial archives, as well as baptisms, births, deaths, and marriages listed in archdiocese

ledgers, I show that the family and community lives of free people of color in New Orleans' oldest neighborhood appeared alive and well throughout the territorial period.

Copyright 2012

by

Nicholas Foreman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and guidance of my family, friends, and professors. Research trips to Southern Louisiana, conference presentations, and other efforts involved in its creation were funded in part by the University of North Texas History Department, which has been unbelievably supportive. The importance of this type of environment cannot be understated, and I will always be greatful toDr. Richard McCaslin and the rest of UNT's history department.

Professors Dr. F. Todd Smith and Dr. Harland Hagler were the reason I wanted to attend graduate school, and both have continued to be the biggest influence upon my development throughout my studies.I would also like to thank Dr. Mike Campbell for helping me to flesh out the details and organization of this thesis in his local history seminar. Dr. Campbell's credentials speak for themselves, but his kind personality and thorough approach to teaching research and writing are something I'll spend the rest of my career trying to emulate. One final faculty member, Dr. Jennifer Wallach, was the first professor to encourage meto think of myself as a scholar, which has made all the difference in my writing. Shesets examples in her own workthat are inspiring to everyone around her, and I can only hope to one day affect my own students as much as she has affected me.

Thanks are also due to the staff and librarians at the Historic New Orleans Collection, as well as the New Orleans Notarial Archive Research Center, who not only walked me through the their collections, but made my time in New Orleans enjoyable. Both of these repositories have been vital part of the area of Louisiana studies, and their significance will hopefully continue to be acknowledged by scholars for generations to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. THE LEGACY OF SPANISH RULE 11

3. GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION, CLAIBORNE, AND THE FREE BLACKMILITIA 19

4. SOCIAL MOBILITY, NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS, AND THE DAILY LIVES OF FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR 28

5. ST. DOMINGUE REFUGEES AND THE REPLENISHMENT OF LIBRE CULTURE 40

6. FREE BLACK CITIZENS AND HOMEOWNERS IN THE NOTARIAL ARCHIVES 48

7. FREE WOMEN OF COLOR 56

8. LIBRES AND RELIGIOUS LIFE IN NEW ORLEANS 65

9. CONCLUSION 71

Appendices

A. SELECTED DATA FROM VIEUX CARRÉ SURVEY 76

B. VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF LIBRE SETTLEMENT 79

C. SELECTED BAPTISMAL RECORDS 83

BIBLIOGRAPHY 86

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Because of it'strademark ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as repeated changes in its governmental administration, New Orleans is often presented as a place where racial ambiguity and Spanish leniency werealtered foreverby incorporation into the American Southin 1804. In the traditions of scholars like Frank Tannenbaum and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, many of the published historical works concerned with slaves and free people of color in Louisiana have supported the notion thata comparatively liberal, three-caste Spanish slaveholding regime was converted upon the arrival of American authority into a two-caste Anglo system of dedicated racial segregation. Citing dependence onwhitepatronage, concubinage, and the decline in slave manumissions during the Antebellum Period, a number of historians have suggested that social and physical mobility for free people of color, or *libres*, in New Orleans systematicallydiminished after 1804, and that the city's transformation from an Atlantic *society with slaves* to a rigid *slave society* forced libres out of the heart of the city, known as the Vieux Carré, and into "black neighborhoods" on the margins of town.[1]

While a handful oftheses and dissertations to have dealt specifically with free people of color in antebellum New Orleans, most have supported this notion of overall constriction on libre autonomy under American hegemony. This thesis, on the other hand,seeks to show that free people of color were able to create and maintain a certain degree of self-reliance and

[1] Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (New York: Random House, 1946), and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995); See also Gilberto Freyre *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development in Brazilian Civilization,* trans Sam Putnam (A.A. Knopf, 1946). The Spanish term *libre* is used in both historical and contemporary sources to differentiate betwee free people of color and their enslaved counterparts. The concept of *slave society* versus a *society with slaves* was popularized by historian Ira Berlin, who described a *slave society* as being dependent on a slave driven economy to survive, wereas a *society with slaves* participated in slavery, but was less hinged on the institution for its livelihood. See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: the first two centuries of slavery in North America*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1998), 17-19.

independence that existed in the streets and homes of the city,irrespective of governmental regime. While it was by no means a racially equal culture before or after 1804, the self-determinism and mobility of thisfree black caste developed on its own during French and Spanish periodsof the eighteenth century, rather than being uniformly destroyed, continued to evolve long after the advent of Anglo control. Additionally, instead of being relegated to the outskirts of town, free persons of color continued to own homes, run businesses, and interact with fellow citizens of all racial distinctions in each of New Orleans's neighborhoods, a fact which can be traced through the property records all the way up until emancipation.

By focusing on individual free people of color, rather than the non-white population as a whole, the daily lives and interpersonal characteristics of the free black community are used to demonstrate a level of complexity and agency amongst libresthat has seldom been acknowledged by previoushistorians' efforts. Through evaluation of the geography of free black-owned properties listed in the city's notarial archives, as well as baptisms, births, deaths, and marriages kept in archdiocese ledgers, I show that a culturally and economically significant caste of free people of color appeared alive and well in New Orleans -and the Vieux Carré in particular-well into the antebellum period, and that generalizations are counterproductive when seeking to understand such a complex location as New Orleans.[2]

To demonstrate this continued presence and viability on the part of New Orleans's non-white inhabitants, this work relies heavily on the city's notarial archives, which contain

[2] Among the major works being argued against with regards to racial quarantine are Ben Hobratsch, "Creole angel: the self-identity of the free people of color of antebellum New Orleans." Thesis (M.A.)--University of North Texas, 2006; Sybil Kein, *Creole: the history and legacy of Louisiana's free people of color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 2000; Amy R. Sumpter, "Segregation of the free people of color in antebellum New Orleans in 1850 and the changing nature of the construction of race between the colonial and antebellum periods, 1718-1860." Thesis (M.A.)--University of Colorado, 2002; and Daphne Spain. "Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* Vol. 441, Race and Residence in American Cities (Jan., 1979), pp. 82-96.

handwritten and printed volumes of records for everything from real estate sales and permits to build, to slave manumissions and estate inheritances. Kept by an ever-expanding list of public notaries throughout New Orleans's entire history, the notarial records for the early American period in Louisiana bear the signatures of white and libre citizens alike, and show the involvement of free people of color in a variety of municipal and business-related activities. Contrary to the notion that their rights to legal recourse were uniformly revoked, a significant amount of New Orleans's libre population utilized these public notaries and the court system to defend their freedom, distribute inheritance, and secure ownership of their property againsta burgeoning population and frequently ambiguous claims to chattel or real estate in the early nineteenth century. Free persons of color owned businesses,socialized with their neighbors, and attended church services in the center of town,all of whichcontributed to New Orleans's cultural and economic development throughout the antebellum period. Though they seldom experienced the freedoms and privileges enjoyed by most whites, libres from all over the city still managed to carve out individual spheres of relative comfort and influence in American New Orleans. Despite the efforts of either government in charge of Louisiana, the Crescent City and its free people of color were in many ways self-determined.

Throughout the city's history, New Orleans's large mixed race slave and libre populations, and its connections to the Caribbean world have been the subject of fascination and curiosity. More than a recent phenomenon amongst historians, nearly every surviving travel account from the early territorial period features commentary marveling at the uncommon diversity of skin tone on the city's streets, the mixture of languages and customs visible in its populace, and many other examples which present New Orleans as "otherworldly" in one fashion or another. Benjamin Latrobe's exhaustively cited travel journals from 1819, for example, is the

most oft-used example of this, and its repeated employment by historians has contributed greatly to the widespread proliferation of romantic depictions of Congo Square, multiracial chaos in the markets and on the levee, and proud Gallic cultural traditions amongst both white and black Creoles.[3]

The same tendency to embellish or generalize when discussing race and slavery in New Orleans has plagued the professional fields of comparative slavery, Southern Studies, and African American history for generations, and will be actively argued against in the coming chapters. Since UB Phillips, Frank Tannenbaum, and other pioneers of the concentration first attempted to explain the troubled history of sanctioned human bondage in the first half of the twentieth century, their respective assumptions of paternalism and religious "traditions" of slavery from one locality to the next have widely influenced future scholars. Although a number of alternate theories have subsequently emerged, these early generalizations still live on in many waysto this day. Specifically, Latin American slavery is still widely regarded as "relaxed," and free people of color are seldom depicted as anything but middling pawns caught up in the administrative adjustments of one white faction or another.[4]

Within the last two decades, historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall has added her own touch to the popular imagery of colonial Louisiana, primarily with heraward winning book, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana.* By suggesting the near ubiquity of maroon -or runaway slave- culture and clandestine black economies, Hall has both inspired and influenced more recent scholars of slavery in Louisiana. Although it employed a remarkable amount of primary documentation on the origins of Louisiana's slave population, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*quite possibly over-

[3] Benjamin Latrobe, *Impressions respecting New Orleans; diary & sketches, 1818-1820* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951).

[4] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *AmericanNegro slavery: a survey of the supply, employment and control of Negro labor as determined by the plantation regime* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).

emphasized the temporary existence of maroon encampments, systems of trade and information amongst nonwhites, and the oft-employed theory of Catholic Spanish leniency. As a result, Hall's admirable scholarship has served in many instances to keep certainaspects of the Tannenbaum thesis and other generalized "modules of history" alive in the historiography. Admittedly, *Africans in Louisiana* was one of the first works to espouse the very same argument for agency amongst slaves and free blacks that this paper hopes to communicate.However, presenting colonial New Orleans in the foremost as a steamy, untamed wilderness under tenuous slave control in many ways contributes to the misconceptions and mythos that obscure some important qualities of libre life, from codified repression toeveryday banality,that existed in nineteenth century New Orleans.[5]

But however much these concepts dominate scholarship on this specific subject, they are of course not without opponents. Nearly three quarters of a century since the publication of *Slaves and Citizens* in 1946 has provided dozens of rebuttals from historians of all concentrations. Ira Berlin's seminal work *Generations of Captivity* was a major contribution to the breaking up of such generalizations in the historiography of slavery, and communicated to an entire generation of scholars the importance of considering context (i.e. time, location, and personality of individual slaves) when venturing a description of life under a given slave system.As Berlin worded it, "slaveholders severely circumvented the lives of enslaved people, but they never fully defined them. The slaves' history- like all human history- was made not only by what was done to them by also by what they did for themselves."[6]

---

[5]Latrobe, *Impressions respecting New Orleans*; and Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in colonial Louisiana the development of Afro-Creole culture in the eighteenth century* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

[6] Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*: *A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 4.

Of further aid to this revisionist movement aremore localized works, such as historian Paul F. Lachance's 1994 article "The Formation of a Three-Caste Society: Evidence from Wills in Antebellum New Orleans," and Thomas N. Ingersoll's 1999 book, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans.* Although differing in scope, and of course length, both works deal with the interaction between slaves, free people of color, and the administrators of Louisiana, and attempt to better explain the ways in which slavery and race in Louisiana developed independently of government policy. Lachance emphasized the free black community's use of wills and successions to argue for the existence of a propertied, third caste of libres that asserted their rights to inherit the estates of their relatives during the Antebellum Period. Instead of grouping slaveholding regions together geographically(i.e. Caribbean vs. North American), Lachance contends that some places, like New Orleans, exhibited characteristics of both "systems" of slavery.[7]

In *Mammon and Manon,*Thomas N. Ingersoll also espoused this notion of a less clear distinction between regimes, and employed the tragic French play *Manon Lescaut* as both a primary source and allegory to examine some of New Orleans's oldest romantic myths and racial preconceptions. *Mammon and Manon* utilized economic and population data to support the notion that, although many things changed over time in New Orleans, some facets of its identity, like slaveholding and a dedication to economic progress, developed early on, and did not experience the culture shock across regime that is often suggested. Instead, Louisiana was committed to slavery from its very beginnings, and though geographic and political obstacles prohibiting importation sometimes retarded the growth of its slave population, the city of New

[7] Paul F. Lachance, "The Formation of a Three-Caste Society: Evidence from Wills in Antebellum New Orleans," Social Science History, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), 211-242; and Thomas Ingersoll *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans*: *The First Slave Society in the Deep South*, 1718-1819 (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

Orleans exhibited many characteristics of the Deep South well before the Louisiana Purchase. Ingersoll also rejected the argument of white paternalism as the engine of social elevation for free blacks, something he referred to as the "dogged insistence by some historians that the free black caste was white created and maintained." He claims that this perspective of New Orleans's infinitely complex racial makeup "utterly obscures the real lives of individual free people of color and the fundamental nature of Antebellum Society."[8] Despite Lachance and Ingersoll's rebukes, however, these generalizations about Louisiana history persist in both scholarly work and collective historical memory, and further scholarship is needed to bring the fluid diversity of the Crescent City into better focus.

By showing continued occupation and utilization of the city's social and economic epicenter by free people of color and their families,this paperbuilds upon these earlier works to illustrate that much more went into the construction of daily and community life for non-whites in New Orleans than the racist traditions or personal benevolence of the white administrators charged with harnessing the city. Most importantly, free people of color formed family alliances and exercised political agency amongst themselves.They conducted business independent of white patronage, and relied upon others in the non-white community much more readily than has been acknowledged by the majority of previous authors.While whites significantly dominatedthe government and mainstream economics of the city, New Orleans's free people of color displayed a degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency that, in a number of ways, allowed them to maintain continuity of caste across the cultural shift of American assumption.

While it would be ideal to thoroughly examine the entirety of the pre-emancipation era, for the purposes of concision and efficiency, this thesis focusesintently on the period between the

[8]Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon*, 345.

change in possession in 1804 and the first federal census taken under statehood in 1820. Using that Census as a cut off date allows for the use of three sets of census records (1805, 1810, and 1820, respectively),and the consideration of the transitional, territorial, and statehood phases altogether. The decade and a half leading up to 1820 also encompasses a swath of time in which the city underwent rapid economic and population growth, including a deluge of refugee whites, free persons of color, and slaves of all hues from the island of St. Domingue. These new citizens assumed a multitude of professional and cultural roles upon disembarking on the levee, and revitalized both the Gallic and free black demographics of New Orleans to an extremely important degree.Refugees intermarried extensively with *nativos de la ciudad*, crowded the church pews of St. Louis Cathedral, operated businesses, and significantly impacted the policy and racial makeup of the Vieux Carré and other neighborhoods.[9]

As the town underwentthese changes, its demographic statistics were also recorded to varying degrees of legibility in official church documents. St. Louis Cathedral was the town's only official church at the time,andits ledgers contain over a thousand baptisms of free persons of color during the territorial period alone. All children baptized were listed by name, race, parentage, and the names of those serving as god parents. This thesis takes note ofthe frequency of free black god-parenthood-as opposed to the notions of white patronage emphasized so heavily in the historiography of slavery- to show self reliance amongst the libre community well into the antebellum era. Paternalism through god-parenthood has been emphasized by many scholars in the past, and understandably so, for white associations clearly benefitted some

[9] Paul F. Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring, 1988), pp. 109-141. For works that emphasize white paternalism through god-parenthood, see Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida,2007); and Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984).

members of the libre caste. However, these types of personal endorsements from white society were not always quite as simple or clear-cut as the commonexamples of privileged mulatto offspring of slave-owners, or other libres who relied on white associationsimply. On the contrary, whites served as godparents for light skinned, or *pardo* mulattoes and quaterones just as often as they did for so called “negro” or *moreno* slaves, and libres are the most common *padrinos* listed in the archdiocese records between 1804 and 1812. The church also took note of births, marriages, and deaths ofits congregation members, and in the process, left a number of valuablealternate sources with which we can compare the notary acts to further understand the interactions and affiliations of the libre community in daily and religious life.[10]

Because of these factors, the following chapters will focus intently on the first decade and a half of American rule, in the hopes thata more accurate depiction of the Latin/Anglo transition and its effect on free people of color will be thrown into relief. By comparing daily entries in the court archives, property records, and church documents across the period of regime change, it is possible to see which aspects of Louisiana’s rich cultural and racial history changedfollowing the end of Spanish control, and which did not. Where in the city the libre population lived from one period to the next, their importance to the local economy, and their interactions with both the white and slave communities will all be considered. Through analysis at an individual and familial level, it will be demonstrated that free people of color continued to lend their input to every part of the cityduring the American period, and that the installation of so-called Anglo slavery in no way washed out the influence of the libre caste as a whole.To help frame up these arguments, the traditions of Spanish stewardship that precluded the supposed onset of American

[10]*Slave and Free People of Color Baptismal Archives*, Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans Louisiana. The Spanish designations of *pardo*, meaning light skinned, or mulatto, and *moreno*, meaning dark skinned or negro, were used to signify parentage of a given non-white. *Padrino* is the Spanish term for godparent.

reform in Louisiana, as well as the political and geographical contexts in which this transition occurred must firstbe examined in further detail.

CHAPTER 2

THE LEGACY OF SPANISH RULE

Prior to 1804, Spanish New Orleans experienced more than a decade of uninterrupted economic and demographic growth, anda rise in sugar production, commercial activity, and diversity in racial makeup defined the city's late colonial period. As historian Kimberly Hanger explained in her landmark work *Bounded Places, Bounded Lives,* the byproduct of this growth was the steady proliferation of the libre class,who utilized readjustments in racial roles caused by the influx of "strange negroes" and other newcomersto carve out a variety of niches in an expandingslaveholding society. This all occurred during a timeof worldwide political upheaval, as revolutions in America, France, and the Caribbean cast a pall of uncertainty upon the minds of Spanish Louisiana's slaveholders and administrators.As they had during the French period prior to 1769, Creole libres of various cultural and ethnic backgroundsinvolvedthemselves in nearly every facet of the city's day to day life during the colonial period. Adding to this was the almost daily arrivalat the levee of ships from Saint Domingue and other parts of the Atlantic which brought new free and enslaved people of color into the city. These new arrivals fusedwith the Creole"nativos de la ciudad" to increase the numbers and political sway of the existing libre population, and will play an important role throughout this work.[11]

The members of this conglomerate caste of native and non-native libres were a constant fixture in the markets, church pews, and municipal buildings of the city. The port of New Orleans grew to real significance during the lasttwo decades of Spanish rule, and for those who could afford them, all manners of possessions and entertainment became available to the people of the city. This material accumulation was not closed to the libre class,and a small percentage of

---

[11] Kimberly Hanger, *Bounded Lives: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1796-1803.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 152-158, 162-169.

the free black population was able to obtain possessions and financial security in spite of their secondary racial status. While by no means possessing the wealth and prestige available to whites,free people of color exercised self-determinism and a certain degree of financial autonomy within this cosmopolitan setting, and the city of New Orleans truly blossomed as an oasis of culture on the otherwise isolated Gulf Coast during this time. Along with many of their white counterparts, some members of the libre community acquiredvaluable assets in the late Spanish period, including homes, businesses, and even slaves of their own, the rights to which weretransferable to their heirs and protected underlaw.[12]

The demographic and economic growth of the libre class during this period were also aided in some ways by the Catholic traditions of *coartacion* and *cartas*, best explained as self-purchase for slaves.As Hanger enunciated, more enslaved people of color secured their freedom in the 1790s than at any other time, and the libre class gained a significant number of new membersthrough these avenues during the final decade of Spanish control.These newly freed people of all racial distinctions thereby added to the complexity of the city's racial hierarchyin the years leading up to American purchase, and created a relatively stable foothold for their caste that proved difficult for the incoming American administration to bring under control.[13]A majority of works published in the last fifteen years have used thesenumberson manumission, so dutifully collected by Hanger,to supporttheidea thatliberal Iberian precedents favored the slave in many ways, and were intentionally designed to create a libre "buffer" class. The prevailing opinion is that such an intermediary caste would mitigate the clashes in culture and authority

[12]While libres did obtain property and a certain degree of personal wealth, Thomas Ingersoll cautioned against overstating their prestige, stating that "to speak of free blacks in either New Orleans or Trinidad as 'privileged' or living in 'affluence' is highly misleading." Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon,* 231.

[13] Coartacion was protected in Spanish Legal code, and was explained by historian Kimberly Hangeras "the right of slaves to purchase their freedom for a stipulated sum of money agreed upon by their masters or arbitrated in the courts. See Hanger, *Bounded Places,* 24.

between the white and slave populations, and ease governance overall in the increasingly chaoticfrontier port. Through manumission, it has been argued, Spanish paternalism and a neatly tiered, three caste system of racial organization kept the mostly defensive holding of Louisiana under some semblance of political control.[14]

Bounded Places itself, however, suggests another explanation, as Hanger attributed the intensification of slavery and the decline of manumissions in the late Spanish and early American periods to a number of factorsthat were not directly related to the leniency of internal policy. The explosion of plantation agriculture in the form of sugar cultivation, for instance, increased the amount of developed land in the region by the day, and as this occurred, new demand for slaves arose. The slave population in both the city and its surrounding areas grew in accordance during this time, though mostly through natural increase. Although slaves had been brought to the colony in small numbers since its very earliest days, large scale importation by the Spanish did not begin in earnest until 1782, when a readjustment of crown policy under Charles IIIexempted this trade restriction on a need basis, and allowed Louisiana -which was still struggling- to trade in slaves with French ports.[15]

A moratorium ontrade in Caribbean slaves wasagain imposed by the *cabildo*between 1795 and 1800, this timeintended to limit the importation of blacks from specific trouble areas, such as the Caribbean or certain regions of Africa, whomight have come into contact with revolutionary ideas in their former homes. While this inconsistency of importationhampered the growth of the slave population to some degree, Louisiana's slave numbers grew steadilyanyhow,

[14] Eighty four manumissions are listed for the years between 1812 and 1820 alone in Carter G. Woodson's listing of slaveowning free black households in Orleans Parish, which was constructed from 1820 and 1840 census data. This suggests that although lower manumission numbers are less than the peak years of 1800-1803, slaves still had access to self purchase and other forms of emancipation well into the American period. See Benjamin Hobratsch, "Creole Angel," 70-123.

[15] Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Orderin Early New Orleans* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 54-58, 160-170; See also Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon*, 184-186.

as natural increase and illegal smuggling brought many new slaves in through undocumented avenues during the period. The newfound profitability that this environment affordedmade slave ownership of one or more slavesmoreworth protecting, and in turn, a diminishing number ofmasters were inclined to allow access to self purchase and manumission to those held in bondage.[16]

Also contributing to a decline in slaveholders' willingness to free their slaves was the intensification of paranoia surroundingevents like the 1791 slave revolt on St. Domingue, the aborted plot at Julien Poydras's Pointe Coupee plantation in 1795, and the 1811 uprising on the German Coast.[17] Because of these and other revolutionaryuprisings, the decline in manumissions cannot be solely explained as Anglo aversion to a free black caste, and instead must be attributed in part to these unpredictable events. As Ingersoll put it "the generalization that planters in the United States were more hostile than otherplanters to manumission of selected slaves has never been demonstrated…the idea that there was literally no place for the freedman in the southern states is contradicted by many success stories…including a few with a place in the slaveholding class."[18]Indeed, the realm of the freedman in New Orleans in particular was well established by the time of American assumption, andthe librecommunity had already constructed a tradition of cohabitation with the white community.

---

[16] Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon,* 131, 184-186. Hanger, *Bounded Places*, 77; The Cabildo was the municipal council of New Orleans during the Spanish period. After 1804, it was dissolved and remade as the New Orleans City Council.

[17] Julien Poydras was a French-born municipal clerk, politician, and plantation owner. Slaves on his Pointe Coupee plantation were discovered in the midst of planning a violent rebellion, which was linked to the slave revolt on Saint Domingue, and has been a popular topic amongst Louisiana historians. See Jack D. L. Holmes, "The Abortive Slave Revolt at Pointe Coupée, Louisiana, 1795" *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* , Vol. 11, No. 4 (Autumn, 1970), 341-362; and Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*

[18] Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon,* 137 and Ingersoll, "Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Apr., 1991), 173-200.

Even after 1806, when changes in policy attempted to assuage planters' fears of insurrection by demanding that any newly freed slaves leave the territory, New Orleans's free black population skirted the letter of the law by buying up relatives or loved ones as slaves to protect them from deportation. Rather than manumit them and face separation, these free people of color became legal owners of those they sought to protect.Through this loophole, de facto freedom could be achieved by the slave, and they could not be expelled from the territory or have their personal rights or mobility infringed upon by the broader slaveholding community. This interesting concept of purchase for protection as it relates to social mobility for people of color is explored further in Chapter 4.[19]

In addition to plantation growth and political unrest abroad, the physical and geographical characteristics of the city itself at the time of the Louisiana Purchase also offer valuable clues as to what might have affected changes in manumission rates and the daily lives of the city's free people of color, other than systematic American reform.In 1804, the oldest part of New Orleans, or what is referred to as the first municipality, consisted of an area only thirteen blocks wide by six blocks deep, most of today's French Quarter. It was boundedby the Mississippi River anda number of plantations, which backed up tocypress swamps and made the city something of an oasis of habitable land in the low-lying hinterlands. These natural surroundings were -as they are today- an important determinant of the city's physical and social makeup. In 1804, at the time of the change in possession, the population of the Vieux Carré stood at 8,222, with 1,565 libres constituting just over thirty percent of the total free population, and thirty three percent of the total non-white population. The total urban population of 3,551

[19] For a more detailed discussion of the concept of family purchase as protection from laws against "introducing" new free people of color, see Hanger, *Bounded Places,* 71.

whites, 1,565 *gens de couleur libres* (free persons of color), and 3,105 slaves were consequently drawn into close quarters, where true segregation was not a viable option.[20]

In the first years of American control, the plantations on either side of the town center had not yet been sold and converted into the residential faubourgs that stand there today, and by 1805, the citywide population had grown to 8,475, but the vast majority of its residents still resided within the confines of the first municipality.As a result, contact between persons of different stations and races in the streets and cathedral was in many ways unfettered.[21]Even as the city limits expanded outward with the incorporation ofthe faubourgs Marigny (1806), Lacourse (1810), and Treme (1810), no significant residential parsing of the racial demographics was achieved. As natives and newcomers settled into these neighborhoods, the newly constructed homesalong streets like Esplanade, Bayou, and Bonnes Enfants filled up with individuals from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities, and not just free people of color.

This notion is supported in primary documentation, for although only the name of each head of household and their domicile's tenant demography are listed in the census, the location and density of the free black population can be easily mapped when this information is paired withthe libre property ownerslisted in the notarial records. The data collectedcan in turn be compared with other extant documents to appendtheselocationswith personal histories oflibre families and individuals wholived in the cityduring the American Period. Well connected libre clans with last names like Vincent, Auguste, Hardy, Dolliole, and Populus, to name only a few, are found repeatedly in the property records,church ledgers, and business documents from the

[20]*Ibid.,* 18; The City Census of 1805 also included 253 "autres persons" in the total population, which was a catch-all category for persons whose ethnic background was unclear or otherwise unsubstantiated. See Matthew Flannery, Dolley Madison Heartman, and Charles Louis Thompson, *New Orleans in 1805: a directory and a census* (New Orleans, La: Pelican gallery, 1936). Hereafter referred to as Flannery, *New Orleans 1805*.

[21] Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805,*107.

era, and many of their family linescan be shown to have obtained relative prominence that contributed to the social development of the libre communityas a whole between 1804 and 1820.[22]

Members of thesebloodlinesserved in the territorial militia, acted as god parentsfor the children of their peers in the church, and owned or rented property in the Vieux Carréor other neighborhoods throughout the entirety of the antebellum period. They intermarried with other libres, or in many cases, members of the slave community. They also formed platonic and sexual relationships with whites, despite the social stigma attached to such interracial familiarity. In addition to this, Catholic traditions of church attendance and baptism created still more avenues for interaction and alliance across and within class distinctions, and the Spanish priests who stayed behind in the city after 1804 became the record keepers for these interpersonal connections through the archdiocese records.

But whether they came from a long established libre family, arrived from St. Domingue, or emerged from slavery during the beginning of the nineteenth century,free persons of color of all stations and lineages bore significant roles in the cultural, economic and political life of Spanish New Orleans. The surviving traces of these individual people and their interactions with one another, as well as their contact withthe rotating cast of public notaries and municipal government officialsshed light on the misconceptions ofSpanish leniency versus stringent American racial regulation during the late colonial and early territorial periods. Although each regime undoubtedly displayed its own set of governmental and cultural attributes, the somewhat free-standing population of New Orleans did so as well. Because the city has so many records

---

[22] See map of free black properties in Appendix B See map of free black properties in Appendix B; see also Florence M. Jumonville. *The Vieux Carré Survey* (New Orleans, LA: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1981), hereafter referred to as *Vieux Carré Survey*. A searchable version of the survey is now available to researchers online via the Historic New Orleans Collection's website, see http://www.hnoc.org/vcs/index.php.

pertaining to its unusually large libre population, these theories can be put to the test in a mannerthat few places in the United States or elsewhere can support. By examining the diverse primary documentation on this topic, as well as the ways it has been used in the past, the following chapters will attempt to recreate portions of social and political life for individual members of this influential caste, each of whom had their own place -be it favorable or otherwise- in the workings and machinations of the city as a whole.

CHAPTER 3

GOVERNMENTAL TRANSITION, CLAIBORNE, AND THE FREE BLACK MILITIA

Because New Orleans's sizable libre caste was already well entrenched in the city's social and political identity by the time of American Governor William C.C. Claiborne's arrival, the new administrators of the Louisiana Territory were obligated to consider them as an important political entity. Factions such as the free black militia served as a potent symbol of the libre caste'scontribution to the town for the better part of a century before the Louisiana Purchase, and its most prominent members enjoyed privileges under the law and social custom that were not to be readily surrendered. The free black unit of the Louisiana militiawas established during the French period, when it was known as the Marechaussée. This distinguished groupof free men of color from the community came into being out of necessity, when New Orleans was stillsomething of a frontier outpost, and soldiersfor its defense were scarce. Free black soldiers helped to guard the struggling fort and outpost that constituted New Orleans at the time, and assisted in various patrols and military duties in and around town.[23]

When Spain assumed administrative control in 1769, the libre militia continued to play an important part in the colony's protection, as Louisiana became useful as a physical buffer between an expanding Anglo North America and Spain's valuableholdings in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America. Throughout the next three decades of Spanish control,the libre militia assisted in the retrieval of runaway slaves(also known as *maroons*),helped build and maintain the city's crucial system of levees, and policed the city's streetsto ensure public order. Their service lightened the load of civil administration, and provideda significant portion of the

---

[23] More detailed information related to the free black militia during the Spanish period see Hanger, *Bounded Places,* 109-136.

military capabilities of a typically undermanned and poorly supplied Spanish force.[24]

But with the growth of slavery in the region after 1792,new fears generated by the Haitian rebellion and theabortive slave conspiracy at Pointe Coupee created dissonance in the minds of many whites. The graphic accounts of the brutal revenge exacted by slaves and free blacks in St. Domingue made many people distrusting of the nonwhite population and libre militia in specific, as talk of bloody insurrection and revolution loomed large in newspapers and administrative dispatches alike.At the same timethat this uncertainty spread, Thomas Jefferson purchased Louisiana from Napoleon, who had regained the colony from Spain in the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso, before abandoning his plans to resume French efforts in the New World.As the three nations involved in the exchange each reacted to this unexpected change, the spectacle of conflict and the danger of armed non-whitesbecame the source of much concernamongstthe white population.

This clash between the militia's established tradition of service and the newfound fear of violence ensured that incoming territorial governor Claiborneand his military counterpart, James Wilkinson,arrived in New Orleans amidst a growing debate. Some Americans, like planter Benjamin Morgan, recognized the unique benefit these black soldiers offered the territory. Morgan wrote to Chandler Price just before the transfer of possession that many of New Orleans's libres were, in fact, "very respectable," and in reference to the militia, suggested "it is worth the consideration of government they may be good citizens or formidable abettors of the black people say slaves if they should ever be troublesome."[25] But others feared what might transpire if free people of color were allowed to keep their weapons, such as JohnWatkins, who

[24]The term maroon comes from the Spanish *cimmarones,* used to describe runaway horses. References to the practice of *marronage* appear often in both French and Spanish sources from the period.

[25]Benjamin Morgan to Chanlder Price, August 7, 1803 in Clarence Edward Carter, Ed.*The Territorial Papers of the United States, The Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812*. v.9. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1940), 6-8.

was mayor of New Orleans in 1805.Watkins wrote to Territorial Secretary John Graham in Washington that libres were not to be trusted, declaring that they “must always [be considered] in a country where slavery exists to the extent it does here as political enemies.” Should they beallowed to continue owning weapons, Watkins and others in the white community warned,insurrection was sureto follow. He and many others in correspondence with Claiborne at the time wrote to him and made their thoughts on the matter known, suggesting more white troops be sent to the territory. Mayor Watkins went on to express the widely held sentiment that the territory’s military defense was severely disadvantaged, saying “we shall ever be in danger while the protecting arm of our country is so feeble.” He referenced the “encrimsoned plains of St. Domingue” for dramatic effect, and declared that the only to way to ensure the internal safety of the city was to add to the American population until it“overbalance[d] that of every other description of persons.”[26]

Based on Claiborne’s own correspondences with his superiors, he clearly felt pressure to act in the best interest of the city’s new American population, but also understood the importance of gaining the support of the city’s Creoles. In regards to the problem of the free black militia,he wrote to Secretary of State James Madison, “I am indeed at a loss to know what policy is best to pursue…so much was said upon the subject, that the Legislative Council thought it prudent to take no notice of the Mulatto Corps under the General Militia Law.” But if he disbanded the militia outright, Claiborne risked losing the services and allegiance of the militia and its prominent members, who could otherwise help himto gain control of the city’s libre community. He continued, “This neglect has soured them considerably with the American Government, and

[26] John Watkins to Secretary Graham, September 6, 1805 in *OrleansTerritorial Papers*, 502-504.

it is questionable how far they would, in the hour of danger, prove faithful to the American Standard"[27]

The libre soldiers, on the other hand, drew significant pride and an elevated place in the community from their military service, and were not prepared to let the militia go without appeal. They issued a formal request that the governor reconsider his decision to dissolve their ranks, citing their importance to the city and its defense, as well as the militia's history of community service. Their letter was accompanied by a promise of allegiance to the new government "to serve with fidelity and zeal," and bore the signatures of each member. As spokespersons for the libre community, the militiamen also made mention of their anticipated retention of established rights under the new government. Their letter passively put pressure on the new administration to honor the status quo, by stating, "we are duly sensible that our personal and political freedom is thereby assured to us for ever, and we are also impressed with the fullest confidence in the Justice and Liberality of the Government towards every class of citizen which they have here taken under their protection."[28] Their letter and its contents show the importance of autonomy and distinction to the libre community, as well as their degree of political savvy. While not all members of the diverse libre community supported the militia and its efforts to assist in maroon capture and other white-assigned tasks, its members served as spokespeople for the many of sentiments shared by the wider libre community.

The new administrators subsequently found themselves in a position of compromise, therefore, Claiborne "chose to maintain the extant free colored militia companies in New Orleans

[27] William C.C. Claiborne to the Secretary of State, January 8, 1806, *Orleans Territorial Papers*, 560-562.

[28]Address from the Free People of Color to Governor Claiborne, January, 1804, *Orleans Territorial Papers*, 174-176.

until he was able to consult the Jefferson administration."[29]Doing so enabled the governor to avoid some of the backlash from disappointed militia members.While waiting for Jefferson, Madison, and his other superiors in Washington to send word, Claiborne kept the free black units intact, but suspended their right to wield rifles. At the time, New Orleans resident James Brown wrote to the Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin to explain the danger of creating an enemy out of the free black militia by disaffecting libres of their arms. He cautioned, "the free people of color have lost their consequence by being stripped of their arms and are anxious to regain it; in short…we possess hardly sufficient strength to ensure internal tranquility should foreign intrigue give motion to the disaffected."[30]Although the libres did protest the seizure of their weapons, they continuedto drill and parade in the Plaza de Armas(now Jackson Square). But once a peaceful change of possession was achievedthrough the efforts of French transitional governor Pierre Laussat, the much-feared potential of a military conflict over Louisiana subsided. As the threat of invasion and insurrection evaporated, orders were passed down from Washington, and Claiborneofficially disbanded the free black militia in 1806.[31]

Even after the militia was suspended,however, its members continued to bear great influence upon the community, and enjoyed prestige amongst their fellow free people of color.Their family names remained coveted inclusions in marriage and baptismal alliances for generations to come, and even their military service itself had not seen its last days.Through their presence in the Plaza de Armas, as well as their personal and religious lives, the free black militiamen were strongly tied to the Vieux Carréand other public spaces within the city itself.Their captain at the time of the transfer in possession, Noel Carriere, owned a series of

[29] Erin Michelle Greenwald, "To strike a balance: New Orleans's free people of color and diplomacy of William Charles Cole Claiborne" Thesis (M.A.)--Ohio State University, 2005, 10-18.

[30] James brown to Secretary of the Treasury, January 7, 1806, *Orleans, Territorial papers*, 499.

[31]Claiborne to the Secretary of State, January 8, 1806, *Orleans Territorial Papers*, 561.

properties on Bienville, Dumaine, and St. Louis streets between 1796 and 1831, andeach of his children was baptized in the St. Louis cathedral, the centerpiece of the city. The Populus family, which boasted three members amongst the signatories of the militia's appeal to Claiborne, was well established by the time of American assumption, and became one of the most interconnected and prominent libre clans in the city during the Antebellum Period. Maurice, Antoine, and Celestine Populus lived together on Rue Bourbon in the Vieux Carré at the time of the militia's dissolution, and though they each eventually moved out of the first municipality, members of their family continued to run a shoemaking business within the Vieux Carréfor multiple generations.Yet another member of the militia, a free mulatto named Jean Louis Dolliole(sometimes spelled Delliele) owneda series of domiciles on St. Philip Street and Orleans Avenue in the heart of the French Quarter during his life, and passed these holdings on through succession to his heirsbetween 1800 and 1843.Though their ranks were officially dissolved, the free black militia members'integral place in the social and economic spheres of the community was not.[32]

Instead, the pride associated with service in the free black militia lived on in public records that give mention of members or their families for generations to come. For example, when the daughter of former militia captain Carlos Brule was baptized in January of 1806, his former status as an "officer under Spain" was duly noted in young Rosa Brule's baptismal record. Similarly, Luis Palau, son of Don Pedro Palau and New Orleans native Felicite Destrehan, shared his baptismal record with a detailed description of his father, a "quaterone libre, Captain in the Spanish garrison at Pensacola."[33] Such references were frequent, and attest

[32] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entries for Maurice Populus and Jean Louis Dolliole

[33] Earl C. Woods, Charles E. Nolan, and Dorenda Dupont, Ed. *Sacramental records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans* (New Orleans, La.: Archdiocese of New Orleans., 1987),Volume 8, entries for Rosa Brule, January 30, 1806, and Luis Palau, June 6, 1806.

to the status and familial pride afforded certain individuals' families. When libre child Luisa Boisdore underwent baptism in 1805, for instance, the names of her grandparents were listed to provide proof of her free lineage, and her father's status as an officer in the Militia Corps of the city was also noted for posterity.[34]

While the suspension of the libre militia eased some people's minds following a surprisingly peaceful transitional period, fear ofviolent uprisings or disorder in the region did not cease. The continued arrival of refugees from St. Domingue, marronage, and uncovered slave plots periodically massaged the citizenry's willingness to enforce the color barrier on arms possession. In 1811, when two African slaves named Kook and Quamana led an uprising of slaves at the Destrehan Plantation on the German Coast -a few miles upriver from New Orleans- the outbreak of violence sent the entire population of lower Louisiana into a panic. To put down the rebellion, libres and whites alike assembled into roving militia bands to track down the rebels and protect the city from attack.[35]

Later, when the War of 1812 necessitated a shot in the arm to American forces in order to again defend the city against British invasion, the free black militia wasofficially reinstated. Between December 16, 1814 and March 25, 1815, free black soldiers were placed underthe command of General Andrew Jacksonto serve as civil guards and bolster the undermanned American regiments at Chalmette Plantation. Their service in the Battle of New Orleans is now storied, and following 1815, those who served in the free black regiments regained much of their social dignity, though their return to official duty was not permanent.[36]

---

[34] *Ibid.*;See also Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 185-187.

[35] For more on the 1811 slave uprising at the German Coast, see Daniel Rasmussen, *AmericanUprising: the Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt,* (New York, NY: Harper, 2011).

[36] Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 185-187; see also Claiborne to the Secretary of State, January 8, 1806 in *Territorial Papers*, 561.

The public's consent to reinstate the free black militia duringsuch times of need illustrated that American officials and the white citizenry of New Orleans could not, nor did theywish to,do away entirely with libre involvement in civil defense. Claiborne must have recognized this upon his assumption of power in the territory in 1804, for he did not clamp down on the movement and legal protection of free blacks across the board, and allowed a number of Spanish policies, like the militia, coartacion, and the right of free blacks to defend themselves in court to remain in place. Although some of these stays in policy were only kept for a specified period of time (coartacion without owner's consent was suspended in 1806, for example),suchconcessions to the non-white community show the extent oftheir influence on public policy and its implementation well into the American regime.[37]

Thoughthe black militia was absent from the Plaza de Armasafter 1806, the former members of this long standing fixture of the community did not forfeit their place within the social circles and daily politics of the city, and continued to draw great pride from their involvement in the regiment. Their families continued to hold important roles in the local economy, and went on constitute a large portion of the free black merchants and artisans who practiced a trade or plied their wares in the streets and marketplaces throughout the nineteenth century. In many ways, the white community was still beholden to the militia officers and their libres peers, who still wielded considerablepolitical and social importance, as well as the physical power that was such a source of unrest for whites. Non-white tenants and property owners held fast to their place in the Vieux Carré and other neighborhoods throughout the territorial and early statehood years, and despite changes to the plantation economy and political climate around them, many aspects of their daily lives remained constant.

[37] Edward F. Haas, *Louisiana's Legal Heritage* (Pensacola, Fla: Perdido Bay Press, 1983); see also Greenwald, "To strike a balance."

The next chapter centersonthe everyday tracesof some of these free people of color, whose records appear with uninterrupted regularity in the property records, notarial acts, and court cases for the entirety of the period in question. Though in many instances commonplace, these details of individual libres' day to day lives serve as case studies to better illustrate where in the city free people of color lived, who they associated with, and what property or material comforts their lives afforded them.

CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL AND ECONOMICMOBILITY IN THE DAILY LIVES OF LIBRES

Despite the cultural andethnic amalgamation that took place in the Vieux Carré,however, physical segregationalong racial lines did exist in some corners of the city. New Orleans's discriminating Creole culture prided themselves on respected bloodlines and a sense of ownership of the city, and the social hierarchy of the citybecame complex and partitioned long before American rule.Public spaces, like the markets, the Plaza, and the levee bustled with every type of person, but certain social restrictions and customs that had governed black movement and white entitlement since the French period continued to apply. As a logical result of this, many private spaces in New Orleans were off limits to non-whites, such as hotels, dining clubs, and even some "sporting houses," or gambling rooms.

Possibly the most famous example of racially exclusionary culture wasthe Theatre d'Orleans, which was situated on Orleans Avenue between Bourbon and Royal Streets. Founded by Louis Tabary, a transplant from St. Domingue, the theater became well known and respected as one of the finest venues of the performing arts in America during this time, and catered exclusively to whites and only the most well to do Creoles of Color. Undeterred by their being prevented from entertainment at the Theatre d'Orleans, however,those with the resources in the libre community established their own venues,such as the respectable St. Philip Theater (intuitively located on St. Philip Street),as well asa number of less socially acceptable, but equally popular tippling houses and brothels throughout the Vieux Carré. The theater and other entertainment venues'utility as a symbol of community autonomy and the ability to afford

entertainment amongst the libre caste during this periodis extremely potent, as free people of color attendedoperas, plays, and a number of other social events.[38]

Dances or galas known as Negro or quadroon“balls”were famously popular in the nineteenth century in particular, and were consistently attended by hundreds of patrons, including wealthy white men. These quadroon balls provided a setting for the establishment of *plaçage*arrangements, wherein a white man paid for the upkeep of a non-white consort somewhere outside the view of his family and polite society. This tradition, the byproduct of laws forbidding interracial marriage, has beenoffered repeatedly by scholars and popular authors alike to emphasize the exploitative nature of race and sex in New Orleans. Some historians have even asserted that because plaçage can be shown to have occurred in areas of town like the Faubourg Marigny, that these satellite neighborhoodsbecame the exclusive realm of libres, particularly “fancy girls,” or light-skinned concubines, and other manners of kept women.[39]As one master’s thesis states,

> Free people of color lived in this faubourg because this is where wealthy white males “established” their mixed-race mistresses. Purchasing a home in the third municipality was an attractive option because it kept the mistress or placée, at a safe distance away from a man’s “legitimate” white wife and children. The latter of these would live in the first or second municipalities on the other side of town. In this instance, the white men that chose to enter into plaçage with a free woman of color were forcibly segregating people of mixed-race from area whites.[40]

---

[38] The Theatre d’Orleans was the most “decorous” theatre in the city, and was run at different times by Louis Tabary and John Davis, both natives of St. Domingue. See Albert E. Fossier, *New Orleans- The Glamour Period: 1800-1840* (New Orleans, LA: Pelican, 1957), 257-260.

[39] Dorian Hastings, “Early neighborhood development in New Orleans: Neither New South nor old.” Ph.D. diss., University of New Orleans, 2004, 6-7.

[40] Hobratsch, “Creole Angel,”12-14.

While this prevailing conception of the Faubourg Marigny as the exclusive home of subjugated free blacks and concubines, a closer look at the property transfers in the notarial records shows much less salacious settlement patterns, with families, business owners, and single adults of all skin tones taking advantage of the newly opened neighborhoods. While securing a white benefactor was certainly one possible path to financial comfort, plaçagewas by no means the only path by which libres securedsocial and economic mobility.[41]

On the contrary, the avenues through which free people of color accessed social elevation in Territorial New Orleans varied greatly. As the size and population of New Orleans grew steadily during the early nineteenth century, free people of color were heavily involved in the town's economic development and physical construction. As mentioned before, the markets and street corners bustled with libre vendors and hawkers selling myriad goods produced both locally and abroad. Free black porters, stevedores, sailors and carpenters were present at all times on the levee across from the Plaza d'Armas, and evidence of this can be seen today in a variety of sources, including ship manifests, travel accounts, pieces of art from the period, and even articles and advertisements published in the local newspapers.Libre craftsmen practiced their trades throughout the stores and workshops of the city, and produced some of the masonry adornments and flourishes of architecture that have become such beloved attributes of New Orleans history.Instead of being forced out of the city's economic and cultural hub, the libre caste's ubiquity in these daily goings on in the Vieux Carré and other parts of the city remained one of its defining characteristics well into the nineteenth century.[42]

[41]Fossier, *New Orleans- The Glamour Period,* pp. 257-261.

[42] Numerous references to free people of color in everyday life can be seen in the two newspapers from the period, the *Courier and the Monitor*.

Despite the multitudeof clues to the contrary, Hobratsch in particular has espoused the idea that an explicitly black Marigny came into existence during the American period. He asserts that in order to escape white culture, free people of color actually chose to settle on the outskirts of town as part of a voluntary "self segregation." While it is true that many people of color did move into the new neighborhoods as they opened up, there is little evidence to support the assertion that they constituted a consistent majority in any of those faubourgs, or that libres intentionally settled away from the center of town to avoid interaction with mainstream white society. Instead, the intermingling of white and black neighborsall over the city was unavoidable, andhas been well documented in property records going all the way back to the Spanish Period. As Hanger states in *Bounded Places*, "census and notarial records attest to the lack of residential segregation in colonial New Orleans" and, "even when a white person or a slave did not reside in a household with a free black, he or she most likely resided next door to one."[43]

Following the onset of American rule, this racial variety along the streets of New Orleans continued unabated, and the number of records showing white and free black residences next to one another further supports this idea. If one is to believe the assumption that libres were only able to achieve financial independence through the patronage of white benefactors, then to suggest self-segregation from these supposed avenues of social advancement seems to be something of a contradiction. For these reasons, more consideration must be paid to just who these libre inhabitants were, and why they chose to reside in one part of town over another, such as proximity to family, cost of living, or most often,occupational demands.[44]

The notarial records and birth and death ledgers for the Archdiocese of New Orleans mention libre individuals representing a great range of occupations including goldsmiths,

[43] Hobratsch, "Creole Angel,"14-15; Hanger, *Bounded Places,*138.

[44]Hanger,*Bounded Places,* 139.

jewelers, carpenters, tavern keepers, grocers, and shoemakers, to name only a few. When Marie Louise Ambrose, a libre, was born in a house on Dauphine Street in 1820, her father Matthieu Ambrose was listed in the birth registry as a free black seaman, and her mother a free washerwoman of color. Two years later, on the other end of the life cycle, a libre child named Marie Populus died only five weeks after her birth. Marie had been born in a house "in the aisle between St. Ann and Dumaine" streets, to Marie Lestaing, a free woman of color, and Maurice Populus, a libre shoemaker. The census of 1820 listed 619 free people of color who made their living through commerce, and most telling, 1319 libres employed in manufacture, which was almost the exact same number of whites who worked in that same capacity.[45]

Other libres worked as carpenters and craftsmen, and built many of the new houses and other structures erected during the early nineteenth century. A builder's registry, housed in the Notarial Archives, lists the contracts to build that were submitted to the city between 1804 and 1860, and many of them involved the work of libre laborers or contractors.Bazile Dede, a free black mason, for example, appears in the building contracts from 1810 for his craftsmanship. Hired by Antoine Foucher, Dede's handiwork added structural adornment to a house in the Tchoupitoulas area that formerly constituted part of the plantation estate of Madame Decord Sarpy, a white mistress whose bloodlines were shared with a number of free people of color.Another pair of libre craftsmen, Francois Darby and Celestin Jung contracted with a fellow free person of color named Francois Fusille in March of 1814 to build a new four-room house on the one hundredth block of Hospital Street, which is now called Governor Nicholls Street. Situated between Burgundy and Rampart towards the back of the Vieux Carré, this house was

---

[45] Many details about the professions and relationships of libres in New Orleans can be found in the birth and death records of the St. Louis Cathedral, published in Earl C. Woods et al, *Sacramental records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*. (New Orleans, La.: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1987);1820 U S Census: New Orleans, New Orleans City, Louisiana; Page: 110; NARA Roll: M33_32; Image: 123, entry for Marie Louise Ambrose, 1/21/1820.

built upon pilings to guard against flood, and cost its owner $1,100 to construct, a sizeable amount for a libre to afford. Other libre buildersand craftsmen, such as Jean Baptiste Cheval, Francois Boisdore, and Charles Dupart continued to work under contract with whites and libres alike throughout the entirety of the nineteenth century, including the post-emancipation era. Their efforts gave the city many of its trademark Creole Cottages and intricately latticed coach homes, now so cherished and iconic of old New Orleans. Their ability to secure new work and to shore up their agreements in written contracts also speaks for the level of professionalism and importance to the literal construction of New Orleans during the period.[46]

The new houses and businesses that steadily appeared during the territorial periodnot only signified the physical and economic contributions of libre professionals, but also became home tomany native and newly arrived libres.The inhabitants of libre-built or renovated properties paid for the construction or upkeep of their homes by working jobs of their own, and while servants, valets, cooks, and laundresses were common libre positions, they were by no means the only avenues to financial self-sufficiency for free people of color. As evinced by the builders and craftsmen listed above, some advantaged libre households even employed others from their caste in one capacity or another, thereby adding yet another layer to the economic autonomy of the free black population. Somepaid for live in servants to do their washing or mind their children, and if they could afford it, a number of free people of color opted to purchase slaves of their own to tend to these needs. The existence and paradoxical nature of these free black slave masters in New Orleans has become a prominent aspect of the city's racial identity, and has been used to emphasize the ability of white slaveholding culture to influence even people of color to adopt its customs. However, there are aspects of libre slave ownership that

[46] Building contracts in the Notarial Archives of M. Lafitte. Volume 1, Number 35*,* entry for Bazile Dede;Building Contracts in the Notarial Archives of N. Broutin Volume 30, Number 124, and C. De Armas Voume 2a, Number 279.

seemingly have nothing to do with an endorsement of black servitude or white held beliefs of slavery's beneficial nature. We can never know the true motivations of those libres who chose to become slave masters themselves, but by examining the details of these intriguing individuals, it becomes clear that in many instances, the libre caste was able to circumvent, or at least mollify the restrictions and stigmas of the hierarchy of race.[47]

Whilethe spectacles of slaveholding free people of color and otherfinancially successfullibres have always been fascinating aspects of the town's history, other studies that refer to them as "well to do" or "prosperous" are guilty of a certain degree of overstatement. Non-white slaveholders were a small minority of the territory's slave masters, and no libre-owned plantations or townhouses contained as many slaves as the most expansive white owned estates. Still, in the city of New Orleans, where there was seldom any need to own more than a dozen or so slaves, libre slave masters were not altogether uncommon. Of the 1,555 free people of color listed on the 1805 Census, 634 held their own un-free persons of color in bondage, which averaged out to just less than one slave for every two libres in the Vieux Carré. Prominent free black slaveholding families like the Hilares of Dauphine Street held twenty-one slaves in 1805, and a handful of other libre families, like the Hinards and Hardys held ten or more bondsmen in their homes, located on Chartres and Burgundy Streets, respectively. These debonair Creoles were not the only non-white members of the slaveholding class, however, for many libres described as "free negroes" and "griffes" also owned slaves, albeit typically on a smaller scale. Libre Rosette Robin, for instance, lived at 320 Bourbon Street in 1805, and shared her home with her only daughter and one slave, a female under the age of sixteen. Jean Le

[47]Hanger,*Bounded Places,* 32, 71.

Mazor, who lived on Royal Street, had a house full of libre family members, and held one slave woman over sixteen as a domestic servant.[48]

By 1820, the total number of libres in the vicinity of the city grew to 6,237 -about twenty three percent of the total population- and many of the households headed by free people of color were also listed as containing slaves. These numbers suggest that as the free black population in the city grew proportionally, they also became the owners of an increasing percentage of the city's real and chattel property, and the diversity of slave life and racial roles within the bustling port continued to expand. Free black property owners, artisans, vendors, and other self determined nonwhites held fast to the level of physical and financial independence they had worked to achieve since the mid eighteenth century. Despite the attempts of white citizens and officials to restrict competition from these free blacks, there was no way to prevent the continuation of such customs, and as a result, no erasure of free black autonomy or the undoing of a three-caste racial hierarchy were everfully achieved.[49]

Libres also frustrated efforts to limit the actual population of the free black caste. Despite the suspension of coartacion in 1806, manumissions of slaves also continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Although the stipulations for access to emancipation were revised in response to fears of insurrection and political instability,these avenues to freedom were never fully closed, and those hoping to obtain their liberty after 1806 could still achieve emancipation if they met the new administration's requirements. For example, any slave over thirty years of age who was able to secure their owner's permission could be freed, and though these new restrictions undoubtedly constricted slaves' access to freedom, manystill managed escape bondage through the legal system andgain membership to the libre caste during the American

---

[48] Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805*, 70.

[49]Hanger,*Bounded Places,* 26-27.

period. While increasing slave values and the spread of plantation agriculture made sure manumission was by no means an everyday occurrence. Over 700 slaves still managed to purchase or be gifted with their own freedom between 1804 and 1820, and those who did only added to the size and strength of the free black demographic.[50]

Just who was emancipating these slaves also gives us clues as to where libres and enslaved blacks fit into the social and administrative hierarchy of race in the city. While it is often presumed that some sort of sympathy or psychological transference based on shared secondary status made free black slaveholders more likely to manumit their slaves, this notion is not convincingly reflected in the notarial records. Furthermore, although purchase or liberation of an enslaved person by a libre family member was one of the most common forms of manumission, free black citizens were also created out of the slave population by the written and sworn permission of particularly grateful white owners. In some instances, it appears that slave owners of either race simply bided their time until their chattel met the age requirement for legal emancipation, and once this was achieved, promptly did so. For example, Antoine Alexir Andry, a free person of color, emancipated his "negress" Louise on June 15, 1809, as soon as she reached her thirtieth birthday. Much later, in May of 1820, a white slave-owner named Michel Johnston emancipated his thirty year old female slave, Pouponne, "in consideration of her loyalty and service."[51]While the racial factors involved in these manumissions are usually what attracts the attention of scholars, the specific motivations to either emancipate a slave or not is the truly interesting aspect amongst masters of either race, and by looking at which individuals were

[50] Haas, *Louisiana's Legal Heritage*, 46-47; Shawn Cole, "Capitalism and Freedom: Manumissions and the Slave Market in Louisiana, 1725–1820," *The Journal of Economic History* (2005), 65, 1008-1027; Spear, *Race Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 198-199

[51]Entry for manumission of the slave Louise in Notarial Acts of Michel de Armas, Volume 2A, Number 254.

freed, and the stated reasons for their emancipation, we can start to understand just what aspects of freedom and enslavement were of most importance to individuals in their position.

For instance, many libres in New Orleans purchased their own enslaved relatives. Rather than paying for the slave's manumission, which could be expensive, and technically required thedeportation of recently freed slaves, a number of libres actually bought other people of color instead of attempting to grant and secure their freedom. While it didn't offer official free status, this type of acquisition often allowed families with members on both sides of the slavery barrier to protect themselves or their kin from many of the worst aspects of slave life, and in some instances, even use the institution of slave ownership against itself. This seemingly contradictory idea in some ways contributes to the perception of libre slaveholders as more benevolent and understanding based on racial or familial identification, but as always, we should be careful of generalizing or projecting our own ways of thinking backwards onto history. As Ingersoll put it in *Mammon and Manon*, "their reasons for owning slaves is open to debate, because many of them [free black slaveholders] were either assisting individuals on their way to freedom, or keeping relatives in slavery for their protection." [52]

However they attained it, the freedom of manumitted slaves was protected under the laws of the city once approved by the court. Their new status, in many cases difficult to achieve, was understandably guarded zealously by newly manumitted libres. Although they might have lived for years as free, slaves were often subject to abduction or re-enslavement of other kinds if unable to produce documentation. The most famous example of this is most likely Solomon Northup, whose tale of re-enslavement and transportation against his will to Louisiana has become canon to students of slavery in America. Northup himself was eventually able to regain

[52] Hanger, *Bounded Places*, 71; Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon,* 312.

his freedom and even prosecute those who had violated his rights, and as a number of other cases from the period show, free people of color successfully defended their status in the court if called upon to do so.[53]

In his doctoral dissertation on free blacks in Antebellum New Orleans, historian Kenneth Aslakson analyzed cases in the city court that involved free people of color suing for their freedom, which highlight the significance of refugees in the maintenance of libre legal status. Through either mistake or the malicious actions of others, a number of libres, most brought from St. Domingue, were accused of feigning freedom, and thereby forced to prove their status before a judge. Aslakson evaluated the career of one particular judge, Louis Elisabeth Casimer Moreau-Lislet, who was a native of Le Cap Francais on St. Domingue, and whom Governor Claiborne appointed to be judge of the New Orleans City Court almost as soon as he arrived. Moreau-Lislet, possibly because of his leanings as a refugee himself, upheld the free status of "thirteen out of fourteen petitioners suing for their freedom between June, 1809 and December, 1813."[54] In doing so, Aslakson touches on two important topics: the ability of libres to seek protection in the courts, and the widespread influence that refugees from St. Domingue like Moreau-Lislet had on the city and its population.

Beyond their aforementioned role in the legal preservation of libre rights in the city, the cultural and social impact of free blacks from St. Domingue and other areas of theFrench Caribbean overrode the attempts of some American planters and administrators to drown Louisiana in Anglo people and culture. These new arrivals bore particular significance on the

---

[53] Notarial records for Antoine Alexir Andry, June 15, 1809 (ledger no. 264), and Michel Johnston, may of 1820; See Solomon Northup, *Twelve years a Slave* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008);Kenneth Aslakson, "Making race: The role of free blacks in the development of New Orleans' three-caste society, 1791—1812," Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2007. Hereafter referred to as Aslakson, "Making Race."

[54] Aslakson, "Making Race,"64-69.

social development and cultural identity of early nineteenth century New Orleans, and helped the native population to maintain its place of resolute pride within their city's politics and economy. These immigrants also brought new professional skills and specializationsinto the community, and their Francophone members re-instilled Gallic culture against the trend of Americanization. Transplants from St. Domingue intermarried with New Orleans's citizens, both white and libre, and contributed a number of now prominent surnames to the family histories of Louisiana in the process.

CHAPTER 5

ST. DOMINGUE REFUGEES AND THE REPLENISHMENT OF LIBRE CULTURE

Between the 1790s and the 1820s, the after-effects of the French Revolution and the slave revolt on the Island of St. Domingue brought thousands of refugees, including "countless numbers of orphaned or abandoned children of free black parents," to New Orleans from the West Indies.[55]According to historian Paul Lachance, over 9,000 white, libre, and slave refugees of all ages arrived in the Crescent City between 1809 and 1810 alone. This influx of immigrants nearly doubled the total population of the city and its environs between the 1790s and 1810. Francophone refugees from St. Domingueshared much in common with the Gallic tradition of New Orleans's Creole population, and reinvigorated the French cultural identity of the city. With them, they brought familiar language and customs, and most assimilated into their corresponding social and racial castes without difficulty. For the city's American administrators, however, these refugees greatly complicated their efforts of to bring New Orleans's various cultural factions under control, andfurther clouded the murky waters of racial distinction within the Crescent City.[56]

The free black population in specific experienced a particularly significant increase as a result of the exodus from St. Domingue, as thousands of free and enslaved people of color came to the Louisiana coast. These nonwhite migrants often came by way of Cuba or Jamaica, as many ports were afraid of allowing blacks arriving directly from St. Domingue to disembark.But whichever course they took to New Orleans, their former and future status as slave or free, and their standing within the pre-existing social hierarchy were often times ambiguous.Due to the violence and upheaval on their home island, the true origins or identities of many refugees were

[55] Aslakson, "Making Race," 2.

[56] Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans," 109-111.

lost or obscured somewhere along the way to the Crescent City. Some had been members of that island's especially powerful class of libres, *les gens de couleur libre,* who became arguably the most important political faction on the island during the aftermath of the French Revolution. As a complicated parade of opposing white and slave factions fought to win the support of the libre caste, the fight for control of the St. Domingue became increasingly complicated, and this uncertainty over their place in society in many instances followed them to their new home in New Orleans.[57]

Whatever their status, however, these new libres and bondsmen replenished the diversity of family associations and professional capacities within the pre-existing free black community, and though each individual's experience differed, the sheer numbers of free blacks who arrived helped to solidify the libre caste's foothold during a time of political transition. Many of these new free blacks, mulattoes, *tiercerones* and *quaterones*incorporated to varying degrees into the native population, and thereby altered the demography of the territory significantly.Former residents of St. Domingue intermarried with New Orleans's natives, participated in the local economy, and occupied houses and church pews situated right alongside their white and black counterparts. This infusion of foreign born people brought about a new period of Creolization in Louisiana, and any attempts by Claiborne or other officials to blanket the city in American culture and valuesfound considerable opposition inthe large numbers of Caribbean refugees that disembarked on the levee.[58]

---

[57] *Ibid.,*113.

[58] The racial designations of Quateron and Tiercerone in church ledgers are holdovers from the Spanish regime, when race was divided into a hierarchy based on an individual's generational proximity to African ancestry. Such distinctions were also used by many of those who lived on Saint Domingue prior to arrival in New Orleans. For instance, a tiercerone was the product of a white father and quarterone mother. See Jay Dearborn Edwards and Nicolas Kariouk Pecquet du Bellay de Verton, *A Creole lexicon: architecture, landscape, people* (Baton Rouge: LSU press, 2004), 175.

The social integration of these new citizens of color included extensive intermarriage withnative libre families, and an abundance of entries in themarriage records and notarial acts display the overwhelming number of refugees that joined new families in New Orleans upon their arrival. Dozens of such partnerships between libres from St. Domingue and individuals born in New Orleans were also recorded in the baptismal records from 1804 to the 1812, usually as parents, but occasionally as godparents. Such unions brought new bloodlines from France and all over the Atlantic world into the city, and this replenishment of the "dating pool" in turn contributed a number of significant new surnames to the city's tangled genealogy. For example, Pedro Godefroy, a Frenchman who immigrated from Le Cap Francais on St. Domingue prior to 1804, married New Orleans native Adelaida Lalande, who wasdescribed as a "mulatto libre,"despite the laws in place against interracial marriage. The couplesettled on Camp Street in the present day Business District, where Godefroy served as a public notary between 1808 and 1809. Beyond his marriage to a libre native of New Orleans, his brief stint in this public capacity gave him an even more interestingkind of personal involvement in the recorded history of free people of color in the city. His recorded notarial acts add to the body of source material available to historians related to libres, and show whites and nonwhites engaged in all manners of business with one another.

Godefroy'sown first-born son, Raymundo Godefroy, was baptized in the St. Louis Cathedral in October of 1804, and was listed in its ledger as a "quarteron libre," suggesting that Godefroy acknowledged him as legitimate, despite his racial status.[59]By 1820, Godefroy moved his family over to the more lavish accommodations of Esplanade Street, where thehousehold consisted of himself -a white man- and his wife and four children, all free people of color. His

---

[59] Baptismal Records for Raymundo Godefroy in Earl C. Woods, et al, *Sacramental records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*. New Orleans, La.: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1987.

wife Adelaide's family also owned property in the Vieux Carré throughout the period in question, as well as a handful of slaves. Through these types of family mergers, the libre population as a whole became more entrenched in the city's geography and daily life with each successive generation. The Godefroy family's significant place in the free black community can be traced in the records throughout the antebellum period, and by 1860, when the status of libre was on its way to extinction, eight different households headed by Pedro's mulatto progeny were listed on the census.Pedro's personal hand in the collection and recording of the notarial archives themselvesmade him especially important to this study, and help to drive home the importance of Saint Domingue refugees' inclusion into the city's familial and even administrative spheres.[60]

Many similar instances of naturalization through marriageappear readily in the extant documentation, and a number of them included a bride and groom of unequal social or racial stations. While there were laws attempting to curtail interracial unions, examples like Godefroy's marriage to a mulatto woman suggestthat such restrictions were apparently difficult to enforce. What's more, many marriages listed in the church records show that quarterone, mulatto, and negro libres wed across the artificial lines of racial classification quite often, which supports the notion that libres' decisions to marry were based on much more than social advancement or "marrying up."Jean Dutreuille, for instance, was thefree mulatto son of a white St. Domingue transplantnamed Benjamin Dutreuille and Marie Louise, a "negro slave."In late December of 1804, he marriedAgatha Montreuil, a "free mulatto" and New Orleans native, or "natif de cette ville."[61]Although both of Agatha's parents were listed as "negroes," which suggests they were

---

[60] Entries for PierreGodefroy in Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805* and *Fourth Census of the United States, 1820*, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C. Hereafter referred to as 1820 Census.

[61] Notarial Records of Narcisse Broutin, 1804, vol 61, pg 380.

not born free, Jean Dutreuille was not dissuaded from his wedding proposal, and the two went on to contribute to the growth and interrelation of the libre caste by having children of their own.

Libre women who arrived from St. Domingueunattached often found mates in New Orleans as well, such as Sanis Grandie-listed as a mulatto libre from Cap Francais- who married Juan Mayoux, a libre native to New Orleans. The couple had a daughter named Luisa Felicite, who was baptized in the St. Louis Cathedral in August of 1809 before two white padrinos, Don Manuel Ribio and Donna Hanrietta Martin.In April of 1817, libre woman Felicite Marrigu married Joseph Dupont, the free mulatto son of New Orleans natives Francois Dupont and Jeanne Layarre, a free woman of color. Felicite had come to New Orleans with her father Francois Marrigu, a free man of color, and her mother Francoise was listed as having died on St. Domingue.[62]

As the above examples suggest, the relationships and experiences involvingrefugees from St. Domingue and natives of the city of New Orleans varied widely. While a great number of the immigrants from St. Domingue were readily integrated into the daily life and kinships of New Orleans, each individual's experience likely also involved any number of difficulties, such as disdain from the white community, uncertainty of status, or difficulty finding housing or work amongst the growing population. Many of the newcomers were slaves or free blackswho had come to Louisiana in the absence of any other options, and those with no character references or familiar associationcommonly drew the suspicion of the slaveholding community. Fear of those with contact, real or imagined, withSt. Domingue's slave revolt, and the suspected connection of all Caribbean slaves to such revolutionary tendencies created a backlash against the importation and immigration from the islands throughout the period.

[62]*Baptisms of Slaves and Free Persons of Color,* entries for Joseph Dupont and Felicite Marrigu, April 28, 1817.

The administration consequently made a series of efforts to halt or regulate the influx of free black refugees. In 1804, Governor Claiborne gave permission to city council representatives to search vessels and inspect the passengers landing on the docks in order to prevent illegal immigration from St. Domingue, with particular concern for the exclusion of non-whites seeking entry into the city.[63]Three years later in 1807, the territorial legislature attempted to officially bar all new free people of color from entering Louisiana, but these measures were in many ways ineffective, and though similar measures were again passed in 1825 and 1830 the free black population of New Orleans continued to grow and evolve with a decided measure of self control. In fact, throughout the antebellum period, even into the 1830s and 1840s, numerous petitions from concerned citizens and local politicians failed to limit the introduction of "strange negroes" into the city, and the influence of St. Domingue on New Orleans became unavoidable. Just like restrictions on manumission or slave movement, these petitions sprang up mostly in response to periods of unrest or violent events elsewhere that antagonized whites' psyche, but did little to actually threaten the status quo of the libre community. [64]

Despite the inability of local officials and citizens to stop the flow new people of color into the city, however, the reality of secondary status in a racially unequal society still affected those libres who did manage to find their way into Louisiana. While many found cultural and social similarity when they arrived, otherslikeCharlotte Butoapparently had a harder time incorporating into the swift social current of the Vieux Carré. Buto, a free woman of color from St. Domingue, left notraceable family or social connections in the public record, and no neighbors or friends acted as deponent when she died in a house in the Vieux Carré in 1821. Although the majority of details surrounding Charlotte Buto's life cannot be discerned, her

[63] Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 192-193.

[64]John Watkins to Governor Claiborne, April 24, 1804, *Territorial Papers*, 234.

fleeting and solitary appearance in the extant records shows that not all St. Domingue refugees shared the same welcoming experience upon immigrating to a city so conflicted about their arrival.[65]

These variations in experience were likewise not exclusive to women. One libre man named Charles Petion Populus, whose family became a fixture in libre community of New Orleans,experienced the typical St. Domingue to Louisiana migration in reverse. Listed as a shoemaker and musician, Charles left his wife and two sons, Charles and Antoine behind in his native city and immigrated to Haiti sometime in the early American Period. Though his reasons for doing so cannot be known –possibly deportation, or simply divorce- his family can be seen carrying on in the Crescent City, while he died on the Caribbean island in 1826. While his case is by no means common, the fact that movement in both directions existed between the island and Louisiana is an important concept to keep in mind.[66]

But while Charles Populus and Charlotte Buto stand out as caveats to the typical interaction of St. Domingue and New Orleans, it remains true that the vast majority of refugees who came from the Caribbean to Louisiana readily assimilated into the city's pre-existing social and cultural infrastructures. A large number of new kinship ties, whether fictive or actual, as well as professional and social affiliations brought by the waves of newcomers replenished into the libre community in both numbers and power. As the earlier example of Pedro Godefroy's family helps to illustrate, these new families and individuals found an almost unlimited variety of places to live and workin the expanding city, and became just another aspect of New Orleans's diverse cultural makeup.

---

[65]Entry for Charlotte Buto in Woods et al, *SacramentalRecords.*

[66] Entry for Charles Petion Populus in Alice D. Forsyth, *Louisiana marriages, volume I: a collection of marriage records from the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans during the Spanish regime and the early American period, 1784-1806*. (New Orleans, Polyanthos, 1977), 217.

The overwhelming numbers of French or Creole whites and blacks who arrived from the island created a need for more housing and developed land in the area, as well as new strains on the city's ability to support and control its growing population. Those who could not find room or employment in the Vieux Carré spread out into the adjoining neighborhoods of St. Mary, the Faubourg Marigny, and Treme along with their black and white neighbors of myriad origins, and within a few generations, were often indiscernible from their native Creole counterparts. In the next chapter, the geography of these settlement patterns will be examined more thoroughly by tracing free black individualsand their families in the Census and notarial records. Their physical presence in the city, as well as their sustained impact on cultural development of its various neighborhoods will be shown, and a case for their self reliance in terms basic needs, like housing, will be made.

CHAPTER 6

FREE BLACK CITIZENS AND HOMEOWNERS IN THE CENSUS AND NOTARIAL ARCHIVES

Despite the assertions of some works that libres self segregated or wererelegated to the periphery of town by whites, over 650notarized transactions involving properties owned by free persons of color in the very center of the citythroughout the antebellum period contradict the notion of a "black part of town." While institutions like plaçage and other forms of concubinageundoubtedly existed, the quantity, geographical distribution, and variety of properties owned by free people of color suggest that libres of all walks of life were able to establish a wide range of living arrangements for themselves and their loved ones. These libres lived and workedin all areas of town, and instead of becoming racially compartmentalized, people of all ethnic distinctionscontinued to interact and reside within the same neighborhoods.This intermingling can be demonstrated through tabulating the demographics along each street in the census, or through examination of property characteristics listed in the notarial archives.[67]

In the first municipality, which remained New Orleans'ssocial and economic hub,free people of color were just as present as they had been before 1804, and remained a crucial part of the city's economy and workaday life. Those native or newly arrived libres who could not find room in the Vieux Carré filtered into every other segment of the expanding port city, and in few ways were their personal mobility and property rights impinged uponby Anglo changes in administration. The property records listed in the notarial acts from the period show the number of choices available to the city's nonwhite population during this time, by noting precisely who

[67] See census totals in Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805,* 107 and *1820 Census*.

owned each property, from whence it was obtained, and other such details. Such information suggestsmuch more self determinism than prior narratives of *plaçées* and white-affiliated Creoles of Colorhave afforded the free black population.As mentioned in the previous chapter, free people of color performed an expansive range of professional tasks, andwhen it came to choosing a place to live, very few of New Orleans's residents were able to avoid contact with those of a different raceon an everyday basis.[68]

By emphasizing libres' adherence to the center of town in terms of both housing and employment,the concept that propertied free blacks were relegated to the faubourgs, or that social advancement occurred solely through beneficial connections with white society, loses traction.Free men and women of colorearned honest livings performing any number of trades, or by providing a service to their neighbors and peers of either race. In this way, the libre community added to the economic self-sufficiency of the town itself, which is of particular importance when discussing the historical issues of supply and economic development in Louisiana. In light of its hard-scrabble, isolated beginnings, the cosmopolitan identity that came to define New Orleans in the nineteenth century could not have been forged without the daily services and goods provided by these free black vendors, service workers, or artisans.

Standing upon their long established presence in the homes and shops of the Vieux Carré, propertied libresbought and sold homes and plots of landin the first municipality throughout the entire American period, and constituted a majority percentage of the homeowners along some streets. Whether property was bought, sold, or passed through inheritance, these transactions often involved parties representing both races, and in many instances,were between two free black individuals. Census data from 1805 and 1820 show thatwhites and blacks entered into

[68]Spain, Daphne. "Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* Vol. 441, Race and Residence in American Cities (Jan., 1979), 82-96

contracts or business agreements with one another that pertained to real estate situated alongeach street ofthe city, without exception.Of the 650 property transfers involving libres listed in the Vieux Carré survey, 167 -or 26 percent- were purchased or sold by a free person of color between the years 1804 and 1820. These properties ranged in price from $510 to $6,250, and some libres managed to acquiremultiple homes during their lifetime. Libre Barthelemy Campanel owned a string of properties between 1797 and 1831 that included houses on Decatur, Toulouse, and St. Philip streets, as well as three different addresses on Dauphine Street. This ability to purchase more than one property was not restricted to the males of the caste, and many of the landlords in town during the nineteenth century were libre women like Heloise Marcos, who owned three houses on St. Ann Street simultaneously.[69]

Property also came into the hands of free people of color through the misfortune or inability of others in their community to stay above-board financially. Sheriff's auctions and court judgments ordering the sale of properties for delinquent payment, insufficient proof of ownership or other legal claims disavowed some libre property owners of their homes, while at the same time, it left those houses open to acquisition by other libres. In January of 1814, free woman of color Marie Laseur obtained the property at 1018 St. Philip in the Vieux Carré via sheriff's sale following judgmentin municipal court againstits former owner, another libre named Julien Juheau. A few streets away, free woman of color Marie Louise Villart purchased the lot at 919 Dumaine Street in a sheriff's auction after judgment in the suit of Benoit Pignon vs. Pierre Denis de la Ronde. Villart obtained the property, which included "buildings and improvement" on April 1, 1815, but apparently did not have a need for all of it. Four months after winning the auction, Madame Villart partitioned and sold half of the property to fellow libre Eugenie

[69] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entries for Barthelemy Campanel and Heloise Marcos.

Fressineau in late August of 1815. Through this subdivision of her lot, Villart lost half of her property, but likely regained much of her invested capital, and still retained possession of the house next door at 921 Dumaine.[70]

In one particularly interesting example, Jean Goule, a free man of color, acquired the property at 820 Dauphine as a prize in an 1827 lottery conducted by Dorothee Lassize. Madame Lassize was authorized to conduct said lottery by an act of the State Legislature, and it was held in Café du Hewlett at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis Streets in the presence of notaries Joachim Bernardez and Felix de Armas.[71]Mr. Goule's number was drawn, and his status as a person of color apparently did not exclude him from claiming his prize. While winning a house in the lottery certainly constitutes an unlikely and unrepresentative circumstance, the fact that libres were allowed to enter such raffles and collect their winningsat all denotesrecognition of their rights to property by the white community.

Of course, not everyone was as lucky as Jean Goule, and any number of financial obstacles excluded people in New Orleans, both white and black, from attaining the security of property ownership. The libre caste was on average less advantaged economically than whites, especially its minority faction of free black men. Yet the disparity of opportunity did not exclude libres from acquiring property, even along streets that housed some of the most valuable real estatein the city.Members of the Mandeville family for example, who were the free black descendants of the Marigny's slaves, owned chattel and multiple homes throughout the city, including homes onConti, Dauphine and Orleans in the first municipality.[72]

---

[70] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entries for Marie Laseur, Madame Villart.

[71] *Ibid.,*entry for 820 Dauphine, April 10, 1827.

[72] *Ibid.,*multiple entries for Mandeville family.

Instead of exhibiting either expulsion by whites or self segregation by blacks, the notarial records show libre propertiesbound by white neighbors -andwhite residents with libre neighbors- along every street in the city. In fact, nowhere in the Vieux Carréor faubourgs was there complete racial uniformity on any of the census rolls for the period in question. In the Census of 1805, Royal Street was the most racially similar street, but still housed five libre households amongst its total of fifty (10%). Raphael Bernabe,who owned property at 1020 Toulouse Street, was bound on one side by "Mr. Alpuente and sons (white) on one side, and Pierre Marly, free man of color, on the other." A few streets over, on Orleans Ave, libre Francois Boisdoré owned property that was "bounded on one side by Jean Lanna and on the other by Franchonette Wiltz" who were both white.[73]

As these examples suggest, the free black population of New Orleans was not confined to any one area of the growing city, and many assumptions of racial quarantine in the American period are in need of re-evaluation. While some libres might not have had the resources to own a place of their own, they rented rooms and small shotgun houses called Creole Cottages from landlords of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and many of these tenants made the transition to property ownership themselves later on in the 1830s or 1840s. Some of the more wealthy free people of color, lived in highly valued domiciles, like Charles St. Martin's lot at 728 St. Philip, valued at$6,000, a tremendous amount when he bought the home in 1819. The majority of free blackswho owned theseproperties in the Vieux Carrécould expecta return on their investment, even if it was only held for a few days. For instance, the aforementioned Barthelemy Campanel, who owned a number of houses in the city, bought a property at 812 Dauphine in 1801, and then sold it to his son in 1808. Two and a half years later, in August of 1811,he bought the home

[73] Notarial Records of Pedro Pedesclaux, 1811, Volumes 62-63.

back from his son, and waited only two days beforereselling it to Barthelemy Duverje, a white man, for a modest profit.[74]

Once obtained by a free person of color, such properties were oftenpassed down to children or other family members viainheritance.By willing their homes to other libres, the free black community maintainedchain of ownership on some properties across multiple generations, and thereby held onto their family's physical place in the city. The largenumber of inheritanceslisted in the Vieux Carré Survey supports this notion, and help to support the assertion of this thesis that the legal protection fornon-whites in matters of property and succession was not roundly destroyed by American reform.Angelique Aury, a libre woman who owned the property at 320 Dauphine, held possession of her estate for over sixty years, a remarkable amount of time, and left the property to her children upon her death in 1845. These heirs, with the last name Dalcourt, continued to hold the title to Aury's lot until 1887, when they finally sold the property to Joseph Anselme and Jean Leopold Mercier, both libres. This property is unfortunately a parking lot today. In another example,Andre Juin's property at 938 Ursulines was obtained through succession in 1815, and willed to his heirs Raphael, Andre, and Rose Juin when he died in 1848. His heirs held the property until 1848, when they each sold their portion to fellow libre Francois Escoffier.[75]

Many of the parcels gained through successionor other avenues were then partitioned by their owner and re-sold in segments, such as the property at 937 St. Louis, owned by Marie Joseph Fondale and Jean Marie Foucher, both free people of color. Of the couple's heirs Helene, Louis Barthelemy and Jean Marie, two decided to sell their portion of the lot, and thus the property was divided into two addresses, 937 and 939. In all, twenty nine properties are listed as

[74] *Ibid.*

[75] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entries for Angelique Aury and Andre Juin.

having been partitioned during the period in question, and in some instances, these divisions were involuntary.For instance, Raphael Barnabe's property at 1020 Toulouse Street came into the family's possession in 1811, but following the death of Raphael's daughter Suzanne, the family's heirs were unable to keep up with the taxes, and were forced to sell one half in 1839, while the remaining portion (1022 Toulouse) was seized and auctioned by the Sheriff in 1844.[76]

As a result of their property ownership, many free people of color were called upon to serve as executors of wills, landlords, and property managers during the antebellum period. Those libres who went before a judge or arbitrator apparently negotiated these agreements themselves, and were in many instances successful. Some libreshiredan attorney if they could afford one, such as Balthasard Carriere, who was represented by Charles Pierre when he purchased a house at 1025 Bienville for his mother Marie. While this was apparently rare, later in the antebellum period, some lawyers -like the well known John Charles David- made entire careers for themselves by representing free people of color. David's reputation for the defense of blacks in property cases, freedom suits, and other legal matters is testament to the ability of New Orleans's black population to utilize the avenues of the legal system in a tradition that could be drawn past emancipation all the way to *Plessy v. Ferguson.* Butalthough a few exceptional individuals were able to afford representation, most free people of color represented themselves in court cases and matters involving property.[77]

As the property records and census data suggest, libres owned homes, operated businesses, and raised their families in each of the city's neighborhoods, new or old. Whether

[76] Libres were sometimes wealthy enough to afford representation. One example of this was the free woman of color Angelique Fortier, who was represented by councilor Thomas L. Harmon in her purchase of the slave Francoise on February 15, 1816, Notarial Records of Michel De Armas, Volume 10, 1816.

[77] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entry for Balthasard Carriere, 1025 bienville (3/21/1831); For more detailed discussion of the life of John Charles David, or the legal history of slavery in the late antebellum years, see Judith K. Schafer *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 34.

they were the landlord or just the tenant of the lots and domiciles that appear in the Vieux Carré Survey, the censuses, or thearchdiocese records, free people had a crucial impact on the settlement and demographic geography of the New Orleans.For these reasons, the role of women within the libre caste cannot be understated. Their status as both a majority of the libre population as a whole, as well as the vast majority of black property owners in the city will be used to show just how complex the interaction of race and gender were during the antebellum period. Instead of being doubly repressed because of both gender and race, free black women were often the most mobile and financially stable group amongst the nonwhite population, and in many instances exhibited more independence than any other faction besides white males.

CHAPTER 7

FREE WOMEN OF COLOR

Another particularly important aspect of the libre community in New Orleans that should not be overlooked or understated is the presence of a female majority amongst its members. Especially amongst libre property owners, women constituted as much as seventy percent of the total population demonstrated in the records, and free black women held a number of autonomous roles within their social community that have heretofore been marginalized by most historians. During the late Spanish period, sugar planting made male slaves the preferred type of bondsperson outside the city, and although a great number of female slaves lived in the city as vendors or domestic servants, the characteristics of urban slavery and the overall drop in value of female slaves enabled a disproportionate number of their gender to attain freedom through self purchase or owner-instigated emancipation. These gender ratios continued well into the American period, when plantation agriculture reached new levels of production and acreage in Lower Louisiana.As more women achieved libre status, their presence and influence in the affairs of the overall nonwhite population was elevated to a level seldom acknowledged by historians, in which they carried immense significance within the local economy and its social constructs, such as family and church life. Much more than concubines kept on the margins of town, dozens of libre women can be seen to have owned property, operated businesses, and raised families in the Vieux Carré, and should therefore be granted a place in the foreground of the city's history.[78]

As was the case in other areas of the American South, even into the twentieth century, women of color exercised a paradoxical position of power in the political daily life of the city.

---

[78]Hanger,*Bounded Places,* 71, 77.

Although often stereotyped as licentious and wantonly oversexed, libre women were oftenthe most independent and propertied members of the free black community, holding jobs, residences, and slaves throughout the antebellum period.Some libre women like Charlotte Martindefied assumptions about the autonomy of women and the ability of free blacks to achieve success at the same time. According to the 1805 city census, Madame Martin lived on Magazine Street in the predominantly wealthy neighborhood of St. Mary, and shared her home with a white male consort, four other libres, and eighteen slaves of her own.[79]

In many cases, property came into libre women's hands through marriage, but it is important to note that assets gained through such alliances were not always supplied by the groom. Libre brides or their families were often seen contributing homes or significant dowries to their grooms upon nuptials, such as Heloise Lanna, who donated her property at 931 Orleans Street as a marriage gift for her daughter and son-in-law in March of 1820.[80] Patrice Wale, owner of the property at 328 Conti, donated his lot containing a store and two houses to his libre consort, Judite Mandeville in 1815. Mandeville held the property until 1838, when she renounced her rights to the property and passed it on to her daughters Marie Angelle and Patrice Wale.[81]

This is not to say however, that all free women of color relied upon marriage to improve their station or financial situation. For while some libre women married into their property, others were content to be single mothers or caretakers for their immediate family, and obtained

---

[79] Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805,* entry for Charlotte Martin, 102.

[80]*Sacramental Records*, entry for Luisa Felicite Mayoux (August 24, 1809); *Vieux Carre Survey,* entry for Heloise Lanna (March 3, 1820).

[81]*Ibid.*, entry for Juditte Mandeville, 328 Conti (June 19, 1815).

their homes through their own labor or inheritance.[82]Many supported themselves and their immediate family with their own earnings, and these autonomous free women of color can be seen in the censuses, where all free black property owners were denoted with either an “fmc” (free man of color) or “fwc” (free woman of color) in the margin next to their names. For example, Frances Robert, described as a free woman of color, lived on Royal Street with one other libre girl under sixteen years of age (most likely her daughter), and seven slaves (three male, four female). Their residence was situated amongst wealthy white slave-ownerson Royal, and was only one block from the city’s most infamous slave exchange, located at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis. No men of either race were listed as occupants in her home. Around the corner on Orleans Avenue, a free “mulatress” namedAgner Mathieu lived with her free black mother and daughters, and held two young female slaves of her own. Although she was a slave-owner, Mathieu evidently did not own her house, and her name is not present in any property transfers listed in the notarial records. Other libre women like Magdelaine Bizot, on the other hand, were listed in both the survey and census as the head of household (at 721 Toulouse Street) even though the census lists an adult male amongst its occupants. These examples suggest that not only did free people of color retain power over their property under American rule, but also that the women of that caste did not automatically take a subordinate position to their male counterparts in daily affairs.[83]

Through their unique place in the social hierarchy libre women were in many ways more independent and economically significant to the community as a whole than the majority of their

[82] While it is not the most common source of property ownership, some libre women did gain property through marriage. One such example of this was Eulalia Baueran, a quarterone libre from St. Domingue, who married Don Pedro Liquete, a Frenchman from Bordeaux, before inheriting his estate. See Woods et al, *Sacramental records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*.

[83] Flannery, *New Orleans in 1805,* entries for Aigner Matthieu and Magdalene Bizot, 36-40. *Vieux Carre Survey,* entry for Magdelaine Bizot.

contemporaries, be they whites or libres. Via their own entrepreneurship and self determination, and not simply through the "generosity" of white affiliates, the libre women of nineteenth century New Orleans constructed much of the world in which they livedentirely on their own. Of the 364 free black property holders in the Vieux Carré Survey for the years between 1805 and 1820, 255 -or 70 percent- were women, and female landlords outnumbered their male counterparts nearly two to one during this period. This female majority does not appear as readily in the census data, as the eldest male in the household was usually recorded as head regardless of the name on the deed, but the Vieux Carré Survey allows for the cross-reference of stats relating to libre women,by which a map of their residential geography can be constructed. When this is done, libre women appear in every corner of the Vieux Carré, and the households of each free woman of color who owned her home can be seen in relation to her peers. In all, there were 136 property transactions involving free women of color listed in the Notarial acts between 1804 and 1820 in specific, and a number of these involved libre women acting on their own behalf, or negotiating terms of a contract without male representation. The census of 1820 lists 607 free women of color as head of household, and they were likewise distributed throughout the entirety of the city and its faubourgs. While racial distribution was not entirely even from street to street, every neighborhood housed at least some free persons of color.[84]

Some of the entries in the notarial archives also contain information on tenure of possession, chain of command, familial relationships, and demographic surroundings of the free black women who owned property. These pieces of the puzzle help to reconstruct metadata relating to the properties themselves that add depth to our concept of libre women's daily lives. For instance, Angelique Aury, mentioned in the last chapter, held her plot in the heart of the city

[84] See map in Appendix B; Citywide demographics can be seen in the last pageof the *1820 Census*, 109; NARA Roll: M33_32; Image: 122.

for over sixty years, between 1785 and 1845, before willing the plot to her heirs. Another libre woman named Marie Bodaille also ensured that her property at 923 Dumaine stayed in the family across multiple generations. Bodaille inherited the home from her mother, Maria Juana Dauphin, in March of 1776, and held the lot for over four decades until her death in December of 1819, when she willed the home to her daughter, Madelaine Dupuy.Such lengthy tenures of possession by these libre women tells of the stability many free people of color of either sex were sometimes able to achieve. Furthermore, the fact that so many free women of color were able to purchase and maintain properties without the financial support or assistance of a man of either race points to their important primary role in the city's settlement and daily operation. As a majority of the libre population, and its largest faction of propertied members, free women of color were in many instances the most economically and socially significant members of their caste.[85]

These free black women protected their rights to this property when necessary, and a number of them were recorded as they stood before judges or juries in municipal court. Marguerite Launay, for example, a free woman of color, inherited the property at 416 Burgundy in the 1816 succession of her mother Francoise Baure. Twenty five years later, in 1843, Launay and her siblings' right to the property was upheld in court, allowing them to sell the house to fellow libre Jean Baptiste Couvertie. In 1820, libre woman Marie Louise Villartalso won control of her house in a court case brought by Madame Eugenie Delassize Avart, a white woman. The court ruled that Madame Villart had rightfully purchased the property at 1003 Bourbon from Claude Treme in 1816 before notary Pedro Pedescleaux, and thus she retained possession of the house against Madame Avart's claim. Madame Villart in turn sold toPaul Francois Gallien

[85] Entries in Vieux Carré survey for Angelique Aury, whose length of tenure is based on the records of various notaries between 1804 and 1845; see also entry for Marie Bodaille, March 28, 1776 and December 15, 1819.

Preval, a white man, in 1823. The willingness and ability of these and other libre women to defend their rights to a given property, and also to sell their holdings when they so chose further supports the idea of female libre autonomy, and suggests they were comfortable with navigating the official channels of property transfer when necessary.[86]

Of the total 651 libre owned properties listed in the entirety of the Vieux Carré, which includes every libre owned property from the beginning of Lousiana to Emancipation, 389 -or just under 60 percent- were owned by free women of color. But regardless of their clear place of importance within the community, the free black women of New Orleans remain subject to much of the same oversight and stereotyping that they contended with in their own time. Few descriptions of their independence and economic stability have factored into works on the city's settlement patterns or its free black demographics.Instead,taboo sexual relationships between free women of color and white men are the most commonly emphasized aspects of libre womanhood, and countless literary and historical efforts have centered around only these salacious outliers of the female libre data set.

Though voluntary or involuntary sexual relationships must certainly be acknowledged, individual women's motivations for engaging in such arrangements are of utmost importance. Whether specifically aimed at social advancement, or initiated for less subversive, more emotional reasons, the fact that some of these women chose to include their sexual lives as part of their own identity and personhood is something that few scholars have examined within the specific setting of Antebellum New Orleans. In Jennifer Spear's 2009 work *Race Sex and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* as well as Kimberly Hanger's *Bounded Places, Bounded Lives*, the

[86] *Vieux Carre Survey*, entries for Marguerite Launay, 3/16/1816 and Marie Louise Villart, 7/27/1820; Another more complicated example involved a libre woman named Eulalie Mandeville, who successfully defended her right to the property she inherited from her white consort against litigation from his white heirs. See also Spear, *Race and Sex*, *and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 186.

role and sentience of free black women received unparalleled treatment, and the case for their importance to the social and economic spheres of the city are also given much needed attention. Unfortunately, however, the majority of other works have failed to incorporate the work of these two historians, and many still manage to gloss over the multitude of ways in which individual libre women impacted the demographic and cultural growth of the city.Indeed, to move forward in our understanding of women and race in Louisiana,future historians must look beyond the exploitative or involuntary conditions of these population's lives to find the full range of their importance to the community.[87]

Even enslaved womenacted with intent and foresight to improve their place in society. Some slave women managed to save enough money from selling wares in the market or "hiring out" to purchase freedom for themselves or their children, and a number subsequently became libres, property owners, and even slave masters themselves during the nineteenth century. After 1807, this leap from slavery to freedom required the permission of one's owner, as access to self purchase contracted in the face of growing slave numbers and inflated fear of rebellion, but connections to whites and free blacks still afforded slave women some degree of potential for emancipation. For example, a libre husband might pay for his wife's manumission, or less commonly, a white consort or master who fathered a child by a slave might free either his concubine or her offspring out of obligation of one kind or another. Although interracial marriage was illegal, and had been since the Spanish period, free and enslaved women still entered into relationships with white men, and in most instances, found a way to use that connection to their advantage. Though concubinage and white exploitation of blackdefinitely

[87] Hanger, *Bounded Places,* 42,82; and Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans,* 153.

occurred, the underlying motivations and self preservation of the women involved in even the most unequal relationships from the period mustalso be taken into account.[88]

Like the many other myths portraying New Orleans as a center of vice, these unrepresentative depictions of free black women have their roots in the colony's earliest days. Even when they ascended the social hierarchy to become property owners, black women of all sorts, whether slave or free, pardo or moreno, endured negative social stigma and prejudice assigned to them by white society. The travel account of Claude Robin, published in 1807, described libre women as exhibiting "such lust throughtheir bearing, their gestures, and their dress" that they corrupted, or "ruined" the honor and reason of the male population.[89]These assumptions lingertoday in the popularity of concubines and "fancy girls" in the topical historiography. But stigmatized or not, free women of color in antebellum New Orleans clearly held a great degree of control over the public and private spaces that surrounded them. Libre women made conscious decisions that were specifically intended to benefit themselves and their family, even from within a system of racial and gender inequality. These actions on their part resulted in new levels of social standing and financial comfort that their counterparts in Charleston or Richmond seldom achieved.

In a number of such ways, libres solidified their own status within the community outside the courts. Through their involvement in the religious life of New Orleans, free people of color often formed family alliances and social connections independently of white paternalism via god-parenthood. The regularity with which libres relied upon members of their own caste for their children's god-parents, or *padrinos,* will be used to dispel the notion of white social

---

[88] Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon,* 326-327.

[89] Claude C. Robin, *Voyages dans l'Interieur de la Louisiane, de la Floride Occidentale, et dans les Isles de la Martinique et de Saint-Domingue*, 3 vols. (Paris: F. Buisson, 1807), II: 112.

patronage through baptism that has so often been emphasized as the primary means of social advancement for nonwhites.By evaluating all the free black baptisms in the sacramental records for the territorial period, it will be shown that, just like the women of the caste, the children of the libre community did not universally wait upon the sponsorship or assistance of a member of the white population for legitimacy or social support later in life. Instead, baptized libres were most frequently supported by their nonwhite neighbors, fellow congregation members, and family when baptized before the priest at St. Louis Cathedral, suggesting yet another avenue of free black autonomy.

CHAPTER 8

LIBRES AND RELIGIOUS LIFE IN NEW ORLEANS

As the previous chapters have asserted, the familial and social relationships amongst free people of color were anchored by a variety of outlets. While daily interactions on the streets and in the markets, as well as intermarriage were indeed significant, the most visible place for forming social alliancesin antebellum New Orleans was the Catholic Church. The St. Louis Cathedral, situated in the very heart of the Vieux Carré, was New Orleans's only official church during the early American period, and served as the center of religious and community life for the majority of the city's population, regardless of race. Baptisms of slaves and free people of color appearin the ledgers from this period with overwhelming regularity, and the relative diligence of Father Antonio de Sedella as a record keeper has in turn enabled historians to glean a wealth of information from his baptismal entries alone. The listed godparents, or *padrinos* for each baptism is of particular interest when studying free people of color, as it provides a window into the families and individuals in the community with which libre parents and slave-owners wanted to be associated. However, while many studies have emphasized the importance of white padrinos as a means to social advancement for free people of color, the overwhelming frequency with which non-whites served as godparents for baptized libres suggests a much more complicated social structure.[90]

In the eight years before Louisiana attained statehood in 1812, 851 free people of color, both children and adults, were baptized in the St. Louis Cathedral. In 589 of the priests' entries, at least one free person of color was listed as a godparent, and 315 baptismslisted two libre

---

[90]Antonio de Sedella, or "Pere Antoine, served as pastor of the St. Louis Cathedral during the late Spanish and early American periods. See Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon*, 252-253. Of the 851 baptisms listed in the Archdiocese records for the territorial period, 589 (or 69 percent) involved at least one free black godparent. See *Baptisms of Slaves and Free Persons of Color*.

padrinos. This made baptized libres with two padrinos of color twelve percent more common than those with two white godparents, of which there were 217. Libre family members, such as aunts, uncles, and even siblings served as padrinos for their baptized relatives, suggesting that a white godparent and the nebulous hope of social advancement through such an arrangement were not always first in the minds of libre parents. The godparents of Luisa Boisdore, a libre baptized in 1805, were her brother, Carlos Gilberto, and sister, Adelaida Boisdore. Similarly, the padrinos of Maria Delande, also baptized in 1805, were Carlos Brule, the infant's maternal grandfather, and Maria Brule, his sister.

Non-relatives served as godparents for their friends and fellow congregants as well, and certain family names were more highly coveted in church alliances than others. Members of the well known Rousseau family, for instance, served as godparents for fellow libres in the baptismal records four different times in 1806 alone, which suggests that social affiliations made in the church bore significance in the wider libre community. Other libre clans also received numerous requests to become godparents for other members of their caste, and in the process, further contributed to their own family's prestige. Free woman of color Isabel Lachaise served as padrino for other members of the libre community four times between 1805 and 1807, andVincent Populus -a former member of the free black militia- served as padrino four times in a span of just two years, from 1804 and 1805.[91]

While the maintenance of caste autonomy in religious life was clearly more important to libre families than has been previously acknowledged, a surprising degree of overlap between the libre and white communities did occur on the baptismal ledgers. Many whites acted as padrinos for free people of color, and in number entries -or one quarter of the 851 total baptisms- both

---

[91]*Baptisms of Slaves and Free Persons of Color*, entries for Rousseau, Boisdore, Lachaise, and Populus in 1806; see also Appendix C.

padrinos were listed as white.For example, Bernard de Marigny, a white planter who owned a large portion of the land in and around New Orleans, served as padrino for four different libre childrenduring the span of five years between 1804 and 1809. Marigny was especially important in the wider social and political life of the city, and although he was highly sought after as padrino for the white community, he was also heavily involved in god parenthood for nonwhites. The fact that he stood as padrino for the children of his own slaves as well as members of the well known Macarty family of libres -whose children Bendicto and Bernardo were baptized before Antonio Sedella in April of 1806- in some ways supports the notions of miscegenation and paternalism. But Marigny's willingness to vouch for baptized children of a variety of complexions and social standings also suggests that whites were willing to attach their name to nonwhites regardless of their social status.[92]

Further contributing to the idea that god-parenthood was not solely determined by whiteness or class, a high number of baptisms during the territorial period listed two padrinos of different racial distinctions on the same baptism. Of the 851 baptisms during the Territorial period, 274, or 32 percent of these exhibitedone white and one libre godparent right next to one another in the ledgers. Raphael Johan, who was white, and Johanna, a negro slave, were the listed padrinos in the 1804 baptism of Johan, the child of Rosalia, a free woman of color. The next year, in the baptism of quaterone libre Maria Antonia Dauphin, the listed godparents were Don Juan Moreau, white, and Maria Antonia, mulatta libre. Another particularly diverse entry from 1809 featured Antonio Joseph Boisdore, listed as mulatto libre, who was baptized before his godparentsAntonio Fernandes, white, and Victoria, a griffe libre. Antonio's biological parentage was also likely mixed, for although his father was listed as unknown, or "no

[92]*Ibid.,* multiple entries for Bernard Marigny

conocido," his mother Francisca was an "esclavo de Mr. Boisdore," and the child was granted free status by her master.[93]

In addition to these white/libre pairings, thirteen baptisms in which a white person and a slave were the listed padrinos further detract from the assumed importanceof white paternalism in church life. In fact, baptized individuals with "mixed" god-parentage including at least one nonwhiteconstituted nearly seventy percent of all the baptisms recorded during the territorial period. This directly contradicts the idea that racial alliances all went in the same direction, with proximity to whiteness being the ideal for all. Although white paternalism surely existed in some respects, it is clear that the libre caste was self sufficient insofar as they chose respected peers of both races from within their own community in which to entrust the god-parenthood of their children.

Besides the names of god parents in baptisms, the archdiocese records also show information related to the birth and deaths oflibre congregationmembers, and these declarations often include clues to the familial and social connections of their subjects.For example, when Jean Billy, a libre man described as being "an Ibo, born in Africa" died in New Orleans in 1821, the declarant was Paul Boree, a well known free man of color who was a former captain in the militia, and lived on Burgundy Street in back of the Vieux Carré. While Jean Billy's African birth suggests that he gained his freedom after he immigrated to Louisiana, Creole libres were born in houses throughout the city, and by 1820, free people of color who were native or otherwise constituted twenty three percent of the population of Orleans Parish. For example, when Aimee Bastille was born to free woman of color Elmira N. and a merchant named Charles Bastille in 1819, the delivery took place in a house on Dauphine Street. The next year, a libre

[93] *Ibid.,*entry for Antonio Joseph Boisdore (May 20, 1809).

named Julien Blancard was born on the same street to Marie Anette Cayeux, free woman of color, and Raymond Blancard, a white tavern keeper.[94]

Whether they were born in the city, St. Domingue, Africa, or elsewhere, many free people of color exhibited lifelong connections to New Orleans. The recorded deaths of congregation members from the libre community, for example show this in its most literal sense. When the son of Antoine Benjamin, a libre who lived at 941 Bienville, passed away in 1821, the declarant was listed as Charles Jason, a fifty year old libre carpenter who also resided in the Vieux Carré. By serving as witnesses and declarants when their libre neighbors and family members who died, New Orleans's free people of color evinced yet another example of their caste's self reliance. Libres of a range of wealth and professions lived -and died- in the Vieux Carré and other neighborhoods throughout the expanding port city, and as New Orleans became the largest and most significant city in the South, it grew both with and around its free black population.Many specific examples to this effect are found in the notarial and sacramental records of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and through these valuable sources, the important details and accents of libre daily life have been preserved.[95]

Through their involvement in the religious community at home and in the St. Louis Cathedral itself, the libre caste exhibited an immense impact on the social connections and familial distinctions of early nineteenth century New Orleans. Their continued participation in the baptisms and confirmations of their fellow libres, as well as their willingness to serve as declarants for their friends and acquaintances who were born or passed away in the city help to illustrate this importance. Catholic tradition is often seen as having been wiped away by American rule, but as the Archdiocese records show, the Catholic Church and its significant

[94]Entries for Jean Billy and Aimee Bastille in*Baptisms of Slaves and Free People of Color.*

[95]*Ibid.*

place in the daily lives of both whites and people of color continued well into the antebellum years. Additionally, instead of relying on the white community, or at least light skinned libres for patronage through padrinoship, the free black caste of the Crescent City looked to their neighbors, friends, fellow militia members, and family of all racial distinctions for the honor of serving as their children's religious mentors.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Through the connections afforded by church life, family associations, and economic influence, the free black community of New Orleans exercised levels of self-determinism and political agencythat have often been underrepresented in the topical historiography. Contrary to the notions of Anglo reform and free black marginality suggested by some historians, the libre caste's diversity of roles and political involvementin daily lifecounteracted attempts by all three administrative regimesto bring the nonwhite population of Louisianaunder greater control. Furthermore, rather than advanceto new levels of wealth or social standing solely through the patronage of whites, free people of color in New Orleans found a multitude of ways to assert their own personal and familial solidarity that often had little to do with the relative leniency or severity of the government in charge. Libre professionals of all walks of life and social tiers provided an economic and social contribution to the cultural identity of nineteenth century New Orleansthat complicates assumptions of white paternalism and black subjugation in the Crescent City.

Instead of being relegated to "black neighborhoods," or otherwise relying on the benevolence of the mainstream white community, free people of color acquiredreal and chattel property on their own, and remained presentin every section of town well into the antebellum period. This calls into question the popular notions of physical quarantine along racial lines in the new faubourgs that opened between 1804 and 1820, as well asthe prevailing images of what daily life was like for a person of African descent in an Anglo slave society. While many attempts to restrict and control the black population were made by both the American regime and their Spanish predecessors, personal agency was not limited to those with white skin, and the

autonomy shown by the libre caste after 1804 is an important aspect of determining the character of race, class, and gender in both antebellum New Orleans and the wider Atlantic world.

While the Crescent City was in many ways a unique sector of the American South, too much emphasis has been placed on the changes in societal and governmental structure that supposedly took place following the arrival of William C.C. Claiborne. Under the watch of American administrators, the city became more crowded and multicultural during the Territorial and early Statehood periods than ever before, and while New Orleans is often presented as a "unique" locale, certain common threads between both American and Caribbean traditions were exhibited by its residents of "varias classes y colores,."[96] The libre caste continued to hold an important role in the daily goings on of the city during this time, and almost none of the city's enclaves were devoid of free black residents of one description or another.

The overwhelming emphasis on concubines and marginalized libre of no account that are so prevalent in the historiography fall short of providing libres with their due credit in the city's evolution, and those who continued to live, work, and contribute to the social development of the burgeoning town have only recently been acknowledged by historians like Thomas Ingersoll and Kimberly Hanger. As these revisionists have asserted, the libre caste boresignificant influence on the city well into the antebellum period, andrather than being forced intoa two-caste system of racial separation following 1804, libres maintained a loosely defined third tier in the racial hierarchythatwhite administrators were never able to fully uproot.

Providing testament to these new depictions of libre agency are the hundreds of property records that show all manners of material acquisition that were attained by free people of color. When necessary, free blacks utilized the court system to protect their rights tothese possessions,

[96] Kimberly Hanger, *Personas de varias clases y colores: free people of color in Spanish New Orleans, 1769-1803*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Florida, 1991.

and the fact that they were often successful in these cases further supports the idea that free blacks were in many instances as protected by the legal system as white citizens. The females of the caste were especially independent and self-reliant, and a majority of the properties owned by free people of color belonged to a woman.

Libres also made their own social connections within the nonwhite community, and many relied upon members of the same caste for social institutions like god-parenthood or familial alliances. While much emphasis has been placed upon the notion of white paternalism and sponsorship of free blacks, all manners of interracial and interclass connections are exhibited in the archdiocese records and notarial archives that suggest a much more diverse web of social interaction. Throughtheir constant presence and interaction in the streets at home, libre individuals created a fluid community of myriad skin tones and cultural traditions that have given New Orleans the trademark diversity of which it is so proud today. Rather than making generalizations about the physical and political limitation of one caste or another, future historians will hopefully see the value of considering the individual as a basis for more representative studies.

Because previous works have chosen to focuson an entire class or “race” within a given community, the characterofnineteenth century New Orleans and other cities with large free black populations have been subjected to persistent misrepresentation. The entries related to housing and baptisms examined in this thesis, although they may seem banal, have been offered in order to better communicate the detailsof daily life and social organization left by these free black persons and their families.By following the examples left by this cross-section of libre individuals and their families, the influence of free people of color as homeowners, militia members, community leaders, employers, and employees willhopefully be seen in much greater

detail by the next generation of young historians.After all, it is this emphasis on the individual, and not an entire group of people with similarly defined racial traits that helps to best see the true nature of race, gender, and culture in American history.

While this study has focused on the period between transition in 1804 and the first census under statehood in 1820, it is important that future scholarship extend these observations through the first half of the nineteenth century to include the advent of emancipation. Such a continuation of the work done by this thesis in particular would help to further expunge the stereotypes of the Tannenbaum thesis and free black helplessness from the topical historiography. By using the same notarial and archdiocese records employed by this study, as well as its primary inspirations in the work of Hanger and Ingersoll, the complex racial and social history of New Orleans will hopefully be further explored by subsequent scholars who will add their own contributions to the argument for nonwhite agency in New Orleans and other locations.

Becauseof the explosive and profitable growth of plantation agriculture and Louisiana's slave population between the 1790s and 1820s, the constant addition of new enslaved and free people of color into the populace made it impossible for incoming administrators to define its citizenry by race alone. Although free people of color undoubtedly had to content with the policies and prejudices white culture, they also found a multitude of ways in which to push back against those who sought to superimpose themselves into a pre-existing tradition of racial intermingling and libre self-determinism. To attribute all of the cultural and political complexities that developed during this period of revolution and expansion to the administrative traditions of one nation or another is to overlook the power in numbers and persistence that non-whites held throughout New Orleans's history.

.

Though undoubtedly less advantaged in many respects, libres continued to bear political and economic significance within the wider community, and resisted any attempts nullify the place of social and economic significance achieved in previous generations. Free blacks and their family members took deliberate action to guard againstremoval from their homes in the center of town, loss of their place in the city's defense, or their own rights as freepersons. Despite fears of the potentially destabilizing influence of a sizable libre caste, free blacks were instead a crucial element of the city's identity, and served to anchor the city in its past while at the same time helping it to adapt to societal changes well beyond the assumption of American rule.

APPENDIX A

TABLES OF SELECTED FAMILIES LISTED IN THE VIEUX CARRE SURVEY

Entries marked with an asterisk (*) denote members of free black militia.

Barnabe, Francoise Raphael	1020/ 1022 Toulouse	1822/9/3	bought from her son for $1,000. Valued at $5,300 upon her death, 12/27/1836
Barnabe, Pierre Raphael	1020 Toulouse	1822/9/3	sale for $1,000 to his mother.
Barnabe, Pierre Raphael	1022 Toulouse	1836/12/27	liquidation and partition of succession of Franciose Raphael Barnabe. Valued at $5,300 at auction published oct. 22, 1836 in Bulletin, Nov. 1-24, 1836 in Bee for lot and several buildings of wood.
Barnabe, Pierre Raphael	1020 Toulouse	1836/7/30	Pierre Raphael Barnabe, uncle 1/3, Suzanne Raphael Barnabe 1/3, Jean Louis Augustin, natural tutor of the 3 minor children of Thalcide or Theresa Raphael Barnabe and of Jean Louis Augustin i.e. Theodore Augustin 1/9, Augustin Augustin 1/9, Marie Augustin 1/9, deliberating succession of Francoise Raphael Barnabe, widow of the late Raphael Barnabe, their grandmother.
Barnabe, Pierre Raphael	1022 Toulouse	1839/6/7	sold to Jean Luis Augustin Barnabe for the account of Suzanne Raphael Barnabe, fwc. For $6,000 for the whole lot, $3,000 for half. Suzanne Barnabe was in possession of 1/2 lot, consents to sell.
Barnabe, Raphael	1020 Toulouse	1793/6/6	husband of Francoise Raphael Barnabe, fwc.
Barnabe, Raphael	534 Rampart	1808/8/18	transferee
Barnabe, Raphael	1022 Toulouse	1811/2/12	transferor of 3 lots on Toulouse, bounded by Mr. Alpuente and sons on one side, Pierre Marly, fmc, on the other.
Barnabe, Raphael	1020 Toulouse	1819/4/26	transferee via sale.
Barnabe, Suzanne	1020/1022 Toulouse	1839/6/7	sale of lot in two halves by heir, 1020 sold 6/7/1839 for $3,000, 1022 sold 5/15/1844 by sheriff for nonpayment to Francisco Brunetti.

Hardy, Angela	1028 Dauphine	1827/4/12	transferred 4/24/1828
Hardy, Jean Baptiste	1022 Dauphine	1812/5/15	transferee. Husband of Rose Papotte (fwc).
Hardy, Jean Baptiste*	1024 Dauphine	1830/7/5	transferor.
Hardy, Jean Baptiste*	1017 Dauphine	1831/5/17	transferee via marriage contract. In consideration of their approaching marriage, J.B. Hardy made a donation of the undivided half lot
Hardy, Jean Baptiste*	1015 Dauphine	1841/1/9	transferor. Acquired via donation from J.B. Hardy, who originally purchased the property in 1827.
Hardy, Louis*	1022 Dauphine	1800/5/10	transferee. Sold on November 16, 1803.
Hardy, Magdaline	530 Dauphine	1790/4/24	by act of retrocession from her mother
Hardy, Magdaline	836 Dauphine	1793/10/16	both donated to her sons Estevan and Juan Larrieux

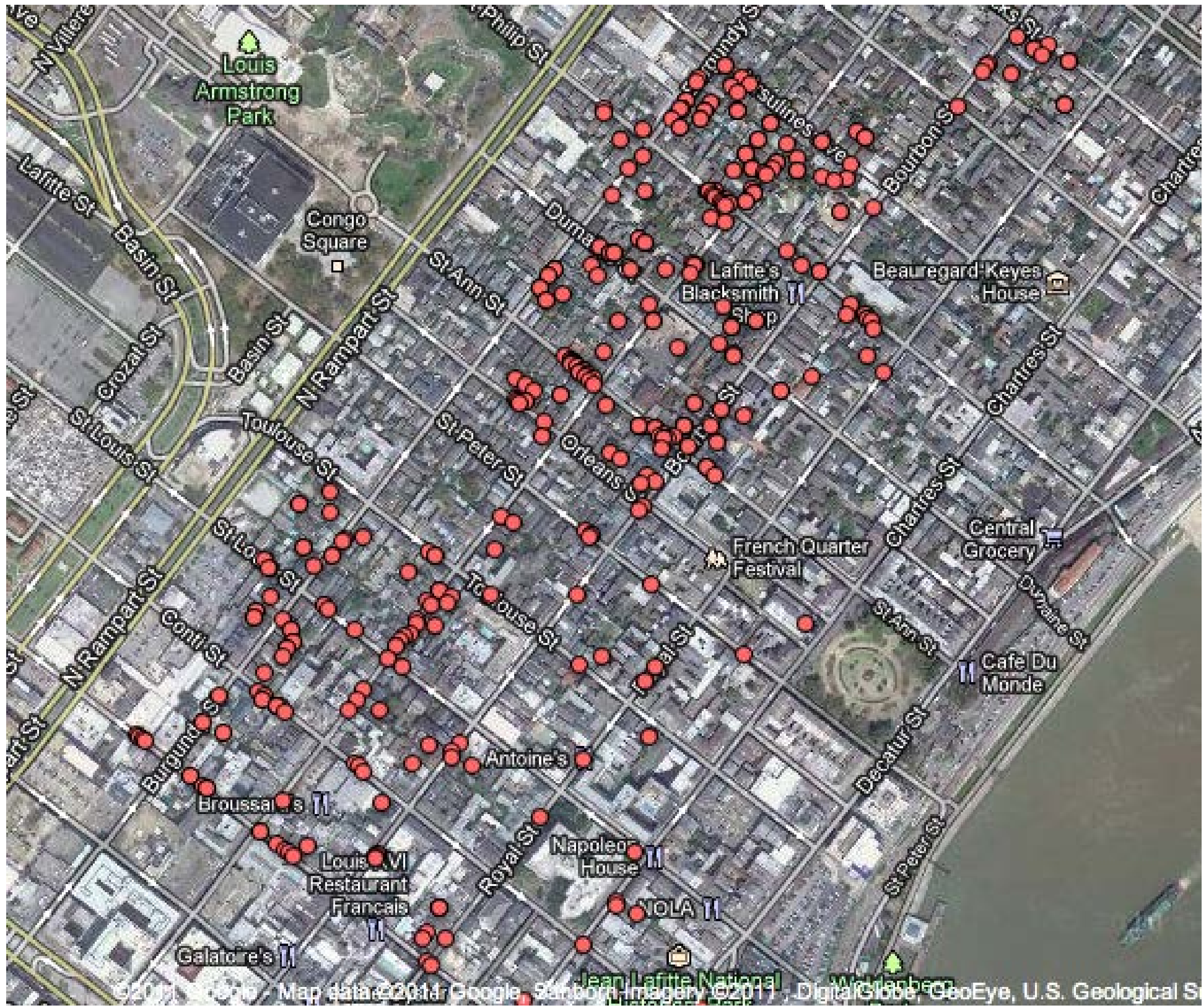
Populus, Elizabeth	818 Burgundy	1784/2/17	inherited from her mother, transferred again to her sister on 1/1/1785
Populus, Francoise	818 Burgundy	1785/1/1	transferred from her sister on 2/12/1829
Populus, Maurice	831 Bourbon	1836/2/9	transferor. Refers to second acquisition: "bordered on all sides by the property of current vendor."
Populus, Maurice	822 Bourbon	1840/8/4	transferor via succession. Undivided 1/5 interest to heirs
Populus, Maurice*	822 Bourbon	1800/10/2	transferee.
Populus, Vincent	831 Bourbon	1836/2/9	transferor.
Populus, Vincent*	831 Bourbon	1799/4/22	transferee. Bounded on one side by Ursulines convent and the other by charity hospital.

Poree, Celeste	1011 Dauphine	1811/5/14	acquired by the vendors and purchaser, cojointly, from their late mother. Transferred to Mme. Forneret on 10/6/1843
Poree, Charles	1011 Dauphine	1826/6/24	transferor via sale. Bounded on one side by Mr. Livey and the other by Colas mandeville (fpc). Acquired by the vendor and purchaser from their mother, cojointly.
Poree, Charles*	930 Dumaine	1833/1/24	transferee. Charles Poree Jr., Etienne alias Voltaire Poree, Linval alias Joseph Poree, Honorine Poree, Jean Baptiste Poree, Adelon Pree, all free people of color and issue of Charles Poree and his Wife Francoise Catherine Macarty.
Poree, Charles*	932 Dumaine	1844/6/3	transferor. Bounded by Mrs. Faget and a fence built by Mr. Cazeras
Poree, Charles*	936 Dumaine	1848/1/25	transferor
Poree, Etienne	936 Dumaine	1848/1/24	transferee. Charles Poree (fmc) paid to each of his heirs the sum of $234.30 as their portion in the succession of their mother, representing half their parents' community interest.
Poree, Eugenie	932 Dumaine	1833/1/24	wife of Joseph Ignacio Zamora. Inherited in portions, siblings bought out.
Poree, Jean Baptiste	930 Dumaine	1833/1/24	transferee. Charles Poree Jr., Etienne alias Voltaire Poree, Linval alias Joseph Poree, Honorine Poree, Jean Baptiste Poree, Adelon Pree, all free people of color and issue of Charles Poree and his Wife Francoise Catherine Macarty.
Poree, Linval	932 Dumaine	1833/1/24	transferee. Charles Poree Jr., Etienne alias Voltaire Poree, Linval alias Joseph Poree, Honorine Poree, Jean Baptiste Poree, Adelon Poree, all free people of color and issue of Charles Poree and his Wife Francoise Catherine Macarty.
Poree, Pierre Valentin	1036 Ursulines	1824/10/16	transferee via purchase. First portion acquired by Francois Escoffier. Adjoins on Burgundy the property of Raphael Guin (fmc), son of vendress and the lot of Widow Delery on the other side.
Poree, Pierre Valentin	1036 Ursulines	1827/5/31	transferor via sale.
Poree, Pierre Valentin	934 Ursulines	1848/6/15	transferor via sale. O. Drouet, representing Felix Percy, notary public. Sold by order of 3rd district court.

APPENDIX B

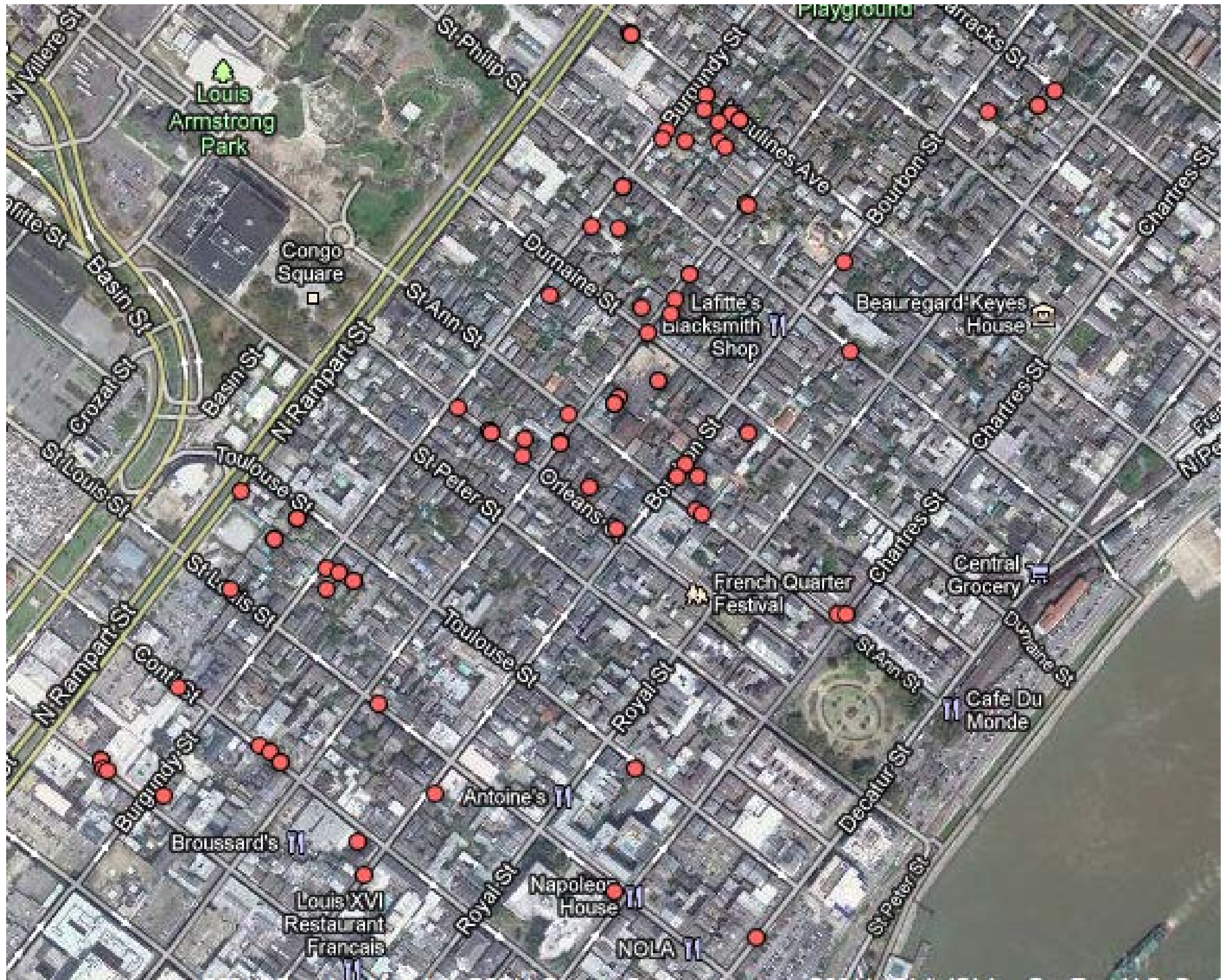
VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF LIBRE SETTLEMENT

A. Properties in the Vieux Carré owned by libre women:



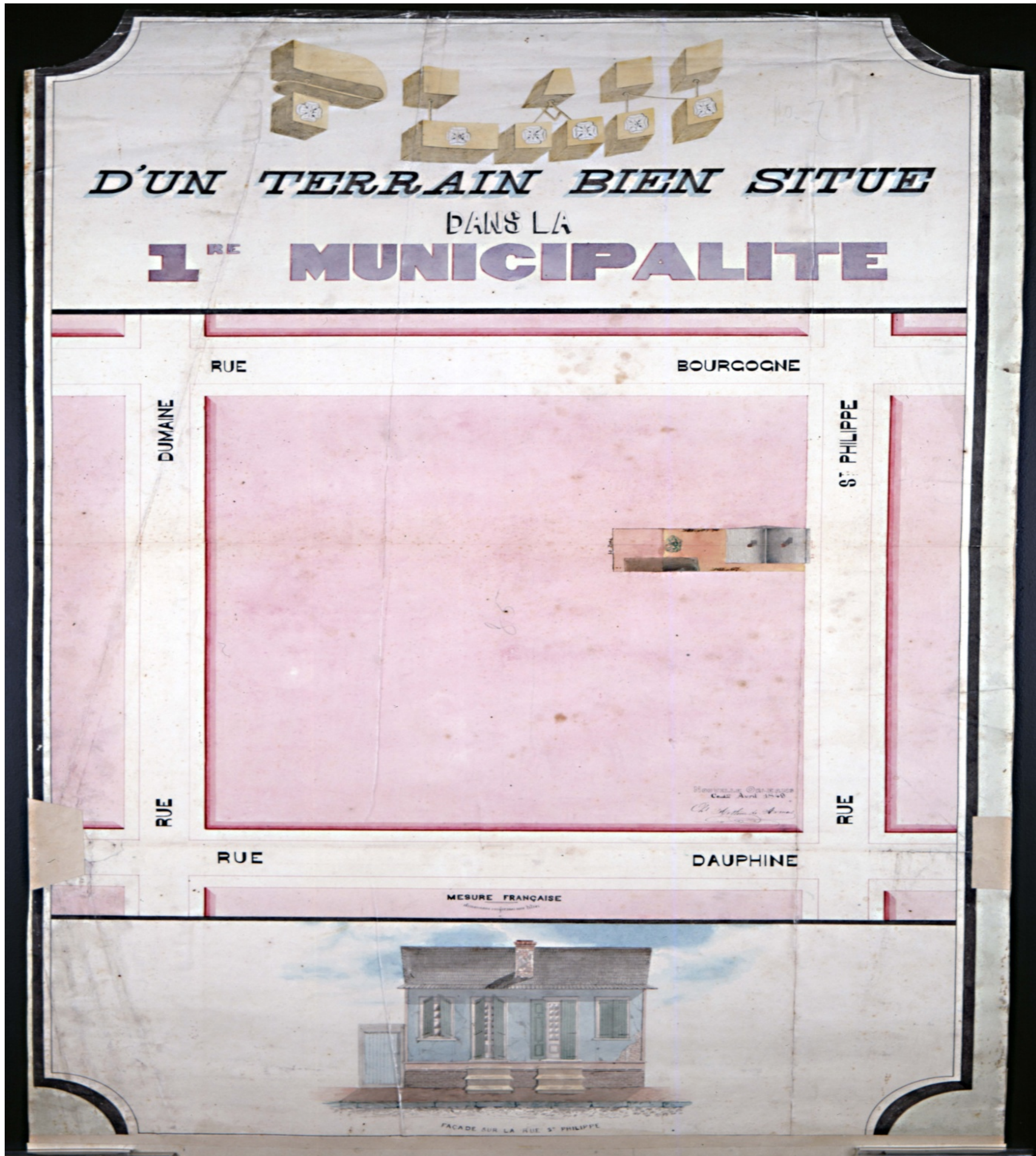
These properties can be viewed with individual metadata online at:
https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?snapid=S320815S9Mn

B. Propertieslocated in the Vieux Carréowned by libre men:



These properties can be viewed with individual metadata onlineat:
https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?docid=1DyVKt45EDX8lDJ5UC37gYg6qnraE1tyXVktd1X8&pli=1

C. Plan Sketch of a Libre Home, 1849.



This watercolor drawing shows a free black-owned property in the Vieux Carre and its situation along St. Philip Street. In the late 1840s, the city of New Orleans had dozens of these drawings made for a city-wide survey of each municipality and the structures thereon. This home was purchased byfree woman of color Mathilde Duraldein 1844 from fellow libre Joseph Dolliole. A record of her the property's transfer can by seen in the Notarial Acts of Amedee Ducatel Vol. 40, 1849. De Armas, Charles A. Planbook 16, folio 7 (016.007), April 12, 1849, and the chain of command for 926 St. Philip can be accessed through the Vieux Carre Survey online at http://www.hnoc.org/vcs/property_info.php?lot=23113 .

APPENDIX C

SELECTED BAPTISMS IN THE SAINT LOUIS CATHEDRAL

Racial distinctions as part of the catholic tradition:

(w) = White
(tr) = Tiercerone Libre- the offspring of a "quarterone" and a white person
(ql) = Quarterone Libre- the offspring of a "mulatto" and a white person
(ml) = Mulatto Libre- the offspring of a "negro" and a white person
(gl) = Griffe Libre- the offspring of a "mulatto" and a "negro"
(nl) = Negro Libre- any free person of color without white parentage

Name	**Date**	**Godparents**
MacCarty, Ursula Angelina (ql)	1804/02/27	Maneul Ensenat (w), and Ursula Veret (ml)
Meunien, Luisa (nl)	1804/03/01	Carlos Brule (ml, captain of negro militia), and Luisa (nl)
Yago (ml)	1804/03/04	Jose Olinas (w), Maria Luisa (ml)
Trudeau, David (ql)	1804/03/07	Mr. Jonas (w, physician), and Maria Trudeau (ml)
Pedro (nl "legitimo")	1804/03/08	Raphael (ml) and Francisca (ml)
Maria Juana (nl "legitimo")	1804/03/08	Jose Villars (nl) and Maria Juana (nl)
Luis Hipolito (ql)	1804/03/10	Jose Montegut (w) and Marie St. Maxent (ml)
Feliciana Charlot (ml)	1804/03/10	Joseph Segniac Duffossay (w)and Felicite Montegut (w)
Fortier, Maximo Oscar (ql)	1804/03/13	Francisco Dalcour (w) and Celeste Honore Fortier (ql)
Maria (nl)	1804/03/18	Juan Landi (nl), and Helena Guiliaume (nl)
Solet, Juan Francisco (ql)	1804/03/19	Juan Francisco Moygnard (w) and Francisca (w)
Josephina Celestina (ql)	1804/03/23	Don Morant (w) and Maria Morant (w)
Bartholome (ml)	1804/03/24	Miguel (w) and Maria Feiquar (w)
Joseph (ml)	1804/03/25	Joseph Rochon (ml), Isabel Rochon (ml)
Luisa (ns) of Adelaida Robin (ql	1804/03/30	Antonio Perez (ql), and Luisa (ml)
Casalette, Philippe (ml)	1804/04/01	Juan Baptista Rouselle (w) and Isabella Cenclare (ml)
Lachaise, Maria Luisa (ml)	1804/04/01	Basilio Brion (ml) and Maria Luisa Delagrue (ml)
Esteban (ml)	1808/10/11	Esteban Gautie (w) and Francisca (nl)
Johnston, Juan (ql)	1808/10/16	Don Juan Angelino (w) and Donna Luisa Roche (w)
Hardy, Joseph (ml) "legitimo"	1808/10/24	Joseph Pinny (ql) and Maria Dominique (ml)
Lachiase, Isidoro (gl)	1808/10/25	Isidoro Macarty (ml) and Maria Populus (ml)
Piernas, Euphrosina Felicita (ql)	1808/10/27	Bautiste Piernas (ql) and Ada Piernas (ql)
Danse, Manuel (ml)	1808/10/28	Pasqual Ferion (w) and Rosa (nl)
Anna (ml)	1808/10/29	Salvador Laudreine (w) and Francisca George (ml)
Carlos (ml)	1808/11/01	Charles Dupart (ml) and Francisca (ql)
Castille, Maria Felicita (ml)	1808/11/01	Francisco (ms of Mr. Boisdore) and Maria Cheval (ml)
Maria (ml)	1808/11/03	Vincent Capador (nl) and Maria Capador (nl)

Authamand, Joseph (ml)	1808/11/06	Joseph Vero (w) and Margarita Krep (ml, of Mobile)
Meunien, Marie Jeanna (nl)	1808/11/09	Vincent Capador (nl) and Francoise Populus (ml)
Leblanc, Joseph Zacarias (ql)	1808/11/13	Don Joseph Domingo de Linza (w)
Montalvo, Carolina (ml)	1808/11/20	Juan Baptista Soubie (w) and Maria de Clouet (w)
Cavelhin, Bautistina (ql)	1808/11/26	Don Honorato Fortier (w) and Bautistina Ferraris (w)

Maria Luisa (ql)	1809/06/29	Celstino LeRoux and Donna Maria Dionisia Forestal
Isabel (ql)	1809/06/30	Juan Marie and Isabel Olivier (ml)
Joseph (ml)	1809/07/01	Laurent Olivier and Louise Valentia
Alexandre (ml)	1809/07/09	Alexandre (ms of Mr. Moreau) and Marie Valentina (gl)
Charlotta (ml)	1809/07/09	Joseph (ms of Mr. Fortier) and Charlotta (ns)
Luisa (ql)	1809/07/12	Carlos and Maria Luisa Laveaux
Maria (ml)	1809/07/14	Thomas __ (ql) and Maria Luisa (nl)
Dupre, Emelia Juana Bautista (m	1809/07/16	Antonio Leyer and Isabel (nl)
Luisa (ql)	1809/07/17	Antonio Luis (ml) and Amada Medezengue (ml)
Marie (ql)	1809/07/19	Joseph Coujal and Arsene Jabeil
Boisdore, Adelaide (ql)	1809/07/19	Batiste Charles Brun and Adelaide Lalande
Lioteau, Martine Odile (nl)	1809/07/20	Jean Cayol and Sophia Josephine (ml)
Lacoste, Ursula Vilva (ql)	1809/07/20	Charles Vivant (ql) and Francoise Sebastien (ql)
Verbois, Luisa (gl)	1809/07/24	Houberto (ms) and Sophia (ns of Madame Verbois)
Pignatel, Ana (ql)	1809/07/26	Basilio (gl) and Melita Mombrum (ql)
Ana Rosalia (ql)	1809/07/29	Juan Baptista Gublan and Cecilia St. Martin
Luisa (ml)	1809/07/29	Noel Carrier (ml) and Luisa (gl)
Tressinet, Maria Luisa de la Lus	1809/07/29	Don Juan Gourjon and Donna Maria Duquesne
Rocho (ml)	1809/08/05	Rocho Gandrant (ml) and Susana Boutel (ml)
Dupremont, St. Gemana (ml)	1809/08/08	Juan Romera and Sophia Destrehan (ml)
Adelaida (ql)	1809/08/08	Francisco Montagne (akolyte) and Deseada Petit (ql)
Mariana Andres (ml)	1809/08/10	Paul (ml) and Movechita (ml)
Hipolito (ml)	1809/08/12	Juan Baptista Dupain and Estephania (ml)
Catherine (nl)	1809/08/13	Josidore (ns of Mr. Victor) and Catherine (ns of Mr. Andre)
Marie (ml)	1809/08/14	Charles Brule (ml) and Catherine (ql)
Maria (ql)	1809/08/14	Santiago (ml) and Maria (ml)
Bouligny, Luisa (nl)	1809/08/15	Don Pedro Percy and Donna Luisa Sanseret
Bouligny, Irene (nl)	1809/08/15	Don Pedro Percy and Donna Luisa Sanseret
Pedro (nl)	1809/08/15	Pedro Bore (ml) and Luisa (ns of Mr. Jean)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Civil District Court, Notarial Archives Division, New Orleans, LA:

Notarial Records of Narcisse Broutin, Vols. 7-38, 1804-1819.

Notarial Records of Michel de Armas, Vols. 1-22, 1809-1820.

Notarial Records of Stevan De Quinones, Vols. 1-15, 1804-1815.

Notarial Records of Pierre (Pedro) Godefroy, Vols. 1-2, 1808-1809.

Notarial Records of Pedro Pedesclaux, Vols. 46-73, 1804-1816.

Notarial Records of Carlisle Pollock, Vols. 1-6, 1817-1820.

Notarial Records of Amedee Ducatel, Vol. 40, 1849.

Baptismal Records of St. Louis Cathedral, New Orleans, LA:

Slave and Free People of Color Baptismal Records, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. http://archdiocese-no.org/archives/sfpc.php

Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C.:

Fourth Census of the United States, 1820. (NARA microfilm publication M33, 142 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C..

Third Census of the United States, 1810. (NARA microfilm publication M252, 71 rolls). Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29.National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Published or Re-printed Primary Sources

Clarence E. Carter, Ed. The *Territorial Papers of the United States*, Vol. IX, Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1940.

Hill, Roscoe R. *Descriptive catalogue of the documents relating to the history of the United States ... in the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba deposited in the Archivo General de Indias at Seville*. New York: Kraus Reprint Corp, 1965.

Flannery, Matthew, Dolley Madison Heartman, and Charles Louis Thompson.*New Orleans in 1805: a directory and a census*. New Orleans, La: Pelican gallery, 1936.

Claiborne, William C. C., and Dunbar Rowland.*Official letter books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*. Jackson, Miss: State Dept. of Archives and History, 1917.

Forsyth, Alice D. *Louisiana marriages, volume I: a collection of marriage records from the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans during the Spanish regime and the early American period, 1784-1806*. New Orleans, Polyanthos, 1977.

Jumonville, Florence M.*The Vieux Carré Survey*. New Orleans: Historic New Orleans Collection, 1981.

Northup, Solomon. *Twelve years a Slave*. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008.

Woods, Earl C., Charles E. Nolan, and Dorenda Dupont.*Sacramental records of the Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of New Orleans*. New Orleans, La.: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1987.

Books

Clark, John Garretson. *New Orleans, 1718-1812; an economic history*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1970.

Dormon, James H. *Creoles of color of the Gulf South*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996.

Edwards Dearborn and Nicolas Kariouk Pecquet du Bellay de Verton, *A Creole lexicon: architecture, landscape, people*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004.

Fossier, Albert E.*New Orleans- The Glamour Period: 1800-1840*. New Orleans, LA: Pelican, 1957.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Hanger, Kimberly S. *Bounded lives, bounded places: free Black society in colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

Haas, Edward F. *Louisiana's Legal Heritage*. Pensacola, FL: Published for the Louisiana State Museum by Perdido Bay Press, 1983.

Ingersoll, Thomas N. *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: the First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819.* Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999.

Kein, Sybil. *Creole: the history and legacy of Louisiana's free people of color*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

Landers, Jane. *Against the odds: free Blacks in the slave societies of the Americas*. London: Frank Cass, 1996.

Roux, Vincent M., and Kenneth D. Roux. *Louisiana's households of free people of color residing outside of Orleans Parish & the city of New Orleans in 1810 & 1820*. San Francisco, CA: V.M. Roux, 1995.

Schafer, Judith K. *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003.

Spear, Jennifer M. Race, sex, and social order in early New Orleans. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Tannenbaum, Frank.*Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas*. New York, NY: A.A. Knopf, 1946.

Journal Articles

Cole, Shawn. “Capitalism and Freedom: Manumissions and the Slave Market in Louisiana, 1725–1820,” *The Journal of Economic History* (2005), 65 : pp 1008-1027 Spear, 198-199.

Hanger, Kimberly S. "Desiring ‘Total Tranquility’ and Not Getting It: Conflict Involving Free Black Women in Spanish New Orleans,”*The Americas* , Vol. 54, No. 4 (Apr., 1998), pp. 541-556.

Holmes, Jack D.L. “The Abortive Slave Revolt at Pointe Coupée, Louisiana, 1795” *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* , Vol. 11, No. 4 (Autumn, 1970), pp. 341-362.

Ingersoll, Thomas N. “Free Blacks in a Slave Society: New Orleans, 1718-1812,” *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Apr., 1991) pp. 173-200.

Lachance, Paul F. “The Formation of a Three-Caste Society: Evidence from Wills in Antebellum New Orleans,” Social Science History , Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), pp. 211-242.

— “The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration and Impact”, *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 29, No. 2(Spring, 1988), pp. 109-111.

Spain, Daphne. “Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,*Vol. 441, Race and Residence in American Cities (Jan., 1979), pp. 82-96.

Theses/ Dissertations:

Aslakson, Kenneth R. “Making race: The role of free blacks in the development of New Orleans' three-caste society, 1791--1812.”Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2007.

Gourdet, Camille Kempf. *The New Orleans free people of color and the process of Americanization, 1803-1896*. Thesis (M.A.)--College of William and Mary, 2005.

Greenwald, Erin Michelle.*To strike a balance: New Orleans's free people of color and diplomacy of William Charles Cole Claiborne*. Thesis (M.A.)--Ohio State University, 2005.

Hanger, Kimberly S.*Personas de varias clases y colores: free people of color in Spanish New Orleans, 1769-1803*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Florida, 1991.

Hastings, Dorian. “Early neighborhood development in New Orleans: Neither New South nor old.” Ph.D. diss., University of New Orleans, 2004.

Hobratsch, Ben Melvin. *Creole angel: the self-identity of the free people of color of antebellum New Orleans*. Thesis (M.A.)--University of North Texas, 2006.

Irwin, Martha P. *Portrait of a neighborhood: the socio-economic status of free people of color and whites in Tremé, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1810-1840*. Thesis (M.S.)--University of New Orleans, 1998.

McGowan, Emma. *Free people of color in New Orleans (1803-1860)*.Thesis (M.A.)--Tulane University of Louisiana, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1939.

Pearson, Ellen Holmes. *Imperfect equality: the legal status of free people of color in New Orleans, 1803-1860*. Thesis (M.A.)--University of New Orleans, 1996.

Rankin, David Connell. *The forgotten people: free people of color in New Orleans, 1850-1870*. Thesis (Ph. D.)—Johns Hopkins University, 1977.

Sumpter, Amy R. *Segregation of the free people of color in antebellum New Orleans in 1850 and the changing nature of the construction of race between the colonial and antebellum periods, 1718-1860*.Thesis (M.A.)--University of Colorado, 2002.