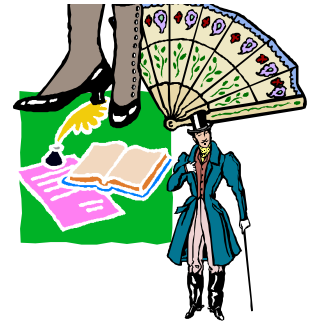


"Genealogy is the
constant process of
reinterpreting fact in the
light of new knowledge"
---Unknown



Mon Cher

*A Creole Genealogical Newsletter
Vol 2 Issue 2*

Commemorative Issue

June 20, 2003

This special edition of *Mon Cher* will have a different format from the regular quarterly issue and is being released in conjunction with the *CHERS* annual convention, whose theme is "*Free Women of Color in Louisiana Creole society: their Perseverance, Entrepreneurship, Intelligence*". This issue consists primarily of ancestral biographies of Louisiana Creoles of Color. Some may be of prominent men and women that made a name for themselves in Louisiana history. Others may be someone's great, great, great grandparent or other ancestor. This issue will also include articles and book reviews on Creoles and/or being bi-racial and much more. Many of the biographies and articles were submitted by fellow researchers who have cared enough to share their research with us. They have done extensive research by accessing actual archival records. They have explored old courthouse documents and explored sacramental records in their fact finding quest. We thank all who have taken the time to write and submit this information. Most of all I want to thank all the Louisiana Creoles of Color who have endeavored in the research of their ancestors along with those who are working so hard in the documentation of Creole history and the preservation of the Creole Culture.

Ingrid Rogers Stanley
Editor

"A la recherche du Creole!"



*Some CHER Members/Organizers at
the 2002 Creole Heritage Conference*

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Section I – Biographies

Ann Prevost and John Purnell

By Rusty Kleine; Cornville, Arizona

On January 25, 1869 in West Feliciana Parish, John Purnell and Ann Prevost (both Mulatto) filed for a marriage license. No parents were listed, however, John was the son of Thomas Purnell (White) and Mary Martin (Black), both born in Maryland. The marriage ceremony was performed at Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville, Louisiana. Witnesses at the ceremony were W. L. (William Logan) Bell, G. A. Maes and F. Serff.

Indications are that Ann was born into slavery but when she was emancipated is unknown. According to the 1870 and 1880 Morganza census data she was born in Maryland. Prior to her marriage to John she had three children Aristide Bell, Albert Bell and Horace Gillespie Bell. Alfred Bell is shown as the father of Horace on his baptismal record found in the Archdiocese of Baton Rouge Church Records. However no

confirmation has been found that Alfred is also the father of Aristide and Albert. It does appear feasible, however, that Alfred is the father of all three children. Ann died in 1889 at the age of 64 of heart disease and is buried in St. Ann's Cemetery in Morganza.

On the 1850 West Feliciana Parish Census John Purnell is listed in the household with his mother, Mary Martin who is shown as Black, age 48, born in Maryland. John (Purnell) is shown as 18 years old, Mulatto, born in Louisiana and occupation is listed as Carpenter. There are seven other children listed in the household, ages ranging from 9 years old to 21 years old, all with the surname Purnell and all born in Louisiana. Living next door is Thomas R. Purnell, White, age 52, occupation overseer, born in Maryland.

Ann and John are shown on the 1870 Morganza census. John is 45, shown as a manager, Ann is 45 years old. Also shown in the household is Cera E. Purnell, female, age 18, Mulatto, born in Louisiana; Aristide Bell, age 23, Mulatto, a laborer; and Horace Bell, age 19, a Mulatto, laborer. Living next door is Albert Bell, age 21, Mulatto, a laborer. In the same household as Albert is his wife Violet, age 17, Mulatto and daughter Ida 6 months old. Albert, born in 1849 in Bayou Sara, married Violet Haile in 1869; Aristide was born in Bayou Sara in 1847 and married Mary Haile on March 30, 1880; and Horace, born 02/06/1851 in Bayou Sara married Lucille Ricard (daughter of Antoine Ricard and Ledy Tounoir) on 02/24/1873. In 1880 the family is still living in Morganza.

Anyone having any information regarding this family can contact Rusty Kleine at her E-mail address : RKleine@metromat.com

Pierre LaCroix Carmouche

*Submitted by Marlene Darensbourg
Chicago, Illinois*



In tracing my family history I discovered an ancestor named Pierre LaCroix Carmouche who had a very fascinating but sad story. He had begun life in Ascension Parish on 11/20/1861 and in 1886 he was elected assessor for the town of Donaldsonville and succeeded himself in 1887. In 1888 he was nominated as the Knights of Labor candidate from Donaldsonville for election to the State Legislature for Ascension Parish and began correspondence with Booker T. Washington in 1900 when his nephew was a student at Tuskegee Institute. Because of racism he failed to win an important appointment and left the, as he called it, "cursed Southland" in 1903. He was the first man of color to offer his services to President McKinley for the Spanish War and was sent to Cuba as 1st lieutenant in company "L", Ninth United States Volunteer Infantry, and took an honorable part in the Santiago Campaign. He attained Mr. Washington's endorsement for naval officer of the Port of New Orleans in 1909 with a letter of introduction to the president. To all who knew Pierre Carmouche there was no doubt of his patriotism but when he applied to the United States Government to get his pension, as was his legal right, he was denied and told that he was not a patriot of this country. Pierre wrote letters and applied and then reapplied so many times that his is the largest single pension file on record. He had been injured in that Spanish War and had to use a cane the rest of his life. He was finally awarded his pension but by that time he had become a bitter and broken man and died soon after. He

died in 1921 of a self inflicted gun shot wound. In his lifetime Pierre LaCroix Carmouche made many friends and acquaintances. His family possesses many of his writings and he has several letters on file with various institutions. One of the letters which he had written can be found in volume 12, pages 61-64 of "The Booker T. Washington Papers".

Here is an excerpt of a letter from P. L. Carmouche To Booker T. Washington (including misspellings):

From P. L. Carmouche

*Detroit Michigan,
November 30th, 1912
(Personal)*

My dear Mr. Washington:

I have carefully read and re-read your Article in The Century Magazine of this month. With my temperment and full knowledge combined, as to conditions existing in this supposed land of "equality and freedom," I want to say to you Mr. Washington, that I made the mistake of my life in not going to France when I left that "cursed South land," instead of coming to Michigan as I did. I want to further say, that, in leaveing the South, I did not do so in order to desert our people-the colored people- but I wanted to get away from a condition existing there, which, In my Judgement, Is far worse than death to me and to our people. A thousand pities that the millions among us- I mean colored persons- are yet blind in considering their horrid plight. If I would leave the United States to-day, it would be to desert a condition existing in this Country which is a mockery to our Christianity and a shame to civilization. The few "opportunities" given in the form as it were of charity to us, should

not be considered in any sense compensation for the injustices perpetrated against us. As for me, I do not thank, nor do I make, in words nor deeds, excuses to no liveing man for our "opportunities" and presence In America. I claim for my self and our people, all the same things the "white man" claims for himself.....

Anyone having information about this family please contact marlened19@hotmail.com

The Manumission of Isabella

Excerpt from "The Harleaux Legend"

by Ingrid R. Stanley, Slidell, LA

While researching my family history I was able to locate the names of my great, great, great maternal grandparents in the sacramental records of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Church Records. The marriage records of my great, great grandfather, George Washington Walker showed his parents as John M. Walker and Isabelle Hokins. Even though I was very gratified to find the names of by ggg grandparents I wanted some background information as well. I wanted to know more. I searched other avenues in hopes of finding additional information to no avail. I eventually put it on the back burner while I concentrated on other ancestors. One day while I was on a research trip in New Roads, Louisiana at the Pointe Coupee Parish Court House I was browsing through an index book when to my amazement I found an entry on the manumission of Isabella. I thought to myself, could this be my Isabelle Hokins? I promptly wrote down the date and volume number and proceeded to locate the correct book. Carefully I checked each page, slowly and deliberately. Then before my eyes was a three page document telling of Isabella's (Isabelle's) manumission granted by John M. Walker.

According to the document Isabella was granted freedom on May 8, 1822 in Cincinatti, Ohio; county of Hamilton. Also freed was her 15 month

old daughter named Nancy. Isabella is described in the document as about 20 years old, black complexion, of a tall and slender form. Nancy is described as being a "bright mulatto" about 15 months old. Isabella was presenting her manumission papers to Peter Dormenon, Judge of the parish of Pointe Coupee in order that they may be recorded and registered in the parish of Pointe Coupee. The papers were recorded, registered, signed and witnessed by Judge Dormenon, Pierre Louis L'Hermite and Adolphe Belzone on December 18, 1826. Isabella's mark is also on the document.

Due to this information I can make the most likely assumption that Isabella and John lived for a time in Hamilton County; Cincinatti, Ohio and that they had at least one child prior to 1822, Nancy.

However, I later found in Sacramental records that Isabella and John had two additional children, George Washington Walker, born about 1830 who married Hermina Raize and Elizabeth Walker, born about 1832, who married Jean Baptiste Leduff. Now my quest is to find additional information on Nancy. I have not been able to locate anything other than what is in Isabella's manumission papers but I know one day, when I least expect it, she will come to life.

Sources: Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Church Records, Pointe Coupee Parish Courthouse Records Year 1826 Doc # 2162. Anyone having information about this family can contact Ingrid R. Stanley at Emmapeel1st@aol.com

"People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors."

.....Edmund Bur

Marie Leveaux
By Barbara Trevigne
New Orleans, LA

(Barbara Trevigne, biographer of Marie Laveaux, is a native and resident of New Orleans, Louisiana)

Confusion abounds in pinpointing the real Marie Laveaux in distinction to other family members. Marie Laveaux was named after her paternal grandmother, Marie Laveaux. Although it is thought her parents did not legally marry, she shared half siblings' issue from her mother Marguerite with Henri Darcental and from her father Charles Laveaux and his wife, Marie Dupart yet another Marie Laveaux. Her two half sisters were also named Marie, one being Marie Louisa Darcental and the other was Marie de los Delore Laveaux. Marie Laveaux's half brothers were Antonio Darcental, Germano Darcental, Lorenzo Laveaux and Charles Laveaux.

Additionally, we find a Veuve Marie Leveau nee Pinson and a Marie Labeau who at twenty-one drowned in Bayou St. John. They are not to be confused with our Marie Laveaux and her daughter Heloise Glapion. The surname Lavaux, Leveau, Lebo, Lavaud and Labeaux are names that appear in New Orleans Spanish period.

According to the birth record of Marie's daughter, Philomene Glapion, Marie was born in 1801. Her father Charles had various occupations. He was in construction and is listed as a trader on his death certificate. It is generally accepted that Charles' father is Carlos Laveaux Trudeauaux, General Surveyor of Spanish Louisiana from 1879 to 1803.

References to Marie being wealthy and having numerous children were in fact her half sister, Marie Delore. Although Marie Delore bore twelve issue only seven survived. She was married to Francois Auguste. Francois was listed as a native of Curason, which was ruled by the Dutch

and a native of Holland, on his son Hermogene's birth record. Marie Delore died in Paris. Her body was returned to New Orleans for burial. Marie Delore Laveaux is interred in St. Louis #2, Square 3.

Marie Laveaux did legally marry Jacques Paris to which one issue was born, Vangelie Paris. Jacques was a native of Haiti according to their marriage contract. It is noted that both sisters married men of color. Marie received her Rampart Street property from her father when she married. It was not obtained through a murder case as written in earlier published works. Additionally, the St. Ann Street property was purchased by Christophe Glapion from her grandmother's succession (Catherine Henri aka Pomet). Although Jacques nor Vangelie appear in any other archival records we do know the Paris surname appears in archival records in New Orleans.

Louis Christophe Duminy de Glapion, Marie's non-legal husband, was of French lineage even though it has always been assumed he was of the free colored class. Her marital status which appeared in her 1881 obituary compounded confusion. That information as well as other inaccurate biographical information has been written and repeated by twentieth-century writers. Christophe was born in 1789 and baptized at St. Charles Borromero Church.

Marie bore six issue with Christophe. The male children did not reach adulthood. Only Heloies and Philomene had issue. New Orleanians claiming ancestry to Marie would have to be descended from Heloise, Philomene or from the Auguste bloodline through Marie Delore. However, Christophe's father did have issue with Lizette Glapion, fwc. The Glapion surname in the Gens de Couleur society would be through Lizette and the senior Christophe Glapion. However,

Lizette's son Celestin Glapion, of whom I have found no record of an issue, did have a slave named Celestin Glapion. It is possible that some Glapions are descended from that line.

Marie Laveaux was a devout Catholic. She prayed with condemned prisoners and was the only person allowed to erect a religious altar in the prisoners' cells. Marie dressed the dead, served as surety in some court cases and was a victualler. She was instrumental in outlawing public executions and was called upon by community leaders regarding health issues. Marie was also a plaintiff in court proceedings brought against her. Additionally, Marie served as a character witness in at least one case that has been recovered from the civil court archives. She received the sacrament of baptism at birth and extreme unction when she died. Her burial was on consecrated ground in St. Louis #1 Cemetery. All in all her life is not mysterious. She was a very public person who contributed much to the fabric in the quilt of New Orleans history.

Charles Olivier De Vezin

Adelaide Dubreuil-Madelaine LaCoste

*Submitted by Linda Ursula Goesling
(Fourth Great-Granddaughter of Charles Olivier)
Gulfport, Mississippi*

The progenitor of my Creole line was Charles Hughes Honore St. Maurice Olivier de Vezin. Born in New Orleans on the 8th of June in 1751, he was the first son, second child of Pierre Francoise Olivier de Vezin and Marie Josephete Gatineau- Duplessis. He was christened on the 26th of July in 1751 at the Church of St. Louis, King of France (now known as the St. Louis Cathedral). His Godfather was Honore Michel de LaRouvillier, Royal Councilor and General Paymaster of the Navy in the Colony of Louisiana and his Godmother was Charlotte Fluery, Marquise DeVaudreuil, and wife of Pierre Rigauld, Marquis DeVaudreuil, and Governor of the Province of Louisiana.

In 1776 Charles married Marie Madeline Marigny de Mandeville. According to the marriage contract dated 15 April 1776, she was the daughter of Antoine Phillippe Marigny de Mandeville and Marie Francoise Dupart Delille. From this union there were four children: Charles Borromee (also known as Barthelemy)born 19 November 1778, Marie Francoise Emile born 3 February 1779, Pierre Duscosel born 30 April 1782, and Louisa Adelaide born 22 October 1785. All children were born in New Orleans and christened at the Church of St. Louis, King of France. The death on 22 October 1786 of Marie Madeline brought changes to Charles Olivier's life. He moved to a plantation in St. Charles parish at Cannes Brule (now Kenner, La).

In the early 1790's, Charles obtained a Spanish Land Grant in the Attakapas area of Louisiana. This encompasses the Parishes of St. Martin and St. Mary. His plantation was on the land now known as Olivier, Louisiana. At this period of time, Charles formed life long relationships with two free women of color, Adelaide Dubreuil and Magdelaine LaCoste. Adelaide and her two sisters were emancipated on 4 October 1775 by their father Alexander Dubreuil. Adelaide was only 6 months of age at the time of her emancipation. By Adelaide, Charles sired ten children: Zenon born 30 May 1790, Louisa born 27 September 1792, Felicite Aspasia born about 1793, Pierre Honore born 29 May 1794, Amelia born about 1805, Adelaide Isabella born about 1806, Phillippe born 11 September 1810, Louis Dubreuil born about 1811, Hyacinthe born about 1812 and Pierre Francois born 4 October 1813. As for Magdelaine, her father, Jean LaCoste, emancipated her on 3 July 1788 when she was 19 years of age. From her relationship with Charles was born eight children; Jean Baptiste born 19 December 1793, Pierre Charles born 11 May 1795, Josette born about 1797, Marie Pamela born August

1803, Marie Adele born about 1804, Casimer born 9 October 1805, Charles Honore born about 1806, and Evariste born 5 December 1808.

Examining the dates of birth, it seems that Charles had the earlier children with the two ladies in New Orleans, then moved them to the Teche country in the early 1800's. According to the 1810 Census of the Attakapas, Adelaide and Magdelaine had adjoining lands of 40 arpents facing the Bayou Teche along with horses, cattle and slaves. Charles seems to have been a good provider as well as a dutiful father, as he was a witness at the baptisms and marriages of his children. In fact, he had one of his sisters act as godmother to his last child. He died on 24 April 1815 at his home east of Bayou Teche and was buried on that plantation. We can only wonder if he had any idea of the great legacy that he began.

Sources: St. Louis Cathedral Baptism Records - St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church Records, Births and Deaths - Marriage Contracts, Wills and Testaments of the Spanish Period in New Orleans 1770-1804 by Charles Maduell, Jr. - History of Louisiana Vol. II by Charles Gayarre - St. Charles Parish Original Acts 1792 - American State Papers

Anyone having any information regarding this family can contact Linda at Lugoes43@aol.com

Antoine Dubuclet

*Submitted by Patricia Schexnayder
Slidell, Louisiana*

*(Excerpt from "A Family History" by Pat Schexnayder
and Kara Schexnayder Chenevert)*

Antoine Dubuclet (II) was born a free person of color of French and African heritage in 1813 in Iberville Parish, LA. He was one of nine children born to Antoine Dubuclet (I) and Rosalie Belly.

The Dubuclets were descended from an early French military family, the Dauterive-Dubuclets, who settled in south LA during the colonial era. Antoine Dubuclet (I) married Rosalie Belly, the

daughter of Pierre Belly, a native of France and an early Iberville Parish planter, and Rose, a Jamaican slave of the Nago Nation of southern Nigeria. Rosalie was one of the five daughters of Pierre and Rose. The Belly daughters married into many prominent families of color throughout south LA, including the Dubuclets, Decuirs, and Ricards. The Ricard tomb in St. Raphael Cemetery in Iberville Parish houses the remains of Pierre Belly and Rose.

Antoine Dubuclet (II) married Claire Pollard, a free woman of color and the daughter of Louis Pollard of France and Eugenie Decuir of Pointe Coupee, in 1836. The Pollards and the Decuirs were also wealthy sugar cane planters in Pointe Coupee Parish. Antoine and Claire's 10 children were well-educated young men and women from what appears to be a "genteel" background. Several of the children received their education in the Beaumont area of France where some remained while others returned home to LA. Two of the Dubuclet sons were physicians and at least two were musicians. Claire and her sister, Sophie Pollard, owned a plantation in Iberville Parish together. Adjoining their plantation was another one jointly owned by their husbands, Antoine Dubuclet and Pierre Durand. Claire Pollard's family inheritances and the success of these plantations established Antoine as the wealthiest free person of color in the US prior to the Civil War. Claire died in 1851, leaving Antoine and her children her share of the Dubuclet/Pollard estate. Antoine later purchased from his sister-in-law, Sophie, both the Durand share of the plantations and Pierre Durand's entire estate upon Pierre's death in 1856.

In 1854 Antoine Dubuclet began a domicile with Mary Ann Welsh that lasted until her death in 1866. Four children were born of this union. The Welsh family remains an enigma and nothing has been found in

research connecting Mary Ann to her family of origin. However, upon her death Mary Ann left a handsome estate, including property in New Orleans, to her minor children.

Following the Civil War Antoine focused his attention on politics. During those turbulent times Antoine Dubuclet, along with several other influential persons of color in LA, held State office in the new Reconstruction government. Antoine Dubuclet held the office of State Treasurer. Under Antoine's tutelage, unlike many other southern states, LA did not bankrupt or fall into financial ruin in the years following the War. Antoine employed two of his sons as clerks in the Treasurer's office and ran an efficient organization free of corruption, withstanding scrutiny and investigations that found no wrongdoing on his part. Antoine Dubuclet held office as State Treasurer for 11 years through three terms. The State Treasurer's office at that time was located on Royal Street in New Orleans and during those years Antoine spent most of his time in the city He died in 1888 in Iberville Parish and was brought to New Orleans for interment in the old Dubuclet tomb in St. Louis No. 2. Cemetery.

Antoine Dubuclet is the great grandfather of Odette and Noemi Dubuclet, the two little girls who grace the cover of Sybil Kein's book, *Creole, The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*. He is the gg and ggg grandfather of the authors.

Anyone having any information on this family please contact Pat at patschex@hotmail.com

“Those who do not look upon themselves as links connecting the past with the future do not perform their duty to the world.” -----Daniel Webster

Julien and Zelina
Excerpt from “The Harleaux Legend”
by Ingrid R. Stanley, Slidell, LA

Julien

The furthest I could trace back my Harleaux ancestry was to Julien Philadelphie Harleaux. Burial records show that he was a lieutenant in the artillery, a native of Nancy, dept, of Moselle, France. I was unable to find his date of birth or when he arrived in the United States or the Pointe Coupee area. This may be because (as found during my research) there are at least 20 different spellings of the name Harleaux ranging Arlaud/Orlaut to Harlaud/Harlaux. Sometimes two different spellings occurred in the same legal document.

I assume he arrived in the Pointe Coupee area at least by the late 1820's because I have found a baptismal record for his first known child born in 1827. Julien had a longtime relationship with Zelina (sometimes Zeline or Azelina) Robert. In all probability Julien and Zelina were never married (he a Frenchman and she a quadroon) even though in Zelina's burial records it is stated that she was the wife of Julien Harleaux. Church records indicate that Julien died at age 50 on 02/22/1838 and was buried 02/23/1838 at False River; Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana. The 1850 Pointe Coupee census (which was after Julien's death) lists Azelina Robert, age 30, Mulatto, place of birth-Louisiana. Also in the census records it lists children Cora, Robert, Julien and Flora. All of them are listed under the surname Robert. This I feel was an error by the census taker because all other census data as well as baptismal, marriage records and legal documents show the children's last name as Harleaux or a variation of its spelling. Sacramental records list Julien and Zelina as having the above listed children along with an additional child Louis.

Zelina

Per the book *Slaves and Masters of Pointe Coupee Parish* by Winston DeVille, Lucie, a slave, and her three children were sold by Vincent Ternant to Hyacinthe Robert for \$1515 on 09/01/1818. On that same date Hyacinthe Robert emancipated Lucie, Mulatress.

On October 2, 1818 Hyacinthe Robert sold young quadroon Zelina and her brothers Zenon, Paulain, and Hyacinthe to Lucie mother of the children. No price was stated in these records. To further collaborate this information I have found documentation of these transactions in the slave records compiled by Gwendolyn Midlo-Hall, 1) a young female quadroon, age 14 was purchased by free mulatress Lucie on 10/02/1818. Selling Value \$850 (the name of the child was missing but in all probability it was Zelina). 2) Paulin, male quadroon, age 4 was purchased by free mulatress Lucie on 10/02/1818. Selling value \$850. 3) Hyacinthe, male quadroon, age 5 months, was purchased by free mulatress Lucie on 10/02/1818. Selling value was \$850. The language of all of the children is listed as French.

In a land document, #392, dated 09/20/1842 it is stated that Zelina Robert purchased a tract of land consisting of 141.66 acres in Pointe Coupee parish.

Zelina had five children with Julien Harleaux. There was no marriage record found but she is listed as the mother of all of Julien's children (Hiacinte Coralie, Julien, Louis, Robert and Flora). I have found Zelina listed on the 1850 Pointe Coupee census showing her and four of her minor children and Octavean (who later became son Robert's wife). On the census it shows her name as Azelina Robert, age 50 and has land valued at \$25,000. Listed just a house away was her mother Lucie, age 70, and brother Paulin. I also found her listed on the 1860 census with her son Julien and his wife Rosella. Her son Robert was listed separately in the next household with his wife Octavean and

son Joseph. Also listed in the same household were his sister Cora (Hiacinte Coralie Harleaux) Vacher, age 30 and three of her children. His property is valued at \$13,000 and his occupation is listed as planter. A few houses away are her brothers Paulin and Zenon and their families. On the 1880 Pointe Coupee census Zelina is living on what appears to be the same piece of land as previously, next door to her son Robert and his family. However this time another unknown family is living with her. It appears as though she may have leased part of her land to another family. Zelina died 02/18/1889 at the age of 90 and was buried 02/19/1889 at Chenal Cemetery also in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana

Anyone having any information regarding this family can contact Ingrid R. Stanley at Emmapeel1st@aol.com

Dr. Julien Ludovic LADMIRault And Virginia Belanger, Free Woman of Color By Marla Jones-Weber

Dr. Julien Ludovic LADMIRAULT was born on August 25, 1810 at 1 p.m. in Nantes, France. He was the sixth child of the union of Dr. Jean-Baptiste Olivier LADMIRAULT and Anne Dorothee GODFFRE. It was in Nantes, France that Julien LADMIRAULT began his study of medicine, where he was following in his father's footsteps. Dr. Jean-Baptiste LADMIRAULT was a health officer and a qualified surgeon. Julien LADMIRAULT was last seen in Nantes, France on October 2, 1837 being present at the wedding of his brother Félix. Félix was also a doctor of medicine in Nantes. Distant cousin and

fellow genealogist Jacques AMIRAULT (variation of LADMIRAULT), presently living in France, presented us these facts. From Jacques' research we can also see that the LADMIRAULT's experienced a very comfortable lifestyle and great wealth, having throughout their ancestry numerous medical doctors, notaries as well as possessing such titles as Lord of Vauthibault and Lord of the Courtyard of Rigny.

Dr. LADMIRAULT arrived in Louisiana shortly after his brother's wedding. The first record of him was in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana in 1841. Here, Dr. LADMIRAULT entered into a partnership for the management of his False River plantation with Mr. Benjamin POYDRAS, also from France. This information was found in the book, "The Life, Family, and Legacy of Julien Poydras", by Brian J. Costello. Mr. Costello further documents, "Dr. Ladmirault resided in the False River plantation house and lived the life of a planter while serving the public as one of Pointe Coupee's most beloved physicians."

Dr. LADMIRAULT's life as a planter is documented in the Louisiana Sugar Census Index for all the years from 1850 to 1860 as well as several years in the 1840's. This includes a record of him in the "Statement of Sugar Made in Louisiana 1844-45-46". Here it states on page 28 that his crops were "Lost by frost".

In documents on Dr. Julien LADMIRAULT's personal life, we can only find one child that he claims to be his own. The child Donatien LADMIRAULT was born to Virginie, a slave in the possession of Dr. LADMIRAULT. She was purchased in December of 1843 from Benjamin POYDRAS who was being represented by his cousin Charles POYDRAS for \$1,000. Virginie was about 30 years old at the time. Prior to being sold to Dr. Ladmirault she had been sold several

times in a small period of time. Prior to 1839 she was a slave of the Arnaud Beauvais family, where she had been a family servant for a great many years. In 1839/1840, Charles Poydras purchased her at the public sale of Beauvais properties. He in turn sold her to Theophile Ladmirault, Dr. Ladmirault's brother. Theophile then sold her to Benjamin Poydras. In 1840, Theophile representing Poydras sold Virginie to Widow Severin Porche for a heavy sum. Finding her ill at the time of the sale Virginie was returned to Poydras/Theophile the same year. This act prompted a lawsuit questioning her health. In the lawsuit a Dr. Ferris goes on to state that she had been the property of the Beauvais family since she was a small child, and had known her to be predisposed to consumption. The day after her return to Poydras she was bought by Dr. Ladmirault. In 1847, Dr. LADMIRAULT petitioned the Police Jury for the emancipation of Virginie, mulatress, aged about 33 and her child, Donatien, quadroon, aged about 12 months. After the petition was granted approval, Dr. Ladmirault sued the State of Louisiana for the liberation of Virginie and Donatien, who was their "natural child."

After researching the Federal Census Reports for Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana we found some interesting facts. The 1850 census, pages 54 & 55, show Dr. Ladmirault age 39 with \$30,000 worth of real estate value, **living as one family** with Virginie age 36 and Donatien age 5. There are no other persons or families listed as residing in the dwelling. Then, the 1860 census shows Dr. L. LADMIRAULT, age 48, physician with \$17,000 worth of real estate value and \$8,000 of personal value, **living in the same household as a separate family**

is Virginie BELANGE age 45, a mulatto, native of Louisiana; Donatien age 15, mulatto, a native of Louisiana and Angela, age 11, mulatto, also a native of Louisiana. Our research does not yet provide any further or factual information on the relationship of Angela and Dr. LADMIRault.

Further census research shows that on the 1880 census (1870 census has not been fully researched) Dr. LADMIRault is listed as 67 years old and living alone. The 1880 census goes on to show Donatien age 34 living in a separate dwelling. He is shown with several young children, with however no female partner. The children include: Rogatien age 12, Felix age 9 (he was actually 11 at the time), Olivier age 7, Francois age 3 and Agnes age 4/12 of a year. Not included were two females Josephine Virginie age 15 and Anne Marie age 9. At this time we are unsure why the two daughters and the female partner were omitted from the census records. Dr. LADMIRault lived on for several more years and was able to watch his family grow in many ways.

Throughout his years of practice as a physician, Dr. LADMIRault was noted in several of the 1880's newspaper articles for his efforts and works in the community. He was so loved and revered that in September 30, 1882 edition of the "Pointe Coupee Banner" it was written: "To the regret of the whole community, Dr. LADMIRault has been seriously ill during the past week..." In many ways we can assume from his

practices as a planter and beloved physician that Dr. LADMIRault contributed greatly to the Creole way of life in Pointe Coupee parish. Through the emancipation of his slave Virginie and their child Donatien, we can see his compassion for people of color in the community. We can only assume at this time that his compassion stretched out into his medical practice to all persons in Pointe Coupee parish. We should also note that

though he had only the one son, Donatien, he did have many grandchildren with generations to follow that did in the past and continue to date to contribute to the Creole heritage and way of life throughout the country.

Dr. LADMIRault was a beloved physician and planter and family man. He died in Pointe Coupee in April 1890. Volume 18, page 364 of the Diocese of Baton Rouge Catholic Church Records indicates, "Julien Ludovic LADMIRault, age 79, native of Nantes, department of Loire Inferieure, France, buried 15 April 1890. (PCP-20, 186)

Several of his descendants still reside in the parish of Pointe Coupee, Louisiana today, while others have ventured off to other parts of Louisiana. Still others opted to live in other states in America. No matter where we have ventured, we all share in the wonderful heritage of the LADMIRault lineage.

Anyone having information about this family please E-mail Marla Jones Weber at Marla@tgwnet.com or Sylvia Potter Jones at sjones0102@aol.com



No man can know where he is going unless he knows exactly where he has been and exactly how he arrived at his present place" .

.....Maya Angelou

Section II - Articles

Sorapuru House Submitted by Marlene Darensbourg Chicago, Illinois



(picture taken from the Louisiana Studies in Historic Preservation Website; <http://www.laheritage.org/CreoleHeritage/Color.html>)

The Sorapuru House is a one story, frame Creole cottage which was built in 1825 and is located in Lucy, Louisiana; St. John the Baptist Parish. The house is of local importance because of its early French Creole architecture and its unusual Federal style mantels (mantels in which the wall wraps around the fireplace). In addition to the fireplaces the home also contains several ten pane French doors and exposed beaded ceiling beams which also lends to the importance of the architecture. The house is only two rooms deep and three rooms wide and doesn't have any hallways. The parlor is located in the front with the dining room in the back with the bedrooms along the side. Along the full width of the home is a front porch or "gallery".

The house was built by Terence LeBlanc, St. John's Parish first Judge. Judge Leblanc's daughter, Adorea, and her husband Adolphe

Sorapuru (a New Orleanian of French heritage) were married in the house by her father but the marriage was never recorded because Adorea was a mulatto (her mother Josephine Foucher was a woman of color). Adorea and Adolphe moved into the house after their marriage. Adolphe served as the parish Recorder of Mortgages in the 1850's. The Sorapuru family (an old and respected "Creole of Color" family in the parish) lived in the house until 1996 and though the house is not inhabited at this time the house remains in the family. In 1999 the house was added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Above is a picture showing the Federal Style Fireplace.

Skin Deep Skin Deep

by Anne-Marie Vidal
Brooklyn, New York

Shopping in downtown Brooklyn, one day I was surprised to hear an elderly black woman address me with "Good Lord, Girl, you shocked me. I haven't seen a black girl look as white as you for years." I smiled and laughed but inside I was angry, my mind asking for the thousandth time: Why do people feel that they can comment on a light skinned woman of color's complexion?

What frailty of society has made my skin a focal point of so much discussion?

The concern over skin color really reflects a larger issue: When will bi-racial and multi-racial people be just what they are and not asked are you black or are you white? Most of my life I have tried to sidestep the issue saying I would not deny either of my parents. Then the question was simply rephrased: What do you go as? I go through this world as who I am a woman of Native-African-Latin American heritage with just a sprinkle of French. I am so mixed race there is no splitting and saying I am a quarter this, and 1/8 that or any other description.

Despite the new millennium, race and ethnicity matter. And Americans are people that like to have things placed neatly in boxes. And I am not easily categorized. When the year 2000 census form came out it did not have the promised and long-awaited choice under race: the option to identify one's self as multi-racial. Once again, America did not recognize millions of people of mixed racial heritage. Having grown up a mixed race child in the less than progressive 1950s, I had worked hard to fit in. I tried to wear my hair like the other girls, tried to be nice to them in the hopes that they would welcome my participation in their playground games. It didn't happen. In grade school, I spent an inordinate amount of time in the principal's office based on the fact that according to one of the nuns who served as my teacher, I just looked guilty. What really looked guilty about me? For the north, I was dark complected. My skin tones led me to be characterized as sallow, surly or plain. My supposed guilty looks probably had to do with the fact that I was darker than my classmates were. Away from the sharp racial divisions of working class Detroit, the same skin was perceived differently. During family sojourns to New Orleans my looks evoked completely different responses: my big legs were pretty, my hair was good, and everyone said I was pretty. No one would have dreamed of asking me about my skin color. My complexion perceived as light, by

darker relatives caused people to exclaim over how pretty a child I was.

???

**The Term
"Creole"
Just My Opinion**
*By Ingrid Stanley
Slidell, LA*

"What was the difference between free men of color and free blacks"? The term free people of color (*les gens de couleur libres*) was generally used for those blacks or mulattos who were born into freedom. Free blacks were referred to as those of African descent who were free but had been previously in slavery. From what I have read the term Creole comes from the word *Criollo* which is Spanish for created in America. This agrees with other scenarios I have read stating that Creole refers to those of French and/or Spanish descent born in the New Colony (meaning as opposed to those of French and/or Spanish persons born in France or Spain). The term Creole has also been interpreted to mean anyone or anything born in the New Colony of Louisiana. This is what I believe the true word *Creole* means and why it mostly applies to Louisiana and where French/Spanish colonies existed. The controversy comes in when Mulattos also referred to themselves as Creole. In the forties and fifties whites stopped referring to themselves as Creoles because of the black connotation associated with it. Slowly but surely Whites who had once been Creole started to refer to themselves as Cajun. With the big migration to California which occurred around that time the *passee blanc* Mulattos did not use the word Creole as they were afraid of being associated with the colored race. I even heard of one family who said they were from Mississippi to avoid the possibility of being classed as colored.

To me it is perfectly alright to make the distinction of black/colored Creole as opposed to just Creole (those without African heritage) because there is that distinction. In my opinion Mulatto Creoles meet the definition of Creole as well as the White Creoles and both should embrace their heritage and so should those families who crossed the color line so long ago.

Who is Clemence Oliveau?

By Ingrid R. Stanley
Slidell, LA

Clemence Oliveau and Alexis Lebeau is listed as the parents of Octavine LeBeau (wife of Robert Harleaux). I have tried relentlessly to find more information on Octavine's parents without much success. I have been able to draw a few assumptions from various bits of information I have been able to collect.

In the book "Slaves and Masters of Pointe Coupee, Louisiana" by Winston deVillie I found several entries regarding a Magdaleine Oliveau and her children. In an entry dated 01/23/1801 negress Magdaleine was freed by George Olivo (also spelled Oliveau). In another entry dated 01/20/1801 Henry, Euphrosine, Claire, Magdaleine and **Clemence**, children of negress Magdaleine, were freed by George Olivo(Oliveau). There is also mention of a succession of deceased Magdaleine, called Oliveau, free negress dated 05/14/1818.

I believe that this child Clemence, daughter of Magdaleine, is the mother of Octavine Lebeau.

I also have a document showing where Alexis-Octave Lebeau (who could have been Octavine's half brother), Notary Public, is administering a sale of property between Magdalein Oliveau (which I believe is

Octavine's sister) and Robert Harlaud (Harleaux), husband of Octavine. What does all of this mean? Well, I don't exactly know. What we can conclude is that it is not just coincidence that 1) the freed slave Magdaleine had a child named Clemence, 2) That Octavine's husband Robert Harlaud purchase a plat of land from Magdaleine Oliveau (same name as Clemenc's mother and sister) and 3) that the notary conducting the sale has the same name as Octavine's father Alexis Lebeau.

In Pointe Coupee Parish Courthouse is a court case where Madeleine (fwc) filed suit against Etienne Major (1/2 brother to George) for misuse of the children's money in 1806. George had left mention of his illegitimate children in his will. Copy of will is on file in the courthouse.

Why Are We A Rainbow Family?



By Desi Valteau

I was going through the guest book on the Les Gens de Couleur Libres website and found Desi's entry. I related to it immediately because as you know, Creoles are every color of the rainbow. I contacted Desi and she most graciously gave me permission to share it with you.

"Hi everyone, I am a Creole who was born and raised in New Orleans. I went to St. Leo (elementary), St. Mary's Academy (high school) and Xavier University. I left New Orleans in '89 and now reside in Altadena, Ca., where I am a freelance entertainment journalist. I am married and have a 6-year-old daughter. What's funny is that I am light-skinned, my husband is from Nigeria and very dark skinned and my daughter

has a caramel complexion. While I've never had a discussion with my daughter about race, she's very perceptive and she started asking questions such as: 'Why are we a rainbow family?'

'Mommy, how come you and I are the only mommy and daughter at my school that don't match?'

My heart sank at her questions, but I told her that color doesn't matter.

On a lighter note, my daughter and I were at a restaurant with some parents and kids from her school and we were discussing a particular subject when my daughter thought someone asked me, 'What are you?' She blurted out, 'My mommy's Creole.' Everyone laughed."



*By Catherine F. Donnow ...©
Hammond, LA*

A little known treasure sits in the Marigny, the oldest "suburb" of New Orleans. Built circa 1815 by Rosette Rochon, it is a splendid example of the New Orleans Creole cottage.

The home was built using the "*brique entre poteaux*" or "brick between post" construction. Architecture both in France and the Caribbean influenced this unique style of building. The construction offered the accessibility of cool breezes in the hot months and warmth in cold months. Two windows and two doors across the front of the house provided cross ventilation along with the rear gallery. Creole cottages such as the Rosette Rochon home typically consisted of four main rooms, with a gallery across the

back of the house. The gallery often contained "cabinets" which served as services spaces. A stairway in the gallery would lead to the rooms of the upper floor. Rosette Rochon was born in Mobile Alabama in 1767. She was born into slavery as the daughter of Pierre Rochon and Marianne, a slave. Her father, who was a shipbuilder, freed her. Rochon then lived in San Domingue (now Haiti) until the revolution at which time she relocated to New Orleans in 1797. During her lifetime she was involved in 2 placage relationships and amassed a small fortune due to her good business sense. She owned rental property, grocery stores and made loans for which she was paid interest. When she died in 1863, she had a worth of around one million dollars in today's currency. The home, which is now the Musee Rosette Rochon is thought to be the last of the real estate she owned which is still standing.

Rochon bought the property on which the house stands from Bernard de Marigny de Mandeville. Marigny was the son of Count Pierré Enguerrand Phillippe de Mandeville, one of the wealthiest Frenchmen in the New World. In 1805 Bernard Marigny began subdividing his father's plantation, which became the Faubourg (neighborhood) Marigny. Free people of color and new immigrants to New Orleans mostly occupied the faubourg. Recent years have seen a great interest in the area with homes being renovated and restored and coffee houses and dining facilities opening bring life into the neighborhood.

The present owner of the house, Mr. Don Richmond, is in the process of restoring this fine old building to its former glory. Because of its present condition, an insite into the original building materials can be seen down to the bricks, mortar and cypress that was used in the construction. The home is also a tribute to the free men of color who probably

built the house. Carpentry and masonry were two of the trades in which free men of color in the area excelled.

Located at 1515 Pauger St, the home is open for tours at this time by appointment only. To arrange a tour and/or donate funds to help restore this bagatelle (small jewel) of New Orleans, call Don Richmond 504 947-7673.

Discovering Bliss

*By Bliss Broyard
New York City, New York*



Two months before my father died (in Boston, MA), I found out that he had a secret, something—my mother said—that would explain a lot about him. Before we had a chance to talk, though, my father’s illness took a turn for the worse, and one day, after watching him suffer through terrible pain, my mother chose to break the news herself. With little prelude, she revealed that our father was part black. “His parents were Creoles from New Orleans,” she said. “That’s the secret?” I asked. “That’s all?” my brother said.

This news was nothing compared to the scenarios we’d been imagining: abuse or some horrible crime. And it did explain some things. We’d never seen my father’s family when I was growing up. When I was seven, my grandmother and my aunt Lorraine paid their only visit, and I never met my father’s other sister nor her children. Also, I didn’t know anything about my father’s childhood in New Orleans. Beyond a few reoccurring anecdotes—the time his father had to shoot a rabid dog that was careening through the streets or how sweet the figs had been from the tree in the family’s backyard—my dad’s past was eclipsed by mystery. Yet, the revelation raised new questions, too: Why did my father hide his racial identity? What did this ancestry mean to

him? What did it mean to me? If my father was part black, what was I?

My father was never well enough again for any conversation on the subject, and then he died. I would have liked to put some of these questions to his sisters who came to his memorial service, but the legacy of my dad’s rejection made this conversation slow in coming. Also, my schooling and upbringing hadn’t included much African American history nor had I ever known anyone black well enough to call a friend. I was afraid of saying something ignorant or racist that would estrange all over again.

I headed to the library where I started to read about my ancestral city, New Orleans, and the history of these mixed race people who lived there, the Creoles. I learned that Creoles had a distinct culture and language of their own, that many of them had been free before the Civil War and had been early activists in the fight for equal rights. Most of all, I began to realize that the answers to my questions about my father’s and my racial identity weren’t simple or neat. There was no equation into which I could plug the circumstances of my life that would tell me who I was now supposed to be. At one time, there had been the one-drop rule, which forced people like my father into making some painful choices. When I finally worked up my courage to talk to my aunt Shirley, she gave me some advice about what to call myself: “The minute you let other people label you, you let them take away your power. You’re Bliss, that’s who you are. And the best thing you can do is to figure out what that means.” And so I’ve let this question be my guide as I’ve searched into my father’s past and reconnected with his family, and discovered all the traces that my ancestors and their history had already deposited in me without my ever realizing it.

Finding Lise

By *Lolita Villavaso Cherrie*
New Orleans, LA



“You are such a nosey young lady; but, if you must know, then I will tell you. My grandfather was a white Frenchman who owned a plantation in St. James Parish. He had two families: his white family and his mulatto family. We lived right behind his white family. When his white wife died, he moved his mulatto children up front into his big house. He loved us so much! He even died in the arms of his favorite child, my mother, Estella.” These are the words of my grandmother as she spoke of her grandfather, Marcellin Tirceut.

With these images etched in my memory, I set out a year ago to find out as much as I could about my g-g-grandfather, Marcellin. He seemed to be such a fascinating and interesting ancestor of mine! Yes, I soon discovered that he was married for 26 years to a member of the wealthy Arceneaux family. Together he and Celeste brought 15 children into the world. Yes, he was wealthy and owned a sugar plantation, a store, livestock, and well over 700 acres of land. As my research continued, I soon discovered that Marcellin owned something else as well. He owned 51 slaves, one of who in 1857 was a 16 year old mulattress-creole whose life was valued at \$1600. Her name was Lise; and Lise, I soon discovered, was my g-g-grandmother. She was the mother of Marcellin’s 6 mulatto children born in the 1860’s and 1870’s after the death of his wife.

It suddenly dawned on me that I knew nothing of her. I never even knew her name! Why was his memory kept alive in my family and not hers? Why did I find so many references to him in my research, and so little to hers? Was it because she was born a slave and considered of less importance? As my research continued, I soon

found myself losing interest in Marcellin, and seeking to gain insight into the soul and character of Lise. As the pieces of my genealogical puzzle came together, I began to see Lise for who she really was. She may have been stripped of her freedom, youth, and innocence at a very early age; but never of her courage, strength, and determination to survive. She fought a long and hard fight! It was a fight I do not think many of us could fight today. She fought a Catholic Church that purposely hid the identity of her children’s biological father in all their baptismal records. This was their way of protecting the good name of their white father. She fought a system that absorbed all white men of any fiscal responsibility for their mulatto children by passing laws which state that illegitimate children of slave mothers and white fathers have no right to prove paternal descent. As a result, many white creole children never got to know their colored brothers and sisters. She fought a man who saw fit to have children with several other slaves, but ended up staying with none of them. She fought a society that would not allow her children to attend medical school, as three of Marcellin’s white sons did, because they were thought to be inferior. Marcellin remarried in 1879, and upon his death in 1883, all of his possessions were left to his new wife of just 4 years. Lise and her 6 kids received barely anything. Lise may have lost the battles, but she won the war. She knew that one day her children’s children would be given a better life. All she had to do was to be strong enough to keep her family together, and to instill in her children a sense of pride and self-worth. She did this and so did her next 4 generations of off-spring. It is because of Lise that I am who I am today. It is because of Lise that I can now say I am the proud descendant of a slave woman. Let’s find these women and give them their just due. Let’s put them on the pedestal they so rightly deserve!



Section III – Book Reviews

“Passing” by Nella Larsen

Reviewed by Anne-Marie Vidal

Passing, a 1929 novel by Nella Larsen, was written in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance when popular culture began to recognize African American authors and their unique experience, style and dignity. It was out of print for nearly 70 years and re-published in 1997. It recounts a portion of black history too often neglected: the experience, sometimes accidental, of African Americans who mistaken for white, cross over into a different world. Most made this journey in the hopes of living a life with more opportunities and comfort. In Passing the character who does so slips into a life of the ultimate discomfort; she marries a well-to-do white man without revealing she is black. When she renews a friendship with another light skinned black woman her friend witnesses the abuse of her married life. Cordial on the surface, he had no idea of his wife’s background. He calls her “Nig” to indicate that over the years, she no longer is “as fair as a lily” (her skin tone darkens a bit over the years). Like others who have made similar decisions, she loses both her personal history and her cultural identification.

That the novel has impact seven decades later is not surprising. The author demonstrates very well that there is more to race than skin color. The story line relates the experience of Clare Kendry, whose desire for economic advantage, has her changing her life by simply taking the bus from one side of town to the other with her unknowing suitor. Her re-acquaintance with a childhood friend, Irene Redfield, brings to the fore the dilemma of her own identity. Both women live in flesh tones that are easily mistaken as white. Irene lives her life proudly as black; she is married to a prominent black doctor and enjoying an upper class black world. This portrait of Irene reveals that culture and social setting is a strong component of what we define as race. Living

with a man who has contempt for black people and culture, Clare is drawn to Irene’s life, friends and social milieu.

A Feb. 17, 2001 New York Times Book Review appraisal of the novel attempts to portray Larsen as outside of African-American culture because she is bi-racial. Larsen, the child of a Scandinavian father and African-American mother, weaves a thoughtful story, which compellingly tells of the meeting between two women. Larsen’s character clearly explains to her rediscovered friend how little it took “pass” into white society. She attributes her acceptance to many Caucasians’ security that others are like them and have their experience. Passing is an unusual novel; there is no sensationalism in its treatment of a topic that few people were comfortable discussing. Many of us have known friends or relatives who pretend to be who they are not. Passing is more than the story of Clare Kendry and her difficult upbringing by paternal aunts. She tells Irene that her paternal aunts never forgave their brother for “ruining a Negro girl” and producing her. The book focuses on the isolation of keeping secret one’s race, and the difficulties of re-defining an identity. Until the past 20 years, too few dignified accounts exist in literature or movies of the lives of racially mixed people. That the Times reviewer felt compelled to state that Larsen is “as much a part of the black experience as Zora Neale Hurston” only made me wonder by whose standard was she excluded from it? That the book was reprinted four years ago could be a sign that African-American culture includes the racially mixed. Maybe some part of the American population knows that race is not static and history is not etched in stone; both have as much to do with the perspective of the person viewing them as the person who creates.

**“The History of Pointe Coupee Parish
Louisiana” by Brian J. Costello**
Reviewed by Ingrid R. Stanley

During my research into the Harleaux ancestry my sister and I decided to take a trip to the New Roads area to see if we could find some new sources of information. While touring this beautiful little town we came across a little shop, Main Street Market, which had some antiques and tourist paraphernalia. I found this wonderful book, “A History of Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana”, by Brian J. Costello. It’s riddled with all sorts of information regarding the city and the people of Pointe Coupee Parish. Throughout this book Mr. Costello has given an in depth account of the colored Creole in Pointe Coupee, their lives and their contributions. He documents details about a slave uprising, the lawsuit of Josephine Dubuclet, the murder trial of Auguste Graugnard and much more. He also gives a list of colored Creoles who held office in the 1800’s. Mr. Costello also tells of the relationships between the French Creole men and the colored Creole women and daringly gives the names of all involved. Anyone interested in the history of New Roads/Pointe Coupee and the colored Creoles that occupied the area must read this book. See below for an excerpt from this treasure of history.

*“Creoles of Color”**

“Article 95 of the Civil Code of Louisiana prohibited marriage between whites and persons of color. Nevertheless, common-law unions between white men and colored women were prevalent. Some of these unions, it can be assumed, were not voluntary on the part of the women, but others were obviously based on mutual affection and existed as ‘marriages’ in every aspect but the law. Toward the end of the Spanish colonial period and continuing well into the American period, a number of the wealthiest and most prominent white Creoles of Pointe Coupee were bachelors, but maintained relationships with colored Creole women who

bore them children. In most cases, these children legally bore the father’s surname with the clarifier dit (‘called,’ for males) and dite (‘called’ for females). After a generation or so, however, the colored Creole families were no longer dit or dite. Thus, in the records, the colored Creole son of Joseph DeCuir might be identified as Antoine dit DeCuir, but later Antoine and his children are simply called DeCuir”

Two other books by Mr. Costello (equally as interesting and informative) are “From Porche to Labatut, Two Centuries on the Pointe Coupee Coast” and “Creole Pointe Coupee, A Sociological Analysis”

*A History of Pointe Coupee, Parish, Louisiana by Brian J. Costello, Chapter 7, page 100, pp. 2.

“Property” by Valerie Martin
Reviewed by Mary Gehman

An important addition to the reading list of anyone exploring the issues of race, gender and slavery is the novel Property by New Orleans native Valerie Martin, published by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday earlier this year. It is an emotionally disturbing read. As writer Marilyn French is quoted on the cover, the book is “vivid and gripping. I read it in one gulp.” In that one gulp the reader lives inside the mind of a young woman, Manon Gaudet, a mistress on a plantation upriver from New Orleans. To her marriage she has brought her personal slave Sarah who tacitly waits on her. Manon, unable to bear children, has to tolerate her husband’s bedding Sarah. Sarah and the master’s young son Walter, a deaf mute, careens around and through the novel “like a beautiful and vicious little wildcat” while Sarah nurses her second child,

an infant presumably also fathered by Mr. Gaudet.

For several months Manon in a terse, unflinching voice takes us through a series of tragedies in her life, accompanied always by the silent, brooding slave woman. In a remarkably convincing depiction of the world and its restrictions shared by both women, they are property to one degree or another of Mr. Gaudet and subject to his whims. We come to understand and feel the interdependence of the two women and how they cannot close the gap between them and be anything more than mistress and servant.

Through her clipped, tense style, Martin forces us to confront the ugly truce these two women have made with each other against a backdrop of Manon's mother lying ill in New Orleans and a rumored slave insurrection along the River Road. Observing the slave woman while being served her morning coffee, Manon notes: "Her eyes were lowered, her hand steady, a single line of concentration on her brow all that gave evidence of any feeling about what she was doing. A very different look from the one I'd seen in the night as she rushed from my husband's bedroom."

Participants in the Creole chat line on www.gensdecouleur.com have accurately pointed out a number of inconsistencies in the historical details of *Property*, things that bother those of us closer to the material than Martin. However, like most good fiction, the essence of the book stands up well; we are relieved to end it, to step out of that time and place when both those oppressed and those who oppressed them were tortured by their larger common fate.

Martin said on a panel of women novelists at this year's New Orleans Tennessee Williams Literary Festival that she made *Property* a relatively short book (196 pages) because she could not stand to live in the mindset of Manon for more than one year. As difficult as it was for her (being a white woman) to write it, Martin has done us a service

by providing an opportunity to more deeply understand the environment that shaped our ancestors on both sides of the color line.

The Benjamin Janvier Series By Barbara Hambley

Reviewed by Ingrid Stanley

I have found a series of books by Barbara Hambley that I recommend highly if the reader would like to get a feeling of what New Orleans was like back in the early 1800s. So far there are six books in the series:

A Free Man of Color
Fever Season
Graveyard Dust
Sold Down the River
Die Upon a Kiss
Wet Grave

The central character is Benjamin Janvier (January) a mulatto of very dark skin, his father was an African and his mother a mulatto. Benjamin was trained in classical piano and educated by his mother's "protector" (for whom he bears the name Janvier) Monsieur Janvier. When Benjamin became of age Monsieur Janvier sent Benjamin to Paris to study and practice medicine. After the death of his wife, Benjamin returned to New Orleans and lives with his mother, a very shrewd and somewhat unfeeling woman who knows all of the local gossip.

Due to the fact that Benjamin is a free man of color he is not allowed to practice medicine, he therefore earns his living by playing piano at the numerous balls given by the white society and at the quadroon balls. However, what he earns is barely enough for him to live on.

The stories evolve around Benjamin, his

family, friends and acquaintances. In each storyline he finds himself involved in mystery, suspense, intrigue and danger. What's most interesting to me is the background information about New Orleans and it's surroundings, it's people, and it's culture. Some of the of the books even include a glossary of Creole and Afro-Creole terminology. Even though Hambley is not a person of color and the storylines are fiction much of the background information is based on fact. The author has done a lot of research on early New Orleans culture and customs in order to add reality to her work. Her research has paid off!

More About Our Book Selections

"Passing" by Nella Larsen-published by Penguin USA (Paper); (February 4, 2003) Available from www.Amazon.com

"The History of Pointe Coupee Parish Louisiana" by Brian J. Costello-If you are interested in purchasing this book you can contact the author Brian J. Costello directly at 9551 False River Drive; New Roads, LA 70760. The cost is about \$40

"Property" by Valerie Martin-Can be purchased at most major bookstores.

The Benjamin Janvier Series-by Barbara Hambley-Paperback, published by Bantam Books, can be purchased from Books-A-Million Book store. They can found in the historical fiction section. Cost is about \$6.00. You can also go to:
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0553109243/mikewebersweberw/103-0315886-7106230>



About Chers & Mon Cher

Mon Cher is a quarterly newsletter presented by the CHERS organization. CHERS (Creole Heritage Education Research Society) is a group of dedicated genealogy researchers with Louisiana roots.

Our mission is to help interested persons in the study of Louisiana Creole genealogy by furnishing information which will assist them in their quest for ancestral knowledge.

If you have any questions regarding *Mon Cher* or would like to contribute an article please contact Ingrid Stanley at emmapeel1st@aol.com.



"Only a genealogist considers a step backwards as progress!"
..... Author Unknown

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