A Medley of Cultures: Louisiana History at the Cabildo

Chapter 1

Introduction

This book is the result of research conducted for an exhibition on Louisiana history prepared by the Louisiana State Museum and presented within the walls of the historic Spanish Cabildo, constructed in the 1790s. All the words written for the exhibition script would not fit on those walls, however, so these pages augment that text. The exhibition presents a chronological and thematic view of Louisiana history from early contact between American Indians and Europeans through the era of Reconstruction. One of the main themes is the long history of ethnic and racial diversity that shaped Louisiana. Thus, the exhibition—and this book—are heavily social and economic, rather than political, in their subject matter. They incorporate the findings of the "new" social history to examine the everyday lives of "common folk" rather than concentrate solely upon the historical markers of "great white men."

In this work I chose a topical, rather than a chronological, approach to Louisiana's history. Each chapter focuses on a particular subject such as recreation and leisure, disease and death, ethnicity and race, or education. In addition, individual chapters look at three major events in Louisiana history: the Battle of New Orleans, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Organization by topic allows the reader to peruse the entire work or look in depth only at subjects of special interest. For readers interested in learning even more about a particular topic, a list of additional readings follows each chapter.

Before we journey into the social and economic past of Louisiana, let us look briefly at the state's political history.

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Early explorers of Louisiana came from many European nations. The first to adventure into the Mississippi River region were Spaniards: Alonzo Alvárez de Pineda in 1519, Pánfilo de Narváez in 1527, and Hernando de Soto in 1542, all of whom came by way of Florida. Hernando de Soto's overland expedition was the first to confirm European discovery of the Mississippi River, although his brief visit provided only glimpses of the region. The hostile climate, wildlife, geography, and American Indians cost the Spaniards many lives and persuaded them to look elsewhere for precious metals, fertile soils, and docile native laborers.

European powers ignored Louisiana for nearly a century and a half until French explorers rekindled an interest in the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast region. Like the Spaniards before them, the French hoped to find instant wealth in the area. In addition, they sought a westward waterway to link French Canada with the Pacific Ocean and then the Orient. Although this dream of an east-west water route across North America was quickly dashed, Louis XIV, the French Sun King, encouraged exploration of the Mississippi River to enlarge his empire and halt Britain's and Spain's expansion. The French crown envisioned a giant arc of settlement that stretched from Canada through the middle of the continent and into the French Caribbean islands.

The first French explorers of the rumored "great river" were seven men led by Louis Joliet, a native of Canada, and Jesuit Father Jacques Marquette, a native of France. In May 1672 the party set out from Canada, authorized to explore the river from the north and establish missions among the Indians. They sailed downriver to the point where the Arkansas River flowed into the Mississippi, near present-day Beulah, Mississippi. Worried that further southward exploration would invite confrontation with Spanish colonists, the expedition turned around and returned to Canada.

A decade later René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, continued French exploration of the Mississippi to its mouth. La Salle undertook his journey with twenty-three Frenchmen and eighteen American Indians in 1682. Upon reaching the river's mouth, La Salle donned his finest clothes, helped erect a cross and pillar decorated with the royal coat of arms, and proclaimed possession of the Mississippi River, all its tributaries, and all the lands drained by these waters for Louis XIV, king of France. La Salle named this vast expanse "Louisiane" or "Louis' land," in honor of his king.

La Salle returned to France by way of Canada and in Paris sought crown assistance to establish permanent settlement in the new colony. He enticed royal officials with maps made to show the Mississippi emptying into the gulf near Matagorda Bay in the present state of Texas. The maps—probably purposefully falsified—placed the new French claim very close to New Spain's rich silver mines.

Whatever the tactic, La Salle won approval to sail in 1684, along with ships, provisions, and 280 men and women. La Salle's party navigated past the Mississippi and landed west of it. They unknowingly selected a very unhealthy site for settlement, five miles up Garcitas Creek on an extension of Matagorda Bay in Texas. Loss of communication by sea added to their woes: one of the ships returned to France and two others ran aground, one at the hands of a drunken pilot. In 1687 discontented remaining

members of the expedition murdered La Salle and his nephew as they searched for the Mississippi. A Spanish expedition sent to find La Salle and halt his trespasses into territory claimed by Spain found the remains of La Salle's settlement and colonists in 1689. France's involvement in the War of the League of Augsburg (known in North America as King William's War) delayed further exploration and settlement of Louisiana until 1699.

In 1699 Pierre Le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, sailed into the Gulf of Mexico to resume France's quest for a transcontinental empire. His party reached the mouth of the Mississippi on Shrove Tuesday and celebrated Mardi Gras with a mass and *Te Deum*. Over the next few months Iberville's expedition continued up the Mississippi past Baton Rouge and Pointe Coupée and then returned through Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne into the gulf.

Iberville's men constructed the first French settlement in Louisiana on the eastern shore of the Bay of Biloxi. Convinced that large ships would get stuck going into the mouth of the Mississippi River, Iberville chose to establish a permanent site on the Gulf Coast rather than on the river. While Iberville returned to France for additional provisions and settlers later in 1699, his brother, Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, continued to explore the Mississippi River. Bienville found that ships could get to the river and travel down toward the mouth by way of Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne. He encountered an English ship well up the river at what has since been called English Turn *(Detour à l'Anglois)* because Bienville fooled the British into thinking he had a large force, so they turned around and retreated downriver. Iberville, however, still insisted that the Mississippi was not navigable and concentrated his efforts on establishing a French presence along the Gulf Coast. Thus, Bienville had to delay creating a permanent settlement on the lower Mississippi River for almost two decades.

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Colonial Louisiana

Louisiana's colonial period lasted from 1699, when the French established a permanent settlement in the area, to 1803, when the United States purchased it. France ceded Louisiana to Spain in the Treaty of Paris of 1763, and Spanish administrators governed the colony until 1803.

During French and Spanish rule Louisiana's value to Europeans was mainly strategic. Both countries viewed Louisiana as useful within the context of larger geopolitical considerations: they wanted to keep the colony out of the hands of archrival England. Although European rulers put more resources into the colony than they got out, France hoped that by occupying Louisiana it could gain access to silver mines in northern New Spain (Mexico). Spain, in turn, wanted Louisiana as a protective barrier between those same mines and Britain's increasingly expansive North American colonies to the east.

While a French colony, Louisiana was governed alternately by the crown and several chartered proprietors. Discouraged by its failure to make Louisiana profitable and distracted by war with England, the French royal house turned the colony over to financier Antoine Crozat in 1712. France contracted with Crozat to operate Louisiana as a proprietary colony, giving him a monopoly on trade with Louisiana in exchange for his promise to bring settlers and slaves and supply the colony with goods.

After losing much money, Crozat resigned as proprietor of Louisiana in 1717, and the crown turned the colony over to John Law's recently chartered Company of the West. A Scot, Law was an economic wizard who created a French national bank to finance trade and colonization and brought together many trading monopolies, including the Company of the West, into one large corporation called the Company of the Indies (1719).

Unfortunately for Louisiana, more people in France invested money in the parent bank that controlled the Company of the Indies than were willing to settle in the colony. The value of the bank's stock inflated wildly, but the colony failed to live up to promises of vast wealth made to lure speculators. As word of this deception spread, investors sought to cash in their shares and in 1720 the "Mississippi Bubble" burst.

Although beset by failed crops, futile searches for mineral wealth, Indian wars, and slave insurrections, the Company of the Indies retained its Louisiana charter until 1731. Louisiana then returned to direct royal administration—first by France and then Spain—for the remainder of its colonial period.

The system of government in Louisiana mirrored that of its European rulers: absolutist and paternalistic. The royal houses of France and Spain governed Louisiana through their appointed representatives—at the upper levels commonly consisting of a governor, a commissioner or intendant, several post commanders, and a council. As part of the Spanish empire, Louisiana fell within the viceroyalty of New Spain, but came under the immediate supervision of the captain general of Havana, Cuba. Unlike their counterparts in the British North American colonies, propertied white male Louisianians could not elect representatives to colonial assemblies, although under Spanish rule, local elites could purchase seats on the New Orleans town council (cabildo). According to the French and Spanish system of governing, crown officials were to take the interests of all subjects into account and make decisions based upon the common good—or at least that was the ideal.

The highest-ranking official in Louisiana was the governor. Because Louisiana was a frontier colony, most of its governors were military officers, whose primary duty was to protect the province against armed threats from other European powers and Indians. Most were born in France or Spain. In contrast to the British North American colonies, the governor's power in Louisiana was not curbed by local legislative bodies and only rarely by the intendant and council members. Although governors frequently abused this power, they also used their authority to act in the interest of colonials—allowing much-needed food, supplies, specie, and slaves to enter Louisiana illegally—even when such actions ran counter to the crown's interests.

One of the major concerns of colonial political leaders was defending and expanding Louisiana at the expense of imperial rivals: first France against Spain and

Britain and then Spain against France, Britain, and the United States. France initially explored and colonized Louisiana to establish a link between its colony to the north—Canada—and its Caribbean islands to the south. Royal authorities also wanted to prevent the British from getting to Spain's nearby silver mines before they did.

As part of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Years' War (called the French and Indian War in the North American colonies) in 1763 France gave Spain Louisiana minus West Florida, which the British claimed. Britain also acquired East Florida from Spain in exchange for the return of Cuba, which Britain had seized. A second Treaty of Paris signed in 1783 to end the American Revolution returned both East and West Florida to Spain. Although West Florida was a distinct political unit, in practice it was governed as an extension of Louisiana, with the governor at Pensacola coming under *de facto* supervision of the governor-general at New Orleans.

This geographic realignment of political power extended Spain's empire in North America but brought it directly into conflict with a new rival, the United States. Spain did not recognize United States claims to a large tract of land lying west of the Appalachians, east of the Mississippi, and north of West Florida. Settlers from the United States flooded into the region, demanding land and access to the port of New Orleans.

Caught in the middle of warfare between Britain and France and desperately in need of allies, Spain finally gave in to pressure from the United States. In the Treaty of San Lorenzo (known to Americans as Pinckney's Treaty) of 1795 Spain accepted 31° north as the northern border of West Florida and granted United States citizens the right to navigate the Mississippi to the gulf, as well as to unload and store goods for reshipment on oceangoing vessels at New Orleans or other Spanish ports; this was referred to as the right of deposit.

New Orleans was the capital and leading city of colonial Louisiana during most of the eighteenth century. Bienville founded New Orleans in 1718 on a crescent-shaped section of the Mississippi's left bank about one hundred miles from the mouth. He named France's newest settlement in honor of the French regent, the Duc d'Orleans. The site had both strategic and economic advantages. Because it sits where distance between the Mississippi and Lakes Pontchartrain and Borgne is shortest, Indians had long used the area as a depot and market for goods carried between the two waterways. The narrow strip of land also aided rapid troop movements, and the river's curve slowed ships approaching from downriver and exposed them to gunfire.

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The Louisiana Purchase

Louisiana's colonial period ended on 20 December 1803 when the French colonial prefect, Pierre Clément de Laussat, transferred the territory to representatives of the United States, William C. C. Claiborne and General James Wilkinson. A scarce twenty

days before, Spain's officials, Governor Manuel de Salcedo and the Marqués de Casa Calvo, had transferred Louisiana to Laussat and the French. This seemingly sudden change in rule had been years in the making.

The process started with French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, who with his foreign minister Talleyrand shared the vision of a renewed western empire for France. They saw Saint-Domingue, a Caribbean island with an economy based on sugar and African slavery, as France's most valuable American colony and the focal point of these imperial designs. Heralded as the liberator of France, Napoleon was bent on conquering people who sought their own freedom. He sent troops to regain control of the island from revolting slaves. But the spirit of the French Revolution, which paved the way for Napoleon's rise to power, fired the imagination of blacks rebelling on the island. They dealt France a stunning defeat, and in January 1804 established the Republic of Haiti. In the process, waves of slave, free black, and white refugees came to New Orleans.

Napoleon's imperial schemes included the recapturing of Louisiana, considered vital to France's strategic, diplomatic, and economic aims. Napoleon wanted to use Louisiana as a granary for France's West Indian islands, especially Saint-Domingue. And France, like Spain, hoped to use Louisiana to halt the aggressive westward march of a young, expansionist United States. Finally, if needed, Louisiana would make good bartering material: trading privileges on the Mississippi or actual transfer of territory in exchange for alliances and money.

Napoleon's designs on Louisiana as a cornerstone for his American empire met with initial success. He not only made peace with the United States, at least temporarily, but he also persuaded Spain to cede Louisiana to him. On 30 September 1800 France and the United States signed the Convention of Mortefontaine, thereby averting a naval war between the two nations. With this treaty in hand, France moved into secret negotiations with Spain to regain Louisiana, its former colony. Signed on 1 October 1800, the Treaty of San Ildefonso stipulated that France provide Spain an Italian kingdom for the duke of Parma (son-in-law of Spain's King Carlos IV). In return, Spain gave France Louisiana and six war vessels. Napoleon verbally promised Carlos IV that France would never transfer Louisiana to another party.

But Napoleon's plan collapsed when the twelve-year revolt of slaves and free blacks in Saint-Domingue ended in November 1803, and the humiliated French forces withdrew. On 1 January 1804 Haiti declared itself an independent republic—the first self-governed by blacks in the Western Hemisphere. The French defeat in Haiti had a ripple effect on Napoleon's strategic plan to recapture Louisiana. General Claude Perrin Victor, sustaining losses on the island, failed to reach his ultimate destination—Louisiana, no longer a viable target. As Napoleon’s New World empire disintegrated, the loss of Haiti made Louisiana unnecessary.

Delays on the part of Spain also doomed Napoleon's Louisiana venture. King Carlos IV refused to transfer Louisiana until France found a kingdom for his son-in-law. Spain's recalcitrance forced Napoleon to renege on his promise to Carlos IV to preserve Louisiana for France. He finally sold the colony to the United States.

The United States wanted to acquire New Orleans primarily to guarantee its right of deposit, which gave its vessels license to sail down the Mississippi River through Spanish territory and unload goods at New Orleans for shipment to the Atlantic coast and Europe. By the 1790s most goods shipped down the Mississippi came from United States territories hundreds of miles upriver. This right of deposit was guaranteed in the Treaty of San Lorenzo, negotiated between Spain and the United States in 1795, and was renewable every three years. Even with this right, American merchants and farmers had to pay a tax of six percent on the value of goods brought into and out of New Orleans.

American anxiety heightened in October 1802 when Spanish officials suddenly withdrew the United States' right to deposit western produce at New Orleans. Although Spain reopened the mouth of the Mississippi to American trade six months later, United States officials worried that Spain would revoke their right of deposit at any time.

French-held Louisiana stood in the way of the United States' territorial growth. The United States wanted Louisiana because so many American settlers and merchants were already in the region and because of its vital geographic position at the mouth of the Mississippi. Thomas Jefferson was a leading proponent of United States expansion across the North American continent. He and other members of the American Philosophical Society—including George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton—backed an expedition to explore Louisiana and areas farther west as early as 1793.

France's need to dispose of Louisiana and the United States' desire to obtain at least the port of New Orleans drew representatives of both governments to the bargaining table. Despite secrecy surrounding the Treaty of San Ildefonso, the United States government discovered the transfer of Louisiana from Spain to France and sent Robert R. Livingston to France in 1801 to act as its minister. Livingston tried repeatedly to purchase New Orleans, but Napoleon refused. Jefferson eventually sent James Monroe, special emissary to Paris and Madrid, to assist Livingston. On 11 April 1803, just days before Monroe arrived in Paris, Napoleon offered to sell not only New Orleans but all of Louisiana to the United States. Unable to provide an army to defend Louisiana, Napoleon needed funds and preferred to have the colony in American rather than British hands.

The Marquis de Barbé-Marbois, Napoleon's minister of the treasury, negotiated the terms of the Louisiana Purchase with Livingston and Monroe. The United States purchased Louisiana for $11,250,000 and assumed claims of its own citizens against France up to $3,750,000, for a total purchase price of $15 million. Once the treaty was translated from French to English, the diplomats signed it on 2 May 1803 in France.

On 30 November 1803 Spain's representatives—Governor Manuel de Salcedo and the Marqués de Casa Calvo—officially transferred Louisiana to France's representative, Prefect Pierre Clément de Laussat. Laussat's vivid prose depicted the event:

> **At 11:45 on November 30, 1803, I set afoot for the City Hall [Cabildo], escorted by about sixty Frenchmen. The brig *L'Argo* fired a salute as we went past. We arrived at the Place [d'Armes]. The crowd was already considerable. The Spanish troops were lined under arms on**

one side and the militia on the other. The drums rolled before the guardhouse as I passed. The commissioners of His Catholic Majesty came to meet me halfway down the room. Monsieur de Salcedo seated himself in the middle . . . armchair; I sat in another on his right, the Monsieur the Marquis de Casa Calvo on his left. I presented my powers and the order of the king of Spain. . . . The Marquis de Casa Calvo declared in a loud voice that "the subjects who did not wish to remain under Spanish domination were from that moment completely freed of their oath of allegiance." The governor, at the same time, handed me on a silver tray the keys to the forts St. Charles and St. Louis. He then gave up his seat and I took it myself. . . . We signed and affixed our seals. We then arose and went out on the balconies of the City Hall.

United States President Thomas Jefferson selected William C. C. Claiborne, former governor of the Mississippi territory and highest civilian official in the vicinity, to govern lower Louisiana. Backing Claiborne with military power was General James Wilkinson. On 17 December these two commissioners, five hundred United States army troops, and one hundred Mississippi volunteers encamped just above New Orleans, ready to take formal possession of Louisiana. Once United States troops lined up in the Place d'Armes on 20 December 1803, commissioners Claiborne and Wilkinson entered the Cabildo and climbed the staircase to the *Sala Capitular* (council room), where they and Prefect Laussat signed the transfer document. Laussat again narrated the transfer's occasion:

The commissioners, Messieurs Claiborne and Wilkinson, were received at the foot of the stairs of the City Hall. . . . I advanced toward them, midway down the length of the council room [*Sala Capitular*]. Claiborne seated himself in an armchair at my right, and Wilkinson in another at my left. I announced the purpose of the ceremony. The commissioners presented their powers to me, their secretary reading these in a loud voice. Immediately afterward, I ordered to be read: first, the treaty covering the cession; second, my powers; and third, the act covering the exchange of ratifications. I then declared that I transferred the country to the United States . . . I handed the keys of the city, interlaced with tricolor ribbons, to Monsieur Wilkinson, and I immediately released from their oath of fidelity to France all those inhabitants who wished to remain under the domination of the United States.

The United States formally took possession of the full territory of Louisiana at St. Louis in 1804, when France handed over the rights to upper Louisiana. This area encompassed that part of the Mississippi River Valley north of where the Ohio River flows into the

Mississippi, near Cape Girardeau, Missouri. On 9 March 1804 Spanish Lieutenant Governor Charles de Hault de Lassus turned over upper Louisiana to France, represented by United States Captain Amos Stoddard. The following day Stoddard transferred the region from France to the United States. He remained in the territory as civil commandant.

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The Territorial Period: A Louisiana Laboratory

Purchase of the Louisiana territory more than doubled the physical size of the United States. In 1803 Louisiana encompassed an area stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border. Following the transfer of Louisiana to the United States, Congress moved quickly to organize its new acquisition. On 26 March 1804 it divided the Louisiana Purchase into the territories of Orleans and Louisiana. The present state of Louisiana, minus the Florida parishes, made up the Territory of Orleans. The Territory of Louisiana encompassed the remaining area of the former colony.

Because Louisiana was so different from its other states and territories, the United States government made its residents go through a trial period before admitting Louisiana as a state. This vast new acquisition challenged fundamental American institutions: judicial and legal systems, political parties, and land allocation. Its diverse peoples had to prove that they were ready to become part of the United States. They also had to adapt to such common American practices as elections and trial by jury, democratic processes absent under French and Spanish rule. Although United States procedures eventually replaced many of those of colonial France and Spain, Americans did not mold Louisiana into a state like all others. Many of its unique aspects, rooted in the colonial period, remain today.

Closing the vast chasm that separated Anglo and Latin political traditions posed the greatest challenge to effective American rule. The various European ethnic groups already in Louisiana—primarily those of French and Spanish descent (commonly known as "Creoles")—united to resist United States imposition of Anglo political and cultural norms throughout the territorial and antebellum periods. Even though native Louisianians had learned local self-government during the colonial era, Governor Claiborne and other United States officials believed that local leaders did not fully understand American republican concepts and thus were not prepared to govern Louisiana before going through an apprenticeship in democratic forms of government.

At last, in 1811 the United States Congress authorized Louisiana to call a state constitutional convention. According to the 1810 census, more than 76,000 people, about half black and half white, resided in the Territory of Orleans. This number clearly exceeded the population figure of 60,000 specified for statehood in the Northwest

Ordinance of 1787. Moreover, United States authorities, including Governor Claiborne, finally felt that Louisianians were qualified to govern their own state.

Louisiana's 1812 constitution, conservative for the time, was modeled on that of Kentucky, with only slight variations. It provided for a two-house legislature, limited suffrage, and extensive executive powers. Only adult white males who paid taxes could vote, disqualifying two-thirds of the adult white male population in 1812 and all nonwhites and women. Age, property, and residency requirements restricted those who could hold office. Unlike most states, Louisiana's governor had the authority, with senate approval, to appoint all judges and local officials. This policy of a strong head of state accorded with Louisiana's French and Spanish colonial tradition of powerful governors.

Originally, the constitution did not include the Florida parishes, annexed to Louisiana following the West Florida Rebellion of 1810. The convention, however, requested that Congress add the Florida parishes to the new state.

On 30 April 1812 Congress admitted Louisiana, including the Florida parishes, as the eighteenth state in the Union. Exactly nine years had elapsed since the signing of the Louisiana Purchase. Then, in late June 1812 Louisianians elected territorial governor William C. C. Claiborne their first state governor.

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Antebellum Louisiana

Cultural differences and individual personalities, rather than party platforms and philosophies, defined political lines in antebellum Louisiana. Conflict between Latin and Anglo residents and between northern and southern sections of the state infused most political issues. Overall, though, planters—whether of the cotton Democrat or sugar Whig variety—and their merchant allies dominated state government in antebellum Louisiana.

In general, the Florida parishes (formerly English and Spanish possessions) and north Louisiana supported Anglo-American candidates of the Democratic party. Many of the voters living in these areas were Protestants of British or American descent. On both large and small farms they grew and exported cotton and thus, like most Democrats, opposed tariffs. In retaliation for added values, or tariffs, placed on imported goods in the United States, foreign countries often added customs duties to American goods they imported and cut into the sellers' profits. During the antebellum period, most of what England and France imported from the United States was southern cotton.

On the other side of the political arena stood the wealthier planters and their merchant allies from the sugar parishes of south Louisiana. Primarily Catholics and native-born descendants of French and Spanish colonists, south Louisiana voters supported tariffs to protect their sugar from foreign competition and a strong national bank, issues championed by the Whig party and its candidates.

New Orleans reflected on a smaller scale the statewide conflict between Anglo and Latin factions. In 1836 the city was divided into three municipalities. Democrats drew support from an immigrant and Creole coalition of Catholics in the First and Third Municipalities. The Whig party and its successor, the American or so-called Know-Nothing party, attracted Protestant, native-born Anglo-Americans who mainly resided in the Second Municipality.

The Whig party dissolved in the 1850s, when slavery emerged as a national issue and the party could no longer retain support in both North and South. Unhappy with Democratic or Republican party alternatives, many former Whigs in Louisiana and other southern states joined the American party. Party members were called "Know-Nothings" because when asked about their fraternal-like, secretive rituals, they replied, "I know nothing." The American party was anti-Catholic and anti-foreign, but Louisiana Know-Nothings downplayed the first and emphasized the latter. Nativist sentiments were especially strong in New Orleans, the second largest port of immigration in the United States. Irish immigrants in particular competed for jobs and housing with less affluent native whites and free blacks.

Several times in the 1850s riots broke out between Democrats and Know-Nothings over the issue of vote fraud. Although the Know-Nothings often resorted to force, both sides fraudulently registered and intimidated voters. During the 1854 election Know-Nothings claimed that white Creole and Irish Democrats worked together to move voters between several polling places, thus increasing the Democratic vote. The Democratic mayor of New Orleans, John L. Lewis, had to impose a curfew and strengthen police forces to decrease the rioting.

In 1846 legislators voted to move the site of the state capital from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. Four years later workers completed the capitol building, one of the best examples of neo-Gothic architecture in Louisiana. Baton Rouge remained the center of state government until the Civil War, when two governments operated: the Confederate in Shreveport and the Union in New Orleans. The Constitution of 1879 once again restored Baton Rouge as the state capital, where it has remained ever since.

Voters wanted to locate the capital outside of New Orleans so that not all power was centralized in the Crescent City. Some also believed that the many diversions available in New Orleans distracted legislators from the business of running the state. The legislature first tried a new location in Donaldsonville, between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, in 1830, but only met there for one session.

One of the main political issues of the antebellum era concerned expanding the Cotton Kingdom, including its slave labor force, farther west into Texas and the Pacific and south to Cuba. Expeditions against Mexico from 1846 to 1848 and against Cuba in 1851 were launched from Louisiana, where they received much support.

Troops from Louisiana fought in the Mexican War (1846–1848). Among them were the Washington Artillery and the Seventh Louisiana Infantry Battalion, whose drummer was the free black man Jordan B. Noble of Battle of New Orleans fame. In the 1830s several Louisianians had also fought with Texans in their war for independence.

The Mexican War gave many Louisianians, including Lieutenant P. G. T. Beauregard, military training they would find valuable a few years later in the Civil War. One of the leading figures in the Mexican War was General Zachary Taylor. A popular war hero, Taylor in 1848 became the only Louisiana resident ever elected president.

The United States also tried to expand its boundaries by purchasing Cuba. After this attempt failed, southern mercenaries and Cuban exiles decided to take the island by force, with New Orleans as their point of departure. These adventurers were called filibusters, from the Spanish term *filibustero*, meaning freebooter or pirate.

Filibusters launched two expeditions from New Orleans, in 1850 and 1851. They chose New Orleans because it was in the South, where many supported the project to expand the cotton empire, and because public officials in the Crescent City ignored President Zachary Taylor's warning not to upset the sectional balance achieved in the Compromise of 1850. Port authorities gave their "winking encouragement," and crowds cheered as the filibusters sailed from New Orleans in May 1850 and August 1851 with the goal of freeing Cuba from Spanish colonial rule and adding another slave state to the Union.

Spanish troops defeated both invasion attempts. In 1850 the filibusters managed to escape to Key West, Florida, and regroup for a second expedition. Of the 420 mercenaries involved in the 1851 invasion, Spanish forces killed 200 and captured the rest. After sending 160 prisoners to Spain, Cuban authorities executed 50 American prisoners by firing squad. The executions outraged Louisianians and other southerners. Rioters in New Orleans destroyed the Spanish consulate and shops owned by Spaniards. For several years following the failed 1851 invasion, Louisianians honored their "Martyrs for Cuban Freedom."

On the eve of the Civil War Louisiana remained a culturally diverse society, one further divided by socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic concerns. These issues would escalate tensions as the state grappled with the decision to secede from or remain in the Union and then dealt with federal occupation and continuing skirmishes between Union and Confederate troops. Because they were such momentous events, separate chapters discuss events leading to Louisiana's participation in the Civil War and the state's role in the turbulent, controversial Reconstruction era.

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Chapter 2

A Multitude of Cultures: The People of Louisiana

New Cultures from Old: Cultural Exchange in Colonial and Antebellum Louisiana

The prospect of prosperity brought people to Louisiana, voluntarily or by force. Among the many ethnic groups in colonial and antebellum Louisiana were people of Native American, African, French, Canadian, Spanish, Latin American, Anglo, German, Irish, and Italian descent, who provided the initial ingredients for Louisiana's famous "gumbo" of cultures. During the early years of European settlement contact between Indians, Europeans, and Africans in Louisiana resulted in a three-way exchange. Each racial and ethnic group was too divided politically and socially, or too few in number, to overwhelm the other. In the nineteenth century large numbers of European immigrants, refugees from Saint-Domingue, and white and black migrants from the Atlantic seaboard contributed to this conglomeration. They added diversity to a developing polarization between Latin and Anglo cultures in the state.

Louisiana's medley of cultures was played out in many forms, among them language, religious practice, resistance, recreation, material culture, and diet. For example, the dishes most identified with Louisiana—such as gumbo—represent cross-cultural influences that originated in the era of colonial encounter and exchange. A thick brown sauce, called a roux, is the base from which all forms of gumbo are made. Faced with a shortage of flour, colonists made roux by cooking either sliced okra or powdered sassafras *(filé)* in a slowly heated oil. Then they added seafood, poultry, meat, or any combination of these. It is believed that the name of the finished product comes from the Angolan word for okra, *guingombo,* a vegetable introduced to the region by African slaves, or to the Choctaw word for sassafras powder, *kombo ashish,* which local Indians continued to market into the twentieth century. Gumbo, like many other Louisiana dishes, is often eaten with rice, which Africans brought to the lower Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century. In 1718 officials of the Company of the West instructed the captains of two ships bound for Louisiana to buy at least a few Africans "who knew how to cultivate rice," as well as some "hogsheads of rice suitable for planting."

This cultural exchange was especially apparent in the Crescent City, with its resident and transient population composed of many nationalities. Indeed, present-day New Orleans derives its distinctive multicultural, almost foreign character from the meeting of several cultures during its first 150 years. Even though until the late eighteenth century whites were more numerous than blacks in New Orleans, African and Indian slaves from nearby plantations frequently traveled to the city to market goods, drink and gamble at numerous taverns, and sing and dance in the common grounds beyond the town walls. In addition to working and playing in close proximity, blacks, Indians, and whites in New Orleans lived together, residing in adjacent homes or within the same household. This trend continued into the antebellum period. Blacks constituted a majority from 1746 until the 1830s, when the city's population was augmented and further diversified by an influx of German and Irish immigrants.

Often in the process of creating new cultures from elements of each individual one, however, many aspects of the original societies, especially African and Indian, were destroyed. In addition, exchange did not always take place on an even plane, and ruling whites eventually were able to demarcate an oppressed, exploited underclass of poor whites and nonwhites. Although race relations were fluid in the borderlands region of which Louisiana was a part during the colonial era, the frontier's leavening effect only went so far, especially when Spain moved to expand commercial plantation agriculture and the deerskin trade in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Louisiana's integration into the Atlantic mercantile system and its increasing prosperity in the nineteenth century sharpened race and class divisions, much as they had in the West Indian sugar islands decades earlier.

Population Growth

During their various regimes, France, Spain, and the United States encouraged people to move to Louisiana, primarily to defend the region—which for most of its pre–Civil War history was on the frontier—and through their labor make it profitable. Throughout the colonial era an important policy goal of French and Spanish officials was the peopling of Louisiana, which complemented their other aim of expanding their North American empires. To build and defend a prosperous colony, governors, proprietors, merchants, and others actively promoted the movement of people to Louisiana—by hook or crook. They turned the jails of France inside out, snatched people off the streets of Paris, lured Germans and Spaniards with false promises of instant wealth, and purchased captured Africans by the shipload.

Although eighteenth- and nineteenth-century census figures are notoriously inaccurate and those for Louisiana varied as boundaries shifted, they show a burgeoning population, exclusive of Louisiana Indians, whose numbers steadily declined. A census of 1726 counted 3,784 people: 2,240 whites (including 245 indentured servants and 332

soldiers), 1,385 black slaves, and 159 Indian slaves. By 1746 Louisiana boasted a black majority, with about 4,500 slaves, 3,300 white settlers, and 600 white soldiers. Blacks continued to outnumber whites according to a census of the colony's inhabitants taken in 1766, which showed 5,556 Europeans and 5,940 slaves. Though greatly diminished, the number of Indians surpassed all, with almost 16,000 capable of carrying arms, a figure that did not include women, children, the elderly, and the ailing. By 1788 the number of settlers and slaves had more than doubled to include 19,445 whites, 1,701 free blacks, and 21,465 slaves. Figures for 1788, however, encompassed a much larger geographical area, because by then Spain had acquired West Florida from Britain in the 1783 Treaty of Paris and placed it under the jurisdiction of Louisiana.

The colony's capital city of New Orleans also grew over the span of the eighteenth century, although it did not get anywhere near the size of such Anglo North American cities as Boston or Philadelphia. Between 1721 (year of the city's first census) and 1805 New Orleans's population rose from 472 to 8,222, more than a seventeenfold increase. Most of this surge occurred toward the end of the century and was due more to immigration than to natural increase, a circumstance true of the nineteenth century as well. During the years of Spanish rule (1763 to 1803) the white population almost doubled and the slave population grew 250 percent. The number of free blacks increased sixteenfold, although this group was undercounted throughout the period. In the eighteenth century New Orleans was the largest city in what are today the southeast and southwest regions of the United States.

Under United States rule the city and state's population exploded, jumping from 18,000 to 170,000 and from 80,000 to 700,000 respectively between 1812—the year Louisiana became a state—and 1860. During the antebellum era, that period of the nineteenth century that preceded the Civil War, the Crescent City was the largest city in the South, the fifth largest in the United States, and the nation's only major urban center on the western frontier. In the boom period of the 1830s New Orleans ranked third in size in the nation.

The great variety of peoples and cultures coming to New Orleans contributed to the city's reputation for diversity, earned initially in the colonial period. Within a total population of over 116,000 in 1850, New Orleans had about 20,000 Irish, 13,500 slaves, 11,500 Germans, 11,000 free blacks, 7,500 French, and 2,500 English and Scots. Most of the remaining 50,000 were native-born residents or migrants from other states. No one of these ethnic groups physically dominated any section of the city, despite popular notions of severely divided American and Latin sectors. Antebellum New Orleans was a commercial rather than an industrial city and had few districts where only one ethnic or economic group lived and worked. Although some neighborhoods had distinguishing characteristics, in general, blacks and whites, natives and foreigners mingled in the city's shops, streets, and residential areas.

Much of New Orleans's and Louisiana's population growth was due to the westward movement of free Americans, the forced migration of African Americans, and

the immigration of Europeans. This increase would have been much larger if not for the constant attacks of deadly diseases, particularly prevalent in southern Louisiana. During much of the antebellum period Louisiana had the highest death rate of any state in the United States and New Orleans the highest of any city. Yellow fever, smallpox, and cholera epidemics accounted for many of these deaths. Nevertheless, immigration and migration, along with high fertility rates, offset the state's high mortality rates.

Ethnic and Racial Groups

Visitors to Louisiana and New Orleans frequently remarked on its assortment of people, languages, religions, economic activities, amusements, and customs:

> **There were not only the pure old Indian Americans, and the Spanish, French, English, Celtic, and African, but nearly all possible mixed varieties of these, and no doubt of some other breeds of mankind. . . .**
>
> **. . . I doubt if there is a city in the world, where the resident population has been so divided in its origin, or where there is such a variety in the tastes, habits, manners, and moral codes of the citizens. (Frederick Law Olmsted, 1853)**

Louisiana Indians

Many native societies lived in Louisiana (which before 1800 encompassed the Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coast region) at the time of French settlement in 1699. They varied in size and complexity, ranging from nomadic hunters and gatherers to sedentary agriculturalists. While the major activity of all precolonial American Indian groups was to obtain enough food to sustain life, several Louisiana societies produced more than they needed and sold or bartered this surplus. They established extensive cultural and economic exchange networks, trading material goods—as well as belief systems, language patterns, technology, and recreational practices—with other native groups in North America and probably even in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Despite continued losses, the state of Louisiana presently has the third largest American Indian population in the eastern United States (18,541 in 1990, 0.4 percent of the state's population). Diseases transmitted by Spanish explorers in the 1500s and Indians coming from settled Spanish areas in the 1500s and 1600s killed many members of the Louisiana Indian nations long before the French came in the late seventeenth century. Thaumur de la Source, a Frenchman who visited Tunica villages in 1699, observed that "sickness was among them when we arrived there. They were dying in great numbers." Though further decimated by disease, liquor, and warfare in the first half of the eighteenth

century, the Native American population of Louisiana got a boost in the 1760s, when Choctaws—long an ally of the French and enemy of the British—migrated westward out of British West Florida and settled along the Mississippi River and the shores of Lake Pontchartrain north of New Orleans.

In the early years of European settlement, and to some extent even through the eighteenth century, Louisiana Indians held the balance of power in their dealings with whites and blacks. Although severely decimated by diseases, Native Americans made up by far the largest segment of Louisiana's population in the 1700s. They were the most effective military force in Louisiana, and French officials courted their favor to protect French settlements and wage war against nearby English and Spanish holdings. Louisiana Indians also taught newly arrived Europeans and Canadians how to live off the land in a semitropical climate and supplied starving settlers with food. They were assisted by slaves imported from Africa, who grew, gathered, and hunted many of the same foods and medicines the Indians did.

Both France and Spain used Indian allies in their constant contest for supremacy in North America. The French and their Spanish successors in Louisiana were successful in forging coalitions with several southeastern Indian nations, the most important being the Choctaw. They used trade goods, arms, and promises of protection to convince the Choctaw and other natives to fight against the British (and later the Americans) and their main Indian allies in the southeast—the Chickasaw and Creek nations. In spite of the unreliable supply and quality of French and Spanish trade goods, Louisiana agents managed to retain the loyalty of their Indian partners.

The French also enslaved some Louisiana Indians, forcing into service prisoners of war, such as captives taken in the Natchez War of 1730. Upon assuming control of Louisiana in 1769, Spanish Governor Alejandro O'Reilly outlawed Indian slavery in accordance with prohibitions on such exploitation throughout the Spanish empire. Few Indian slaves were emancipated, however, because owners merely reclassified them as blacks and thus kept them enslaved. During the administration of Governor Carondelet in the 1790s several slaves sued for their freedom, claiming descent from Indian parents. Some succeeded, although enslavement of Indians, especially in remote rural areas, continued through the colonial period.

Forced off their lands by expanding cotton and sugar plantations in the antebellum era, Louisiana Indians retreated to swamps, marshes, and piney woods. Many lived on the fringes of plantations, raising vegetables and poultry, gathering herbs from the forest, and making baskets and jewelry. They sold and bartered these goods to planters and slaves or carried them by pirogue through bayous and rivers to New Orleans and other towns.

A Louisiana-born poet and historian, Dominique Rouquette, who grew up on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain among the Choctaws, described such activities in the mid-1800s:

They obstinately refuse to abandon the different parishes of Louisiana, where they are grouped in small family tribes, and live in rough huts in the vicinity of plantations, and hunt for the planters, who trade for the game they kill all they need: powder, lead, corn, woolen covers, etc. Their huts are generally [surrounded] by a fence. In this enclosure their families plant corn, pumpkins and potatoes, and raise chickens. The women use a kind of cane, which they knew how to dye different colors, to make baskets: *lottes* [baskets carried on the back], *vans* [winnowing baskets] and sieves, from which they derived a good profit. They also sold medicinal plants which they gathered from the forests: Virginia snake-root, sage, plantain, tarragon, wild fruit, *pommetes* [medlars] blue bottle, persimmons, and scuppernongs; also roots of *sequiena*, sarsaparilla and sassafras. They also do a little trading in ground turtles, which they find on the prairies. They dispose of these wares at the plantations, in country towns, and at New Orleans. (Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, 1987)

Many other Louisiana Indians relocated to reservations in Oklahoma Territory; they made up part of the 1830s Indian Removal of the Creek, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Seminole tribes from the southern states.

Africans and African Americans

Africans were also a powerful cultural force in Louisiana, mainly because they were introduced in large numbers during short time periods (the 1720s and 1780s) and came mostly from one region in West Africa (Senegambia), thus relating more easily to one another than did Africans shipped to most other plantation societies of the Americas, who were dispersed because owners feared concentrations of any one language group. With so few whites in the colony, Africans constituted a majority of the population in most settlements during the early years. There were also more blacks than whites in most areas of antebellum Louisiana as well. Slaves were born or brought to the state legally from other areas of the United States and smuggled in from the West Indies and Africa. Free blacks augmented their population by births, manumissions, and immigration or migration. In New Orleans blacks made up a majority of the populace during the first four decades of the nineteenth century; the 1810 census showed two-thirds of all New Orleanians to be black. By 1840, however, the percentage of African Americans in the Crescent City dropped to two-fifths of the population and declined even further over the two decades preceding the Civil War, primarily because more whites moved into the city, increasing numbers of slaves were sent to work the ever-expanding cotton and sugar fields, and free blacks fled abroad to escape rising racial harassment and restrictions.

Slaves

Wholesale importation of slaves from Africa to Louisiana began in 1719, when ships commissioned by John Law's Company of the Indies deposited five hundred Guinea slaves in the colony. Between 1719 and 1731 5,761 Africans, most of them from the Senegal concession of the company, were brought to Louisiana against their will. Only one other slave-trade ship landed in the colony during the remainder of French rule: in 1743, with 190 Africans. These slaves, along with indentured servants, salt and tobacco smugglers, debtors, soldiers-farmers, and colonists who immigrated of their own volition, labored to construct the new colonial capital and produce crops for subsistence and export.

Although Indian enslavement continued well into the Spanish period, Native Americans never met Louisiana's labor demands; one French governor even proposed to Saint-Domingue officials an exchange of three of his Indians for two of their African slaves. He and other officials and settlers could not persuade slave traders to send the number of bondpersons needed to exploit colonial resources to their full potential, primarily because Louisiana constituted one of the least economically significant of the French and Spanish New World colonies. Because so few Africans came to French Louisiana after 1732, the population relied on reproduction to sustain and increase its numbers. By the 1740s the colony's black population was mainly creole (a term that in the eighteenth century applied to anyone born in the Americas, as opposed to Europe or Africa).

The traffic in slaves to Louisiana did not really take off until the last three decades of the eighteenth century, when the colony was "re-Africanized." During this period, traders brought slaves to Louisiana from Africa, mainly from Senegal and the Bight of Benin. During the 1780s Spain and its Louisiana governors also encouraged merchants to import African and creole slaves from the West Indies. A royal *cédula* (decree) of 1782 admitted slaves from the French West Indies duty free. Two years later another regulation modified that *cédula*, allowing certain slaves to enter duty free but charging a six-percent duty on other bondpersons. A liberal decree of 1789 granted freedom to black slaves who fled alien lands and sought sanctuary in Louisiana.

In light of the 1791 Saint-Domingue revolt and Louisianians' fears that black slaves from the French islands would inspire their own slaves to rebel, Spanish Governor François-Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet et Noyelles, banned slave imports from the West Indies. Carondelet lifted restrictions in 1793 but reinstituted them in June 1795, to last for the duration of the Franco-Spanish war. Even though the war ended one month later, the rebellion in Saint-Domingue continued; Carondelet issued a new proclamation forbidding the entrance of any black slaves, even those coming directly from Africa, into the colony. Although Louisianians continued to smuggle slaves to meet their rising labor needs, local authorities did not again sanction the foreign slave trade until 1800.

In the nineteenth century most of the slaves brought to Louisiana came from other states in the United States, particularly those along the Atlantic seaboard. In 1804 the

federal government outlawed the external slave trade in Louisiana, and the United States Constitution forbade the importation of slaves after January 1808. The Saint-Domingue refugees of 1809 and 1810 obtained special permission from federal authorities to keep their slaves with them when they settled in Louisiana.

Unable to import slaves from outside the United States, merchants actively engaged in the internal, or domestic, slave trade. They transported slaves by water and over land from older areas of the South, like Virginia and Maryland, to the expanding frontier of the Old Southwest. Most of these slaves came to New Orleans, where they were sold at public auction to cotton and sugar planters. In addition to merchants bringing slaves to Louisiana, planters who moved westward with their laborers, livestock, and furnishings also increased the state's slave population.

Traders also smuggled slaves into Louisiana by way of the state's many bayous and swamps. Rising slave prices in the 1850s produced an increase in this illicit traffic and prompted some white southerners, including many from Louisiana, to petition the federal government for repeal of the African slave trade ban. Although Congress rejected this appeal, the Louisiana house of representatives in 1858 authorized importation of "apprentices" from Africa. The measure did not pass the state senate.

By 1850 New Orleans was the South's largest slave-trading center. As early as 1842 slave dealers in the Crescent City numbered 185, and that figure rose to as many as 300 by the end of the decade. The St. Louis and St. Charles hotels, the Masonic Temple, the exchange on Esplanade Avenue, and various other places held regular slave auctions. At least 25 slave depots were located within a half mile of the St. Charles Hotel in 1850. Volume of the trade in slaves escalated from late winter through early spring, the city's peak commercial season. According to French traveler P. Forest in 1831,

> **The slaves are seated on benches arranged like an amphitheater. In order to give them a better appearance, the merchants keep them quite clean when they are exhibited to the buyers. The latter come and choose the slaves who will fill their needs. The deal is never concluded until the slave has been completely looked over, from head to foot.**

Most slaves were traded at public auction rather than through private transactions, and the majority were from out of state. Louisianians valued their "seasoned" slaves who were accustomed to the region's harsh climate and often immune to local diseases. They rarely sold their slaves unless forced to do so to settle an estate or pay off debts.

Slave dealers often sold their human merchandise in large groups with little concern for keeping slave families together, even though at various times the Louisiana legislature passed laws forbidding sales that separated families or children under the age of

ten from their mothers. Because state law required that estates be divided equally among all heirs, wives were often separated from husbands and children from parents.

The words and writings of former slaves confirm the sellers' lack of consideration for African-American kinship ties. Solomon Northup, a free black from New York who in 1842 was kidnapped and sold into slavery in Louisiana, described the heart-wrenching separation of a slave woman, Eliza, from her daughter Emily, seven or eight years old, in the slave markets of New Orleans:

> **Never have I seen such an exhibition of intense, unmeasured, and unbounded grief as when Eliza was parted from her child. She broke from her place in the line of women, and rushing down where Emily was standing, caught her in her arms. . . . Oh! how piteously then did she beseech and beg and pray that they might not be separated. Why could they not be purchased together?**

Manda Cooper was a slave for at least twenty years of her life. In 1940 the Louisiana Writers' Project interviewed her, and she bitterly pointed out that her mother's master had dispersed her entire family: "I was sold from my ma. All my brothers and sister[s] was sold."

Most slaves resented being sold as property from one person to another with very little control over their wellbeing and that of their children. Like Northup's Eliza, they tried to persuade masters and traders from selling them away from family members and familiar settings. Others injured themselves or pretended to do so to lower their monetary value. Some even took their own lives rather than face a new master and work regimen. On his journey through North America between 1819 and 1821, Adam Hodgson observed that "instances are not rare of slaves destroying themselves, by cutting their throats, or other violent means, to avoid being sent to Georgia or New Orleans." Slaves occasionally engineered mutinies aboard ships while they were transported from the Atlantic coast to Louisiana. Solomon Northup conspired with other slaves to capture the crew and sail for freedom as they traveled from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans.

One of the most famous mutinies took place on board the *Creole* in 1841. In October of that year the *Creole* left its home port of Richmond with a cargo of tobacco and 135 slaves bound for New Orleans. A few weeks into the voyage some of the slaves successfully took control of the ship and headed for Nassau in the Bahamas, a British commonwealth that had abolished slavery in the 1830s. Over the protest of American authorities, the British granted freedom to all slaves aboard the *Creole*, except three who chose to remain with the ship when it sailed to New Orleans.

Although United States officials failed to retrieve these ex-slaves who had won their freedom, in 1853 the Anglo-American Claims Commission awarded the United States $110,330 to compensate owners for their lost slave property. In the meantime, American courts concluded that slave insurrection, not British actions, was responsible for

the mutiny. Thus, owners could not collect from four of the six insurance companies whose policies did not include losses due to insurrection.

Slave Life in Antebellum Louisiana

Slaves made up slightly less than half of Louisiana's total population but almost three-fifths of that outside New Orleans in 1850. Nine out of every ten slaves in Louisiana worked on rural farms and plantations. After 1808 few slaves entered Louisiana directly from Africa, and growth resulted from forced migration from other states and natural increase.

African-American slaves performed most of the manual, skilled, and domestic tasks on Louisiana plantations. Both males and females labored in fields and houses, with men specializing in skilled work and women assuming primary care of children. Most slaves worked from sunrise to sunset and beyond. During the grinding season on sugar plantations slaves often worked around the clock. Even when their day's work in the fields ended, enslaved men and women returned to their quarters to prepare their own supper and the next day's breakfast, mend and wash clothes, tend the master's livestock, repair furnishings, care for their children, and carry out numerous other tasks. On large plantations slave drivers managed gangs of field laborers and in turn reported to the plantation's overseer, usually a white man.

Owners valued slaves for their reproductive as well as productive capabilities. Most encouraged family formation among slaves on their own plantations, both to increase their holdings and to discourage adult slaves from running away. Runaways found escape more difficult if they had to take along children and spouses, and few wanted to leave their families behind. Masters reluctantly permitted their slaves to take partners on other plantations. In such instances, they could not monitor the slaves' activities as closely, and weekend visitations took up time and energy.

During his travels through Louisiana in 1831 Frenchman P. Forest recorded his observations of plantation childbearing and childcare practices:

> **When a negro woman is pregnant, she is moved to a different dwelling, and as her condition develops . . . she is charged with lighter tasks every day. But these particular attentions of the owner rather result from his ambition—since the life or death of the unborn child means money. . . . Sometimes the child has hardly been brought to the world before he is entrusted to some other woman, while the real mother is inhumanely sold without concern for her tears or her laments.**

Not all masters took such care with their pregnant slaves. Edward de Buiew was born a slave in Lafourche Parish. An interviewer for the Louisiana Writers' Project in 1940 recorded de Buiew's description of how his mother and father were treated:

> **Pa always said they made my ma work too hard. I was born in de fields. He said ma was hoein'. She told de old driver she was sick; he told her to just hoe right-on. Soon, I was born, and my ma die[d] a few minutes after dey brung her to the house. Dey even dug holes and put her in dem to whip her before I was born, so my pa said. Pa said he tried to run away. Dey caught him in de woods and almost beat him to death.**

Although slaves recognized their marriages as binding, few masters, even in Catholic South Louisiana, permitted them to solemnize marriages and baptisms in formal church ceremonies. The slave's familial ties were often subjected to the whims and fortunes of his or her master. Slave sales broke up many families—some permanently, others restored after the Civil War. Through perseverance, however, many slaves maintained stable families. Like their ancestors in Africa, most slaves recognized the extended family of grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. They commonly named their children after kin who had died or been sold away.

As in many areas of Africa, childcare was a communal undertaking, in that all members of the society assumed responsibility for the child's development. The plantation system reinforced this tendency. Usually the older women cared for the plantation's slave children so that both parents could work in the fields.

Slaves, especially those on large plantations, were able to carve out some space of their own where they could act independently and away from the prying eyes of their masters. It was on plantations with twenty or more slaves or on ones that were located close to each other that African Americans could gather in and around their quarters and form some sense of community. This slave community had its own leaders, values, activities, and identity separate from that of white plantation society.

Masters and slaves viewed the order within slave societies from different perspectives. Planters and other white observers accorded house servants the highest status because they usually were emotionally and physically closest to the planter family. Below domestics were the valuable artisans and slave drivers. At the bottom of the slave hierarchy were the field hands.

From the viewpoint of the slaves themselves, however, drivers were most hated, closely followed by house slaves. Slaves living in the quarters often did not trust those who worked in the slaveowner’s home and looked upon them as informers or "snitches." The slave community ranked voodoo practitioners and other religious leaders, midwives, and quick-witted tricksters high within their social order. Both masters and slaves held

hunters in high regard. Planters allowed only slaves they trusted to carry arms, and the slave community relied on hunters to supply them with meat.

Slaves reinforced their community ties by gathering together to eat, dance, sing, tell stories, and engage in other social activities. On many Louisiana plantations the noon or evening meal was a communal affair, a time when field slaves took a short break to eat and socialize with each other and their children. Through folklore and song, slaves passed down their collective historical memory from one generation to the next. Few masters allowed slaves to learn to read and write, and legislation passed in Louisiana in 1830 made teaching slaves to do so a crime. Slaves thus conveyed knowledge orally, just as their ancestors did in Africa and colonial Louisiana.

Slaves gained some control over their diet and material circumstances by insisting that planters give them small plots of land called provision grounds. Slave families cultivated these plots during their "free" time in evenings and on Sundays. Harvests from provision grounds supplemented what masters provided and gave slaves foodstuffs they preferred. Slaves also raised poultry, pigs, herbs, and small quantities of tobacco, cotton, or sugar that they sold for money or traded for other desired goods.

African Americans in Louisiana and throughout the antebellum South protested their enslavement and inhumane treatment in many ways. Slaves resisted on a day-to-day basis by slowing the work pace, breaking tools, taking the planter's belongings, faking illness—any action that they perceived cost the master. More violent resistance included poisoning overseers or planter family members, taking one's own life or that of a newborn slave child, and aborting a pregnancy.

When caught doing anything the master, overseer, or driver thought wrong, slaves were usually whipped. Twenty lashes was considered a light whipping. Contemporary observers described what struck them as the strange, but practical, way in which pregnant women were flogged. In the words of former slave Rebecca Fletcher, an interviewee of the Louisiana Writers' Project in 1940:

> **They wanted slaves to have babies 'cause they was valuable. So when a slave was about to produce a baby and he wanted her whipped, he had a hole dug in the ground and made her lay acrost it. And her hands and foots were tied, so she had to submit quiet-like to the beatin' with a strap.**

Other punishments included being placed in the stocks or made to wear a collar or chains.

More visible but less frequent forms of slave defiance were running away or revolting. Slaves most commonly ran away for short time periods to avoid or delay punishment. They often reappeared on their own will, although plantation police patrols were kept busy capturing, and sometimes killing, numerous runaways. Patrols placed runaways in local jails or returned them directly to their masters. One former slave,

Rebecca Gordon, told a Louisiana Writers' Project interviewer of her father's running away: "'Member one tale he told me about when he run away from his missis. He said she was always mean and was forever having him beat. So he run off one day [and] stayed in de woods for about six weeks before he came out."

Other slaves aimed for permanent liberty. They escaped individually or took the greater risk of bringing along their families. Runaways headed for the swamps and forests, where they established or joined already-existing maroon communities. These runaway or maroon camps raised their own food and raided nearby plantations for additional supplies. Other plantation slaves, especially skilled ones, escaped to cities like New Orleans and passed as free blacks. Very few slaves from Louisiana made it north to the free states and Canada or south to Mexico.

In an interview with a Louisiana Writers' Project worker in 1940, ex-slave Elizabeth Ross Hite recounted the punishment meted out to a runaway slave woman who was captured on Trinity Plantation near Baton Rouge:

> **Old lady Oater ran away and built a home in de ground. She had six children. De driver caught her one day and whipped her to death. He beat her until her skin fell off and she died. Den he unloosened her from de tree and buried her in de ground in front of de quarters.**

The largest slave revolt in the history of the United States erupted in Louisiana in 1811. On the evening of 8 January 1811 a group of slaves launched their attack from Colonel Manuel Andry's plantation about forty miles upriver from New Orleans. Led by a Saint-Domingue slave named Charles Deslondes, the insurgents gathered strength from neighboring slaves and maroons as they marched down River Road toward the Crescent City. Revolting slaves killed two whites, burned plantations and crops, and captured weapons and ammunition.

In the meantime, planters organized militiamen and vigilantes, reinforced with United States Army troops from Baton Rouge and New Orleans, to put down the slaves. The free black militia offered its services, and one company was accepted. They and Governor C. C. Claiborne's forces met the advancing slave rebels about eighteen miles outside New Orleans.

What followed was a massacre, an open season on all blacks in the area. Although contemporary accounts estimated the number of revolting slaves at between 150 and 500, they were poorly armed with cane knives, axes, hoes, and a few small arms. Many victims had not participated in the revolt and were innocent bystanders. Official body counts listed 66 slaves killed in battle or executed on the spot, 17 missing, and 16 captured and held for trial. The same report, however, stated that patrols were still uncovering bodies.

The tribunal that met on 13 January on Destrehan Plantation tried a total of 30 slaves and sentenced 21 of them to death. They were shot, and their heads were cut off and placed on poles along the River Road as a warning to slaves who contemplated revolt.

The 1811 revolt occurred less than twenty years after an outbreak of slave conspiracies in the 1790s. In that decade Louisiana slaves, sometimes aided by a few free blacks and whites, fought together for their freedom. They were inspired by rebelling slaves and free blacks in Saint-Domingue and French radical ideals of liberty and equality to overthrow oppressive conditions. The presence of a large, armed white population, divisions among the slaves, and lack of well-defined plans combined to thwart the slaves' aspirations.

Two major slave conspiracies originated in Pointe Coupée upriver from New Orleans in 1791 and 1795. The 1795 conspiracy was by far the largest and most threatening, and "justice" was swift. Colonial officials hanged twenty-three slaves, then cut off their heads and nailed them on posts along the River Road from New Orleans to Pointe Coupée. Another thirty-one slaves were flogged and sentenced to five years of hard labor at Spanish forts in Mexico, Florida, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Three convicted whites were deported and sentenced to six years of hard labor in Cuba.

Spanish officials also responded to the 1795 conspiracy by enacting new legislation that restricted slave activities and increased the oppressive power of rural police patrols and planters. They gave in to French planters' longstanding demands for greater control over slaves and free blacks. Slaveowners, however, found that they could not entirely stifle the slaves' claims to freedom. Residents and authorities discovered slaves plotting to revolt in Opelousas in 1795 and on the German Coast and at Pointe Coupée in 1796.

Slaves in antebellum Louisiana and the South rarely arose en masse to overthrow the social order or escape to freedom, mainly because they realized the futility of such action. In most regions of the South whites outnumbered blacks, and even where there was a black majority, whites controlled almost all guns and ammunition and regularly patrolled rural areas. Slaveowners aggressively tried to prevent the gathering of slaves from neighboring plantations, made slaves carry passes when off their own plantations, and restricted slaves' access to guns, alcohol, and education.

Slaves in urban areas like New Orleans generally had fewer restrictions placed on them. Skilled slaves in particular could hire out their labor, and as long as they paid their masters a stipulated amount by the day or month, they could use extra earnings to obtain goods and entertainment or to purchase their freedom. Urban slaves also usually enjoyed greater freedom of movement and more opportunities for social interaction with fellow slaves, free blacks, and whites. Some city slaves even lived in houses away from their masters.

Slaves provided much of the skilled and manual labor in Louisiana's antebellum cities. Demand for skilled labor was high, as were wages. Competition between whites and blacks for high-paying skilled employment was also strong, although most labor clashes in the antebellum period were over unskilled jobs. Skilled male slaves worked as

carpenters, masons, bricklayers, painters, plasterers, tinners, coopers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, shoemakers, millers, and bakers. Female slaves were also bakers, as well as seamstresses and cooks. Most market and street vendors were women, African- American and American Indian in particular. In much of Africa women conducted local and regional trade, a practice they continued in the Americas, including Louisiana. Baltimore architect Benjamin H. B. Latrobe, who lived and worked in New Orleans in the early 1800s, noticed:

> **In every street during the whole day women, chiefly black women, are met, carrying baskets upon their heads calling at the doors of houses. . . .**
>
> **These female pedlars are slaves belonging either to persons who keep dry good stores, or who are too poor to furnish a store with goods, but who buy as many at auction as will fill a couple of baskets, which baskets are their shop. I understand that the whole of the retail trade in dry goods was carried on in this way before the U. States got possession of the country. It was not then, nor is it now, the fashion for Ladies to go shopping. The Creole families stick still to the pedlars, & tho' many inducements are held out, by the better arrangement & exhibition of the shops, to the Ladies to buy, still—as in everything else—the old habit wears away very slowly.**

Although many city slaves were skilled workers, most were domestic servants. They cared for their masters' homes, families, gardens, and animals, shopped and sewed for the household, and ran numerous errands. The number and appearance of one's servants indicated the urban resident's wealth and social standing, so many prominent whites and free blacks in New Orleans and Baton Rouge outfitted their domestics in great finery when making public appearances. Like craftsmen, domestics were sometimes hired out and earned extra money for themselves as well as their masters. Masters also occasionally gave their favorite servants monetary or material presents. With these earnings domestic slaves purchased their freedom or more commonly bought items not supplied by their masters, such as gold jewelry and other luxury goods.

For much of the antebellum period slaves and free blacks supplied New Orleans's demand for unskilled manual labor. During her visit to the Crescent City in 1827, Englishwoman Frances Trollope commented on "the large portion of blacks seen in the streets, all labour being performed by them. . . . We were much pleased by the chant with which the Negro boatmen regulate and beguile their labour on the river." Black laborers were employed in the city's brickyards, foundries, distilleries, cotton presses, hospitals, schools, convents, and other enterprises. Many men were needed to load and unload river and oceangoing vessels, carry or haul goods between dock and warehouse, lay railroad

track, and dig canals. Slave laborers also worked for the city and state on such public works projects as clearing roads, laying water and gas pipelines, and collecting garbage.

With the surge of white immigrants coming to Louisiana in the late 1840s and 1850s, blacks and whites began to compete more fiercely for unskilled jobs. German and Irish immigrants, in particular, began to take over positions previously dominated by free and slave African Americans. Competition between Irish and black workers made it difficult for labor unions to organize and strike for higher wages. If Irish workers walked off the job, companies hired blacks to replace them, and vice versa. Some New Orleans unions—like those for printers, river pilots, and screwmen—excluded black laborers.

Free Blacks

The first recorded emancipation of an African slave in Louisiana was that of Louis Congo, who obtained his freedom by accepting a position as colonial executioner in the early 1720s. From the very beginning of its history free people of color resided in New Orleans, but their exact numbers were unknown. French census takers did not indicate whether persons of African descent were slave or free; they consolidated free blacks with whites, indentured servants, or black slaves. Only when Spain effectively took over Louisiana in 1769 did census takers begin to distinguish between free blacks and slaves, *pardos* (light-skinned persons of African descent) and *morenos* (dark-skinned persons of African descent). Their figures, however, were no more accurate than those of the French era and usually undercounted free persons of color.

During Spanish rule the New Orleans free black population grew rapidly as proportions of both the free and nonwhite, as well as the total, populations. In terms of the latter, free blacks rose from 3.1 percent in 1771 to 19 percent in 1805. Over the same period they expanded from 5.1 to 30.6 percent of the free (white and black) population. In contrast to demographic trends found for many Spanish-American regions at the beginning of the nineteenth century, free nonwhites never outnumbered slaves in New Orleans, but they nevertheless composed a substantial proportion of the nonwhite population. Free creoles of color made up only 7.1 percent (97 of 1,324) of the city's African-American population in 1771, but rose to a high of 33.5 percent (1,566 of 4,671) by 1805. The number of free blacks in the entire province of Louisiana also increased during the Spanish period, from 165 to 3,350. Immigration of Saint-Domingue refugees, manumission, and natural increase fueled this growth well into the antebellum era.

In Louisiana, as in many areas of Spanish America, the crown fostered the growth of a free black population to fill middle-sector economic roles in society, defend the colony from external and internal foes, and give African slaves an officially approved safety valve. Colonial policymakers envisioned a society in which Africans would seek their freedom through legal channels, complete with compensation for their masters, rather than by running away or rising in revolt. In turn, slaves would look to the Spanish government to *"rescatarnos de la esclavitud"* (rescue us from slavery) and subsequently protect their rights and privileges as freedpersons.

With this vision in mind Spain, upon acquiring Louisiana from France, made Louisiana's colonial laws conform to those prevailing throughout the empire. For the governing of slaves and free blacks, Spanish Louisiana codes primarily drew upon provisions of *Las siete partidas* ("The Law of Seven Parts," compiled by the court of Alfonso the Wise in the thirteenth century) and the *Recopilación de leyes de los reinos de las Indias* ("Collection of Statutes for the Kingdom of the Indies," which drew together diverse legislation applying to Spain's New World empire in 1681), and also were influenced by the French *code noir* (Black Code), which had been issued for the French West Indies in 1685 and introduced in Louisiana in 1724. Although the code noir imposed harsh penalties upon erring slaves and proved to be one of the more oppressive slave codes in the Americas, it gave free blacks full legal rights to citizenship, ironically after providing unequal punishments and restricting their behavior in preceding articles of the code. Local regulations, however, frequently impinged upon these rights, denying free blacks legal equality with white citizens.

New Orleans slaves followed several avenues to freedom during the era of Spanish rule in Louisiana. The number of slave manumissions recorded in court documents increased with each decade. Although for the period as a whole the majority of slaves continued to receive liberty by way of acts instituted by the master, as they had under French rule, a rising proportion initiated manumission proceedings themselves, expanding from about one-fifth of total manumissions in the 1770s to three-fifths in the early 1800s. The slave or an outside party purchased freedom directly from willing masters and indirectly from more reluctant owners through the governor's tribunal.

In keeping with its aim of encouraging growth of a free black population in Louisiana, the Spanish crown implemented a practice common in its American colonies known as *coartación*: the right of slaves to buy their freedom for an amount either negotiated with the owner or determined by the courts. Louisiana's code noir had permitted masters over the age of twenty-five to manumit their slaves, with prior consent from the superior council (the French colonial governing body). Spanish regulations, however, did not require official permission for a master to free his or her slave and even allowed slaves to initiate manumission proceedings on their own behalf. The slave, a friend, or a relative could request a *carta de libertad* (certificate of manumission) in front of the governor's tribunal. Two and sometimes three assessors declared the slave's monetary value, and upon receipt of that sum, the tribunal issued the slave his or her carta. Under Spanish law a slave did not have to depend upon the generosity of the master or mistress to attain freedom; rather, the slave relied on his or her own efforts and the aid of a favorable legal system. Louisiana slaves and parties arguing on their behalf recognized support from Spanish officials for "a cause so recommended by the law as that of liberty."

Coartación offered advantages to slaveholders, slaves, and the Spanish government, and all three groups acted according to their interests. The crown benefited from a growing free population of color that tended to accept its middle status in a three-caste society, aspired to attain the privileges of white colonials, and supplied the

colony with skilled laborers and militia forces. *Coartación* provided slaveowners with incentives that encouraged slaves to work more productively, reduced their provisioning costs, and compensated them at the slaves' estimated fair value. Legal manumission also acted as an effective form of social control by offering liberty to obedient bondpersons and denying it to rebellious ones. In turn, the system facilitated slave efforts to acquire the necessary cash or goods with which to purchase their freedom independent of the master's will.

Although freed and free persons of color consistently experienced exploitation and prejudice in a hierarchical society such as prevailed in New Orleans, the continuous and expensive struggles undertaken by many slaves to attain freedom attested to their appreciation of liberty as something desirable. Several court cases indicate that not all slaves aspired to free status or viewed such status as advantageous. In such an urban setting as New Orleans slave artisans and traders, in particular, moved about, transacted business, and socialized much the same as free persons of color. Their ability to do so, however, could be taken away from them at any time at the whim of their owners; persons legally manumitted at least exercised a greater measure of control over their lives. As in Cuba and Brazil, free blacks in New Orleans grew in numbers and status during Spanish rule both in response to laws and cultural attitudes and to such material factors as demographics and economic activities. Antebellum Louisiana's large free population of color, unique in the United States South in terms of wealth and influence, traced its roots to the Spanish regime, when slaves could attain freedom with greater ease than at any other time.

Free women and men of color in Spanish New Orleans actively participated in the economic and social life of the society. Though usually not as prosperous or prominent as leading white persons, some free blacks successfully battled downward mobility and secured a stable niche in the middle stratum. Free persons of color borrowed money from and loaned it to whites, other free blacks, and slaves. Free blacks generally garnered wages equivalent to work performed by their white and hired-slave counterparts, earnings that placed them in the lower and middle economic sectors. In Louisiana and other colonies crown and local discrimination against nonwhites both in the courtroom and on the street restricted access to resources needed to enter the upper echelons of the social hierarchy. Records for the Spanish period of New Orleans's history attest to the daily battle free blacks waged to fight off poverty, free their families, and acquire property and patronage. Those who flourished often functioned as leaders among their peers, most prominently as commanders in the free *pardo* and *moreno* militia units.

Like free blacks in other American urban areas, those in New Orleans labored at middle- and lower-sector tasks in which they sometimes competed with lower-class whites and slaves but offered little threat to prominent whites. Policy and practice excluded them from the professions, clergy, and government positions, and relegated most of them to manual or skilled labor. Throughout the colonies competition and hostility flared between unpropertied whites and free creoles of color, most frequently manifested in attempts to

limit free black participation in certain trades. Although craft guilds developed in some parts of the Americas, a general lack of trade restrictions characterized colonial New Orleans. In the city demand for labor consistently surpassed supply, a situation that reduced competition and augmented opportunities for nonwhites to acquire skills.

The work free blacks did reinforced their ambivalent position in the community. Persistent dependency and even downward mobility plagued newly freed blacks, who often expended all their resources to gain liberty and then had to toil at the same tasks they had undertaken as slaves. On the other hand, blacks manumitted long ago or born free frequently attained economic independence as farmers, slaveowners, traders, and businesspersons. Economically successful free creoles of color usually endeavored to distance themselves from their slave past and identify with values espoused by whites. In a frontier, peripheral society such as New Orleans, however, racial and economic groups relied on each other for peace and prosperity.

Despite some problems, New Orleans censuses in 1791 and 1795 furnish partial glimpses of the tasks at which free people of color toiled. Especially numerous in 1795 were free carpenters, shoemakers, seamstresses, laundresses, and retailers. Scanty data from the 1791 census of New Orleans further indicate the frequency of certain occupations among free black male household heads: seven carpenters, five shoemakers, three tailors, one blacksmith, one hunter, one cooper, one wigmaker, and one gunsmith. A 1798 census of household heads in the suburb of St. Mary recorded three male wood dealers, two male carpenters, one male carter, one male gardener, two female settlers, one female tavernkeeper, and one female washer, out of a total free black population of ninety-six. Most likely, free blacks pursued those trades in which they had been trained as slaves, there was less competition from white workers, or demand exceeded supply. Although few written regulations restricted access to jobs by race, custom and practice all too frequently relegated free persons of color to positions with low prestige, responsibility, and pay.

As in most colonial societies, sex, as well as race, in large part defined occupation. With few exceptions, free black females in New Orleans performed tasks different from those of males, a practice reinforced by both African and European traditions. Men functioned as artisans and laborers, whereas women commanded retail activity, running small commercial establishments such as shops and stalls and peddling their wares on the streets. Women also solely assumed the sex-specific tasks of seamstress and laundress; male tailors supplied and repaired men's clothing. Tavernkeepers among the free black population were most commonly females, whereas among whites they were males. Among tavernkeepers licensed by the city in 1787 there were sixty-three white males, two white females, two free black males, and six free black females. These figures probably concealed male-female partnerships in which the man obtained the license but operated the business jointly with his female consort. For example, upon being imprisoned for debt, the free *moreno* Francisco Barba begged the court for leniency; he and his wife ran a tavern

and boarded soldiers of the Mexican regiment stationed in Louisiana, and his wife faced difficulties managing the service by herself.

In general, the wages free people of color earned varied by skill, competence, labor demand, and individual whim. Women's tasks usually commanded lower wages, although those involved in trade probably could earn as much or more than their male counterparts. Wage data for the period are scarce and do not have much meaning until the cost of necessary staples, supplies, and rents can be computed. Travelers to New Orleans, however, generally noted high wages that were frequently offset by exorbitant prices for land, slaves, drygoods, and foodstuffs. According to the physician Paul Alliot, at the opening of the nineteenth century “the ordinary day wage for men or women workers is four escalins [French coin equivalent to a Spanish real]. Relatively to the price of house rent and of all products in general, there are very few who live in comfort.”

Like most white persons and slaves, free people of color acquired their skills by observation and apprenticeship. With the exception of the Ursuline school for girls, the royal Spanish school, and some private classes given by "qualified" individuals, few institutions in New Orleans offered a formal education. Wealthy colonists sent their children to schools in Europe, but the majority relied on private libraries and the expertise of master tradespersons. Free blacks in particular learned trades, because there was a demand for their skills and they were excluded from most professions that required formal learning. Again, in the words of Alliot: “There are many workmen of all kinds at New Orleans. All the men of color or free negroes make their sons learn a trade, and give a special education to their daughters whom they rarely marry off.” In addition, many freed persons acquired skills during their enslavement, and they often used these talents to earn the money that purchased their freedom.

Women and men in the service sector most likely obtained their talents less formally than artisans or managers. They watched other slaves and free persons sewing, hunting, washing, cleaning, and vending and learned from them. On 21 May 1803 don Antonio Jung manumitted his slave María Clara, the seven-year-old daughter of his former slave Francisca. That same day doña Margarita Landreau, widow of don Julian Vienne, registered a note of obligation assuming responsibility for the education of María Clara. In exchange for the girl's labor over a twelve-year period, Landreau agreed to teach her the arts of cooking, washing, and everything else necessary to manage a house.

Local militia units commanded by black officers furnished critical support for free blacks and provided them with their most significant political institution. Colonial administrators depended on free blacks to defend their provinces because in Louisiana and other frontier regions able-bodied white men were too few, a situation free men of color used to their advantage. The New Orleans free *pardo* and *moreno* militias constituted a vital part of Spain's circum-Caribbean defense system, a role the free black community and colonial administrators recognized and rewarded. Military association offered free blacks in New Orleans and throughout the Spanish empire one more instrument through which to advance socially and to voice their claims as valuable, trustworthy subjects.

This legacy originated in the French regime, when colonial leaders first formed and employed free black troops in the 1735 campaign against the Chickasaw Indians. After organizing a company of forty-five free blacks and slaves with free black officers, Governor Bienville led them into battle. French authorities created a permanent company of fifty free black militiamen in 1739. This company battled Native Americans at Fort Assumption into the next year but then dissipated. From 1740 until 1779 neither the French nor Spanish employed free black troops in active combat.

Spain reactivated New Orleans's free black militia in 1779 to fight the British during the American Revolution. Militia members fought valiantly and contributed to Spanish victories at Baton Rouge (1779), Mobile (1780), and Pensacola (1781). While in the service of Spain, free black soldiers and officers defended New Orleans and surrounding areas from threatened French incursions during the revolutionary years of the 1790s. Between 1779 and 1801 the New Orleans free black militia grew from two companies of 89 men to two battalions of 496 men. The 1801 militia roster recorded one company of grenadiers and three of infantry in the free *pardo* battalion and one company each of grenadiers and infantry in the free *moreno* battalion. In addition to engaging in direct combat, members of the free black militia captured runaway slaves, fought fires, repaired breaks in the levee, policed the city, and marched in religious and secular parades.

The free black militia in New Orleans functioned as a corporate group in society, and as such, it wielded its organized strength on behalf of all free persons of color. Spanish corporatism, in which individuals were organized into bodies such as nobility, clergy, military, and artisans, conferred special privileges on group members. Militiamen, especially officers, utilized their titles, reputations as loyal, honorable *vecinos* (citizens), and patronage from leading whites, many of them military men themselves, to increase their material and social influence. The title that accompanied promotion in rank conferred upon the holder recognition from the white community, which honored and valued military service. Officers of the free black militia also often functioned as leaders among free persons of color, and they prominently placed their titles on public documents. For example, in the 1795 census of New Orleans Francisco Dorville identified his occupation as *"capitaine des mulâtres libres,"* even though he more fully devoted his time to running a tavern and selling goods in New Orleans and Natchitoches.

Militia membership promoted group cohesiveness and identity among free persons of color. Free black militiamen, most notably officers, married each other's daughters and sisters and loaned money and provided other types of assistance to one another. Officers commonly practiced lucrative trades and thus more likely possessed the means to aid fellow militia members than did the rank and file. Members of the free black militia also served as godparents for each other's children and stood for each other at weddings. Free blacks, especially officers, passed the tradition of militia service on to their sons and grandsons.

Although free blacks acted upon every opportunity, several factors, some of them beyond their control, influenced their capacity to provide economic security for themselves

and their families. First, free blacks who acquired marketable skills either before or after attaining freedom tended to prosper. Throughout the Americas skilled blacks found it easier to purchase freedom and continue to earn as a free person. Many slaveholders allowed their slaves to rent themselves out, taking a portion of the pay and permitting the slaves to keep the remainder. One freed woman, Helena, poignantly revealed the impact that possessing a skill high in demand could have on attaining and retaining freedom. Helena tried to convince the court that appraisals of her slave son were excessive because he knew no trade and his master had readily admitted that the slave was a thief and drunkard. In her plea she provided several examples of skilled slaves who had purchased their freedom for the same amount as her son's appraisal and pointed out that an unskilled slave could never earn such an exorbitant sum.

The free person of color's ties to and reputation in the white community constituted a second factor in the succeed-fail equation. A society stratified by race and class such as prevailed in Spanish New Orleans primarily operated according to *parentela* (extended family) and *clientela* (patron/client) relationships. Advantages accrued to those free blacks who were linked by kin and patronage to leading white families. When a prominent white man, don Luis de Lalande Dapremont, brought charges of criminal activity against the free black Pedro Bailly, he threatened the livelihood of Bailly and his family. Bailly claimed that the charges were false and entered out of spite; Dapremont had just recently lost a suit that Bailly had brought against him for collection of a debt. Bailly also stated that the mistrust engendered by these charges had seriously affected his retail business because white patrons from whom Bailly had borrowed funds and goods were harassing him for payment and refusing to extend additional credit. A militia officer and loyal servant of the king, Bailly had earned the distinction of a *buen vasallo* (good subject) meriting the favor of local leaders. The court eventually dropped Dapremont's charges against Bailly, thereby restoring his favorable reputation.

Free persons of color occasionally formed business partnerships with white individuals. Pedro Viejo, a white man, jointly owned a small dry goods store with Juana, a free black. A native of Guinea, Juana was a former slave of Luis Poirson and the legitimate daughter of two slaves. Half of the enterprise belonged to her, and she designated Viejo as her only heir. Free woman of color María Juana Ester and Antonio Sánchez, a white man, were partners in another retail business. Born in New Orleans to Victoria Rouden, a free black, and an unknown father, María Juana had one natural daughter named Francisca. In her will María entrusted Sánchez with selling her share of the partnership's goods and placing its proceeds in her daughter's possession. Included in the estate inventory were farm and carpentry implements, wagons, ox teams, cows, horses, lumber, a canoe, slaves, and two farms.

Kinship ties to white persons, as well as patronage, gave some free people of color added economic leverage. Some white fathers publicly acknowledged their free black consorts and offspring and donated personal and real property to them. In his 1794 will don Pedro Aubry declared that he was single but that he had two natural children—Pedro

Estevan and María Genoveva—by María Emilia Aubry, all his former slaves. As his only heirs, the children received a farm seven leagues from New Orleans, two slaves, livestock, furniture, and household goods.

In some cases, however, patronage placed free blacks in positions of dependency much like slavery. Throughout the New World manumission provisos or self-purchase debts often enveloped newly freed persons in conditions of lingering servitude. Such a continuing dependent relationship transpired in New Orleans between don Antonio Pascual and Angélica. Pedro Visoso manumitted his slave Angélica, about thirty years old, for 400 pesos paid by don Antonio. Angélica in turn contracted with don Antonio to serve him the rest of his life, but she retained all the rights of a free person. These arrangements, while exploitative, also offered a newly manumitted person who had few skills or assets a secure means of support.

Indeed, a third factor that could help a free person of color succeed materially was that of being born free or having free kin. Second- or third-generation free blacks usually inherited the accumulated property, no matter how meager, of past generations, and slaves who had well-established free black friends or relatives stood a better chance of being "rescued" from slavery than those with no ties to the free black population. For example, Juan Bautista Hugón, born free and a captain of the free *pardo* militia when he died in 1792, purchased the freedom of four of his five children and at least one of their mothers during his lifetime. At the time of his death Hugón's goods consisted of a house and land on Calle Santa Ana in New Orleans, one slave, furniture, and clothes. He donated to don Juan Bautista Macarty's slave Magdalena a bed, a stoneware fireplace adornment, one pig, and some chickens. Hugón also requested that his executor, the *moreno* captain Manuel Noël Carrière, purchase his fifth child's *carta de libertad*. Hugón's goods sold at public auction for 1,095 pesos. After paying for the *carta*, outstanding debts, and burial and court costs, Carrière turned over 227 pesos, 5 reales to Hugón's children.

One final testament illuminates the extent of property a free person of color could accumulate during a lifetime and bestow upon relatives and friends when she or he died. It also reveals the intricate kinship and patronage ties among free blacks and whites. Perrina Daupenne, a free person of color, drew up her will in August 1790. Single and childless, she was the natural daughter of a white man she confessed not to know and the free black María Daupenne. Daupenne owned a house in New Orleans and ten slaves, five of whom she freed. She also instructed her executor to purchase the freedom of a slave belonging to a white man. In addition to giving the charity hospital ten pesos and a priest thirty pesos to say thirty masses for her soul, Daupenne donated slaves, livestock, clothes, furniture, linen, household goods, and a cypress grove to her friends, aunts, and cousins, all of them women. To her brother she gave her share of their dead brother's estate. Daupenne's white godmother, doña Sinfora Prado y Navarete, received all her gold jewelry and a mahogany wardrobe. Daupenne appointed another white person and government official, don Andrés Manuel Lopés de Armesto, to be her executor. Finally, Daupenne named as her heir Candio Tomás, a free black and legitimate son of her cousin

María Juana Pierre Tomás and of Pedro Tomás, both free. Few free people of color went to their graves this wealthy, but those who did usually enriched at least some free blacks and slaves who remained behind.

Like white New Orleanians, Daupenne and other free persons of color invested much of their wealth in slaves. The pattern of free black ownership of slaves in Spanish Louisiana closely resembled that of other Spanish-American colonial regions and Brazil, where free black populations were large and restrictions on manumission never emerged. In these areas, as well as in Spanish Louisiana, free blacks primarily owned slaves to help them in their trades or agricultural pursuits. As long as slave prices remained low, free people of color who could afford bondpersons used them. In addition, free blacks could afford to purchase their slave relatives and free them with few constraints.

Under the French and Spanish regimes free people of color ideally had legal rights and privileges equal to those of white citizens. Local regulations occasionally curtailed their efficacy, but in general free blacks possessed property and contractual rights equal to those of whites. Unlike the French code noir, Spanish law also permitted Louisiana's free persons of color and slaves to accept donations of property, including slaves, from whites and other free blacks. Armed with these powers, free blacks purchased and sold slaves as they would any other type of property. Like their white neighbors, free blacks invested in African slaves for use and speculation more frequently than for benevolent purposes.

Free people of color in New Orleans also manumitted substantial numbers of slaves, both kin and non-kin. Free blacks saved or borrowed money to grant freedom to their loved ones. Free blacks wishing to free their slave kin could pay the manumission price directly to the master or indirectly through government tribunals, thus avoiding the arduous process of first purchasing and then later freeing slave relatives.

As they struggled daily to achieve or maintain respectable living standards, free people of color made time to enjoy the company of whites, slaves, and other free blacks in various ways. New Orleanians participated in the festivities surrounding the carnival season and other religious holidays, and they observed baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. Free blacks also joined slaves and whites at taverns and gambling tables, playing such illegal card games as "twenty-one" and canasta. Consequently, many spent time in jail with each other, too. With few exceptions, persons of all colors and classes worked and played together, by choice and necessity.

In the primarily frontier environment of colonial New Orleans free blacks, whites, and slaves mingled in the streets, markets, taverns, dancehalls, churches, and private homes of the city. Despite the efforts of some religious and secular authorities and other individuals, New Orleans society refused to follow any strict social stratification based on race, class, or legal status. Occasional raids on billiard halls alleged to house illegal card games uncovered "distinguished" and lower-status whites, free people of color, and slaves drinking with and betting against one another. Free blacks and whites formed common-law unions, usually without the church's blessings but at least with its toleration. Free blacks also married or had relationships with slaves, but they often had to live apart. Even

when a white person or slave did not live in the same household with a free black, he or she very often resided next door to one.

Even as free and slave, black and white socialized together, officials made sure that each person was aware of his or her place in society. In fact, many leisure events, especially those related to carnival, reinforced the social order while simultaneously allowing members to criticize it. Persons of African descent recognized the restrictions placed on them and only temporarily escaped them.

As free persons of color mingled with whites on the streets and promenades, in houses, markets, and shops, and around card tables, bars, and dance floors, they often adopted white cultural values and eroded the solidarity of free persons of color as a group with distinct interests. On the other hand, kinship ties, militia service, and white discrimination drew free persons of color together. The forces of decentralization, however, overpowered those of centralization; free blacks in Spanish New Orleans maintained their anomalous position in the city's society, linked to both slave and white populations in different ways until overt discrimination in the antebellum period shaped the threatened free black population into a more cohesive entity.

With the Americanization of Louisiana and commercialization of sugar and cotton production, free blacks encountered increasing discrimination and legal restrictions. During the first decades of United States rule cotton and sugar production and trade exploded, profit-oriented planters and merchants introduced thousands of African-American slaves, and Caribbean refugees, European reactionaries, and American laborers poured into lower Louisiana. A rising tide of racism accompanied the closing and more precise defining of white society, an influx of white women, and more intense competition between free black and white labor in the antebellum period. Unaccustomed to large, influential groups of free blacks, Anglos and even Latins in New Orleans regarded their numbers, skills, and military power, all primarily gained during the era of Spanish rule, with trepidation.

Even as they faced increasingly adverse circumstances in the first half of the nineteenth century, free African Americans were some of Louisiana's most prosperous planters and farmers, owning more property than free blacks in any other southern state. In 1850 there were 504 free black Louisianians who owned real estate worth at least $2,000. Their average holding was almost $8,000, which included urban and rural properties. Although that number declined in 1860 to 472, the average worth rose to over $10,000. Far behind Louisiana in second place was South Carolina, whose 162 free blacks in the same category had an average real estate holding of $4,723 in 1860. Three out of every ten free black estate owners were women.

The Metoyers and other free black families living in the Isle Brevelle colony on Cane River near Natchitoches acquired vast holdings of land and slaves during the antebellum period. In 1830, at the height of their affluence, the Metoyers owned more slaves than any other free black family in the United States. Residents of the Isle Brevelle colony grew cotton and corn on their plantations and traded with white and black

merchants in New Orleans. Free people of color from New Orleans and Saint-Domingue married members of the colony and contributed to its prosperity.

The settlement traced its beginnings to Marie Thérèze, also known by her African name of Coincoin, a slave woman who was freed by her white common-law husband, Pierre Metoyer, in 1778. Before taking a white wife ten years later, Metoyer gave Marie Thérèze a small plot of land, which she and her fourteen children converted into an empire. In 1974 the federal government declared the early Metoyer holdings, known collectively as Melrose Plantation, a national historic landmark in recognition of its singular origins and the unique architecture displayed in several of its eight remaining buildings.

Another prominent free black planter was Andrew Durnford, son of British merchant Thomas Durnford and Rosaline Mercier, a free woman of color. At the age of twenty-eight Andrew Durnford entered the planter class in 1828 by purchasing at a cost of $32,000 fourteen slaves and a tract of land ten by forty arpents on the Mississippi River some thirty miles below New Orleans. He began cultivating sugarcane on what became St. Rosalie Plantation. Durnford also inherited money and land in New Orleans and McDonoghville from his parents. He and his wife, Marie Charlotte Remy, had three children. One of Durnford's closest associates was his New Orleans factor, John McDonogh, a white merchant and philanthropist. When Durnford died in 1859, the land value of St. Rosalie Plantation was $51,500 (down from a high of $82,800 in 1850) and the value of its slaves $71,550 (high of $84,750 in 1855). At one time Durnford owned over seventy-five slaves.

Most of Louisiana's free blacks lived in New Orleans, where their opportunities to gain freedom, find skilled, manual, and domestic jobs, and interact socially were greatest. Free blacks composed about forty percent of the African-American population in New Orleans, ranging between a high of almost forty-six percent in 1820 to a low of thirty-six percent in 1840. Their number in 1840, however, was greater than in any other decade: almost 20,000 out of a total New Orleans population of slightly over 100,000. A growing slave and especially white immigrant population in the 1830s reduced the proportion of free blacks in the total populace. In addition, in response to increasing discrimination and oppression in Louisiana and throughout the South, many free black New Orleanians moved to Haiti, Mexico, France, and other foreign destinations. Some returned to Louisiana after the Civil War.

Free blacks played an important role in the New Orleans economy, where labor, especially skilled labor, was often in short supply. Many owned successful businesses or engaged in the professions and amassed substantial estates that included real, personal, and slave property. Many New Orleans shoemakers, cigarmakers, ironworkers, furniture makers, and lithographers were free African Americans. Free black men like Lucien Mansion and Georges Alcès operated sizable cigar factories, with Alcès employing as many as 200 hands. Among the most prominent daguerreotypists and lithographers was Jules Lyon, a free man of color who was born in France and spent most of his adult life in

New Orleans. When Lyon returned from a trip to France in 1839, he introduced the daguerreotype process, an early form of photography invented by Parisian Louis Jacques Daguerre.

Among free blacks women outnumbered men two to one and often established long-term relations with white men. United States laws, unlike Spain's, prohibited interracial marriages. In response, whites and free blacks or slaves formed common-law unions or went to France, Mexico, and the Caribbean to wed legally. Travelers frequently commented on New Orleans's free black and slave society. Most observed this society only for a short time and as outsiders, thus creating and perpetuating many myths and stereotypes, especially about free black women:

> **A distinction subsists between ladies of colour of a very singular sort; those who are but one remove from the African cast, are subordinate to those who are from two to three, or more, and are interdicted, by custom, from intermarrying with the whites; but they are allowed, by the same authority, to become mistresses of the whites, without being dishonoured in the eyes of society, that is, they are esteemed honorable and virtuous while faithful to one man; but if, in their amours, they at any time become indiscriminate, they lose the advantage of ranking among the virtuous, and are classed in the city books among prostitutes and slaves. This, or a native disposition to continence, has such a domination over them, that the instances of their infidelity are very rare, though they are extremely numerous, and are mistresses to the married and unmarried, and nearly to all the strangers who resort to the town. . . .**
>
> **Negresses and female Mestises next follow: the first are principally employed as servants, of which every family has a considerable number; the second perform all kind of laborious work, such as washing, and retailing fruit through the city in the hottest weather; and being considered as a cast too degraded to enter into the marriage state, they follow a legal kind of prostitution, without deeming it any disparagement to their virtue or their honor. (Thomas Ashe, 1806)**

Early White Settlers

For much of the colonial period Louisiana was sparsely populated by whites, many of them banished from Europe for their antisocial behavior or enticed to Louisiana by misleading propaganda and promises of free land. Although Spain had some luck in attracting white settlers (primarily Acadians and Canary Islanders) as part of its policy to expand commercial plantation agriculture, France was much less successful. The number of whites coming to French Louisiana was greatest during the 1720s, when the proprietary

Company of the Indies, rather than the crown, governed the colony. Among the 7,020 colonists who disembarked in Louisiana from the 43 ships sent by the company between October 1717 and May 1721, there were a few from Ireland and Switzerland. The wide variety of tradespeople immigrating between 1718 and 1719 included 15 weavers; 14 tailors; 9 joiners; 9 surgeons; 8 each shoemakers, masons, and bakers; 7 wigmakers; 4 each carpenters, ropemakers, coopers, and gardeners; 3 brewers; 2 each upholsterers, goldsmiths, cooks, butchers, governesses, valets and chambermaids; 1 hatter; and 1 maker of gold and silver cloth. Early French colonials obviously found little demand for these trades in the Louisiana wilderness and were ill-equipped to run farms for their own sustenance, let alone market a surplus.

The first settlers of Louisiana brought with them varied backgrounds. Both French and Spanish royal authorities hoped to create in their New World colonies similar, but improved, versions of the mother country. And in an unfamiliar, threatening setting Louisiana colonists transplanted and clung to their social values, even exaggerating them. Settlers were especially sensitive to the social hierarchy of ancien régime France in which birth weighed heavier than wealth, though the two often went hand-in-hand. For example, when a Capuchin curate in New Orleans, strapped for funds, auctioned off the most desirable front pews to the highest bidder, he aroused the ire of the officers' wives, who were displaced by wealthier but baser-born women. They even made their husbands present their complaints to the colonial governing body, the superior council, and eventually the curate had to restore some of the pews to these high-browed ladies.

On the Louisiana frontier, however, adjustments to proper French custom had to be made. For one thing, the upper sectors of French society did not immigrate to the colony. The vast majority of Louisiana's early colonists came from the lower social orders in France, and they aspired to quick wealth and upward mobility. In addition, Canadian immigrants made up the backbone of early colonial society, and they had already modified French traditions and moral values to meet local conditions. Canadian men found concubinage with Native American women acceptable and rarely attended church. As soldiers, trappers, and hunters they had developed a penchant for independent thought and action; in their new Louisiana home they frequently mutinied or deserted when pay levels, provisions, or labor assignments fell short of their expectations.

Many of Louisiana's first colonists did not go there voluntarily, and they escaped from a regimen of hard labor, low pay, and inadequate provisions at the first opportunity. In the 1720s French Capuchin Father Pierre F. X. de Charlevoix admonished that desertions

> **should have been anticipated; that colony having been settled almost entirely by people sent over by force, or Concessionaries who did not find there what they had been led to expect; for soon the only thought of either was to get out of it. . . .**

> **The most malcontent were the soldiers, who received absolutely nothing but bread, while meat was distributed to the Company's workmen, and even to the criminals, who were quite frequently employed by the settlers.**

Another French priest, Father du Poisson, noted in 1727 that "besides these grantees and planters, there are also in this country, people who have no other business than that of vagabonding." Rumors of men and women being dragged off the street and out of the prisons to be shipped to Louisiana spread throughout France and Canada. One must remember, though, that a large number of the prisoners were merely debtors; up to the nineteenth century persons who could not pay their bills were imprisoned.

Women played active roles in Louisiana's exploration and settlement from almost the very beginning. Accompanying La Salle in 1684, a few women sailed with other colonists on four ships from La Rochelle, France. By early 1687 only twenty colonists survived, among them seven women. Harsh conditions continued to kill off even these few hardy souls. Men, women, and children alike hunted what game they could with diminishing supplies of ammunition. All but a handful who joined Indian villages eventually perished.

Women next entered the colony in 1704. As in most frontier environments, women were in short supply. Royal and proprietary authorities encouraged and even forced women to immigrate to Louisiana. Women, they thought, could populate the colony, as well as stabilize those troublesome, unruly males and convert them into God-fearing, hard-working, peaceful farmers. Louisiana's first women included officials' wives, marriageable women, indentured servants, and prostitutes and other criminals. Father du Poisson noted sarcastically that the women and girls coming to Louisiana were "taken from the hospitals of Paris, from Salpetriere, or from other places of equally good reputation, who find the laws of marriage too strict, and the care of a single household too troublesome. Voyages of 400 leagues present nothing to terrify these heroines." Many of Louisiana's early bachelors preferred indigenous women to these cast-offs from French society.

European and Canadian women nonetheless contributed significantly to the settlement of Louisiana and played multiple roles in the colony's development. In addition to populating and stabilizing the frontier, women labored as servants, midwives, tailors, dressmakers, laundresses, bakers, cooks, and menders. On a higher level, one of the three major shareholders in John Law's Company of the West was Catherine Barré, madame de Chaumont, wife of the honorary secretary of the king. She invested 850,000 *livres* in the company and obtained a concession near Pascagoula. Like most concessionaires, she did not reside in Louisiana and exhibited little interest in its affairs.

Germans

Intent upon making Louisiana profitable and unsatisfied with its French settlers, the Company of the Indies tried to lure agriculturalists, especially hard-working Germans, to the colony. The chief propagandist who extolled the virtues of Louisiana was John Law, a Dutch financier who headed the company. Between 1720 and 1722 Law sent an estimated 1,600 German, Alsatian, and Swiss settlers, soldiers, and indentured servants to his Louisiana concessions located in Arkansas, on the Gulf Coast, and just below New Orleans. Over half of them died en route to Louisiana, and disease, famine, and natural disasters forced most of the German immigrants to resettle in a more fertile, safe spot just above New Orleans, known today as the "German Coast." These farmers marketed their fruits, vegetables, poultry, and livestock in New Orleans and frequented its taverns, dancehalls, and church.

Scholars who have studied these German immigrants generally agree that their descendants quickly assimilated into French-Louisiana culture. This was particularly true for those who resided outside of the concentrated population on the German Coast (eighty inhabitants in 1751) or who married non-Germans. Linguistically mixed families in which the mother spoke German retained German dialects longer, but even in the colonial era many Germans spoke French or Louisiana creole and did not develop a Franco-Germanic patois comparable to the German, English, and Dutch patois of the Pennsylvania Dutch. French census takers, priests, and notaries transliterated or simply translated German family names into French. For example, Scheckschneider became Ceixnaitre, Schön became Chesne or Chaigne, and Zweig (“branch” in German) became Labranche. As late as 1831, however, one French traveler to Louisiana—P. Forest—commented that descendants of the original German colonials continued to speak their native language.

Forest visited Louisiana prior to the mass immigration of Germans in the 1840s and 1850s. During the antebellum period Germans immigrated to Louisiana in two waves: just after the Napoleonic wars of the early 1800s and from the 1840s to 1860. Destruction following several French invasions forced the first group to flee, and failed revolutions and crops drove the second group out of Germany. Between 1820 and 1850 almost 54,000 Germans entered the port of New Orleans, with over 126,000 adding to that number in the first five years of the 1850s. Although most continued on to the Midwest and California or fell victim to disease in Louisiana, enough remained to make up about one-tenth the population of the Crescent City in 1860.

Many of these mid-nineteenth-century German immigrants were farmers, butchers, skilled workers, and professionals. As in other states, Germans gradually monopolized the brewing trade in Louisiana. Most New Orleans metal workers, especially silversmiths, were German. German immigrants also dominated the art of lithography, which had been invented in Munich, Germany. One of New Orleans's leading lithography firms in the 1850s and 1860s was the partnership of Benedict Simon, a German, and Louis Lucien Pessou, a free man of color.

Just as in the colonial period, other Germans, especially those of the first wave, came as "redemptioners," or indentured servants. To pay for passage, redemptioners contracted their labor for a period of three to eight years following their arrival in America. Once "redeemed" they were free to seek a living in Louisiana or go elsewhere.

Germans also contributed to the unique culture of Louisiana, adding German breweries, restaurants, dancehalls, theaters, and music festivals. German architects influenced Louisiana landscapes, among them Charles Frederick Zimpel, who designed the Orleans Cotton Press. German artisans also crafted many of the buildings in Lafayette City, an upriver suburb that was incorporated into New Orleans in 1853. German musicians and merchants introduced and popularized the accordion. Cajun bands later adopted the diatonic accordion and incorporated it into their eclectic musical tradition.

Joseph Eder, a German cabinetmaker and carpenter, wrote back to his friends in Germany about New Orleans and the opportunities he found there around 1853:

> **Now, dear reader, I cannot tell you so much about this city, for in all of Germany there is no city like it. It is five hours' walk long and three hours' wide. And in this seaport you again see no end of sailboats and steamboats which come and go every day. You cannot even imagine it. My dear friends, you are entirely in error if you believe America is a wild land, for there is no more beautiful country.**
> **. . .**
> **A person need do no more than hang up his sign. If he has a business which does not please him, he need only change his sign and start something else. A fortune is not necessary for this. An artisan who has no more than his tools can work independently.**

From the other side of the dock, so to speak, a New Orleans resident gave his impressions of the Germans arriving by the boatful in 1853:

> **A large immigrant ship just arrived with a load of steerage passengers. Their style of beauty proclaimed them German, and if that was not sufficient to ensure conviction the grunting gutturals of their language, their meershaums and picturebook clothing would have been conclusive. Little fraus and frauleins built on the six by five principle, waddled around the deck or climbed on the bulwarks and surveyed with prodigious leaden eyes the land of promise. On the levee a large number of older emigrants from the fatherland assembled, who with stentorian lungs and beaming countenance called to the new comers.**

Immigrants under Spanish Rule: Isleños, Acadians, and Anglos

Spain actively promoted population growth in Louisiana and encouraged immigration from many nations by promising settlers land, supplies, and money. The crown especially endeavored to attract Isleños (natives of the Canary Islands) and Acadians, who offered little political or cultural threat to the French and Spanish already resident in Louisiana. A few Acadians had emigrated or been expelled from their homeland in Canada during the 1750s and early 1760s, but mass migration of Acadians into Louisiana began after 1765 and totaled four to six thousand men, women, and children. They mainly settled along the Mississippi River above the German Coast—an area subsequently named the Acadian Coast—and in the western districts of Opelousas, Attakapas, and Lafourche. They, along with over ten thousand refugees who fled war-torn Saint-Domingue for Louisiana in the 1790s and early 1800s, reinforced French culture in Louisiana.

Besides administrators, merchants, and military personnel, the largest contingent of Spanish-speaking immigrants to settle in Louisiana were Canary Islanders. Approximately 2,000 *Isleños* arrived in Louisiana in the late 1770s. Forced to colonize hostile regions, many of them died, and those who survived lived mainly in isolation, making occasional trips to New Orleans to sell their farm products. They retained their language and customs but exerted little cultural influence on other Louisianians. About 100 settlers arrived from Málaga, Spain, at about the same time as the Canary Islanders. Under the leadership of Colonel Francisco Bouligny they founded New Iberia, Louisiana, in 1779. Unfortunately for Spain, these Malagueños showed little penchant for tilling the soil and relied on slaves provided by the crown to do the work for them.

Spain initially discouraged English and American immigrants, although the crown changed its outlook and policy in the 1780s. Throughout the 1770s Maryland and Carolina farmers arrived from the British colonies, and after 1763 several British subjects settled in West Florida, an area that was returned to Spain in 1783. Once the United States secured its freedom, farmers and land speculators from the Atlantic seaboard poured across the Appalachians into adjacent United States territory and the northern reaches of Spanish Louisiana. Recognizing that it could not halt United States penetration of the Mississippi Valley, Spain adopted a new strategy to incorporate its enemies rather than futilely struggle against them. In exchange for swearing a loyalty oath, Spanish officials offered the former British subjects religious toleration, generous land grants, and rights to navigate the Mississippi. British and American mercantile firms established agents in New Orleans, and demand combined with high wages drew northeastern tradesmen to the city. By the end of the century Anglo-American merchants and ship captains controlled much of the river trade and commerce at New Orleans. Spain was successful in increasing Louisiana's population but ultimately lost the colony to the settlers, merchants, and land speculators that its policies attracted.

Jews

Louisiana's Jewish community flourished in the nineteenth century, spurred primarily by immigration from Germany. By 1860 Louisiana was home to the largest Jewish population in the South, numbering about 8,000 residents. Many of the German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish people who came to Louisiana were of the Jewish faith. Jews were officially denied residence in the colony of Louisiana under both French and Spanish rule. Nevertheless, several Jews had lived and traded along the Gulf Coast since the early 1700s. These first Jews in Louisiana—most prominent among them the Monsanto family—were descendants of the Sephardic Jews who migrated to the Americas after Spain expelled them in 1492. They established themselves in Brazil and the Caribbean in the 1600s and afterward migrated throughout the Americas, including Louisiana.

Judaism was not firmly established in Louisiana until the formation of a Portuguese congregation, the Gates of Mercy, in 1828. By the end of the antebellum period, New Orleans Jews had founded four synagogues: Gates of Mercy, Dispersed of Judah, Gates of Prayer, and Temime Derech. Congregation Temime Derech (The Right Way) was the youngest, established in 1857 by the Crescent City's growing Polish population. Other synagogues dotted the Louisiana landscape, including Bikur Cholim (Visiting the Sick) in Donaldsonville in 1856; Shaare Chesed (later B'nai Israel) in Baton Rouge in 1859; Har El (Mount of God, later B'nai Zion) in Shreveport and Gemiluth Chassodim (Unselfish Benevolence) in Alexandria in 1861; B'nai Israel (Children of Israel) in Monroe in 1868 and in Natchitoches in 1871; Shaarey Zedek (Gates of Righteousness) in Morgan City in 1871; B'nai Sholom (Children of Peace) in Bastrop in 1877; and Gemiluth Chassodim (later Temple Emanu'El) in Opelousas in 1877. In some places, cemeteries and benevolent societies preceded the congregation. Women played a crucial role in building these communities. They often spearheaded fundraising efforts, particularly in the construction of synagogues and temples. In Baton Rouge the Ladies Hebrew Association, for example, organized in 1871 to raise money to build a synagogue for Congregation Shaare Chesed. B'nai B'rith, a national Jewish fraternal organization, helped create a network among Jews in Louisiana, as it did in isolated areas across the country, including the rural South.

Temple Sinai, the first Reform congregation in New Orleans, was founded in 1870. Reform Judaism, which originated in Germany, took root in the United States in the 1820s, but did not flourish until the last third of the nineteenth century. It sought to modernize ritual, relax dietary laws, and allow women a greater role in religious practices. Some Reform innovations in synagogue worship included mixed-sex seating, the removal of head coverings, and the introduction of organs and choirs.

Many small storekeepers and traders in rural antebellum Louisiana were Jews. They prospered by maintaining kinship and business ties with Jewish merchants in New Orleans and New York. The real boon for country storekeepers came after the Civil War, however, when plantations were divided into tenant or sharecropper farms and former

slaves entered the market. In Louisiana's urban areas many retailers, especially dry-goods merchants, were Jews.

Prominent members of Louisiana's antebellum Jewish community included Judah Touro and Gershom Kursheedt, both Sephardic Jews, and Daniel Warburg, a German Jew. The son of Dutch immigrants, Judah Touro was born in Rhode Island in 1775 and moved to New Orleans in 1801, when Louisiana was still under Spanish rule. Touro quickly established himself as a commission merchant, real estate developer, and community leader. A generous philanthropist, he used his wealth to build a synagogue, an infirmary, an almshouse, and a public library in New Orleans. When he died in 1854, Touro also left money to libraries, hospitals, and parks in cities throughout the United States.

Touro Infirmary opened in New Orleans in 1852, when Judah Touro established a hospital with Dr. Joseph Bensadon as its head. Touro's will stipulated that the "Hebrew Hospital" operate as a "charitable Institution for the relief of the Indigent Sick." The board of directors leased the hospital to Bensadon with the understanding that the hospital would admit needy Jewish patients, follow Jewish dietary regulations, and observe Jewish holidays. In 1874 the infirmary merged with the Hebrew Benevolent Association and became the principal Jewish charitable institution in the city. From the beginning, Touro also served non-Jews and in 1883 began admitting them to its charity wards.

Gershom Kursheedt was the first president of Dispersed of Judah (which later became Touro Synagogue) as well as the Hebrew Benevolent Association. He also steered Judah Touro's philanthropic impulses toward Jewish institutions and helped establish the Jewish Widows' and Orphans' Home. Apart from his involvement with Jewish organizations, he was a founder of the Howard Association, a voluntary public health organization.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1789, Daniel Warburg came to New Orleans by 1821. Like Touro, Warburg was a commission merchant. He established a business with another German, Henry G. Schmidt, and also speculated in real estate. Warburg lost most of his holdings in the aftermath of the nationwide economic panic of 1837. He died in 1860.

Warburg's common-law wife was Marie Rose Blondeau, an Afro-Cuban woman who died in 1837. Blondeau began her relationship with Warburg as a slave, and in 1830 Warburg freed their first child, Eugène, at age four. As required by law, Warburg had to obtain special permission to free a slave under the age of thirty. Warburg also freed Blondeau at about the same time, because their next four children were born free. Warburg's sons Eugène and Daniel became prominent marble cutters and sculptors.

Irish

Like Germans, persons born in Ireland had settled in Louisiana from its earliest days. During the colonial period Spain sent Irish priests to Louisiana to minister to the region's growing English-speaking Catholic population. The Crescent City held its first St.

Patrick's Day celebration in 1809, and Irish community leaders founded St. Patrick's Church, the city's second Catholic parish, on Camp Street in 1834. Irish architect James Gallier Sr. worked on St. Patrick's.

The major influx of Irish, however, came after 1830, especially following the potato blight of the 1840s. By 1860 the Irish in New Orleans numbered over 24,000, about one-fourteenth of the total population. Unlike German immigrants, most Irish who came through the port of New Orleans stayed there, primarily because they could not afford passage farther inland. They crowded into the Crescent City's riverfront neighborhoods and strained its limited housing, employment, education, and other municipal resources. Many destitute Irish fell victim to disease, crime, and unemployment.

Native residents and writers grossly exaggerated the Irishman's reputation as a violent drunkard and gambler. At the same time they exploited his vote and labor, forcing him to compete with free blacks and slaves for the city's most dangerous and low-paying manual jobs. Most of the Irish coming to Louisiana who were peasants and victims of the potato famine in Ireland had to take unskilled, low-wage jobs. They mainly dug canals and ditches and built roads, levees, and railroads. They also labored on the docks and in the warehouses of Louisiana's commercial centers and in 1860 made up almost half the deck crews of western steamboats.

In so doing, they often competed with African-American workers, both free and slave. Builders of the New Basin Canal, which connected the downtown American sector of New Orleans with Lake Pontchartrain, preferred to hire Irishmen because the work was dangerous, and they did not want their valuable slaves injured or killed. Often laboring in water up to their hips, Irish canal diggers were most susceptible to yellow fever, malaria, and cholera. Estimates of the number of Irishmen buried along the New Basin Canal ranged from 3,000 to 30,000, and a popular song mourned their passing:

Ten thousand Micks, they swung their picks,
To dig the New Canal
But the choleray was stronger 'n they.
An' twice it killed them awl.

After completing the New Basin Canal in 1836, many of the Irish laborers still alive became draymen, carting goods between wharves and warehouses. Irishmen forced free blacks and slaves out of the drayage business, as well as the related hack business. In the 1840s Henry Didimus described the streets of New Orleans crowded with over two thousand Irish draymen, "cursing and railing, lashing their poor beasts, and not unfrequently, and with more propriety, lashing each other." Among women, Irish domestics sometimes replaced black servants, particularly in the Anglo-dominated uptown Garden District.

Several Irish, especially those arriving before 1830, were professionals. Irish teachers, lawyers, doctors, architects, and printers practiced in Louisiana. Others managed boardinghouses, hotels, and other small businesses.

Antebellum Foreign-Born French

French nationals came to Louisiana directly from France and as refugees from the West Indies. During the nineteenth century New Orleans continually drew greater numbers of French-speaking immigrants than any other urban area in the United States. By 1860 New Orleans was home to more than 10,500 French-born residents. Ties between Louisiana and France remained strong in the antebellum period. A number of Louisianians, both black and white, made frequent trips to France, maintained contacts with friends and relatives there, and received schooling or training in France.

German traveler Karl Pöstl did not hold French immigrants in high regard when he observed them in 1826. Although these numerous Frenchmen included lawyers, merchants, and physicians,

> **the greater part . . . consists of adventurers, hair-dressers, dancing-masters, performers, musicians, and the like. The French are of all men the least valuable acquisition for a new state. Of a lavish and wanton temper, they spend their time in trifles, which are of no importance to any but themselves. Dancing, fighting, riding, and love-making, are the daily occupation of these people. . . . Without either religion, morality, or even education, they pretend to be the leaders of the *bon ton*, because they come from Paris, and they in general succeed.**

Keep in mind, though, that traditional animosity between Germany and France most likely influenced Pöstl's opinion.

One of the lawyers whom Pöstl did not include in his description of the "greater part" of French immigrants was Pierre Soulé. Performing in New Orleans in 1846, the French musician Henri Herz had this to say of Mr. Soulé:

> **In New Orleans I had the rare privilege of knowing Mr. and Mrs. Soulé, whose home was the meeting place of all the distinguished people in the region. Mr. Soulé, born in France of French parents, rose rapidly to the top rank in the legal profession, and he had the unique experience, for a foreigner, of representing the United States as ambassador to Madrid. His learning was as profound as his manner was friendly.**

Saint-Domingue Refugees

Between 1809 and 1810 over 10,000 French Saint-Domingue refugees came to New Orleans, doubling the population of the Crescent City. These immigrants originally fled war-torn Saint-Domingue in 1803, as black slaves emerged victorious in the Haitian Revolution, the only successful long-term slave revolt in the Americas. The refugees first resettled in nearby Cuba but left six years later when Spanish authorities expelled them in retaliation for Napoleon's invasion of Spain.

This large influx of French-speaking immigrants, made up of about even numbers of whites, free blacks, and slaves, reinforced the dominance of Latin culture in south Louisiana, at least for a few decades. Although the refugees added to New Orleans's cosmopolitan character, they also increased tensions festering between Latin and Anglo residents since the Louisiana Purchase.

Black refugees to Louisiana also introduced or enhanced already-present aspects of African and Haitian culture. These included voodoo/hoodoo practices, shotgun house architecture, and some of the symbolism and words associated with Mardi Gras Indian rites. New Orleans was the birthplace of voodoo in North America. Many African Americans in Louisiana believed—and continue to believe—in the power of the spirit world and ancestor worship. As an African religious system, voodoo helps keep living persons in harmony with their spirit ancestors and nature. Dahomean people retained their religion of *vodu* with them when taken from West Africa to Saint-Domingue (Haiti) and then to New Orleans in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Both black and white New Orleanians employed the services of the famed Marie Laveau and other voodoo priests and priestesses in the nineteenth century. According to one former New Orleans slave, N. H. Hobley, Marie sold many charms to ward off evil spirits: "Some of the big [white] ladies—and men too—came to her for advice; others consulted her by mail." Protective charms frequently used by blacks included blue glass beads, pierced coins, and crystal pendants.

Even though he did not practice voodooism himself, Hobley seemed to admire Marie Laveau and "always attended the Congo Square functions." Although he was "too young to take any active part," he "learned everything." Laveau, he said,

> **did not sit on a throne nor wear royal robes. . . . Generally [she wore] a dress of jenny-blue calico—skirt made very full—a kerchief 'round her neck and a tignon or headdress, large hoop earrings of gold, some beads, and a brooch. She went on the streets as unconcerned as any washerwoman, smiling and often speaking to those she met.**
>
> **Whenever she was seen, people would stand aside and whisper, "Here comes Marie Laveau," and wait until she passed. But her power—it seemed supernatural! She worked with charms and herbs and incense and snakes and skeletons, and invoked spirits.**

Others did not speak of Laveau so favorably. Among them was Marie Brown, who in a 1940 interview for the Louisiana Writers' Project, said of the "Voodoo Queen":

> **That she-devil, that hell-cat Ma-rie Laveau! . . . She walked like she owned the city and everything. She looked like a devil. . . . What she look like? I can see her now. She was banana-color and wore always a madras handkerchief tied around her head. There were two curls, one on each side of her face.**
>
> **That hell-cat! She must be a-burning for her sins. She said she could call spirits outer your house. She would make pictures come off [the] wall. She could do anything she wanted.**

Other Groups

During the antebellum period Louisiana began to attract an increasing number of Italian immigrants, although large groups did not arrive until the 1880s and 1890s. Most of the early Italians came from Sicily and carved a niche in Louisiana as importers and sellers of citrus fruit from the Mediterranean and bananas from Central America. By 1850 New Orleans had the largest Italian settlement in the United States, but quickly fell behind northern industrial centers in the post–Civil War era.

New Orleans was one of the few United States cities in the nineteenth century to draw immigrants from Spain and Latin America. The city was popular among Hispanics because of its Latin familiarity and geographic closeness. The port also maintained regular shipping lanes to Cuba and Central America.

* * *

Conclusion

The many people of Louisiana contributed to its medley of cultures. They reinforced the "foreign" or cosmopolitan character of Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, and helped shape the region's unique customs. William Darby, an early nineteenth-century traveler, was one among many visitors to note the Crescent City's diversity: "No city perhaps on the globe, in an equal number of human beings, presents a greater contrast of national manners, language, and complexion, than does New Orleans." And Vermonter Joseph Holt Ingraham takes us back to a Sunday morning in New Orleans in the 1830s:

The whole city had come forth into the streets to enjoy it [spring sunshine]. . . . The long narrow streets were thronged with moving multitudes. . . .

. . . As we issued from Chartres-street—where all "nations and kingdoms and tongues" seemed to have united to form its pageant of life—upon the esplanade in front of the cathedral, we were surprised by the sound of martial music pealing clearly above the confusion of tongues, the tramp of feet, and the rattling of carriages.

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Chapter 3

The Driving Force: Economic Activity in Louisiana

Throughout their history the inhabitants of Louisiana pursued many economic activities, most of them centered on agriculture and commerce. Economic transformations have had much more impact on Louisianians than changes in the political regime (from France to Spain then back to France and finally to the United States). European exploration and settlement altered—and in many cases annihilated—the agricultural, hunting, and trading practices of Louisiana Indians. During the eighteenth century many Native American groups went from a position of power to one of dependency. From the perspective of its European rulers Louisiana was transformed over the same century from a marginal colony with a primarily regional exchange economy to a colony fully integrated into the Atlantic economy. By the end of the 1700s Louisiana's expanding plantations produced for export such commercial crops as cotton, sugar, and tobacco, and its major port city of New Orleans stood as "the grand mart of business, the Alexandria of America" (Zadok Cramer, 1801).

During the antebellum period most people moving to and living in Louisiana grew or marketed cotton or sugar. As in the colonial era, life in the countryside was very different from that of the city, but commerce along the waterways and roads linked rural and urban Louisianians. Cotton and sugar planters sold their crops and purchased goods through factors, also known as commission merchants, based in New Orleans. Small farmers sold produce and livestock in the cities. Urban dwellers flocked to the countryside during hot summer months, especially during outbreaks of yellow fever or cholera. Louisiana—and New Orleans in particular—truly was "the mighty mart of the merchandise brought from more than a thousand rivers" (William Darby, 1801), where one could find people of "all nations and kingdoms and tongues."

* * *

Louisiana Indian Economic Activities on the Eve of European Settlement

As in most societies, Louisiana Indians carried out tasks defined along gender lines. Males dominated political and religious affairs, protected their communities, cleared land, hunted, and constructed buildings and canoes with handmade tools. Women cared for children and the elderly, planted crops, manufactured clothes and utensils, and decorated their homes and religious centers. One early French settler, Antoine Simon Le Page du Pratz, observed that among Louisiana Indians "most of the labour and fatigue falls to the share of the women" and the men had "a great deal of more spare time than the women."

Hunting played an essential part in the native economy as an important source of food, clothing, tools, and jewelry. Louisiana Indian men pursued deer, bear, bison, and a multitude of smaller game animals. Native hunters stalked their prey or used a communal surround. When Europeans came to Louisiana, they noted that the Natchez in particular practiced the "communal surround." Upon sighting a deer, about a hundred men formed an open crescent. They drove the deer from side to side until it dropped to the ground exhausted.

At various times through the centuries Louisiana Indians caught their prey with stone, bone, and antler spear points, atlatls (spear throwers), bows and arrows, stone plummets attached to bolas and nets, and traps. They prepared meat and hides with stone scrapers and other hideworking stone tools. Louisiana Indians did not use iron tools until Europeans introduced that metal.

Surrounded by water, Native Americans in Louisiana enriched their diets with fish and shellfish, among them garfish, bowfin, catfish, paddlefish, sunfish, bass, clams, and oysters. Indian anglers snared their catch with hooks and lines, nets, traps, trotlines, weirs, spears, and poison.

Women and children gathered fruits, seeds, roots, leaves, and other plant foods from the land to supplement the Native American diet and fill their medicine chests. Indian women also plucked Spanish moss from the trees and processed it into bedding, furnishings, and construction and clothing materials. They made baskets and mats of cane taken from the marshes.

Semisedentary and sedentary Native American groups in Louisiana cultivated crops to support their high population densities. Agriculture, in conjunction with hunting, fishing, and gathering, provided Louisiana Indians with enough food for themselves and even for trade with other native groups. Corn, beans, and squash were the principal staples of native agriculture. Corn was first domesticated in Mexico and from there introduced into the Mississippi Valley region. Perhaps the earliest planters of corn were members of the Coles Creek culture, with substantial harvests beginning A.D. 600–700. Louisiana Indians also cultivated tobacco, sunflowers, gourds, and pumpkins.

The whole community participated in preparing fields and planting crops. Men broke the ground with bone, stone, and shell-blade hoes and with wedge-shaped, ungrooved axes called celts. Women made shallow holes with short, heavy, sharp sticks and placed seeds in the holes. Both males and females harvested crops, but women and children tended the fields and processed and preserved what was grown. They stored what they harvested in granaries, corncribs, and earth silos.

Trade helped compensate for unequal distribution of natural resources and skills. Louisiana Indians exchanged such local products as salt, shells, Spanish moss, smoked fish, hides, and even ivory-billed woodpeckers with native groups near and far. They imported copper from northern tribes, catlinite from Minnesota, shells from the Atlantic coast, oil jars and flint from Texas, turquoise and cotton blankets from southwestern North America, and novaculite from Arkansas. Some Louisiana tribes were well-known for their special manufacturing talents and created a demand among other native groups for their products. Among these were Caddoan pottery and Chitimacha baskets.

Native Americans did not conduct all their trade through barter or direct exchange and gave certain objects agreed-upon values. The most popular medium of exchange was the shell bead; others included pearls and quartz.

* * *

Colonial Economies: "To Run After Fortune in Every Way Imaginable"

As a colony within the empires of first France and then Spain, Louisiana was supposed to export raw materials and staple crops and import manufactured goods. It was expected that all trade would take place between the mother country and the colony, thereby keeping any profits within the imperial system. Hoping to exploit colonial resources, the mother country sought to maintain a favorable balance of trade, exporting goods of greater value than it imported. This relationship between crown and colony was part of an economic theory known as mercantilism.

Mercantilism did not work well in Louisiana. Reality rarely matched the ideal, mainly because within the grand scheme of empire and the Atlantic trading system, Louisiana was a backwater. It had few easily extracted resources—like gold or silver—and few people—white, Indian, or African—to exploit what raw materials there were. In addition, by the eighteenth century France and Spain were ill-equipped to supply their American colonies, especially marginal, unprofitable ones like Louisiana, with the goods they needed. Both monarchies constantly engaged in expensive wars, and their countries lacked a strong industrial base.

Exchange Economy

Louisiana colonials compensated for France and Spain's inability or unwillingness to meet their needs by forging a frontier exchange economy. Colonists smuggled, traded, made, or grew goods they could not obtain otherwise. It was a cross-cultural economy, based on local and regional production and trade between Indians, settlers, and slaves along the Gulf Coast and into the Caribbean.

Native Americans quickly recognized potential markets for their goods among the newly arrived white settlers. They moved to supply the colonists' need for food and their desire for furs and hides. As more Europeans and African slaves came to Louisiana, they began to grow their own food. Officials and merchants began to demand greater quantities of furs and hides from the Indians, causing them to neglect their fields in pursuit of game. In some cases, Indians came to rely on Europeans for food supplies. Intertribal trade was reduced or stopped altogether as Indians, lured by European trade goods, reoriented their trading patterns toward white colonists.

Through trade and gift-giving, Native Americans acquired a taste for European material culture. In addition to weapons, Louisiana Indians came to prize and demand European liquor, cloth, glass beads, and other trinkets—things that they lacked, thus their allure. Europeans used their access to the supply of these goods to increase Native American dependency on both the products and their suppliers.

Europeans, Africans, and Indians adopted some of each other's foodways. Whites incorporated such native Louisiana ingredients as bear oil and filé and such foods as maize, beans, squash, pumpkin, wild rice, fruits, and nuts into their diet. Although they preferred wheat to corn, hungry French settlers could not afford to reject any source of food and learned from the Indians how to prepare corn dishes, like the Choctaw *tanfula*, called *sagamité* by the French and lye hominy by the English. Choctaw women made *tanfula* by boiling cornmeal and wood-ash lye.

Africans brought to Louisiana also knew how to grow and prepare corn. In addition, they introduced okra and rice cultivation to the lower Mississippi Valley. In 1718 officials of the Company of the West (a company chartered by the king of France to trade in Louisiana) instructed the captains of two ships bound for Louisiana to buy at least a few Africans who knew how to grow rice as well as some rice seeds.

Slaves pounded rice into a consistency similar to Indian cornmeal and used both grains to make what Le Page du Pratz heard some Louisiana residents refer to as "couscou." The Ursuline nun Marie Madeleine Hachard wrote shortly after her arrival in the colony in 1727: “Rice cooked in milk is very common and we eat it often along with sagamite, which is made from Indian corn that has been ground in a mortar and then boiled in water with butter or bacon fat. Everyone in Louisiana considers this an excellent dish.”

White settlers contributed wheat, sugar, and livestock (mainly cows and pigs) to the Louisiana diet. Both Europeans and Africans were familiar with raising, herding, and branding domesticated animals. They taught these skills to the Indians and worked together to expand Louisiana's ranches and livestock herds.

In the early years of settlement white colonists often survived only by imitating Indian and African hunting and gathering techniques or by relying on native and African hunters to supply them with food. Louisiana Indians knew where to hunt, how to capture game, and which fruits, nuts, roots, and vegetables were edible. One of the major changes in native systems of trade was a shift from hunting animals for subsistence to hunting them for skins. Europeans demanded skins and furs in exchange for trade goods Native Americans desired, so they worked to meet this demand. By the mid-eighteenth century several Louisiana Indian groups had turned to stalking game professionally. Their involvement in commercial hunting disrupted agricultural practices and increased the Indians' dependence on Europeans for material goods.

This network for the exchange of goods and services between natives and newcomers worked well, many times to the detriment of the external commercial economy controlled by wholesale merchants, planters, and crown officials. British traveler William Bartram noted in 1777 that on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain there "are a few habitations [plantations], and some fields cleared and cultivated; but the inhabitants neglect agriculture, and generally employ themselves in hunting and fishing."

Conditions changed toward the end of the colonial period, when an export-directed economy finally supplanted the colonists' frontier exchange economy. Commercial plantation agriculture became profitable, as did the deerskin trade with Native Americans, and Louisiana became more closely integrated into the Atlantic trading system. Economic developments at the close of the eighteenth century only hinted at the boom period that lay ahead for Louisiana. Unfortunately, this material prosperity came especially at the expense of black slaves and Indians.

Commercial Agriculture

Once efforts to find precious metals failed, administrators and colonists turned to the production of crops for export. Little financial gain resulted from commercial agriculture, however, until a boom in cotton and sugar production began around 1800, at the end of the colonial period. Tobacco, indigo, rice, and corn were the major cash crops grown in Louisiana during most of the eighteenth century. Following successive crop failures in the 1790s, cotton replaced tobacco in regions north of Pointe Coupée, and sugar replaced indigo to the south. Writing in 1799, traveler Henry Troth noted this transition:

> **On the West side [of the Mississippi River] for near[ly] 180 miles and the other about 120 miles above Orleans they raise [an] abundance of Rice, Cotton, & Indigo. . . . They likewise raise a good deal of Indian Corn and are getting in the way of raising Sugar Cane pretty plenty and erecting Sugar works. . . . I understand their Plantations consist generally of about 40 or 50 acres.**

By the 1720s some colonists had started to plant and harvest cash crops on large tracts of land. In 1727 a French priest, Father Du Poisson, observed that on a few of the early land grants "at least sixty negroes . . . cultivate[d] Indian corn, rice, indigo, and tobacco. These are the parts of the colony which are most flourishing." The Company of the Indies introduced rice from Africa, indigo from Saint-Domingue, and tobacco from British colonies in the Chesapeake and the Carolinas. Labor shortages, however, hampered large-scale production until later in the century, as British Captain Harry Gordon noted in 1766: "Their want of Negroes keep back the Indigo making."

Settlers must have been frustrated by this lack of labor because Louisiana land was so fertile, especially along the Mississippi delta region. English traveler J. F. D. Smyth wrote in 1784:

> **On this river the soil is so extremely rich, and so luxuriantly fertile. . . .**
>
> **The grand culture and staple here being indigo, this amazing fertility of the soil . . . enhances the value of the quality of it. . . .**
>
> **Old plantations, cultivated by the French fifty or sixty years, produced last year . . . from forty to sixty bushels of Indian corn to the acre.**

Before being shipped, indigo and tobacco required some processing, most of which was done by slaves directly on the plantation. They chopped, dried, and bundled tobacco leaves in units called "*carrotes.*" The manufacture of indigo was more complicated. Jean-Bernard Bossu, a French soldier stationed in Louisiana in the 1750s, related:

> **When the [indigo] plant is ripe, it is cut down and brought to a . . . shed. . . In this shed there are three vats placed in such a way that water from one can run into the next. The indigo leaves and a certain amount of water, in which they are permitted to rot, are placed in the highest vat. When the man in charge of the operation decides, after frequent inspection, that the time is right, he opens a spout, and the water runs into the next vat. There is a precise moment when this must be done, for if the indigo remains in the first vat too long, it turns black.**
>
> **When all the water is in the second vat, it is beaten until the overseer, through his long experience, decides that the process is to stop. The water is then permitted to settle, and the indigo forms a sediment at the bottom of the vat. As the liquid becomes clear, it is run off in gradual stages through a series of spouts placed one beneath the other.**

The indigo is then removed from the vat and is placed in cloth sacks through which the remaining liquid is permitted to seep. It is then dried on boards and cut into little squares, which are packed into barrels for shipment to Europe.

Indigo was in great demand in Europe because it produced a blue dye popular for coloring military uniforms. Louisiana indigo, however, was not as high in quality as that grown in Guatemala and elsewhere. Competition, along with insects and heavy rain, hurt the indigo industry in the early 1790s, and planters in lower Louisiana increasingly turned to sugarcane.

Africans proved to be the most reliable, available, and knowledgeable agricultural laborers in Louisiana. Most crops grown in colonial Louisiana had been cultivated in West Africa for decades, and slaves taken from this region were familiar with them. At midcentury Bossu remarked that "negroes are brought over from Africa to clear the land, which is excellent for growing indigo, tobacco, rice, corn, and sugarcane." Thirty years later, according to J. F. D. Smyth, "the culture of every thing here is done altogether by hand hoes, and manual labour of slaves, without the assistance of horses or oxen."

The Company of the Indies and the French and Spanish crowns wanted to make money off Louisiana and encouraged colonists to test several commercial crops. Early experiments with such exotic tropical products as silk, olives, and pineapples failed, mainly due to the colony's inappropriate climate. French colonists, reluctant to eat cornmeal supplied by Louisiana Indians, also tried to raise wheat, but ended up importing or smuggling it from upper Louisiana and New England.

Natural Resources

The extraction, processing, and shipping of Louisiana's natural resources—most notably timber, furs, hides, fish, and seafood—also proved profitable. Colonials exported increasing quantities of furs and hides from upper Louisiana and lumber from the lower Mississippi Valley. Most pelts were obtained from Indians, with government agents and small traders alike exchanging cloth, beads, guns, iron implements, and liquor for beaver-, bear-, bison-, and deerskins. In 1766 Harry Gordon noted that the "principal Staple" of Louisiana "is their Trade for Furs & Skins from the Illinois."

This trade increased native dependency on Europeans, especially as it became more commercialized toward the end of the eighteenth century. Indians neglected agriculture and crafts to hunt full time and were compelled to fight rival European and Indian alliances on behalf of their white suppliers. On the other hand, rising demand and competition for deerskins and furs gave some Indian nations the opportunity to play traders and the European powers they represented off against one another.

Timber was one of Louisiana's most lucrative staples and a main source of revenue through most of the eighteenth century. In 1768 Governor Antonio de Ulloa urged his superiors in Madrid "to establish a commerce designed to handle the great quantity of lumber of all kinds, which is the principal item exported from here." Louisiana also made and exported timber by-products, as noted by Thomas Hutchins, a British military

observer, in the 1770s: "The French inhabitants, who formerly resided on the North side of this lake [Pontchartrain, before Britain obtained West Florida in 1763], chiefly employed themselves in making pitch, tar, and turpentine, and raising stock, for which the country is very favourable." Export of timber and its products from Louisiana declined after 1785, primarily due to competition from the United States and a reduced market in the war-torn Caribbean. At the same time, demand for wood within Louisiana rose as its own sugar and shipbuilding industry grew.

Lumbering and staple-crop cultivation complemented each other on the plantation. During the slow winter months when there were no crops to tend, slaves cut timber, fashioned it into shingles, planks, beams, barrels, and sugar boxes, and transported it to the river or coast for shipment to the Caribbean sugar islands, which were sorely in need of wood. Some planters also paid runaway slaves (maroons) hiding in the cypress swamps to cut wood and haul it to the river. Hutchins once again provided a detailed description of the lumber industry at its peak in the 1770s:

> **In the autumn, the planters employ their slaves in cutting down and squaring timber, for sawing into boards and scantling. The carriage of this timber is very easy, for those who cut it at the back of their plantations make a ditch, which is supplied with water from the back swamps, and by that means conduct their timber [to market] . . . with very little labour: others send their slaves up to the cypress swamps, of which there are a great many between New Orleans and Point Coupée. There they make rafts of the timber they cut, and float down to New Orleans. Many of the planters have saw-mills, which are worked by the waters of the Mississippi, in the time of the floods, and then they are kept going night and day till the waters fall. The quantity of lumber sent from the Mississippi to the West India islands is prodigious, and it generally goes to a good market.**

The most durable woods native to Louisiana are cedar and cypress, resistant to both rot and insects. Le Page du Pratz considered the qualities of Louisiana timber:

> **White and red cedars are very common upon the coast. The incorruptibility of the wood, and many other excellent properties which are well known, induced the first French settlers to build their houses of it. . . .**
>
> **Next to the cedar the cypress-tree is the most valuable wood. Some reckon it incorruptible; and if it be not, it is a least a great many years in rotting.**

One effect of Louisiana's prosperous lumber industry was the beginning of deforestation, especially around New Orleans. Le Page du Pratz reported:

The cypresses were formerly very common in Louisiana; but they have wasted them so imprudently, that they are now somewhat rare. They felled them for the sake of their bark, with which they covered their houses, and they sawed the wood into planks which they exported at different places. The price of wood now is three times as much as it was formerly.

Basic processing of both timber and hides was done in the colony, and although they exported most of what they produced, Louisianians consumed some locally. Tanners cured deerskins before shipping them. Sawmills located on plantations and in or near New Orleans (a total of thirty-six in the late Spanish period) prepared vast quantities of oak, ash, mulberry, walnut, cherry, cypress, and cedar for foreign markets, as well as for Louisiana's construction and furniture industries. In the 1770s the Spanish government granted Louisiana lumbermen and coopers a monopoly over manufacturing and selling sugar-packing boxes throughout the empire, a privilege formerly held by Cuba. Coopers also used Louisiana woods to make barrels for shipping goods or storing them locally.

Other natural resources exported from Louisiana were fish and seafood, which were packed and shipped to the West Indies. Caribbean planters employed their slaves almost exclusively in sugar and had to import most foodstuffs. Colonists and slaves living in Louisiana, however, consumed most of its fish and seafood, catching and eating it on farms and plantations and selling it at the fish market in New Orleans. According to Thomas Hutchins, the colony's waters were plentiful in the 1770s: "The Mississippi furnishes in great plenty several sorts of fish, particularly perch, pike, sturgeon, eel, and calts of a monstrous size. Craw-fish abound in this country; they are in every part of the earth. . . . A dish of shrimps is . . . easily procured." On a business trip from New York in 1801 merchant John Pintard visited the New Orleans fish market. He found "a great abundance of Fish & very excellent," including catfish, sheepshead, drum, redfish, mullet, perch, turbot, eel, trout, shrimp, crawfish, crabs, and oysters.

Import-Export Trade

Louisianians used earnings from the export of cash crops and natural resources to purchase imported slaves and merchandise, primarily manufactured goods and foods they could not or chose not to produce themselves. These included textiles, furniture and household furnishings, stoneware, silverware, wine, olives, and flour. Thomas Hutchins described the wide variety of staples exported from the colony and their markets:

The produce of the plantations, commencing below the English Turn, and continuing to the upper settlements of the Germans, form a very considerable part of the commerce of this country; the different articles are indigo, cotton, rice, beans, myrtle-wax and lumber. The indigo is much esteemed for its beautiful colour and good quality. . . .

The cotton formerly cultivated, though of a most perfect white, is of a very short staple, and is therefore not in great request. The different sorts of beans, rice, and myrtle candles, are articles in constant demand at St. Domingo.

For most of the colonial period wholesale merchants imported items legally from first France and then Spain and their American colonies. They also purchased goods smuggled in on other European, British, and Anglo-American ships. Frequently unable to obtain manufactures and foodstuffs from the mother country because of neglect or warfare, desperate French and Spanish governors allowed the ships of other nations to sell their wares or did not aggressively prosecute individuals who obtained goods illegally. In the early 1780s J. F. D. Smyth wrote:

The restrictions of the Spanish government on commerce render the prices of all European goods here very much advanced, and they would actually be almost intolerable, if the inhabitants did not contrive to get many things underhandedly from the English, French, and Dutch, by means of an illicit trade.

Indeed almost all the flour that supports New Orleans is imported from Philadelphia.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Spanish crown had lifted many restrictions and permitted Louisiana's trade with other nations and colonies, as long as they paid the required customs duties. Needless to say, smuggling continued.

Also by the end of the century, American merchants and vessels dominated the export-import trade at New Orleans, still a part of Spanish Louisiana. Henry Troth noted this tendency when he wrote in 1799: "The Harbour [at New Orleans] appears to be pretty good. There is at this time about 30 sail of Vessells, nearly half of them American. The Spaniard seems to have but few Trading Vessels here. They have 3 or 4 Gallies and about as many other Armed Vessels." Two years later John Pintard remarked on the extent of imported goods—most from England and the United States—found in well-to-do New Orleans households: "For the want of porcelain, I have seen very common English figure stoneware displayed and that at the very first houses. The furniture in general is very plain, but American manufactured Chairs & tea tables are getting into vogue." Spanish reports on the arrival of ships in New Orleans for the year 1801—the year of Pintard's account—record eighty vessels from the United States, six from England, forty-three from the British West Indies, two from France, four from the French West Indies, fifteen from Cuba, and twenty-nine from the Spanish mainland colonies.

Travelers, merchants, and residents alike recognized New Orleans's importance as a commercial center. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, New Orleans was coveted and shortly obtained by the United States. American geographer William Darby noted the city's prominence and potential on the eve of Louisiana's transfer: "Almost the

total of the production of the industry of its inhabitants, must flow to one common center. . . . This rapidly increasing city will, in no very distant time, leave the emporia of the Eastern world far behind."

Regional Marketing

Regional and local trade affected the daily lives of most colonial Louisianians much more than did the external markets of the import-export trade. To facilitate this regional trade, whites of many nations, Africans, and Native Americans formed cross-cultural exchange networks along the Gulf Coast and throughout the Mississippi Valley. Differing groups traded goods they raised, caught, or made on a personal, face-to-face level, often exchanging elements of their culture—such as language or methods of food preparation—at the same time. With the exception of urban markets like that at New Orleans, the barter system dominated local trade. Scarce hard currency rarely changed hands.

On farms and ranches and in gardens and cultivation plots colonists, slaves, and Louisiana Indians grew vegetables, fruits, grains, and livestock to trade in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Pointe Coupée, and other towns. African-American slaves were the most visible peddlers of food, sent to town to sell poultry, meats, vegetables, and milk on their owners' behalf. Slaves also used this opportunity to market game, fish, or foodstuffs raised on their own plots.

German, Acadian, Isleño (Canary Island), and free black farmers also provisioned local townspeople from their gardens and fields. Living along the Mississippi River, they raised fowl, corn, and vegetables to sell in New Orleans or smuggle across the river to British residents of West Florida. Thomas Jefferys, a British visitor to Louisiana around 1760, referred to the Germans, who had settled upriver from New Orleans beginning in the 1720s, as "the purveyors of the capital, whither they bring, weekly, cabbages, sallads [*sic*], fruits, greens, and pulse [edible seeds] of all sorts, as well as vast quantities of wild-fowl, salt pork, and many excellent sorts of fish."

The central hub of this regional trade network—like that of the import-export trade—was New Orleans. Goods flowed in and out along the waterways that surrounded the city. In the early 1800s William Darby noted:

> **Most culinary vegetables suitable to the climate are cultivated in the parish, and brought into the market in New Orleans. The peach, orange, and three or four species of the fig, are the exotic fruit trees that have been most extensively introduced on the Mississippi. All those fruits are in their respective seasons abundant in the New Orleans market. Apples are mostly brought down the Mississippi, and are in winter and spring sold cheap. Of culinary vegetables the most abundant are pulse of all kinds, cabbages, turnips, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots and lettuce.**

A few decades earlier—in about 1760—Thomas Jefferys described the Germans' pattern of marketing, which was much like that of other Louisiana farmers:

> **They load their vessels on the *Friday* evening, towards sunset, and then placing themselves two together in a pirogue, to be carried down by the current of the river, without ever using their oars, arrive early on *Saturday* morning at *New Orleans,* where they hold their market, whilst the morning lasts, along the bank of the river, selling their commodities for ready money. After this is done, and when they have provided themselves with what necessaries they want, they embark again on their return, rowing their pirogues up the river against the stream, and reach their plantations in the evening with provisions, or the money arising from the produce of their labours.**

Within New Orleans, retailers sold goods from shops throughout the city or from stalls along the levee. Others hawked their wares through the streets, going from house to house. Slaves gathered on the main plaza or the common grounds behind the city (in what became known as Congo Square) to trade, dance, and sing. Indian, slave, and free black women commanded much of this retail activity, as John Pintard observed in 1801:

> **Market hours commence at 6 & are mostly over by 8. Very few people go to the market in person. All is bought by domestics, especially the females, who seem to be the chief buyers & sellers of the place. One meets with wenches with large flat baskets containing all kinds of goods with a measure in her hand traversing the streets & country in all directions. They are very expert at selling—wait upon the ladies with their wares and are very honest & faithful to their employers.**

Engaged in very lucrative trades, bakers and butchers usually owned several slaves who made and then sold breads, pastries, and meats throughout the city. Large herds of cattle, mules, and hogs raised on the grasslands of Attakapas and Opelousas in western Louisiana supplied New Orleans with much of its meat supply. Indian, white, slave, and free black hunters also sold game in the market, which Pintard noted as "in the greatest plenty & reasonable—Wild ducks, Teal, Geese, English Snipes, Rabbits & Squirrels abound."

In an effort to provide inhabitants with fresh, unspoiled, and plentiful meat, government officials tried to regulate the livestock industry and butchers' shops—without much success. Pintard described the meat market at New Orleans:

The flesh market is entirely enclosed, each separate stall, of which there are about 7 or 8, being a distinct apartment with a door & window. This of all places of the kind is the most filthy I have ever seen. . . . As to the Beef it is very indifferent & cut into shreds for soup, no other use being made of it. I do not believe it would be possible for an American to obtain a joint of meat to furnish a dinner after the manner of his own country. . . . Mutton I have seen but once . . . the meat w[oul]d have disgraced even a college dining room.

Pintard praised New Orleans bakers, even though their shops were less than sanitary, too:

The Bread in this city equals any in the world. It was a high relish to my appetite after going into a bakery & seeing a number of Negroes without shirts & almost naked sweating over the kneading troughs. I was rightly served. No person who has any squeamishness ought ever to thrust his nose into a French Cuzine [*sic*]. Ah mon Dieu quelle spectacle! quelle odeur!

During the Spanish regime officials established a central marketplace in New Orleans along the river, where Louisiana Indians had traded long before Europeans arrived and where the French Market stands today. The cabildo (town council) wanted to tax and regulate New Orleans's growing retail industry more effectively. In 1784 it constructed a market large enough to house all traders; the marketplace stood independent of the butchers' market built two years earlier. After the fire of 1788 destroyed the stalls, the cabildo authorized construction of new vegetable and meat markets in the 1790s, along with a fish market in 1798.

Manufacturing and Service Industries

Many items that Indians, whites, and blacks traded in regional markets were made in the colony. Louisianians manufactured goods and provided services they could not get legally from France and Spain or illegally from other countries and colonies. During Louisiana's colonial period most manufacturing involved the processing of crops and natural resources and the production of articles needed in the home: furniture, leather goods, clothing, utensils, and iron implements.

Many colonial Louisiana craftsmen and skilled workers were slave and free African Americans. In 1795 about half of New Orleans carpenters, joiners, shoemakers, silversmiths, gunsmiths, and seamstresses were free blacks. Alabama Indians near Manchac, Louisiana, made baskets and earthenware and sold them in New Orleans, as did the Choctaw Indians and other native groups.

Manufacturers used both locally available and imported products. A furniture maker, for example, might craft a chair from mahogany imported from Saint-Domingue, cover it with leather or deerskin obtained and tanned in Louisiana or with cloth imported

from France, and stuff the seat with Spanish moss gathered from Louisiana trees. In the 1750s Jean-Bernard Bossu, a French soldier, lauded the white and red cedars growing in Louisiana, which "are made into beautiful inlaid work, keep insects away with their odor, and do not rot." Colonial inventories often listed tables, beds, armoires, and other furniture crafted from materials native to Louisiana. Carpenters and masons built many of the homes and buildings in Louisiana using sundried mud bricks placed between cypress posts and roofed them with cypress shingles.

Preindustrial societies like that of eighteenth-century Louisiana depended on artisans—rather than machines—to manufacture the items they used every day. Carpenters, joiners, ironworkers, masons, and caulkers constructed houses, public buildings, fortifications, bridges, and sailing vessels. Shoemakers, hatters, tailors, seamstresses, wigmakers, tanners, and watch- and jewelrymakers fashioned colonials' personal apparel, while joiners, turners, cutlers, gunsmiths, upholsterers, cabinet- and furniture-makers, and gold- and silversmiths manufactured their household effects. Saddlers, blacksmiths, cartmakers, and wheelwrights made getting around in the city and countryside much easier.

Many colonials, especially those living outside New Orleans and other towns, made at least some of the goods they used within their homes, rather than purchasing or trading for them. Household production included spinning thread, weaving cloth, stuffing mattresses and other furnishings, making simple furniture, molding candles, and dying homespun with indigo grown and processed in Louisiana. When he traveled among the Acadians in the 1770s, Englishman Thomas Hutchins observed, “They are sober and industrious; they clothe themselves in almost every respect with the produce of their own fields, and the work of their own hands.” As in other colonial regions, women and slaves controlled most aspects of the household economy.

* * *

Antebellum Economies: Rural and Urban

Agrarian Life

Agriculture was the major economic activity in Louisiana during the nineteenth century, as it had been during the preceding colonial era. Louisiana produced and exported two major commercial crops: cotton and sugar. Sugar production required large amounts of land, labor, and capital, and it was along the fertile river bottoms of the Mississippi delta that one could find the grand, extensive plantations so commonly associated with the antebellum South. Most Louisiana slaves lived and worked on plantations that had twenty or more laborers.

Not everyone living in rural Louisiana was a planter or a slave. Small farmers made up a majority of the rural free population and were much more numerous than the better-known cotton and sugar planters. Some of these farmers grew a surplus of cotton,

corn, vegetables, livestock, or other items and sold it in Louisiana's towns and cities. Others grew only enough for their own needs and had little contact with urban areas.

The Plantation Complex

When most people think of the antebellum South they envision ornate mansions surrounded by lush gardens, slave cabins, cotton gins or sugar mills, and other outbuildings. Louisiana had many of these plantation complexes, although few were as grand as fiction has portrayed them. The largest complexes were mainly self-sufficient, in that slaves produced and manufactured most of the food, clothing, and goods needed on the plantation. Even smaller holdings usually had at least one slave carpenter or blacksmith. Most plantations also reserved one field for growing corn, the basis of the diet for both slaves and livestock.

Slave housing was usually separate from the main plantation house, although servants and nurses often lived with their masters. Slaves lived either in long barracks that housed several families and individuals, or in individual huts. One French visitor to Louisiana in 1831, P. Forest, described the slave cabins he saw on plantations below New Orleans: "The negroes' habitations—made of wood—look like bee-hives, arranged in a semi-circle around the main house. . . . Sometimes there are 40 or even 50 of these cabins. The whole looks like a Camp arranged around the noticeably prominent hut of the leader."

Cotton Cultivation

Cotton was king in Louisiana and most of the Deep South during the antebellum period. Between 1840 and 1860 Louisiana's annual cotton crop rose from about 375,000 bales to nearly 800,000 bales. In 1860 Louisiana produced about one-sixth of all cotton grown in the United States and almost one-third of all cotton exported from the United States, most of which went to Britain and France. Planters and farmers grew cotton in all regions of the state, but the highest yields came from areas north of Pointe Coupée, especially along Louisiana's many fertile river bottoms.

Although Louisianians grew some cotton in the colonial period, they, like other producers, did not find it profitable until Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793. Prior to the cotton gin, laborers separated cotton seeds from fiber by hand, a long and tedious process. Because gins were fairly simple machines that many firms could manufacture, cotton production increased rapidly throughout the South.

Attracted by rising cotton prices and rich, untouched land, cotton producers moved to Louisiana from the older eastern regions of the South. Locals also joined the cotton boom, purchasing additional properties and converting what land they already owned to cotton fields. Cotton prices stayed high until the nationwide Panic of 1837, then declined, but rose once again, although not to their pre-1837 level.

Producers could grow cotton just as profitably on small farms with few laborers as they could on large plantations with many slaves. Thus, many Louisianians raised cotton. Cotton was fairly easy to grow, although bad weather and insects could destroy the crop. As soon as the weather warmed, cotton workers, most of them slaves of both sexes, planted cotton seed by hand along rows of raised soil. Hoe hands thinned out the growing

cotton plants and cleared unwanted grasses until the plants rose tall enough to shade out grass. Cotton bolls grew until the late summer, when the plant died and sap stopped flowing into the boll. Lint inside the boll dried, expanded, and finally popped the boll open.

Pickers harvesting the crop averaged about 150 pounds per day, from sunrise to beyond sundown. Cotton picking was hard, backbreaking, finger-splitting work. Once workers filled their sacks, they emptied them into large baskets and trampled down the cotton in preparation for the next sackful. At the end of the day, pickers carried the seed cotton from field to gin-house, where it was weighed. Ex-slaves often commented that those slaves who did not meet an established quota were usually whipped. In the gin-house animals or steam powered the machines that separated lint from seed. Workers then pressed the lint into four- or five-hundred–pound bales that were shipped to New Orleans and pressed into even larger bales for export.

Sugar Production

Almost all the sugar grown in the United States during the antebellum period came from Louisiana. Louisiana produced from one-quarter to one-half of all sugar consumed in the United States (most of the remainder was imported from Cuba and Brazil). In any given year the combined crop of other sugar-producing states—Texas, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama—was less than five percent of Louisiana's.

Louisiana's sugar harvest rose from 5,000 hogsheads (a large barrel that held an average of 1,000 pounds of sugar) in 1802 to 30,000 in 1823, 75,000 in 1833, and peaked in 1853 at 449,000. Production dropped to 220,000 hogsheads in 1860. Sugar prices were highest in 1858, when hogsheads sold for an average price of $69 each, bringing the total value of Louisiana's sugar crop to $25 million. Most Louisiana sugar was exported by sea to Atlantic ports and upriver to western states. Louisianians refined very little sugar prior to the Civil War. They consumed some of the local crop in its brown sugar or molasses form and distilled it into rum and taffia (a cheap grade of rum).

Although sugar dated from the colonial period of Louisiana's history, it did not become a major crop until the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Colonists first cultivated sugarcane in the 1750s, using a variety called Creole cane that was easily damaged by frost and thus not well-suited to Louisiana, even the lower part. Refugees from Saint-Domingue brought Otaheite or Tahiti cane to Louisiana in 1797. Its principal advantages over Creole cane were increased resistance to cold and greater quantity of sugar. Even more suitable to Louisiana's climate was ribbon cane, introduced in 1817 and cultivated throughout the sugar regions within a few years.

Etienne de Boré was the first Louisianian to risk his resources successfully in an enterprise to turn Creole cane into sugar. To do so Boré employed the technology and skills of experienced Saint-Domingue sugarmakers, who had come to Louisiana at the outbreak of warfare between slaves and masters in 1791. Although initially expensive, Boré's plans paid off, and he died a rich man.

Upon seeing Boré's success, numerous other south Louisiana planters turned their fields to sugar, erected sugar mills, and consolidated the lands of many small plantations

into large holdings. Production in Louisiana was also helped by the Haitian Revolution (1791–1803), which destroyed the world's largest sugar supplier and improved the position of competitors like Louisiana, Cuba, and Brazil.

To grow sugar profitably, planters needed large amounts of land, labor, and capital. The most expensive part of a sugar plantation was the sugar mill, and to justify the expense of a mill, the planter had to process a lot of cane. To grow all this cane, the planter also had to have large quantities of land and workers, most of them slaves. Planting, growing, cutting, and milling cane was extremely hard work; most free workers refused to do this work or could not be relied upon during the busy harvest (called grinding) season. In addition, since the sugar growing and processing took up an entire year, planters could keep their slaves busy all the time.

Sugarcane grows best in Louisiana south of Baton Rouge. It is a tropical plant that yields the most juice when given a year-round growing season, but in Louisiana the cane must be cut before frost kills it. Each fall planters gambled on when to cut the cane: if too early, yields were low, and if too late, the crop was ruined. Compared to cotton, sugar growing involved greater risks but also greater profits. According to an old Louisiana saying, "it took a rich cotton planter to make a poor sugar planter." In antebellum Louisiana the average sugar plantation had a value of $200,000, whereas even the largest cotton plantations were worth only $100,000.

Kidnapped free black Solomon Northup described the planting, tending, and harvesting of sugar on a Louisiana plantation. His master grew cotton but found it profitable to hire out Northup to a neighboring sugar planter:

> **Cutting cane was an employment that suited me, and for three successive years I held the lead row at Hawkins' [plantation], leading a gang of from fifty to an hundred hands. . . .**
>
> **The ground is prepared in beds, the same as it is prepared for the reception of the cotton seed, except it is ploughed deeper. . . . Planting commences in January, and continues until April. . . .**
>
> **Three gangs are employed in the operation. One draws the cane from the rick, or stack, cutting the top and flags from the stalk, leaving only that part which is sound and healthy. . . . Another gang lays the cane in the drill, placing two stalks side by side in such a manner that joints will occur once in four or six inches. The third gang follows with hoes, drawing earth upon the stalks, and covering them to the depth of three inches.**
>
> **In four weeks, at the farthest, the sprouts appear above the ground, and from this time forward grow with great rapidity. A sugar field is hoed three times, the same as cotton, save that a greater quantity of earth is drawn to the roots. By the first of August hoeing is usually over. About the middle of September, whatever is required for seed is cut and stacked in ricks, as they are termed. In October it**

is ready for the mill or sugar-house, and then the general cutting begins.

Young male and female slaves made up the first and second gangs, children and the elderly the third gang.

Artist John James Audubon resided on St. Armand's sugar plantation near New Orleans for a few months in 1821. In his journal he described the harvesting and making of sugar in Louisiana:

The Slaves [are] employed at Cutting the Sugar Cane—this they perform with Large heavy Knifes not unlike those used by Butchers to Chop—some cutting the Head of the plants and others the Cane itself—tying the Last in small fagots with the Tops. Carts with Entire Wooden Wheels drawn by 4 oxen haul it to the House where it is, bruised, pressed, Boiled & Made into Sugar.

The making of sugar required more machinery than any other type of agricultural production in the antebellum period. Sugar-making was very industrial in nature and called for much technology, skill, and capital. Early sugar mills were powered by animals and later ones by steam engines. Many slaves working very quickly and for long hours fed sugar into the mill and operated the machinery.

Constant improvements were made in the manufacture of sugar, especially between 1830 and 1860. One of the most notable technological innovations was Norbert Rillieux's vacuum-pan method of manufacturing sugar. It was much more efficient than the open-kettle process (also known as the "Jamaica Train") popular at that time.

A free black man born in New Orleans in 1806, Rillieux went to Paris for his education and became an engineer, scientist, and inventor. After testing and perfecting his newly invented vacuum evaporator on Louisiana sugar plantations in the 1830s, he patented it in 1843. Rillieux modified the single vacuum-pan process already used in Louisiana, adding another vacuum pan to the system. This method utilized the heat produced by the first pan to boil the syrup in the second pan, thereby conserving fuel. Rillieux further refined his procedure with a third pan and took out a second patent in 1846.

Like many free persons of African descent, Rillieux experienced increasing racial discrimination prior to the Civil War, and he left Louisiana. Rillieux spent the rest of his life in Paris, where in 1881 he patented more efficient technology for beet-sugar production.

Tobacco Cultivation

Louisianians continued to grow tobacco, a crop cultivated here since colonial times, most of it north of the Red River. Antebellum farmers and planters often raised both cotton and tobacco, for they or their slaves could grow and harvest the two crops at different times. Perique, a strong, aromatic tobacco primarily used for flavoring purposes, grew only in St. James and St. John Parishes, upriver from New Orleans.

Planters

Although plantation owners and their families made up only a small part of the agrarian population, they controlled much of the wealth and political power in pre–Civil War Louisiana. Nevertheless, very few realized the myth of the planter family later idealized in novels and movies. Most masters and mistresses had little time to sit on their verandahs drinking mint juleps or cavort from one grandiose mansion to another socializing and dancing. Management of large landholdings, labor forces, and other investments required a lot of time, talent, and luck. During the boom and bust years of the antebellum era fortunes were hard to come by and easy to lose.

Louisiana's planters, both free black and white, were among the wealthiest in the South. The state's most valuable plantations were in the lower Mississippi Valley region, where masters and mistresses supervised vast sugar and cotton estates and many slave laborers. Although most planters were astute businessmen who bought and sold crops and slaves at the best price and reinvested profits in their plantations, many often spent at least some of their earnings on luxurious consumer goods. Fine furniture, tableware, artwork, clothes, and jewelry added to the planter family's comfort, as well as allowed them to show off their wealth to friends and business associates. The wealthiest planters also kept houses in New Orleans, where they stayed during the winter cultural season.

Visitors often commented on the hospitality of Louisiana planters. In 1831 French traveler P. Forest found them "in general, quite open and generous." One dining experience at a plantation near New Orleans solidified Forest's high opinion:

> **There were eight at the table, and three negro women to serve us, besides a small negro boy, who, hidden under the table, was occupied in chasing away mosquitoes from under the marbled petticoats of our hostess. . . .**
>
> **One of the negro women held in her hand a large fan made of ostrich feathers, and which she lackadaisically passed back and forth under the noses of the guests, in order to refresh them by giving them a little ventilation. Another slave was preparing ice for the glasses which she made sure were never empty. . . . It is customary to stay at the table till the coffee, the punch and the *geniévre* (gin) have kindled the heads of all the guests.**

Although men owned and controlled most large holdings in Louisiana and throughout the South, women contributed significantly to the daily operation of plantations and frequently ran them during their husbands' absences. While the master supervised slaves in the fields, the plantation mistress managed the domestic labor force for the entire household, which included not only the great house but also the dairy, gardens, smokehouse, barnyard, and slave cabins. In addition, women administered the production, purchase, and distribution of food and clothing. The plantation mistress also bore and cared for numerous children, heirs to her husband's cotton or sugar kingdom.

Because plantation homes were so far apart, their mistresses so busy, and their masters so protective of white women and honor, planter women lived primarily isolated from one another. Their letters reveal that they tried to maintain ties with friends and family, visiting other plantations or venturing to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and other towns, where they attended balls, concerts, operas, and plays. Slavery and the plantation system elevated the standing of whites within antebellum southern society, and at the same time subjugated women, both black and white. Plantation mistresses exercised some control over their slaves, but the master was "father," both literally and figuratively, to all who lived and worked on his plantation. As such, he held ultimate authority over his dependents, including his wife and children. Southern slave society was built upon a foundation of patriarchy and paternalism.

Some Louisiana planters and large slaveowners were free people of color, frequently referred to as Creoles of color. Like whites, free African Americans used increasing numbers of slave laborers to maintain their agricultural enterprises and make them profitable. According to census data from 1830, forty-three free persons of color in eight sugar and cotton parishes owned 1,327 slaves—almost one out of nine slaves owned by blacks in the United States. Among these free black planters were Jean-Baptiste Meuillon, who farmed 1,240 acres in St. Landry Parish; Andrew Durnford, a Plaquemines Parish sugar planter; and the Metoyer family of Natchitoches, who produced much of the cotton in that area.

Small Farmers and Ranchers

The vast majority of rural whites and free blacks lived on small or modest-sized holdings and owned no slaves or maybe just two or three, with whom they worked side by side in the fields. Many of Louisiana's small farmers and ranchers were Acadians (also known as Cajuns), Germans, Isleños, Anglo-Americans, free African Americans, and American Indians. They raised food and livestock, manufactured clothing and other items, fished, and hunted game for their own consumption. In addition, they sold any surplus goods, as well as small quantities of cash crops like cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco, in neighboring towns and cities.

Urban Life

Louisiana's far-reaching network of rivers and waterways and less numerous carriage roads and railroads linked together its cities, country towns, plantations, and farms. There were close ties between agriculture and commerce, planters and merchants

in antebellum Louisiana. Most activities in urban areas like New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Shreveport revolved around commerce. Manufacturing and services flourished as related enterprises.

Commerce and Trade

Most of the goods that passed into and out of Louisiana and the entire Mississippi Valley region came through New Orleans. During most of the antebellum period it was the second leading port in the United States, behind New York City, and in the 1840s the Crescent City was the fourth leading commercial center in the world in value of exports. Between 1830 and 1860 the value of the city's exports rose from $15.5 to $110 million and its imports from $7.5 to $18.5 million. Exports consistently exceeded imports.

New Orleans was also second only to New York City in tonnage. In 1850 1,131 ships of United States and foreign registry carrying 487,690 tons cleared the port of New Orleans. Comparable figures for New York were 2,673 ships carrying 931,509 tons. From 1820 to 1860 the increase in New Orleans trade (nearly fifteenfold) far outstripped growth of its population (about fivefold). Visitors were struck by the Crescent City's vital, flourishing commercial activity. In 1846 French pianist and composer Henri Herz marveled at the scene before him:

> **Like all foreigners who visit the great Louisiana city, I was seized with admiration on seeing the activity which reigned on the docks, literally covered with bales of cotton, casks of sugar, barrels of flour, sacks of cereals, lumber, tobacco, salted meat, etc. It is a world of commission men, speculators, and dealers who argue feverishly in the midst of this piled-up merchandise. Horses, wagons, Negroes, and whites bustled about in an area six hundred feet wide, where half the business of the United States takes place.**

Antebellum New Orleans was the transfer point for United States and foreign goods. Wheat, corn, lard, pork, furs and hides, whiskey, hemp, and lead from the Old Northwest (today's Midwest) and cotton, sugar, molasses, and tobacco from the South flowed down the Mississippi River and its tributaries on steamboats, flatboats, and keelboats to New Orleans. There products were offloaded and stored in warehouses or transferred directly to oceangoing vessels, and then shipped to the Northeast, Europe, and the Caribbean.

Manufactured and luxury goods, salt, coffee, West Indian and Brazilian sugar, specie, and a wide variety of items entered the Crescent City from foreign and United States ports. They were distributed in New Orleans or shipped upriver. Officials collected duties on all these imported goods at the Custom House located near the levee in New Orleans.

Most river trade was conducted by steamboat. The first steamboat to come down the Mississippi arrived in the Crescent City in 1811, and by the 1850s around three

thousand steamboats docked at New Orleans each year. Britishwoman Frances Trollope was one among many antebellum travelers to comment on the steamboat's visibility in Louisiana: "The innumerable steamboats, which are the stagecoaches and flywagons of this land of lakes and rivers, are totally unlike any I had seen in Europe, and greatly superior to them. The fabrics which I think they most resemble in appearance, are the floating baths at . . . Paris." In 1849 another British traveler to Louisiana, Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, related the nighttime wonder of "the magnificent 'floating palaces' of steamers, that frequently look like moving mountains of light and flame, so brilliantly are these enormous river-leviathans illuminated, outside and inside."

Beginning in the 1820s canals and then railroads more closely linked the Old Northwest with the Northeast and siphoned off trade from New Orleans. By 1845 direct trade between the two northern regions of the United States—rather than down the Mississippi, through the gulf, and up the Atlantic, and vice versa on the return—was well established and broke the Louisiana river monopoly on western trade. Ever-increasing exports of southern cotton, however, helped the Crescent City retain its status as a leading antebellum port.

Commerce in Louisiana was also boosted by the opening of the Red River above Alexandria, from which more plantation products could flow up and down the Mississippi River. Over a five-year period in the 1830s Captain Henry Miller Shreve removed the "Red River Raft," a mass of logs and trees that clogged the main channel of the Red River. In 1837 Captain Shreve also helped found Shreveport, which quickly grew into an important commercial center linking Louisiana and Texas.

Although most transportation in antebellum Louisiana was by water, residents also traveled and traded by overland road and railroad. The Pontchartrain Railroad was the second completed in the United States. It began operation in 1831, carrying passengers and goods between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain. A few years later developers of the West Feliciana Railroad began building a line between Woodville, Mississippi, and St. Francisville, Louisiana.

Prior to the Panic of 1837, which ended railroad building in Louisiana for more than a decade, workers began laying a few other short lines. Among these were the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad, chartered in 1835, and the Clinton and Port Hudson and the Mexican Gulf (between New Orleans and Lake Borgne) Railroads, each twenty-seven miles long. Riding the Mexican Gulf was an adventure in itself; passengers often arrived in the Crescent City with clothes muddy from their efforts to lift the train back onto the track after derailments.

Railroad mania swept Louisiana again in the 1850s, with investors and merchants hoping to capture the California and western trade. The most important railroad in antebellum Louisiana was the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern, started in 1852 and financed with state and city subsidies. By 1860 track reached northward to Canton, Mississippi, where it connected with other lines and tied Louisiana to markets in the South and West. Another major line was the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western, which ran from Algiers (across the river from New Orleans) westward to Brashear City (now Morgan City) on the Atchafalaya River.

Trade in New Orleans

The trade of the city [New Orleans] is conducted, for the most part, by four classes of men. Virginians and Kentuckyans reign over the brokerage and commission business; the Scotch and Irish absorb all the respectable commerce of exportation and importation; the French keep magazines [warehouses] and stores; and the Spaniards do all the small retail of grocers' shops, cabarets, and lowest order of drinking-houses. People of colour, and free negroes, also keep inferior shops, and sell goods and fruits. (Thomas Ashe, 1806)

Commission Merchants

The most influential, powerful, and prosperous businessmen in New Orleans were the factors, commission merchants who acted as agents for planters in Louisiana and surrounding states. There were more than 450 commission merchant and cotton factor firms in New Orleans in 1861, handling the business transactions of over 9,300 planters in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas alone.

Factors based in New Orleans bought and sold goods for planters in the countryside and provided links between urban and rural economies. When planters harvested their crops, they shipped them to their New Orleans factors, who sold the crops at the best prices and earned customary commissions of two and a half percent. Factors also received commissions when they purchased goods, such as furniture and clothes, on the planters' accounts and shipped them upriver. At the end of the year, if planters had bought items of greater value than their crops, they had negative balances and paid their factors interest of usually ten percent on the difference.

Louisiana exported such large quantities of cotton and sugar that some factors specialized in these products alone and were often the most wealthy of all commission merchants. The 1855 directory for New Orleans listed 89 cotton factor firms and 50 firms of sugar and molasses factors, in addition to 181 firms of general commission merchants and 4 firms of tobacco-leaf factors. In that year the Crescent City exported about 60,000 hogsheads of sugar and 1.5 million bales of cotton.

Ancillary Services: Bankers, Lawyers, and Insurance Agents

Bankers, lawyers, and insurance agents provided services that helped make planters' and merchants' commercial dealings more profitable and less risky. New Orleans law firms, numbering seventy-five in 1855, tried to keep their clients' business affairs operating within the limits of the law, and its six insurance companies assumed some of the risks—and profits—associated with shipping large quantities of slaves, agricultural products, and manufactured goods.

New Orleans was the financial center of the Mississippi Valley. From 1835 to 1842 its banking capital exceeded that of New York City, financial leader of the United States in most years during the antebellum period. The Crescent City's twenty-six banking companies in 1855 loaned money for the construction of railroads, expansion of plantations, purchase of goods, and many other enterprises. Because the state's conservative banking rules promoted stability rather than speculation, Louisiana suffered much less from the nationwide Panic of 1837 and other economic downturns than did neighboring states. Louisiana's Bank Act of 1842 was the first law passed in the United States requiring banks to keep a specie (gold or silver) reserve against notes and deposits.

Wholesalers

Wholesale merchants imported goods into Louisiana from foreign countries and other parts of the United States and sold them to retailers in New Orleans or neighboring cities and country towns. Some specialized in one or two items, while others marketed a wide variety of goods. Cécée Macarty, a free black woman, inherited $12,000 and built up a business worth $155,000 by the time of her death in 1845. In addition to her import business in New Orleans, Macarty had a depot in Plaquemines and traded as far west as the Attakapas country. Among the Crescent City's hundreds of wholesale and import firms in the 1850s and early 1860s were G. N. Morison and Company, Wheeler and Blake, and A. Massel, wholesalers of drugs, home furnishings, and luxury goods, respectively. Some firms, like Petellat, Gillet and Company and David Felt and Company, the former in dry goods and the latter in stationery, combined wholesale and retail activities.

Large-Scale Retailers

Large-scale retail merchants bought great quantities of goods from wholesale and import merchants and sold them to the public in their New Orleans and Baton Rouge stores. They also supplied smaller urban retailers, country shopkeepers, planters, and peddlers with merchandise. As with wholesalers, some large retailers sold only one or two types of merchandise, while others offered more selection. In New Orleans many retail shops were located along Canal Street and between the levee and Bourbon Street, one of the city's most active commercial districts.

Small Retailers and Manufacturers

Small retail shops and groceries could be found in almost every antebellum Louisiana city and town. They drew customers and suppliers from the nearby countryside, in addition to catering to urban dwellers. Several small shops were often located next to each other in a row or in one large building, a forerunner of today's strip and shopping malls.

Small retailers also sold their goods in large urban marketplaces or hawked their wares on city streets and door to door. Most market and street vendors were women, African American and American Indian in particular.

Architect Benjamin H. B. Latrobe also described markets along the New Orleans levee in 1819, noting the great variety of products and vendors, in none too flattering of terms:

> **Along the levee, as far as the eye could reach to the West & to the market house to the East [the meat market] were ranged two rows of market people, some having stalls or tables with a tilt or awning of canvass, but the majority having their wares lying on the ground, perhaps on a piece of canvass, or a parcel of Palmetto leaves. . . . White men and women, & of all hues of brown, & of all classes of faces, from round Yankees, to grisly & lean Spaniards, black negroes & negresses, filthy Indians half naked, mulattoes, curly & straight haired, quarteroons [*sic*] of all shades, long haired & frizzled, the women dressed in the most flaring yellow & scarlet gowns, the men capped & hatted. Their wares consisted of as many kinds as their faces. Innumerable wild ducks, oysters, . . . bananas, piles of oranges, sugar cane, . . . trinkets, tin ware, dry goods, in fact of more & odder things . . . than I can enumerate. I cannot suppose that my eye took in less than 500 sellers & buyers, all of whom appeared to strain their voices, to exceed each other in loudness.**

Manufacturers/Retailers

Several businesses manufactured items and sold them in one location, with their main activity the conversion of raw materials into finished products. Among these producer/retailers were bakers, butchers, clothiers, shoemakers, furniture-makers, silversmiths, tobacconists, lithographers, daguerreotypists, printers, and bookbinders. Many New Orleans shoemakers, cigarmakers, ironworkers, furniture-makers, and lithographers were free African Americans.

The large market for silver goods kept New Orleans silversmiths busy. They supplied fine silver products to wealthy urban dwellers and to planters throughout the Mississippi Valley region. In addition, some silversmiths contracted with large retail establishments, like Hyde and Goodrich and D. H. Holmes, to provide them with merchandise. Many leading Louisiana silversmiths were German immigrants. Furniture-makers also flourished in New Orleans.

Skilled Trades

New Orleans was the deep South's major manufacturing center during the antebellum period and home to many skilled workers, among them native whites, immigrants, free blacks, and slaves. Demand for skilled labor was high, as were wages. Competition between whites and blacks for high-paying skilled employment was also strong, although most labor clashes in the antebellum period were over unskilled jobs.

During the 1850s, when large numbers of foreign-born whites entered Louisiana, the ratio of skilled to unskilled workers in New Orleans was much higher among free black men than among Irish and German immigrants. Free blacks participated in most skilled trades and dominated certain ones, such as carpentry, masonry, and barrelmaking. Many free black and slave women plied their trade as seamstresses.

Male slaves were highly skilled as well, working as carpenters, masons, bricklayers, painters, plasterers, tinners, coopers, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, shoemakers, millers, and bakers. The return on skilled labor was so high that many masters apprenticed their slaves to white and free black artisans and then hired them out. Although hired-out slaves usually had to give a large portion of their wages to their masters, they often were able to save enough to purchase material goods of their own choice and occasionally even their freedom. Some even lived in houses away from their masters.

Service Industries

Slaves, free blacks, and whites also worked in Louisiana's growing service industries. In cities like New Orleans and Baton Rouge they were porters, waiters, maids, and cooks in hotels and restaurants, nurses and orderlies in hospitals, barbers and hairdressers in shops and homes, ship stewards, and cab and carriage drivers.

Laborers

During much of the antebellum period slaves and free blacks supplied New Orleans's demand for unskilled manual labor. With the surge of immigrants coming to Louisiana in the late 1840s and 1850s, blacks and whites began to compete more fiercely for unskilled jobs. German and Irish immigrants, in particular, began to take over positions previously dominated by free and slave African Americans.

Changes Wrought by the Civil War and Reconstruction

The violence, destruction, and economic uncertainty that accompanied the Civil War and Reconstruction destroyed many Louisiana plantations and their owners' fortunes. Union and Confederate armies bombarded and occupied plantation homes and outbuildings. Many planters deserted their homes or stayed but could not afford to maintain them according to antebellum standards. Although presidential pardons enabled some Confederate white planters to regain their land from Union officials, declining land values made them almost worthless.

Southern white and free black planters lost much of their capital assets when their slaves were freed. These losses were estimated at $500 million. They also lost such plantation goods as barns, mills, fences, tools, and livestock during the war and to creditors following the war. Auctions were held throughout Louisiana during Reconstruction to sell off plantations their owners could no longer afford.

Travelers to the state noted the declining fortunes, and consequent hospitality, of Louisiana planters. In 1867 Giulio Adamoli observed:

> **On the other side [of Canal Street in New Orleans] live the Creoles, of French descent, aristocratic and proud of their great plantations, which were formerly cultivated by armies of slaves. Their fortunes received a fearful blow when the Negroes were emancipated, and their lands were left untilled. But they still own the soil, and prosperity will again smile upon them when labor has accustomed itself to its new status.**

A few years later Edward King found that “there was no longer the spirit to maintain the grand, unbounded hospitality once so characteristic of the South.”

Once freed, many African Americans tried to acquire their own land and work it with their reunited families. Government promises of "forty acres and a mule" raised their hopes, but these hopes went mainly unfulfilled. Ten years after emancipation barely five percent of former slaves in Louisiana and other ex-Confederate states owned their own land. In addition, those who did own land lacked the capital and credit to develop it.

The Louisiana Homestead Association tried to help the state's African Americans realize the "agrarian myth" by becoming independent small farmers. Congress set up the association as part of the Southern Homestead Act 1866. According to the act, the federal government gave individuals eighty acres of its land in exchange for a filing fee of five dollars and living on the land and making improvements to it over a five-year period. Any individual receiving land had to prove that she or he had not supported the Confederacy.

Few Louisianians took advantage of the Homestead Act and the state homestead association's assistance. For one thing, much of the federal land available in Louisiana was worthless. Homesteading also required capital, which most poor blacks and whites did not have. In addition, the association ran into opposition from white propertyholders who wanted a supply of landless workers to labor on their plantations.

Replacing Slavery on the Plantation

Development of labor systems to replace slavery was one of the major problems that Louisiana planters had to solve during the Reconstruction period. Wartime decline in the number of working-age men, revival of agricultural production after the war, and migration to the cities all contributed to labor shortages, and thus competition. Most whites believed that blacks had to be coerced to work productively. Some planters even augmented their work forces with Asian immigrants.

In occupied Louisiana Generals Butler and Banks instituted a forced wage-labor system, which continued under presidential Reconstruction in the form of the Louisiana Black Codes. This system applied mainly to former slaves; the idea was to keep blacks working on the plantations so that crops could be produced and sold, thereby bringing

economic recovery to the state. Labor edicts and legislation set wage scales and working conditions. Workers had to sign labor contracts of at least one year's duration. Laborers who could not prove that they were employed by showing their contracts or passes were arrested as vagrants and forced to work for individuals or the government.

The daily lives of workers on cotton and sugar plantations varied greatly. After the war the lands of many cotton plantations were divided into smaller plots that workers rented as tenant farmers or sharecroppers. Laborers who in antebellum days lived close together in slave quarters now moved into cabins on individual holdings. Like middle- and upper-class white women, most African-American women withdrew from field labor. They only worked in the fields alongside their husbands and children when necessary, such as during harvest season.

Most Louisiana sugar plantations continued to operate using a gang-labor system, with free-wage laborers rather than slaves. These mostly male workers lived in centralized living quarters much like those they occupied before the end of slavery.

Subsistence Farming

Life did not change much during Reconstruction for Louisianians who farmed for their daily subsistence. Few had owned slaves before the Civil War, and thus did not suffer great losses when slavery was abolished. They continued to produce food and process raw materials for their own use, as well as care for their households.

Urban Labor

During Reconstruction African Americans continued to dominate many urban occupations, especially those involving manual work, such as laborers, servants, and roustabouts (wharf workers and deckhands). Almost half the employed black males in New Orleans in 1870 practiced skilled trades, and many of them had been free before the war. Although black males made up only a quarter of the New Orleans labor force in 1870, they held a greater proportion of jobs in several fields: masons (65.6 percent), cigarmakers (54.5 percent), bakers (52.7 percent), roustabouts (46.1 percent), plasterers (42.7 percent), draymen (37.5 percent), barbers (37.2 percent), gardeners (35.1 percent), and carpenters (30.3 percent). African-American urban laborers faced stiff competition from immigrants and native whites. In 1870 almost half of New Orleans's male labor force was composed of immigrants. Immigrants and native whites increasingly excluded blacks from skilled positions and labor unions.

Women city dwellers, both black and white, continued to labor as market and street retailers, domestic servants, and boardinghouse keepers. In 1861 slightly more than half the boardinghouse owners listed in the New Orleans directory were women; ten years later they numbered almost two-thirds. War widows in particular converted their mansions into boardinghouses, as noted by journalist Edward King in 1874:

> **From the balconies hang, idly flapping in the breeze, little painted tin placards, announcing 'Furnished apartments to rent!' Alas! in too**

many of the old mansions you are ushered by a gray-faced woman clad in deepest black, with little children clinging jealously to her skirts, and you instinctively note by her manners and her speech that she did not rent rooms before the war.

Innovations

Sugar Cooperatives

Sugar cooperatives gained popularity during Reconstruction because they were economical. Many large Louisiana sugar plantations were broken into smaller units following the Civil War. Owners or tenants of these smaller holdings, however, could not afford to build and maintain individual sugar mills. They thus pooled their resources for the upkeep of one mill used by all. This type of cooperative production was modeled on similar arrangements practiced in the sugar-producing areas of Martinique, Cuba, and Brazil.

Marketing Cotton

As Edward King, a writer for *Scribner's Monthly*, observed, the marketing of cotton became increasingly decentralized in the postwar years:

Previous to [the Civil War] a large portion of the business was done directly by planters through their merchants; but now that the plantations are mainly worked on shares by the freedmen, the matter has come into the hands of country traders, who give credits to the laborers during the planting seasons, and take their pay in the products of the crop, in harvest time. These speculators then follow to market the cotton which they have thus accumulated in small lots, and look attentively after it until it has been delivered to some responsible purchaser, and they have pocketed the proceeds.

Before the war large planters conducted business directly with New Orleans factors or commission merchants; after the war growing numbers of farmers sold their cotton to traders and peddlers, who then transported and sold it to merchants in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Many of these country traders were Jews who had connections with Jewish mercantile communities in New Orleans and New York. They were present in antebellum Louisiana towns but gained prominence during Reconstruction and beyond.

In 1871 cotton producers and merchants formed the New Orleans Cotton Exchange to transform postbellum cotton marketing into a more efficient and profitable enterprise. Three years later the exchange had three hundred members and expended "thirty thousand dollars annually in procuring the latest commercial intelligence, and maintaining a suite of rooms where the buyer and seller may meet, and which shall be a central bureau of news," according to Edward King.

Ice Manufacture

The first successful commercial manufacturing of ice in the United States took place in Louisiana during Reconstruction. Beginning in 1864 Louisianians conducted experiments with ice manufacture, and four years later the first plant to make ice on a regular basis opened on Delachaise Street in New Orleans. Louisianians used much of this product to cool their favorite beverages.

Tabasco Sauce

Edmund McIlhenny produced the first bottles of Louisiana's famous Tabasco brand pepper sauce in 1868. Constant skirmishes between Confederate and Union forces engaged in the Teche and Red River campaigns destroyed the rice and sugar crops near Avery Island. Peppers were all that remained in the fields. McIlhenny used these peppers and the abundant salt found at Avery Island to create a tasty seasoning that enlivened the drab postwar fare most Louisianians were forced to eat.

* * *

Conclusion

Economic factors—especially reliance on the production of one or two major commodities for export—have shaped much of the history and character of Louisiana. The dependent nature of Louisiana's economy persisted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, some would argue, even to the present day. Commerce, service, and manufacturing enterprises somewhat diversified the economy and gave it a measure of stability, particularly in towns and cities. Throughout its continuous boom and bust cycles, during periods of plenty and poverty, the economy truly has been the "driving force" in Louisiana's past.

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Chapter 4

Education in Louisiana

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries few Louisianians attended school and many of those who did patronized private institutions of learning. Louisiana was not alone: neglect of public education characterized much of the South through the antebellum period and even into the twentieth century. A majority of early Louisianians were illiterate, or at best could only sign their names. They learned trades and skills at home, in the fields, forests, and waters, or in the shops of master craftsmen. The privileged few received an education in the humanities and sciences from tutors, private academies, schools in the North and Europe, and most frequently parochial schools, especially Catholic ones.

Colonial Education

Members of the religious orders provided most formal education in colonial Louisiana. The Ursuline school in New Orleans, established in 1728, is considered the oldest institution of learning for women in the present territory of the United States. There nuns taught white, black, and Native American girls and women as day students and boarders. In addition to trying to improve the spiritual, moral, and intellectual character of their students, the Ursulines trained some girls to nurse the sick and others to join their order. One of the earliest Ursuline nuns, Marie Madeleine Hachard, described the order's teaching responsibilities in a letter to her father in 1728: "We also conduct a class to instruct Negro and savage women and girls; they come every day from one to two thirty in the afternoon."

Spanish authorities relieved the Ursulines of caring for patients at the military hospital and restricted their duties to education. When Bishop Luis Peñalver y Cárdenas arrived in Louisiana in 1795 to head the new diocese, he praised the school's accomplishments: “Excellent results are obtained from the Ursuline Convent in which a good many girls are educated. . . . This is the nursery of those future matrons who will inculcate in their children the principles which they here imbibe.”

Formal schooling for the colony's male children—at least the wealthier white ones—was supplied by members of the Capuchin religious order, numerous private teachers and institutes, and a public school established by the Spanish government. In 1725 Capuchin Father Raphael de Luxembourg established the first school in Louisiana,

located on St. Ann Street in New Orleans. Funds to support the school were scarce, however, and it closed in 1731.

Enterprising instructors opened schools in their homes and business establishments or went to students' homes to tutor them. The colony's wealthiest individuals also had the option of sending their children to schools in Europe. Many leading bureaucrats, planters, and merchants had extensive home libraries. When Jean Baptiste Prevost, agent of the Company of the Indies in Louisiana, died in 1769, his estate inventory listed over three hundred volumes. Colonel and interim governor Francisco Bouligny's library comprised 148 books in 1800.

The Spanish crown introduced free public education for boys to Louisiana. In 1772 a director and three teachers arrived in the colony, commissioned by a royal order to teach Christian doctrine, elementary education, and grammar. They brought with them a large library and established a school on Royal Street in New Orleans.

Few students attended the Spanish public school, even though it was free. New Orleans's French residents did not want their sons taught Spanish language, customs, history, and law. The French population instead supported eight private schools, with an enrollment of some four hundred students.

The majority of Louisianians could not afford formal education or were excluded from schools because they were black or Indian. Like most people in the eighteenth century, they could not read or write and signed documents with their mark. Whites, slaves, and free persons of color in colonial Louisiana acquired skills by learning from others, sometimes through formal apprenticeship arrangements. Tradesmen were always in short supply in Louisiana; officials and colonists thus relied on trained slaves and free people of color to make items that were commonly used or not easily imported. One concession director wrote from Natchez in 1721 that he needed skilled workers, especially locksmiths, edge-tool makers, and sawyers, to teach their trade to the slaves, "for if we succeed in training and perfecting them, they will, in the course of time, bring . . . large profits." Such apprenticeship training was apparently successful. Physician Paul Alliot noted at the end of the colonial period: "There are many workmen of all kinds at New Orleans. All the men of color or free negroes make their sons learn a trade, and give a special education to their daughters." Owners apprenticed their slaves and parents their children to white and free black artisans, for a period of two to six years.

Antebellum Education

As during the colonial period, most antebellum Louisianians received no formal education at all. Tutors, private academies, and parochial schools trained most of those few who could afford an education. Some parents sent their children, free black as well as white, to the North or to Europe for schooling.

With lax regulations, almost anyone could set up a teaching establishment. Some academies taught the basic subjects of rhetoric, arithmetic, science, geography, composition, philosophy, and languages; others specialized in perfecting musical or

artistic talents. While living in New Orleans in 1821, John James Audubon taught drawing at the rate of two dollars per hour for one student and three dollars for two.

Catholic parochial schools remained the most numerous during the antebellum period as they had during colonial days, but Protestant schools rose in number, especially in north Louisiana. Many Protestant pastors appended schools to their churches and taught with the help of their wives and other congregation members.

Louisiana's first public school system was launched in New Orleans in 1841. From this first effort, public education spread throughout Louisiana, but very slowly and sporadically. By the time the Civil War began few parishes in Louisiana had public schools.

Even in densely populated New Orleans, public schools faced many obstacles. Louisiana and the rest of the South had no tradition of common town schools like those of New England. Moreover, wealthy residents who sent their children abroad or to private schools balked at the idea of paying taxes to provide free education for workers and immigrants. In New Orleans, parents of French or Anglo background wanted their children instructed in French or English, respectively. Despite these varying degrees of resistance, those schools that were established provided white children who attended them with an excellent education.

Division of the city into three municipalities—Latins (French and Spanish) predominant in the First and Third and Americans in the Second Municipalities—in 1836 facilitated implementation of a public school system. Authorities in each municipality set the rules for schools in their district, so that Latins could have French-speaking schools and Americans English-speaking ones.

The model for Louisiana's public school system was that of Massachusetts, which incorporated the plans of education reformer Horace Mann. Many of the early administrators and teachers in Crescent City schools were from New England. In 1855 the city opened its first normal, or teacher-training, school.

John McDonogh, a millionaire planter and merchant who had moved from Baltimore to New Orleans prior to the Louisiana Purchase, gave the New Orleans public school system a substantial financial boost. In his will McDonogh left half his estate to New Orleans and half to Baltimore for the education of white and free black children. When McDonogh died in 1850, his heirs contested the will, which consequently was not executed until 1858. New Orleans established the McDonogh Fund with its settlement of $704,440. Officials used disbursements from the fund to build several public schools, called McDonogh Schools, only one of which was completed before the Civil War.

Lyceums and libraries aided the public school system by providing lectures, books, and study areas for students and the general public. In the United States lyceums were institutions for popular education that sponsored discussions, lectures, and concerts. In 1860 the First District Public School Board had charge of the Lyceum and Library Society. According to the 1860 city directory, its facilities were open "to the pupils of the Public Schools in all districts of the city, and to adult subscribers" from 8:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M. until sunset each day.

Evening schools primarily catered to immigrants and other working-class people. Teachers at these schools helped introduce new arrivals from foreign lands to American values, culture, language, and history. According to *Gardner's New Orleans Directory* of 1860, night schools were "open for persons of all ages . . . employed in some useful occupation during the day." Night-school students could attend classes between 6:30 and 9:00 P.M., from 1 October through 1 April. In the New Orleans area students could choose from eight schools in 1860, four each for females and males. Teachers at the women's schools earned salaries of $40 per month, $50 at the men's schools.

Schooling for African Americans

Authorities excluded all African Americans from Louisiana's public schools and after 1830 even prohibited free persons from teaching slaves how to read and write. However, the free black community of New Orleans, which numbered almost 20,000 in 1840, organized its own schools. The Couvent School opened in 1848 in Faubourg Marigny, where many free blacks lived. Its benefactor was Marie Couvent, a former slave. She stipulated that the large estate she inherited from her husband, a free black carpenter, be used to care for and educate poor black orphans. In 1849 Mme. M. Gignac ran a school for African-American children on Ursulines Street in the French Quarter.

The Catholic church also provided education for African Americans. Carmelite and Ursuline nuns taught free black children in classes separate from whites. In 1842 clerical leaders incorporated the Sisters of the Holy Family, an order of African-American nuns, who took charge of a parochial school on Bayou Road in Faubourg Tremé. Black philanthropist Thomy Lafon assisted the educational mission of the Sisters of the Holy Family by building a home for orphans on Tonti Street in Faubourg Tremé and donating it the sisters in the 1860s.

Higher Education

Louisiana invested much more in higher education than in the basic elements of learning. Many of the so-called colleges, however, were little more than glorified high schools and only admitted men as students. Louisiana's first institution of higher learning was the College of Orleans, which operated between 1811 and 1826 on Ursulines Street in Faubourg Tremé, New Orleans. The state legislature funded the college on the condition that it instruct fifty indigent students free of charge. The state abolished the college in 1826 and replaced it with two primary schools and a central school, which educated graduates of the primary schools.

During the antebellum period state authorities incorporated a number of colleges and academies. Among them were Franklin College in Opelousas, Jefferson College in Convent in St. James Parish, Silliman Female Collegiate Institute (later Silliman College) in Clinton, and the College of Louisiana in Jackson. The state withdrew support for the College of Louisiana in 1845, and Methodist Centenary College took over its campus. Centenary remained in Jackson until 1909, when it moved to Shreveport.

Two major Louisiana universities trace their beginnings to the antebellum period: Tulane University and Louisiana State University. Tulane began as the Medical College of

Louisiana, chartered by the state legislature in 1834 and designated the University of Louisiana by the Constitution of 1845. Occupation and Republican administrations funded the university during and after the Civil War. State monies were never adequate, though, and in the 1880s it became the private Tulane University with a large gift from philanthropist Paul Tulane.

Louisiana State University started as the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning and Military Academy, which opened in 1860 in Pineville, Louisiana. Its first superintendent was William T. Sherman. Sherman and his students abandoned the seminary during the Civil War. The state revived it after the war. After fire destroyed the Pineville campus in 1869, authorities relocated the school to Baton Rouge and renamed it Louisiana State University.

Women's Academies

White women in Louisiana, like most southern white women, rarely had a formal education, and when they did, it was in institutions separate from men. The major universities and colleges did not admit women, and most private and public elementary schools had separate buildings or floors for male and female students. Female religious orders, in particular, educated Louisiana's young women, for example at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in New Orleans. There were other Academies of the Sacred Heart at Convent, Grand Coteau, and elsewhere in Louisiana.

Reconstruction Reforms in Education

Important advances in education took place in Louisiana during Reconstruction. The Constitution of 1868 provided for at least one free public school in each parish, open to students ages six to eighteen regardless of race. Although before 1870 there were few schools in Louisiana outside of New Orleans, by the end of Reconstruction most parishes had schools. The Louisiana school system increased dramatically from 100 public schools in the state in 1868 to over 1,100 in 1872. More white than black students enrolled in these schools during the period of Radical Reconstruction. The Louisiana school system was not perfect under Reconstruction administrations, but it was much better than the one that followed in the years after Reconstruction. After 1877 segregation returned, with very few schools for African Americans.

The Union army of occupation and the Freedmen's Bureau set up the first public schools for blacks in Louisiana, separate from white schools. General Banks established the first of these schools for freedpersons, one of them the Abraham Lincoln School. In July 1865 the Freedmen's Bureau assumed control of the schools, most of them in or near New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Northern churches sponsored freedmen's aid societies, which provided important assistance to bureau schools in the form of money and teachers.

Radical Reconstruction introduced support for public education for persons of all races and classes in Louisiana. In its 24 July 1867 issue the New Orleans *Tribune*

explained why mixed schools were necessary: "So that we have in the future no superior and inferior classes, but only American citizens." Radical administrations, however, put little effort into making that idea a reality. The goal of making schooling available to every citizen failed in part due to inadequate funding for buildings, books, and teachers.

Money from the John McDonogh estate aided the New Orleans public school system. McDonogh was a wealthy commission merchant, planter, and real estate speculator who died in 1850 without immediate heirs and left most of his estate to the cities of Baltimore and New Orleans for educational purposes. New Orleans administrators established the first McDonogh school in the antebellum period and McDonogh schools No. 2 through 6 during Reconstruction. Both black and white students attended these schools, fulfilling McDonogh's wish that black New Orleanians share his legacy.

Most teachers in Louisiana public schools were white and southern born, but some African Americans and northerners also taught here. There was very little integration in schools outside New Orleans, and many whites in both rural and urban areas refused to send their children to schools with either black children or black teachers. The comments of journalist Edward King confirm these tendencies:

> **There are a few mixed schools now [1874] in the State, although the mingling of colors has not been insisted upon. . . .**
>
> **. . . The teachers in those schools exclusively attended by white children are all white; in the few mixed schools there are some colored teachers. The superintendent [of the New Orleans district] said that it would not do to insist upon mixed schools in remote districts, as the people would in that case refuse to have any school at all.**

During Reconstruction all-black and mixed public schools flourished, while attendance at white schools dropped. It seems that African Americans wanted to make up for many years of missed opportunities, a trend that Edward King noted: "The colored children in the public schools manifest an earnestness and aptitude which amply demonstrates their claim to be admitted to them. People in all sections [of the state] have ceased grumbling at the 'school-house taxes,' and that in itself is a cheering sign."

William G. Brown served as the first black state superintendent of education in Louisiana from 1872 to 1876. During his administration enrollment and integration of the New Orleans public schools reached its highest point during the Reconstruction era. Born in Trenton, New Jersey, and educated in the West Indies, Brown was also a member of the board of trustees at New Orleans University and editor of the *Louisianian*.

Administrators established normal schools and other institutions of higher education for African Americans in Louisiana during Reconstruction. To train black teachers they set up the Union Normal School in 1869 on the corner of Camp and Race Streets in New Orleans. In 1873 the legislature granted a charter to Union, improving its

status as the New Orleans University. Normal schools for black teachers also flourished in fifteen other locations in the state, at Shreveport, Baton Rouge, Amite, and other sites.

Under provisions of the federal Morrill Act, authorities received a land grant and established the racially integrated Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1874. In 1877, after Reconstruction, the college merged with all-white Louisiana State University.

Two additional universities, which were more like modern-day high schools, educated Louisiana blacks during Reconstruction and beyond. The Congregationalist American Missionary Association established Straight University in 1869, which merged with New Orleans University to become Dillard University in 1935. In 1871 the American Baptist Home Missionary Society founded Leland University in New Orleans. Leland had an integrated faculty as well as student body.

Continued Popularity of Private Schools

The long tradition of support for parochial and private schools continued in Louisiana during Reconstruction, boosted by white opposition to integrated public schools. The number of private schools especially climbed in New Orleans: in 1864 the Crescent City had 140 nonpublic schools enrolling 5,000 male and female pupils; by 1877 there were 222 nonpublic schools with 19,401 students. In Baton Rouge both during and after the war, a majority of white children attended private schools.

* * *

Conclusion

Although formal schooling was not an important part of the everyday life of a majority of colonial and antebellum Louisianians, the learning of skills and ability to at least sign one's name was. Education in a classroom setting was not widespread across the South, whether supported by public funds or private church and institutional monies. Louisianians of high social status and economic means, however, patronized the state's few centers of higher learning or sought education in the North or abroad.

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Chapter 5

Leisure, Recreation, and the Arts: High and Popular Culture in Louisiana

William Darby, an observer of New Orleans life in the early nineteenth century, captured the ambiance of the city in one sentence: "There are few places where human life can be enjoyed with more pleasure, or employed to more pecuniary profit." Although most Louisianians—whites, African Americans, and Native Americans—worked year-round to feed and clothe themselves, they also made time to enjoy each other's company in more pleasant settings. They strolled along levee promenades and waltzed across ballroom floors. Residents and visitors of all nationalities also met at taverns and gaming tables, playing such illegal games of chance as "twenty-one" and canasta. Consequently, most of them spent time in jail with one another, too. With few exceptions, persons of all colors and classes worked and played together, by choice and necessity.

Leisure activities fostered cultural exchange. In the frontier surroundings of colonial Louisiana, Native Americans, free and enslaved African Americans, and whites commonly mingled in streets, markets, taverns, dancehalls, churches, and private homes, particularly in urban areas. There they exchanged dance steps, musical forms, language patterns, religious practices, and even social values. Persons of various races, classes, and legal statuses engaged in social—and what their society deemed antisocial—activities together, even though officials made sure that each person was aware of his or her place in that society. All contributed to Louisiana's diverse population and culture to create what remains even today a unique milieu.

Colonial Louisianians' love for music, dance, and performance continued and even flourished in the antebellum period. Newcomers and travelers to the state traced this emphasis on amusement to the Latin nature of south Louisiana, New Orleans in particular.

Long held by France and Spain, Louisiana practiced what is known as the "Continental Sunday." Like Europeans, most Catholic residents attended Mass on Sunday morning and socialized in the afternoon and evening. This recreational Sunday shocked Protestants and visitors from the North, especially New England. On one Sunday in 1821 the naturalist and painter John James Audubon observed: “The Levee [at New Orleans] early was Crowded by people of all Sorts as well as Colors, the Market, very aboundant[,] the Church Bell ringing [and] the Billiard Balls Knocking, the Guns heard all around. What a Display this is for a Steady Quaker of Philad[elphi]a or Cincinnati.” Another scandalized New Englander remarked of New Orleanians, "They keep Sunday as we in Boston keep the Fourth of July." In the mid-1830s Henry Didimus described New Orleans's Sunday habits to a northern friend: “It is the Sabbath! A Sabbath in New

Orleans! here the noisiest day of the week—so full of strange contrasts . . . of the grave and gay, saints and sinners, each engaged in his vocation. . . . It is not the Sabbath of New England."

For many Louisianians—rich and poor, black and white—social diversions remained the same before, during, and after the Civil War. Resistant to change, social leaders made northern officials and businessmen conform to Louisiana customs. When in 1874 the reform legislature enacted a Sunday-closing law that affected saloons, theaters, and gambling houses, the attorney general ruled the law illegal and refused to enforce it. Political turmoil, economic downturns, and drastic changes for blacks, at least on paper, altered social life during Reconstruction, but for most whites, life went on very much as it had before the war.

Theater and Opera

Colonial Louisianians patronized the one theater that opened in New Orleans in 1792. During the Spanish period proceeds from the lottery and licensing fees for public dancehalls financed upkeep of this playhouse, called *El Coliseo* (the Coliseum). Listed in the census returns for the 1790s were comedians, musicians, and actors who performed until 1803, when city officials razed the dilapidated building that housed the theater. By the next year, however, a white Saint-Domingue refugee had remodeled and reopened the popular venue, which was segregated by color: whites sat on the lower floor and nonwhites in the balcony. As was true of most forms of entertainment, "the fullest and most brilliant audience is always collected together on a *Sunday* evening," noted traveler Christian Schultz in 1808.

Entertainment issues sometimes became the center of political struggles. In 1802 members of the cabildo confronted Governor Manuel de Salcedo with demands for a larger, more centrally located box in the *Casa de Comedias*, or theater. As the city had grown in population and economic power, the cabildo had also expanded from six to twelve members and pressed for greater autonomy and influence in colonial politics. The theater question irritated the governor, the highest crown official in Louisiana, who told cabildo members to ignore such trivial matters. Increasingly sensitive to any slights to its institutional dignity or prerogatives, the cabildo pointed to the Havana cabildo's spacious box in its playhouse. Salcedo responded by suspending and arresting four cabildo members. The theater's owners ordered it torn down the next year, thereby ending the controversy, if not the animosities it occasioned.

One of antebellum America's great theater towns, New Orleans was also the earliest, and for many years the only, city on the American frontier to boast regular opera productions. By 1840 no fewer than five theaters graced the Crescent City. Throughout the antebellum period, residents and visitors to New Orleans could attend plays in either French, English, or German.

The playhouse reconstructed in 1804 was renamed the St. Peter Street Theater. Workers completed the St. Philip Street Theater in 1807, with a seating capacity of 700. Productions at both the St. Peter and St. Philip theaters were in French. The first American theater opened in 1823 on Camp Street. In 1839 German immigrants built a theater on Magazine Street in New Orleans to offer German plays. The *Théâtre de la Renaissance,* which opened in New Orleans on 19 January 1840, had an all-black cast, orchestra, and musical director. With a clientele primarily made up of creoles, the Orleans Theater had adjoining ball- and supper-rooms, which conveniently brought together several recreational pursuits in one location. A frequent performer at the Orleans Theater was Eugène V. Macarty, an African-American born free in New Orleans and trained in France.

Louisiana native Adah Isaacs Menken earned acclaim as an actress on both sides of the Atlantic. A child prodigy who spoke several languages, wrote poetry, and sculpted, Menken made her acting debut in Shreveport in 1857 at the age of twenty-two. She performed in most major United States cities, London, and Paris. During her short lifetime of thirty-three years, Menken's four marriages and divorces gained her about as much notoriety as her acting.

The French Opera House opened in 1859 on the corner of Bourbon and Toulouse Streets in New Orleans, with seating for 2,078 guests. Laborers and craftsmen constructed it in less than six months by working night and day. City authorities gave builder Etienne Villavaso permission to burn large fires in the streets to provide light for workers. Following its opening on 1 December 1859, the *New Orleans Daily Picayune* reported: "Of course, the opening of the New French Opera House was the event of the evening, and it was not a surprise to any one, we imagine to find it as full as it could hold, from the first row parquet to the very ceiling."

Popular during antebellum times, opera and theater continued to attract audiences during occupation and Reconstruction. In addition, traveling theatrical groups followed the rural-town circuit and occasionally played in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. Although considered "places of public character" according to Article 13 of the 1868 constitution, which forbade racial discrimination, operas and theaters ignored the law and retained racially segregated seating patterns. Only the severe Depression of 1873 closed the opera, as Edward King reported:

> **Perhaps one of the most patent proofs of the poverty now so bitterly felt among the hitherto well-to-do families in New Orleans was apparent in the suspension of the opera in the winter of 1873. . . . Opera entailed too heavy an expense, when the people who usually supported it were prostrate under the hands of plunderers, and a comedy company from the Paris theatres took its place upon the lyric stage.**

Dancing

Dancing was by far the most popular form of cultural play, a sport in which Native Americans, Europeans, creoles, and African Americans alike participated. Eating, drinking, and dancing all combined at private fêtes, where according to Pierre-Louis Berquin-Duvallon, a Saint-Domingue planter and writer who lived in Louisiana from 1799 until 1802, "stupid uproar reigns . . . in the assemblage of the guests who go thither without any order. I can not accustom myself to those great mobs, or to the old custom of the men . . . of getting more than on edge with wine." He observed that such fêtes enlivened the slow, dull, inactive winter months in urban and rural areas and that all sorts of persons participated: "They have an extreme passion for dancing and would pass all their days and nights at it. . . . During the winter that passion is at its height. Then, they dance everywhere, if not with much grace, at least with great ardor; and the fiddlers are then always kept busy."

Dancing usually preceded, accompanied, or followed Native American tribal sporting events, feasts, and religious ceremonies. French soldier Jean-Bernard Bossu emphasized the "great physical activity" of Louisiana Indians that he observed in the 1750s. Their penchant for "dancing, ball-playing, hunting, fishing, and fighting, overheats them so that they perspire and thus eliminate body waste," a practice Bossu admired. With music in the background, Native Americans performed as groups, pairs, and individuals. Choctaw ball players danced in teams to the beat of drums. Their songs enlivened *toli (raquette),* chunkey, and other stickball games and resembled the fight songs of today's college teams. Like Africans, Louisiana Indians patterned their songs in the call-response form.

Within the city and on plantations outside New Orleans slaves met on Sundays or after hours on work days to join in African and Caribbean dances. They also danced and sang during parades, religious processions, funerals, feast days, and almost any other social celebration. Slave gatherings at Congo Square, then called *Place des Nègres,* were an outgrowth of marketing activities conducted first by Native Americans and then by African Americans on this site. In addition to playing raquette and other games there, Africans congregated on the commons behind the city to participate in music and dance forms that combined elements of African, Indian, and European cultures, an "Afro-American meld" unique to New Orleans.

Such assemblages in New Orleans and on nearby plantations were so widespread as to incite official concern. Promulgated in Louisiana in 1724, the French *code noir* forbade large gatherings of slaves, especially those that attracted slaves from several plantations. Indicating an inability to enforce these provisions, Governor Miró in 1786 prohibited slave gatherings unless the master gave permission; no slaves from other plantations could attend without written permission from their masters. Miró also curtailed until after vespers in New Orleans *"los tangos, o bailes de Negros"* [slaves dances] that ordinarily convoked in the *Plaza de Armas* on fiesta days. In part, Miró responded to a pastoral letter in which the bishop denounced slave dancing in the *Place Congo.*

Throughout the colonial period Louisianians cavorted at private parties and down city streets, but toward the end of the Spanish period they began to patronize public, for-profit dancehalls where licensed operators offered gaming, drinking, and dancing in one location. In fact, these ballrooms gained such popularity that in 1800 the attorney general asked the cabildo to reduce the number of public dancehalls and subject those remaining to strict regulation. He expressed concern over growing incidents of disorderly conduct. Competition for patrons also increased. One lessee of a public dancehall for white persons, don Francisco Larosa, requested that the governor order all dances—whether they were sponsored by Larosa or not—be held in his hall.

Free blacks in New Orleans organized balls that attracted all sorts of persons and increased in size and frequency as the number of free blacks in the city rose. The dances allowed free persons of African descent to vent emotions and stress, provided them with opportunities to plan events over which they had primary control and responsibility, and encouraged a sense of camaraderie and group identity. Free blacks valued these public dances and continually petitioned the cabildo for permission to hold them on a weekly basis. Just as regularly, the attorney general, claiming to act in the public interest, requested that the governor and cabildo prohibit the dances. He usually did not succeed.

Two free black militia units presented one of these petitions in 1800. The men had just returned from an exhaustive victorious expedition against William Bowles at Fort San Marcos de Apalache in West Florida, and their spokesmen requested weekly dances at don Bernardo Coquet's house as a reward. To avoid interference with the white dances that took place on Sundays, free persons of color offered to hold their dance on Saturdays, from November through the end of the carnival season. Well aware that while they were away at Apalache some unsavory characters had soiled the reputation of the free black balls, the petitioners asked that city police forces patrol Coquet's house on Saturday nights to prevent disturbances. (Previous mischievous behavior included provoking arguments; chewing and spitting out vanilla beans, which produced an intolerable odor; placing chewing tobacco on women's seats to stain their skirts; and "finally, doing and inventing as many evil things as can be imagined.") The petitioners promised to reward the sergeant in charge for maintaining discipline. In closing, the petitioners noted that throughout the kingdoms of the Americas as well as of Europe, the carnival season permitted these types of diversions. The cabildo granted their request and renewed it again the following year, despite the attorney general's strong protest.

Although local authorities preferred separate dances for whites, free blacks, and slaves, residents of New Orleans often amused themselves in mixed company. Free persons of color provided the music at many white gatherings. Masked slaves and free blacks occasionally disrupted carnival balls, their identities hidden behind ingenious disguises. Officials complained that slaves attended free black balls without their owners' permission. Future mayor of New Orleans James Pitot was especially critical: “A public ball, where those who have a bit of discretion prefer not to appear, organized by the free people of color, is each week the gathering place for the scum of such people and of those slaves who, eluding their owner's surveillance, go there to bring their plunder.”

Although persons of different colors and classes continued to meet on the dance floor, the general trend was toward separation of the races, particularly among females. White proprietors usually maintained separate ballrooms or at least held dances on different nights for white and nonwhite patrons. Division of services began in the late Spanish period and intensified under United States rule as territorial and state leaders tried to mold Louisiana race relations to fit those of other southern slave states. One visitor to the young territory of Orleans, Thomas Ashe, remarked:

> **The women, who in point of manners and character have a very marked superiority over the men, are divided into two ranks—the white and the brown. They have two separate ballrooms in the city. At the white ballroom no lady of colour is admitted.**
>
> **. . . Notwithstanding the beauty and wealth of these women [of color], they are not admitted, as I before remarked, to the white assemblies. They have therefore a ball room of their own, which is well attended, and where as beautiful persons and as graceful dancing is witnessed, as in any other assemblies of the sort whatever.**

White apprehensions of subversive activity among large groups of African slaves and free blacks during and after the Saint-Domingue rebellion frequently forced black dancing into back rooms or to the outskirts of the city. In 1808 traveler Christian Schultz met "twenty different dancing groups of the wretched Africans, collected together [in the rear of New Orleans] to perform their *worship* after the manner of their country."

Such gatherings became even more popular and frequent as the slave population grew during the antebellum period. Rural slaves assembled on neighboring plantations and farms and urban slaves met at market sites and other open areas to dance. Although increasingly more Louisiana slaves were born in the United States than in Africa, they retained African customs and fused them with American ones to create new African-American dance steps, lyrics, music, and instruments.

White observers and sometimes even enslaved persons themselves described slave dances. Solomon Northup, a free black man kidnapped from New York and sold into slavery in the Red River region of Louisiana, wrote about slave dances during the Christmas season:

> **When the viands have disappeared, and the hungry maws of the children of toil are satisfied, then, next in the order of amusement is the Christmas dance. My business on these gala days always was to play on the violin. The African race is a music-loving one, proverbially; and many there were among my fellow-bondsmen whose organs of tune were strikingly developed, and who could thumb the banjo with dexterity. . . .**

. . . Oh, ye pleasure-seeking sons and daughters of idleness, who move with measured step, listless and snail-like, through the slow winding cotillon, if ye wish to look upon the celerity, if not the "poetry of motion"—upon genuine happiness, rampant and unrestrained—go down to Louisiana and see the slaves dancing in the starlight of a Christmas night.

Slaves also often had Sundays off. African Americans from the cities and surrounding countryside gathered at large expanses near the edge of town to exchange goods, news, and dance steps. In or near New Orleans two of the most popular sites were Congo Square and the "Camp," where Bayou St. John met Lake Pontchartrain. In 1819 New England architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe came upon a typical Sunday scene at Congo Square, where five or six hundred persons of African origin or descent gathered for music and dance:

The music consisted of two drums and a stringed instrument. An old man sat astride of a cylindrical drum about a foot in diameter, & beat it with incredible quickness. . . . The other drum was an open staved thing held between the knees. . . . They made an incredible noise. The most curious instrument, however, was a stringed instrument which no doubt was imported from Africa. . . . The body was a calabash. . . .

A man sung [*sic*] an uncouth song to the dancing which I suppose was in some African language, for it was not French, & the women screamed a detestable burthen on one single note. The allowed amusements of Sunday have, it seems, perpetuated here those of Africa among its inhabitants.

Fifteen years later the dances, music, and instruments had changed little, as seen from James R. Creecy's impressions of an 1834 visit to New Orleans:

The lower order of colored people and negroes, bond and free, assemble in great numbers in Congo Square, on every Sunday afternoon in good weather to enjoy themselves in their own peculiar manner. Groups of fifties and hundreds may be seen in different sections of the square, with banjos, tom-toms, violins, jawbones, triangles, and various other instruments from which harsh or dulcet sounds may be extracted; and a variety, indeed, of queer, grotesque, fantastic, strange, and merry dancers are to be seen, to amuse and astonish, interest and excite, the risibles and wonder of "outside barbarians," unskilled in Creole or African manners and customs.

Like most nineteenth-century whites, Latrobe viewed Africans and African Americans and their cultures as inferior to his own.

French citizen P. Forest visited Louisiana in 1831, a few years before Creecy. His description of slave dances at the "Camp" near Lake Pontchartrain reveal continuing African retentions, such as the use of drums to provide a beat and flags to distinguish different groups. Forest also noticed that blacks and Indians socialized together, a practice dating from Louisiana's colonial days.

Slaves, free blacks, and whites also attended more formal dances held in Louisiana's many theaters, public ballrooms, and private homes. Most places of public entertainment segregated their patrons by race. Theaters sold less desirable seats to slaves and free persons of color, confining them to balconies or galleries. As in the later part of the colonial period, ballrooms held dances for whites and free people of color in separate halls or on different nights of the week. P. Forest criticized this customary segregation, calling it a "cruel and barbarous prejudice."

Most famous of all were the quadroon balls, at which white men met young light-skinned women of color. According to legend, free black mothers placed their daughters with eligible white bachelors (a practice called *plaçage* by the French). These men agreed to provide their *placées* with suitable housing, clothing, and spending money. Even though Louisiana law prohibited marriages between whites and blacks, several of these arrangements resulted in long-term relationships and many children. During her 1827 visit to New Orleans Frances Trollope commented on the effects of *plaçage:*

> **Of all the prejudices I have ever witnessed, this appears to me the most violent and the most inveterate. Quadroon girls, the acknowledged daughters of wealthy American or Creole fathers . . . are not on any terms admissable into the society of the Creole families of Louisiana. They cannot marry . . . yet such is the powerful effect of their very peculiar grace, beauty, and sweetness of manner, that unfortunately they perpetually become the objects of choice and affection. . . . The unions formed with this unfortunate race are said to be often lasting and happy, as far as any unions can be so to which a certain degree of disgrace is attached.**

Patrons of the popular Tivoli, located on Bayou St. John in the early 1800s, found little or no race and class discrimination, as Thomas Ashe related:

> **Though the places of amusement are separate in the city [New Orleans], for the distinctions in society, still there is an assembly held every Sunday evening at the Bayou, about two miles out of town, where all the beauty of the country concentrates, without any regard to birth, wealth, or colour. The place of entertainment is called Tivoli.**

. . . I went to Tivoli, and danced in a very brilliant assembly of ladies. The Spanish women excel in the waltz, and the French in cotilions.

Although many Protestant churches in rural north Louisiana discouraged dancing, Acadians, or Cajuns, in the south continued to enjoy *fais-do-do*s and *bals de maison* as they had during colonial times. Entire families attended these gatherings, with the children going to sleep while the adults danced late into the night. At the *fais do-do* there would be a *parc aux enfants* or children's room where a volunteer babysitter (usually a community grandmother) would croon lullabies to *"faire dodo"* (make the children nod off to sleep). This practice gave the *fais do-do* its name. Indigenous Cajun music in the nineteenth century was a mixture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French pieces preserved by oral tradition, along with newly composed local songs and dances.

Louisianians kept their love for dance alive, even in the most troubled of times that characterized the Civil War and Reconstruction. Like most recreational activities, the best-attended dances took place on Sundays. Louisianians hosted masquerade balls during the carnival season and masked and unmasked balls throughout the year.

Carnival Celebrations

The traditional carnival season runs from Twelfth Night (6 January) through Mardi Gras and is followed by Lent. Louisiana settlers transferred familiar European and Caribbean carnival practices to the colony, adapted them to their new environment and social circumstances, and mixed them with African and Native American traditions of religious celebration. Scholars most commonly identify such hybrid varieties of carnival festivities in or near major port cities like New Orleans.

Although not as elaborate as today's carnival, colonial customs sometimes exceeded the control of local authorities. Take for example the attorney general's anxiety in 1781. Because of Spain's military involvement in the United States War for Independence, a multitude of troops, ships' crews, free blacks, and slaves had congregated in New Orleans. With so many strangers in the city, officials found it difficult to identify the race of masked revelers, so the attorney general asked the cabildo to forbid free persons of color and slaves to wear masks or feathers and to mimic whites during the carnival season. These feathered celebrants are believed to be the precursors of Mardi Gras Indians and point to cultural exchange between Native Americans and African Americans in Louisiana, as well as to continuing West African and Caribbean *Petro-Rara* traditions. Indeed, historian Daniel H. Usner Jr. notes that "hundreds of Indians gathered [on the outskirts of New Orleans] in late winter to request gifts from officials and to join in the celebration of carnival." In the view of leading white citizens, however, such popular festivity posed a problem of public order, a complaint with which Mardi Gras revelers are very familiar today.

During the antebellum period carnival balls and parades started taking on their modern forms. Groups of maskers began using vehicles to parade around 1837, and in 1857 nineteen men established the first formal carnival organization in New Orleans, the Mistick Krewe of Comus, modeled in part on the Cowbellions of Mobile, which originated in 1831. A visitor to the Crescent City in 1846, Englishman Sir Charles Lyell, captured the masking, music, and mayhem of Carnival. For one day at least, people of many races and classes played together, seemingly to the dismay of outsiders from the northern United States:

> **It was the last day of Carnival. . . . There was a grand procession parading the streets, almost every one dressed in the most grotesque attire, troops of them on horseback, some in open carriages, with bands of music, and in a variety of costumes—some as Indians, with feathers in their heads, and one, a jolly fat man, as Mardi Gras himself. . . . The strangeness of the scene was not a little heightened by the blending of negroes, quadroons, and mulattos in the crowd; and we were amused by observing the ludicrous surprise, mixed with contempt, of several unmasked, stiff, grave Anglo-Americans from the North, who were witnessing, for the first time, what seemed to them so much mummery and tom-foolery.**

Although Comus, the oldest of Mardi Gras krewes, suspended operations from 1862 through 1865, Louisianians resumed their Mardi Gras celebrations during Reconstruction. Journalist Edward King noted, "Carnival keeps its hold upon the people along the Gulf shore, despite the troubles, vexations, and sacrifices to which they have been forced to submit since the social revolution [Reconstruction] began." During Reconstruction several new practices made their way into traditional Mardi Gras lore. The year 1870 saw the introduction of the Twelfth-Night Revelers, and two years later Rex made his first appearance.

Many of the Reconstruction-era Mardi Gras costumes, parades, and balls contained political messages intended to poke fun at Radical policies and politicians. Most notable was that of Comus's 1873 "Missing Links to Darwin's Origins of the Species," in which members dressed as parts of Darwin's evolutionary chain, ridiculing not only Darwin's ideas but also several hated Reconstruction figures.

Those who rode in parades and danced at the krewes' balls gave New Orleans Mardi Gras an increasing elitist and secretive character. As early as 1867 the Italian visitor Giulio Adamoli observed:

> **No one knows the promoters. They call themselves the "Mystic Crew," a secret society whose existence is never betrayed except at this popular festival and the grand ball which follows. Invitations to**

the latter are issued by the Mystic Crew without other signature, and are in great demand among ladies of the highest circles. . . . To tell the truth, this mania for secrecy seems to me just a trifle childish.

The crowds that gathered to watch the parades, however, were made up of people of all races and classes. Writing in 1874, Edward King applauded Mardi Gras in New Orleans: "White and black join in its masquerading, and the Crescent City rivals Naples in the beauty and richness of its displays."

Religious Observances

Colonial Louisianians often celebrated holy days and even sacraments with masses, processions, parties, and parades. The white merchant don Juan Antonio Lugar and his common-law wife, a free black woman named María Juana Prudhomme, celebrated their daughter 's baptism with a large party in their home in 1793, with most leading white New Orleanians present. Members of the free black militia marched in the annual parade to mark the holy day of Corpus Christi. Catholics in the colony also celebrated *La Semana Santa* or Holy Week in tandem with their counterparts in France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. In 1800 Bishop Luis Peñalver y Cárdenas informed the cabildo of the hours he had arranged for Holy Week services.

It appears that weekly masses were not as popular. According to Bishop Peñalver y Cárdenas in 1795, no more than about a quarter of the population attended Sunday mass. A few years later French traveler C. C. Robin remarked that "women, Negroes, and officers of the governor's staff are almost the only people who go to church." New York merchant John Pintard wrote to his wife in 1801 that the city was defended by a series of forts named after Catholic saints, "so that the city is encircled by Saints alth[ough] it may be filled with Heretics & sinners."

Church fathers constantly strove to attend to the moral character of New Orleans's notoriously decadent, disparate population in whatever way possible. Church-sponsored attempts to direct behavior included planned festivities that enticed parishioners into the church and away from "depraved" forms of recreation. For the spiritual benefit of the town the bishop in 1796 arranged to hold a fair *(feria)* in the cathedral on Sundays during Lent. He urged town magistrates to attend these fairs and establish a commendable standard of conduct for the hordes of people expected to attend. Cabildo members agreed to attend but on an individual basis rather than as a body; nonreligious activities filled their Sundays, too. Apparently parishioners preferred to be entertained rather than subjected to pious preaching in their church, and their spiritual keepers recognized this preference. More than one visitor to New Orleans admired “the policy of such an accommodating system of religion, which, while it provides for the *salvation of the soul*, takes care it shall not interfere with the more important *pleasure of the body”* (Schultz, 1808).

In some cases the general populace assumed responsibility for regulating moral conduct. This censuring took the form of a charivari, a noisy, masked demonstration designed to humiliate wrongdoers in the community. Neighbors often staged a charivari when there was an age or wealth disparity in a marriage: an elderly or rich man marrying a very young or poor woman, or vice versa. Such a marriage upset the usual order and withdrew an otherwise eligible and prized member out of the pool of single persons. Society thus demanded retribution in the form of public embarrassment, money, and foodstuffs.

Few direct references to charivaris exist for colonial Louisiana, but at least one woman sought relief from the experience. In 1803 Luisa Julia Saulet, the widow Lambert, married Luis Chobain, apparently considered a desirable mate by others in the community. As a widow, Saulet wanted to avoid "the merriment of a charivari" and asked the ecclesiastical tribunal for dispensation from the three required marriage banns. The tribunal granted her request. One year later Luisa de la Ronde, the widow of don Andrés Almonester y Roxas, married a man seven years younger than she. Disapproving locals subjected the couple to a three-day charivari. Widow Almonester curtailed the spectacle by forfeiting a large sum of money to the crowd, who in turn donated it to the orphans of New Orleans.

Musicians

African and European music came together on the streets and in ballrooms, creating what historian S. Frederick Starr calls a "musical democracy." Music accompanied or was the centerpiece of most forms of entertainment in New Orleans, from opera to theater to parades. This cultural atmosphere nurtured musical talent, blending different musical traditions and performance styles.

Among Louisiana's most famous musicians and performers was New Orleans native Louis Moreau Gottschalk. He was the first musician from the United States to win worldwide praise and recognition for his compositions, many of which were based on Creole, African-American, and other native Louisiana melodies. Gottschalk's father was a Jewish immigrant from England, and his mother was the daughter of Saint-Domingue refugees. He trained in New Orleans and Paris and toured Europe, the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. One of Gottschalk's most famous pieces is *Bamboula,* a composition influenced by songs he learned as a child from his maternal grandmother and his African-American nurse, both Saint-Domingue refugees.

Edmond Dédé, the son of two free persons of color from the West Indies, was also one of New Orleans's leading musicians. Born in New Orleans in 1829, Dédé studied the violin there and later in Mexico, England, and France. He conducted the classical orchestra of L'Acazar in Bordeaux, France, and returned to New Orleans for a number of performances in 1893 and 1894. Before his death in Bordeaux in 1903, Dédé wrote more than forty compositions. Other free black performers who gained recognition during the antebellum era included Eugène V. Macarty, a pianist, and Basile J. Barès, a composer

and pianist. Barès was for many years considered New Orleans's leading composer of dance music.

Among the many touring attractions that performed in Louisiana was the renowned "Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind. Accompanying Lind on her grand American tour was her manager, P. T. Barnum of circus fame. People from all over the Mississippi Valley converged on the Crescent City to hear Lind sing. Between mid-February and early March of 1851 Lind gave thirteen concerts that netted a total of $87,646.12, not including proceeds from the eighth concert, which went to various New Orleans charities.

Adelina Patti was another beloved singing star who came to New Orleans on tour. Born in 1843 in Spain to Italian parents, she made her first professional appearance in New York when she was only seven. Three years later, she performed at a New Orleans concert. In 1860 she returned to the city and at the age of seventeen debuted at the French Opera House, where she became the focal point of the 1860–61 opera season. Patti made her farewell tour of the United States in 1904.

Making an Appearance: Promenading, Shopping, and Dining

In imitation of their European role models, Louisiana colonials liked to stroll through parks and along thoroughfares in the evenings and on Sundays, where they socialized with family, neighbors, and visitors. Walking and riding along the banks of the Mississippi and the Carondelet Canal and on Bayou and Metairie Roads, New Orleanians enjoyed cool evening breezes, picturesque scenery, and chats with acquaintances all dressed in their best attire. Early nineteenth-century visitor Christian Schultz lamented the absence of public gardens in New Orleans but noted that "the Levee after sunset is crowded with company, who having been confined all the day to their houses, seldom miss this favourable opportunity of breathing a little fresh air." Sunset signaled recreational activity, wrote Thomas Ashe: "The instant the luminary sets, animation begins to rise, the public walks are crowded; the billiard rooms resound; music strikes up, and life and activity resume their joyous career." Revelers most likely ignored the Spanish-period curfew that began at 9:00 P.M. during winter months and 11:00 P.M. in the summer.

During the antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction periods, Louisianians and their guests continued to take evening walks along the banks of rivers, canals, and bayous. They also promenaded through parks and streets. Residents in both cities and the countryside visited the houses and plantations of relatives and friends. In 1867 Italian visitor Giulio Adamoli vividly described the pleasure of sauntering about New Orleans:

> **It is delightful to sit in a café and sip lemonade . . . and to see ladies in grand decolleté at Bellanger's, the fashionable refreshment place in Canal Street, taking ices after the theatres. But above all, I delight to mingle with the gay crowds that stroll through the parks on Sunday,**

throng the restaurants of the city and its suburbs of a late afternoon, and pack the theatres and places of refreshment every evening until far into the night. . . .

Canal Street, the principal thorough-fare, need not shrink from comparison with the best boulevards of Europe. Down its whole length extends a belt of lawn, adorned with beautiful flower beds. The sidewalks are thronged day and night with happy people of every color, whom it does one's heart good to watch.

Louisiana residents and visitors also socialized at numerous stores located in rural and urban settings. Even with their resources reduced by the Civil War and Reconstruction, Louisianians loved to shop. For those of high standing, both black and white, shopping was more of a social than an economic activity, a time to see old friends and make new ones, to show off new clothes, carriages, and servants, and to watch all the other people browsing from store to store. Shopping, noted Edward King, seemed to bring out even the most secluded mistresses of the house: "For it is the shopping hour; from eleven to two the streets of the old quarter [French Quarter in New Orleans] are alive with elegantly, yet soberly attired ladies, always in couples, as French etiquette exacts that the unmarried lady shall never promenade without her maid or her mother."

Their love for fine food also undiminished by economic woes or Reconstruction politics, residents and visitors to Louisiana continued to keep its many fine, famous restaurants in business. Travelers consistently remarked on the area's unique food and service. Giulio Adamoli recalled: "We wound up for breakfast at Victor's, one of the numerous French restaurants [in New Orleans]. It shares with Moreau's, the St. Charles, the Cosmopolitan, and the Pilgrim, the reputation of being the best dining-place in the town." On a similar note, Edward King praised

aristocratic restaurants, where the immaculate floors are only surpassed in cleanliness by the spotless linen of the tables; where a solemn dignity, as befits the refined pleasure of dinner, prevails, and where the waiter gives you the names of the dishes in both languages, and bestows on you a napkin large enough to serve you as a shroud, if this strange melange of French and Southern cookery should give you a fatal indigestion.

Ball Games and Other Amusements

Louisiana colonials borrowed what became the popular creole game *raquette* directly from the ballgame Choctaw players called *toli,* even retaining the custom of team songs. This sport resembled the northeastern American Indian game of lacrosse. Spectators of all nationalities gathered at the city's common grounds, now known as

Congo Square, and at the country resort area of Metairie to watch white, black, and Native American teams compete in what is most likely the oldest team sport in Louisiana. In the words of Pierre Clément de Laussat, the colonial prefect sent in 1803 to receive Louisiana from Spain and govern the colony for France:

> **The Negroes and mulattoes, in groups of four, six, eight—some from the city, others from the country—challenged each other to *raquette des sauvages*. I was invited to one of these contests, where bets rose from five to six hundred piastres fortes [each equivalent to one United States dollar]. Each team distinguished itself by ribbons of motley colors. The game was dangerous. Rarely did it happen that there were no accidents, no arms or legs broken.**

Raquette remained a popular spectator sport in Louisiana throughout the nineteenth century, until surpassed by baseball. Ads from early nineteenth-century newspapers occasionally listed raquettes among imported goods for sale. In most parts of the state interest in the game as a spectator sport vanished after Native Americans stopped playing it about 1900.

Also popular, at least in the colonial era, was the Native American game of chunkey. Like raquette, chunkey was largely a spectator sport, with only two players, rather than teams, actively taking part. Numerous excited onlookers wagered sums on each game's outcome. A description of the playing field and action follows:

> **Almost every early Indian town in Louisiana had a chunk yard, a smooth, well-worn space about one hundred feet long and ten to twelve feet wide. One player rolled the stone, and as it moved, one or both players threw sticks, their object being to hit the stone, strike the opponent's stick, or to come to rest nearer the stone after it had stopped rolling. The playing sticks were about five feet long and an inch wide, and rings were cut around them several inches apart. These helped measure the distances involved in scoring the game. (Kniffen, Gregory, and Stokes, 1987)**

Visitors to Louisiana regularly commented on the love that persons of all social stations possessed for recreational sites that combined billiards, card games, alcohol, dance, and prostitution. They gave the numerous taverns, billiard rooms, inns, and dancehalls of New Orleans and other colonial towns plenty of profitable business. This leisure activity also kept urban police forces busy, too, because much of it was illegal and required regulation.

A 1771 municipal law and a 1778 royal decree prohibited games of chance in public establishments in which persons also transacted business, such as taverns, inns, and houses. In 1786 Governor Esteban Miró reiterated the provisions of these laws and also

imposed a curfew; police patrols could arrest anyone seen on the streets of New Orleans after nine o'clock in the evening during winter months and after eleven o'clock during summer. According to one observer, James Pitot, in the 1790s, however, the "government is aware of and permits all of that; and woe unto the minor official who would want to stop it." Besides, wrote Berquin-Duvallon, police patrols probably could not make out furtive shapes slipping along the city's streets, where "lanterns . . . , placed only at each cross-street and consisting of three small lights on winter nights, illumine for only ten paces and leave all the rest of the space in total darkness." Despite official disapproval, Louisianians continued to play, and retailers scrambled to meet their demand for cards. Two gross of packs of playing cards, for example, were included in the inventory of don Luis Ducret, a merchant who died in 1770 on his way back from a trading expedition to Saint-Domingue.

In the early 1790s Governor Carondelet intensified official raids on taverns and billiard halls. Police patrols usually arrived at the suspected institution at night and barged into a back room to find several *"gentes de todas clases y colores"* (persons of all classes and colors) drinking and playing prohibited card games or participating in raffles. Most offenders escaped through back doors, but the police often caught at least one free black person. In March 1791 the sergeant major snared three whites, one slave, and one free person of color. He later discovered two white soldiers in hiding and the owner of the billiard hall, who was fined fifty pesos and released. The others spent ten days in jail.

Five months later the intendant, acting on a tip, inspected a billiard hall and tavern operated by Juan Freyre, known as Juanico el Gallego, where he found *"negros, mulatos, paisanos* [peasants], *artilleros* [artillerymen], *y soldados del Regimento."* The intendant arrested Freyre, a white corporal, a white hospital employee, and a free man of color named Francisco Livaudais. Freyre paid a twenty-five peso fine and the others an undisclosed amount of money, but Livaudais possessed no goods and thus had to serve a jail sentence of ten days. During a 1792 raid the sergeant major seized an unusual prize: the distinguished citizen don Diego de Silveyra. One year later officials discovered fourteen or fifteen persons playing cards at the house and shop of a young shoemaker, Agustín Díaz. They apprehended four whites and a free black named Pedro Larronde, age fifty. A patron at Díaz's shop, the free black Matheo Cotilla, testified that he had not seen anyone playing twenty-one or canasta that night. Larronde admitted to playing cards but stated that he had not recognized anyone else who was playing. He most likely withheld information to prevent the arrest of his accomplices and to ensure a position at gaming tables in the future.

Drinking and Gambling

Most wealthy New Orleanians and their guests could afford to partake of liquor, games, and illicit sex in the privacy of their own homes. For example, listed in the inventory of goods belonging to Jean Baptiste Prevost, agent of the Company of the Indies who died in 1769, were a marble-top table on a gilt pedestal, backgammon and cribbage boards, and two walnut card tables with roebuck feet. Even "gentlemen,"

though, amused themselves, Chritian Schultz noted, with "billiards abroad, and cards at home, or at some appointed house; and it is said they are generally too much attached to the bottle after dinner."

Long before Europeans arrived in the Mississippi Valley, Native Americans routinely gambled on the outcome of sporting events and games of chance. All sorts of games and sports—raquette, chunkey, wrestling, footracing, archery, and guessing, dice, and hoop-and-pole games—called for risks on the part of players and spectators alike. In their love for fun the colonists and Indians of Louisiana were very compatible.

It seemed that everyone in Louisiana, and especially the port city of New Orleans, imbibed with great frequency, a thirst that has not abated in modern times. Ships entering the port carried wine, beer, rum, taffia, brandy, whiskey, and fine liqueurs from Europe, the West Indies, and the British North American colonies. These spirits arrived in barrels, so residents commonly kept a supply of empty bottles handy. A Spanish military and political official, don Francisco Bouligny, at his death in 1800 had in his cellar four hundred bottles of red wine from Bordeaux, one hundred bottles of white wine and various liqueurs, and two hundred empty bottles. The estate inventory of the free black Francisca Montreuil included 350 empty bottles, and that of Catalina Chenal, widow Linguetau, 30 empty bottles. By the end of the colonial period a few distilleries produced taffia and beer locally.

Colonial governments taxed and regulated the taverns, billiard halls, and inns that relieved the thirst of travelers and residents alike. Local authorities tried to protect the public from adulterated or sour alcohol, keep spirits out of the hands of Native Americans and blacks, and at the same time raise revenues from licensing fees. As early as 1717 the French promised to punish those who sold alcohol to Native and African Americans, but this and subsequent provisions—including limiting the number of taverns operating in New Orleans—failed to check abuses.

Spanish officials also attempted to control the proliferation of drinking establishments through licensing and policing. They, like the French, found that enterprising individuals dodged such limitations by operating illegal watering holes. In need of funds to run the city, the New Orleans cabildo finally abandoned efforts to restrict the number of taverns; they instead concentrated on quality control and issued greater quantities of more expensive licenses to raise revenues for patrolling and prosecuting. For example, in 1794 the city's chief constable suggested that the cabildo license six additional cabarets to pay for the extra bailiffs needed to prosecute the growing number of criminals.

It seems, however, that colonial Louisiana already had an inordinate number of drinking establishments. New Orleans alone boasted one tavernkeeper for every 71 residents in 1791. By comparison, in Philadelphia in the 1780s there was one tavernkeeper for every 429 inhabitants; in 1790 Boston claimed one for every 694 residents. Like other port cities in the Americas, New Orleans catered to the needs of a large transient population that kept the numerous tavernkeepers, innkeepers, and billiard-hall owners in business.

In the nineteenth century gambling and drinking combined easily in cafes, taverns, billiard halls, and other recreational sites. During a cockfight at a New Orleans arena in

1867 traveler Giulio Adamoli noted with amusement that "behind the seats a roulette game was running for the entertainment of the spectators during the interval between the matches." Journalist Edward King compared the atmosphere of a New Orleans gaming den with those of France: "Here you pass a little café, with the awning drawn down, and, peering in, can distinguish half-a-dozen bald, rotund old boys drinking their evening absinthe, and playing picquet and vingt-et-un, exactly as in France."

Legal organized gambling came to Louisiana in 1868 with the creation of the Louisiana State Lottery Company. Reputed to be one of the largest privately owned businesses in United States history, the Louisiana State Lottery Company operated legitimately between 1868 and 1893. Louisiana's newly reconstructed 1868 General Assembly approved organization of "the company," as it was called, and chartered it for twenty-five years. The lottery company was exempted from paying taxes and licensing fees but made annual payments of $40,000 to the state treasury. This money funded public education and health care.

Charles T. Howard served as the company's first president. Howard was a native of Baltimore and resided in Louisiana from 1852 until his death in 1885. Prior to his involvement with the Louisiana State Lottery Company, Howard acted as Louisiana agent for the Alabama Lottery and the Kentucky State Lottery. An avid horseracing fan, Howard purchased the Metairie Race Track and converted it into a cemetery in 1872, allegedly because the track's jockey club denied him membership. Howard's family established the Howard Memorial Library and the Confederate Museum in his honor.

The company held daily, monthly, and semi-annual drawings. Former Confederate generals P. G. T. Beauregard and Jubal Early lent validity, integrity, and publicity to monthly and semi-annual drawings. Set on a large stage, blindfolded boys removed tickets and prizes wrapped in cylinders simultaneously from two wheels. One boy pulled a winning ticket from the large drum and handed it to General Early, where it was matched with the prize ticket that another boy pulled from the small wheel and handed to General Beauregard. Early announced the winning numbers, Beauregard the amount won.

The company survived a challenge to its existence in 1879 and entered its halcyon days of the 1880s, part of an era commonly known throughout the United States as the Gilded Age (1873–1898). Ticket prices rose from 25¢ with a capital prize of $3,750 to $40 with a capital prize of $6,000. Unsold winning tickets returned to the company's coffers. It was estimated that the company kept 48 percent of the money collected in each drawing and that in 1890 its gross earnings exceeded $28 million a year.

Ironically only about 7 percent of the company's revenue came from within Louisiana. Residents of the United States, the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico purchased tickets from agents of the Louisiana State Lottery Company. Because its influence reached throughout the continent, it earned the nickname of the "Octopus." The United States mail system allowed people from all over to purchase tickets in the hopes of striking it rich. In fact, it required one express wagon every day just to carry the company's mail to and from the New Orleans post office.

With its charter scheduled to expire at the end of 1893, the company persuaded the 1890 state legislature to pass a constitutional amendment to renew its charter for another

twenty-five years. This amendment would then be submitted to the voters. Lottery officials tantalized legislators by offering to raise annual payments to the state from $40,000 to $500,000; the company's final offer was $1.25 million.

Opposition to the Louisiana lottery gained strength in the early years of the 1890s. Lottery opponents alleged that the lottery company engaged in vote-buying and other corrupt practices. Leading the fight was the Anti-Lottery League, formed in 1890 for the express purpose of closing down the lottery. The League held its first public meeting on 12 May 1890 in New Orleans's Grunewald Opera House. Most newspapers in the state, including the New Orleans *Mascot*, backed the company and its allies. Thus the Anti-Lottery League had to create its own media voice: the *New Delta*.

The federal government assisted the Anti-Lottery League's efforts. In 1890 Congress passed, and in 1892 the United States Supreme Court upheld, a law that prohibited the mailing of lottery tickets and bulletins through the United States postal system, as well as closed the mails to newspapers that contained lottery advertisements and lists of prizes. In March 1892 Louisiana voters further threatened the lottery company's operations when they voted against the amendment renewing the charter and elected the antilottery candidate for governor, Murphy Foster, by a landslide. An attorney and former state senator, Foster served as Louisiana's governor (1892–1900) and United States senator (1900–1913). With Governor Foster's support, an antilottery majority in the 1892 state legislature prohibited lottery operations.

The Louisiana State Lottery Company held its final drawing in December 1893. The company subsequently moved to Honduras and continued to run illegal lotteries in the United States. Because such lottery activities were illegal and conducted covertly, we do not know much about them. However, letters to company officials indicate that company agents often found tickets difficult to sell. In 1907 United States authorities raided and closed down a Wilmington, Delaware, plant that printed tickets, thereby ending the saga of the Louisiana State Lottery Company.

* * *

Conclusion

Residents of and visitors to Louisiana found many ways to amuse themselves, an attraction the state can still boast of today. People of diverse racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds participated in various forms of social and spatial interaction. Such diversions helped make the daily grind bearable and contributed to the rich mosaic of Louisiana’s culture.

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Chapter 6

"Not at All Healthful": Disease and Death in Colonial and Antebellum Louisiana

Disease and death plagued Louisiana throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Contemporary descriptions of health and living conditions, especially in New Orleans, make the state today seem almost pristine. Travelers and residents usually credited the frequency of natural disasters, disease, and death in Louisiana to location, climate, and general negligence. They varied, however, in their assessments of these factors; primary influences on travelers' opinions included the time of year they visited or discussed, the audience for whom they wrote, and their familiarity with semitropical climates. Most would agree with French visitor François-Marie Perrin du Lac, who complained in 1802 that "nothing equals the filthiness of New Orleans, unless it be the unhealthiness, which has, for some years, appeared to have resulted from it" and that "there is seldom a year that the yellow fever or some other contagious maladies do not carry off many strangers [foreigners]."

For much of the antebellum era Louisiana had the highest death rate of any state in the United States and New Orleans the highest of any city. Between 1851 and 1855, when epidemics broke out in four of the five years, 73 out of every 1,000 people in New Orleans died. Disease contributed to much of this population loss, which was only offset by immigration and high fertility rates. The threat of disease also slowed the Crescent City's growth by disrupting normal channels of trade, travel, and transportation.

Disease

The most common diseases to afflict people living in and traveling through Louisiana were yellow fever, smallpox, cholera, dysentery, and malaria, with mange, scurvy, yaws (a tropical disease), Hansen's disease, and venereal diseases also contributing to high mortality rates and short life expectancies. Of the 6,700 emigrants who sailed from France between 1717 and 1721 malaria, yellow fever, and dysentery killed about 2,000 shortly after they arrived in Louisiana. European diseases, along with warfare, revolts, and overwork, decimated the Indian and African-American populations of Louisiana, too. Crown officials replenished the colony's African slave supply and attempted to make planters treat their slaves better, but they could do little to restore Native American numbers, and at most times did not even care to do so.

This human devastation continued unabated throughout the colonial period. During the Spanish regime the two most serious epidemic diseases were yellow fever and

smallpox. The date of the first appearance of yellow fever in Louisiana is uncertain because it was not recognized as such by early inhabitants. La Salle, among others, complained of a deadly fever lurking on the shores of the Mississippi and attributed the deaths of much of his party to it. Prior to New Orleans's founding, yellow fever was possibly the disease that ravaged the settlement near present-day Mobile in 1704. Some scholars date the appearance of yellow fever to 1769, when Governor-General Alejandro O'Reilly's party arrived to claim Louisiana for Spain. Others have chosen 1796 as the year of New Orleans's first major yellow fever epidemic. However, given the prevalence of yellow fever in Latin America from the 1640s and in Anglo North America from the 1660s and the large number of Africans introduced along the Gulf Coast, it was unlikely that Louisiana was spared from the "saffron scourge" over the course of nearly a century following its settlement.

Brought to the Caribbean from Europe shortly after Columbus's 1492 encounter with the New World, smallpox struck frequently, especially against children, with catastrophic force during New Orleans's first century of existence. Not until the end of the Spanish regime, however, did smallpox epidemics stir the government into action against the disease. In 1787 Governor Esteban Miró ordered constructed a small house to lodge slaves afflicted with smallpox. In 1792 the cabildo met in extraordinary session to discuss means of protecting Louisianians from such epidemics. When smallpox struck New Orleans again at the turn of the century, Governor Salcedo established the city's first board of health. Confronted with residents angry over the government's refusal to sanction inoculation, the governor quickly appointed the *Junta de Sanidad* to satisfy demands for a remedy. Salcedo charged two cabildo members, the commander in charge of guarding the port, one surgeon, one interpreter, and the clerk of the cabildo with inspecting ships and houses and quarantining all persons with smallpox in a house across the river.

Colonists, travelers, and slaves who had recently entered Louisiana or resided in densely populated areas like New Orleans were most susceptible to smallpox, cholera, malaria, and yellow fever epidemics. Early in the nineteenth century British visitor Thomas Ashe condemned misleading information that lured thousands to Louisiana "in search of a paradise" only to find "a grave," while those who survived suffered from a "shattered constitution and debilitated frame."

Yellow fever, also known as the "black vomit" or the "saffron scourge," particularly affected low-lying, coastal, warm climatic urban areas like New Orleans. A disease of African origin, yellow fever probably became more virulent and discernible in New Orleans over the last few decades of the eighteenth century because greater numbers of ships carrying human and material cargo entered the port city from Africa and the Caribbean. In the 1770s, 1780s, and 1790s, the city also attracted more European newcomers, those most susceptible to the disease.

During the antebellum period, yellow fever, along with smallpox and cholera, continued to be the most deadly diseases to strike Louisiana. In an epidemic year the mortality rate from these diseases could reach as high as sixty percent of those who contracted them. In the worst of these years—1853—over 8,000 people died of yellow fever in New Orleans alone, about 1 out of every 15 people living there. The death rate

that year was higher than in any other year of the nineteenth century. Over 110 out of every 1,000 people died, 50 of every 1,000 blacks and 125 of every 1,000 whites.

This epidemic was one of the most devastating disasters ever to strike Louisiana. People died faster than graves were dug, and the popular saying was that pretty soon people would have to dig their own graves. The *New Orleans Daily Crescent* of 11 August 1853 gave a graphic description of one of these graveyards:

> **At the gates, the winds brought intimation of the corruption working within. Not a puff but was laden with the rank atmosphere from rotting corpses. Inside they were piled by fifties, exposed to the heat of the sun, swollen with corruption, bursting their coffin lids. . . . What a feast of horrors! Inside, corpses piled in pyramids, and without the gates, old and withered crones and fat huxter [huckster] women . . . dispensing ice creams and confections, and brushing away . . . the green bottle-flies that hovered on their merchandise, and that anon buzzed away to drink dainty inhalations from the green and festering corpses.**

Major yellow fever and cholera epidemics hit Louisiana in at least two years in every decade of the antebellum era. Although New Orleans was most affected, disease often spread to small towns and rural areas throughout the state. Asiatic cholera invaded Louisiana and other parts of the United States in 1832 and 1833 and again from 1848 to 1855. Yellow fever continued to plague Louisiana until 1905, the year of the last major epidemic. Before scientists discovered in 1900 that mosquitoes carried yellow fever, other serious epidemics affected Shreveport in 1873 and New Orleans in 1878.

Many native Louisianians who had been exposed to mild attacks during childhood were immune to yellow fever, malaria, and cholera. The primary victims of disease were immigrants, children, laborers, and the poor. Wealthy residents could escape the plague or afford good health care and clean surroundings. French traveler P. Forest described the exodus of New Orleanians from summer's pestilence:

> **Endemic diseases are so terrible, that as soon as June—at which time they begin to strike the inhabitants—all the well-to-do people desert town to go spend a few months in Northern towns, away from the epidemic. Nothing could be sadder than New Orleans during the months when the disease reigns over the city.**

Travelers to Louisiana frequently commented on the susceptibility of immigrants to disease, as did Lewis H. Webb in 1853:

I saw as I walked on the [New Orleans] Levee to the boat, a ship passing up the river from Bremen [Germany], loaded with emigrants. . . .

. . . Many of them might only find in the new country an early grave—for they have arrived here in a season that if they have long to remain in the city may cut down many of them—when the fevers and epidemics incident to it sets in.

Colonel James R. Creecy toured the lower Mississippi Valley in 1834, following major yellow fever and cholera epidemics, and recorded that "for many years the annual influx of the lowest order of Irish in New Orleans has been immense, and the numbers buried in the 'swamp,' subjects of yellow jack and cholera are astonishing; and yet their places are instantly filled up."

Causes, Cures, and Proposed Solutions

Residents, officials, travelers, and healers attributed Louisiana's unhealthiness to a variety of causes and often proposed just as many different cures and solutions. Despite the growing influence of scientific ideas emerging from the Enlightenment, most people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continued to believe in the atmospheric theory of disease, which held that people became sick by breathing the gasses or miasmas emitted by decaying animal and vegetable matter. One French surgeon, Paul Alliot, who was expelled from the colony in 1803 for practicing without a license, observed:

If New Orleans is not at all healthful, and if the bad air that its inhabitants breathe occasions fatal diseases, the reason is due in part . . . to the abundance of stagnant water, which for lack of drainage, lies the whole year round in the cypress groves which surround the city.

Spanish Governor Manuel Gayoso de Lemos also suspected stagnant water when in 1798 he requested crown permission to raze city fortifications "because the fevers which every year carry off the most valued portion of the population . . . date from the time when there were dug around the palisades those ditches which are always full of stagnating water." In addition, Gayoso considered streetcleaning essential to the health of New Orleans and had the city purchase a wagon and horses and hire a slave to carry away garbage daily.

New Orleans's first documented yellow fever epidemic prompted Attorney General don Gabriel Fonvergne to appeal to the cabildo on behalf of the public. Fonvergne decried the stagnant water in trenches along the streets, the lack of cleaning and care for the streets, and the dead animals rotting in the streets and along the banks of the river. All these factors, he thought, had contributed to the cruel calamity that had conducted more than 250 persons to their graves, almost all of them in the "flower of their youth."

Fonvergne warned that unless the cabildo acted, New Orleans would experience a continual infection of yellow fever and other diseases.

His words obviously fell on deaf ears. Following the even more deadly yellow fever epidemic of 1799, the attorney general, don Pedro Dulcido Barrán, once again presented a letter to the cabildo that outlined causes and solutions to the problem of disease in New Orleans. Barrán believed that the principal and most urgent precaution would be to clean the city, and he addressed the sources of the city's squalor: stagnant water, garbage dumped at the levee and at the gate of Fort St. John, improper burial, and the influx of infected persons and goods. Especially in low-lying areas, stagnant waters created "vapors that are pernicious to health, primarily in summer when the extreme heat easily corrupts the said water." Barrán called upon property owners to fill and raise these lots and advocated

> **care for the part called the batture . . . fronting on the quarter from which the filth and rubbish collected is thrown out that causes a continual infection, both disagreeable and unhealthy, making the principal promenades of the city odious as well as unsanitary. The stenches and corruption of the said filth is particularly bad in warm weather.**

A hospital or lodging downriver could help screen foreign navigators and merchandise, principally woolen goods, "in which miasmas, or putrid atoms, or infections are preserved for a long time and at embarkment in another climate [like Louisiana] spread abroad in the air and propagate."

In 1801 New York merchant John Pintard attested to the disgraceful condition of the city's streets and the attorney general's inability to remedy it:

> **There is no such thing as cleaning the streets that I have seen, further than dragging the mud from the gutters into the middle of the street—when the powerful influence of the sun soon exhales the stench and dries up the filth—otherwise the inhabitants w[oul]d die of the pestilence if the dirt & every kind of abomination could create one.**

The cabildo, however, contracted with don Juan Antonio Lugar as early as July 1798 to clean the city's streets and collect garbage. Renewed in July 1799 and reviewed in January 1800, the contract with Lugar stipulated that the city was to supply him with a wagon and pay him twenty-five pesos per month for his services. In July 1800 the cabildo awarded the contract at public auction, with the addition of second wagon for garbage collection.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people believed that humid vapors emitted from swamps and stagnant mires gave rise to diseases like malaria and yellow fever. In fact, the archaic definition of malaria was "air infected with a noxious substance capable of causing disease." Contemporaries were not aware that mosquitoes breeding in

the standing water were the actual carriers of these diseases: malaria by anopheline mosquitoes and yellow fever by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. Sailing vessels also conveyed these disease-carrying insects to Louisiana. Ships and boats carried fresh water for the crew and passengers in open casks where mosquitoes multiplied. One traveler, C. C. Robin, even found fault with the closeness of buildings in New Orleans, which restricted the free flow of fresh air. He wrote in 1803:

> **Already houses several stories high are to be seen in the city and when all the streets are lined with these, one must expect that maladies like yellow fever will take a great toll. . . . When New Orleans was first laid out its little wooden houses were well spaced and did not confine the air or reflect the sun's rays as the present large, closely-built edifices coated with lime must do. The swamps, in the midst of which the young town was built, shaded the city with its trees and spread a coolness over it which purified the air.**

The same swamps that Robin praised bred the mosquitoes that carried yellow fever and malaria.

With further irony, the traveler William Darby noted in the early 1800s: "This troublesome little insect is so constantly found most numerous near wet places . . . that I have often been tempted to believe it a vigilant sentinel placed by nature at the portals of disease, to warn man to beware." Though colonists did not blame mosquitoes for disease, they quickly became acquainted with the torture that these pesky little insects inflicted. French missionary Du Poisson dramatically expressed his aversion to the mosquito in 1727:

> **But the greatest torment, in comparison with which all the rest would be but sport, which passes all belief, and has never been even imagined in France, still less actually experienced, is that of the mosquitoes—the cruel persecution of the mosquitoes. The plague of Egypt, I think, was not more cruel.**
>
> **. . . This little insect has caused more swearing since the French have been in the Mississippi, than had previously taken place in all the rest of the world.**

Rural and small-town residents generally fared better than those living in New Orleans, and city dwellers who could afford to do so escaped to the countryside, Europe, or New England during the most unbearable summer months. Visitors and settlers extolled the virtues of fresh country air and a wholesome lifestyle, as contrasted with the stagnant swamps and sinful ways associated with New Orleans. Unaware of germ theory,

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century inhabitants rarely connected population density with the spread of disease.

In the antebellum as well as the colonial periods death rates were highest in urban areas like New Orleans, where large numbers of people living in close quarters spread disease more quickly. The filth that accumulated in the Crescent City and the swampy areas that surrounded it attracted disease-carrying insects and polluted the water supply. Thousands of sailors and steamboat workers also introduced diseases from other areas of the United States and abroad as they passed through the port. Like their colonial counterparts, those nineteenth-century residents who could afford to leave the city for the countryside or the North did so during the most dangerous months, June to November. Most businessmen and tourists knew better than to visit New Orleans during the summer.

New Orleanian Zac Robertson warned a business associate in Massachusetts to stay away during the city's worst yellow fever epidemic of the antebellum era, that of 1853. He depicted his surroundings in August of that year:

> **The constant funerals one sees, the newspaper reports & notices at every corner keeps every one's mind active & furnishes the subject for nearly all conversation—every body has some dreadful tale of misery & destitution to recount and there is a fascination in the gloomy subject that keeps the mind occupied with the details.**

Most businessmen and politicians, however, ignored or purposefully covered up the problems of disease and death because they wanted goods and people to keep coming into Louisiana. To maintain a wide-open port free of quarantines, business interests tried to convince newspapers and directories not to publish negative news or publicize the astounding number of deaths in the Crescent City. Whig and Know-Nothing politicians who controlled New Orleans during much of the period were reluctant to spend money on preventing or stopping the spread of pestilence. After all, they reasoned, most of the people dying from yellow fever and cholera were Irish, German, and French immigrants who usually voted Democrat.

On the other hand, it was in the interest of businessmen not to let too many poor and working-class people die. With epidemics claiming thousands of working men and women's lives every year or two, employers faced serious labor shortages. They also found it hard to attract skilled artisans, who chose to go elsewhere rather than risk their lives, even for high wages.

Nineteenth-century "cures" ranged from the ridiculous to the accidentally logical. Residents made halfhearted efforts to clean up urban areas like New Orleans, but until the arrival of Union General Benjamin Butler in 1862, the city suffered from inadequate garbage disposal and filthy markets, yards, and slaughterhouses. To reduce the stray-dog population city leaders in the 1850s contracted with street cleaners to poison the dogs and remove their carcasses within twenty-four hours. Unfortunately, this attempt to rid the city of one nuisance created another when the contractors dumped the dogs' bodies along

the banks of the river instead of in the middle of it. Dead animals floated along the wharves where working-class and poor people drew their drinking water, bathed, and often worked.

Authorities also discharged smoke bombs periodically during epidemics in the belief that the smoke killed harmful vapors. The vapors, or miasmas as they were called, arose from garbage, graveyards, and low-lying swampy ground.

Cures

Colonial Louisiana healers employed contemporary European treatments and borrowed cures from Louisiana Indians and Africans in their constant battle against disease. Bloodletting, accomplished with lancets and leeches, and purgation constituted the most common European therapeutical methods. French soldier Jean-Bernard Bossu offered this advice to Louisiana newcomers in the mid-eighteenth century:

> **First of all, you must allow yourself to become slowly accustomed to the climate, and you must avoid all fruit and liquor until your body gradually becomes adjusted. People with a great deal of blood should have some drawn from time to time to prevent apoplexy, and gentle laxatives should be taken occasionally.**

Bleeding, however, tended to weaken already-ill patients, who were further debilitated by improper diets. Colonial pharmaceuticals included wine, taffia and *aguardiente* (cheap rum), honey, oil, and vinegar. Attacked by fever shortly after her arrival in New Orleans in 1727, the Ursuline nun Marie Madeleine Hachard took an emetic as a cure because it was "the usual medicine of the country." When a "small fit of the Ag" and "a smart fever" struck the United States merchant Henry Troth in 1799, he "took a Pill and the morning following took a Vomit, since which I have felt much better."

Throughout the 1780s, 1790s, and into the early 1800s, the crown and church adamantly opposed inoculation, in spite of popular support for it. In 1802 several New Orleans residents signed a petition requesting the cabildo for permission to use inoculation as a means to prevent smallpox, but to no avail. According to contemporary Catholic doctrine, illness and disease constituted signs from God of a person's sinfulness and were to be endured. Official opposition to inoculation in Louisiana contrasted with acceptance of this technique among British North American settlers and on the part of the church and state in Europe. Even in Spanish America smallpox inoculation was common by 1800. Louisiana church authorities voiced much more conservative teachings—probably as a desperate response to moral laxity in Louisiana and the desire to cling to traditional values in a frontier environment. Nevertheless, several Louisianians rejected church admonitions and sought relief from modern medical discoveries.

A constant shortage of medical supplies and their frequent ineffectiveness compelled European colonists to adopt Native-American and African cures. Settlers had to put aside their notions of cultural superiority to benefit from the medicinal effects

derived from herbs and roots known only to native Louisiana Indians and imported Africans. Nonwhite Louisianians, however, were somewhat reluctant to share their cures with white intruders. Diron Dartaguette, inspector general of the troops in Louisiana, reported to his superiors in 1721: "There are great quantities of herbs suitable for all kinds of sickness but there are few Frenchmen who know them. Only the Indians do and knowing their virtue they make use of them successfully. But they are very jealous of this secret and hide it carefully from the French."

Indeed, many of the Native-American herbal medicines noted by European newcomers to Louisiana have entered into modern pharmaceutical usage. A pharmacist, administrator, and resident of Louisiana in the 1720s and 1730s, Antoine Le Page du Pratz praised such indigenous herbs as sweet-gum sap, willow-bark tea, and various emetic plants. At mid-century the Frenchman Bossu marveled at Native-American healing powers:

> **Many plants of medicinal value grow in Louisiana, among them gensing, whose root makes an excellent cough syrup, jalap, rhubarb, smilax, snakeroot, sarsparilla, and St.-John's-wort, from which an excellent oil for healing wounds is made. . . . The Indians know a thousand medicinal plants good for purifying the blood.**
>
> **There are entire forests of sassafras trees, used for medicine and dyes. Some trees contain copal, a gummy substance which is a balm as good as that made in Peru.**

He especially recommended the Indians' general remedy of exercise and sweating to relieve the excessive consumption to which Europeans were prone: "After overeating, if you feel so stuffed and lethargic that the nutritive juices bloat and exhaust your entire body, I believe you would do well to imitate the Indians, who find sweating an infallible cure."

Surrounded by black slaves, Louisiana colonists also adopted aspects of African spiritism for relief from their illnesses. Dahomey medicine was common throughout the Caribbean and was probably introduced to Louisiana by slaves from Saint-Domingue as well as Dahomey itself. Dahomey medicine included plant-based drugs and vegetable dyes and was quite effective.

Slaves arriving in Louisiana from Africa in concentrated numbers primarily in the 1720s and 1780s had extensive knowledge of herbs, poisons, and the creation of charms and amulets that gave the bearer support and power. Even today Louisianians employ several of these concoctions and their African-origin names, including *gri-gri, zinzin,* and *wanga.* A charm intended to harm others, *gri-gri* comes from the Mande word *gerregerys.*

Healers and Facilities

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century medical practitioners and facilities were quite primitive by our standards. Medical scholar and New Orleans native John Duffy notes that although advanced thinkers of the Enlightenment attempted to discover rational cures for human ailments, most physicians subscribed to the humoral theory that advocated the proper balance of the four "humors," blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. If such ignorance of modern medical techniques was true for the Europeans, it was even more pronounced in the colonies, especially a frontier region as Louisiana.

Both the French and Spanish colonial governments in Louisiana required licensing and regulation of doctors, surgeons, midwives, and pharmacists. Many Louisiana doctors were connected with the military, and the first surgeon mentioned in colonial documents was Surgeon Major Pierre Cave. In 1698 Iberville engaged him at a salary of thirty *livres* (equal to about twenty cents) per month. According to the New Orleans census of 1721, there was one medical practitioner in the city—the Surgeon-Major Berard. One of the most prestigious doctors in early Louisiana was Alexandre Viel, surgeon-major of the New Orleans hospital in the 1720s, a noted botanist and surgeon and a corresponding member of the French Royal Academy of Science.

Louisiana Indians and Africans also demonstrated healing talents. In 1726 the manager of the Company of the Indies plantation, Le Page du Pratz, noted:

> **A young negro who followed the Surgeon [attending the plantation] slept & lived in . . . [the] cabin [that housed sick slaves], to the end of being within reach for blood-letting or for putting a first dressing if the case was pressing. I learned several years after this negro was one of the good surgeons of the colony.**

One of the most famous free persons of color to emerge from the Spanish period was Santiago Derom (James Durham), a former slave of the Scottish doctor Robert Dow and himself a skilled *médico*. Born in Philadelphia in 1762, Derom acquired his medical talents from one of his masters, Dr. John Kearsley, who was an authority on sore-throat distemper. Dr. Dow of New Orleans subsequently purchased Derom. Derom, who spoke French, Spanish, and English fluently, in turn purchased his freedom in 1783 for 500 pesos and soon built up a large practice among both blacks and whites. His accomplishments, however, did not exempt him from financial difficulties, as a 1791 civil case shows. Derom successfully sued doña Isabela Destrean to collect a debt of 100 pesos from treatment and medicine provided to her slaves. The town council's 1801 effort to regulate all medical practice limited Derom to the treatment of throat ailments, his specialty. He was one of the few free black physicians in colonial Louisiana and the earliest known licensed African-American physician in what became the United States.

One of the first midwives in the colony was Catherine de Moutois. She embarked from France for Louisiana in 1704 along with her spouse, whose occupation was listed as

"husband of the midwife." Almost twenty years later the Company of the Indies sent Dame Doville as a midwife for the colony. In addition to her salary, the company provided two barrels of provisions, a furnished residence, a subsidy, and transportation to her patients.

By 1791 the number of medical practitioners had grown to fifteen: two hospital directors, one chief medic, six surgeons, three physicians, and three apothecaries. Most likely, there were several more healers who practiced unofficially. Also, there were at least a few midwives, but the military census only provided detailed information on household heads and did not record women's occupations. A more thorough census was taken in 1795, and it recorded one free black woman as midwife.

Local authorities regulated those who wished to practice medicine in the colony. In the eighteenth century doctors were not esteemed as highly as they are today and usually stood well below government officials, planters, merchants, and lawyers on the colonial social scale. Among medical practitioners physicians ranked highest, followed by surgeons ("the poor man's physician"), midwives, and apothecaries. As in the British, French, Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish New World colonies, barbers often doubled as surgeons and dentists.

All Louisiana medical personnel had to obtain a license from the government. Both French and Spanish officials found this supervision difficult. In 1772, shortly after Spain took control of the colony, the town council commanded all surgeons to present themselves and their diplomas within eight days for examination by the proper authorities.

Some doctors supplied the drugs they prescribed, much to the dismay of local pharmacists, who lost precious customers and profits. In 1799 New Orleans pharmacists petitioned the town council to prohibit physicians and surgeons from filling prescriptions with their own drugs. The council complied with this request and ruled that only when a doctor was called out to the countryside could he fill his own prescriptions. The council also resolved that officials were to inspect drug stores every four months, discard stale medicines, and examine all imported drugs before they were placed on sale.

State officials continued to monitor health professionals into the nineteenth century in an effort to improve the quality of medical care. After the 1830s Louisiana was the only southern state to require a medical license for physicians. In response to the 1817 yellow fever epidemic French-speaking physicians in New Orleans formed their first professional organization, *La Société Médicale de la Nouvelle-Orléans,* and English-speaking physicians created the Physico-Medical Society in 1820. Members of both groups devoted their talents and resources to study the recurring pestilence of yellow fever.

The Louisiana State Board of Health, established in 1855, was the first state board in the United States. New Orleans had created its own board of health four decades earlier, in 1817. Authorities instituted these boards following major epidemics, those of 1817 and 1853–1854. In an effort to reduce skyrocketing death rates, the Louisiana State Board of Health implemented and supervised measures related to quarantine and public health. Nevertheless, medical personnel were still unaware of how most diseases were transmitted and found it difficult to account for the erratic spread of diseases like yellow fever. They could do little to cure the sick. In fact, many seasoned veterans of Louisiana's

numerous epidemics advised the afflicted to stay away from doctors if they hoped to survive.

Some doctors and pharmacists saw an epidemic as an opportunity to turn a profit. People desperate for relief during the 1853 yellow fever epidemic lodged complaints that pharmacists charged unreasonably high prices for medicines. In addition, doctors and druggists allegedly conspired to prescribe expensive and unnecessary cures and then shared the profits. Coffin and ice dealers also engaged in price gouging. In 1831 French visitor P. Forest objected to the high costs of yellow fever or cholera:

> **If by any chance you recover, doctor bills, apothecary bills, and many others, such as for the purchase of poultry for consommés, are so high that you have nothing left. In spite of your many protests, you cannot escape these bills. And you are then forced to leave, cursing your expensive doctor—whom you have never seen—and sending to hell the apothecary.**

Institutions

The first hospital established within the boundaries of modern-day Louisiana was the royal military hospital in New Orleans. Completed by 1726, this hospital maintained thirty beds for the care of ill or injured military personnel and crown representatives. Before Charity Hospital opened in 1736, the city's poor also used the military hospital. Crown funds paid the salaries of surgeon-majors, physician-majors, pharmacists, medics, orderlies, nurses, cooks, and chaplains for the royal hospital. The Ursuline nuns, who came to New Orleans in 1727, attended to patients until the 1770s, when Spanish authorities confined their charitable activities to educating Louisiana's white, African, and Native American women, some of whom learned the art of nursing.

In 1726 local authorities decided to construct a hospital to serve the poor gratis and those who could afford to pay at reasonable rates. They lacked money to build or purchase an existing structure, however, until the mid-1730s. After the Ursulines vacated their temporary lodgings on Chartres Street, what was to become Charity Hospital opened in that edifice. The hospital got a boost in 1735, when New Orleans boatbuilder and -seller Jean Louis willed all he owned to the Hospital for the Poor *("Hospice des Pauvres")*, also known as St. John's Hospital in memory of its benefactor.

Although few matched Jean Louis's generosity, benevolent persons throughout the colonial period donated money to the hospital or the poor in their wills. Government revenue from fines and fees also contributed to Charity Hospital's coffers. For example, Governor Carondelet's 13 July 1794 fire-prevention proclamation prohibited storage of more than twenty-five pounds of gunpowder in homes; if confiscated, the gunpowder would be sold to benefit Charity Hospital. An earlier measure levied a half *real* on each costumed person who attended balls and other social events. The proceeds of this entertainment tax went to Charity Hospital.

Following a series of hurricanes that struck New Orleans in 1779, 1780, and 1781, the wealthy Spanish philanthropist and government official don Andrés Almonester y Roxas donated the necessary funds to rebuild the destroyed Charity Hospital. His only requirement was that he, as sponsor, be allowed, in accordance with Spanish law, the right to name the hospital personnel. The new brick and lime hospital was dedicated to San Carlos, patron saint of the Spanish king Carlos III, and admitted its first patient in 1786. It stood outside the city's perimeter, at the intersection of what is now Rampart and St. Peter streets.

Almonester also provided funds and land to construct a hospital for patients who suffered from Hansen's disease after physicians reported several cases in 1785. At the time persons with the disease, formerly known as leprosy, were kept separate from population centers, so Almonester offered to build the hospital on his plantation outside New Orleans, next to a canal in which afflicted persons could bathe. He proposed separate lodgings for whites and persons of color. Proceeds from Almonester's property rentals on the *Plaza de Armas* (modern-day Jackson Square) and sporadic donations of municipal funds contributed to the upkeep of this facility. Officials named it the Hospital de San Lázaro after the biblical beggar Lazarus whom Jesus cured. When Almonester's building deteriorated, a new hospital was constructed in the late 1790s, and in 1798 physician Estevan Fuignet de Pellegru constructed at his own expense a hospital on land donated to him by the king of Spain for this purpose. It was located on Condé (now part of Chartres) and Dumaine streets. Upon inspection of this hospital in September 1800, don Luis Giovellina, professor of surgery, reported seven charity patients in its care. Giovellina lambasted the hospital's deplorable conditions, including the lack of attendants as well as the absence of partitions to separate men and women.

Treatment for Hansen's disease has been a constant concern in Louisiana. A leprosarium at Carville, Louisiana, the last such institution in the continental United States, still operates at the close of the twentieth century, although it no longer accepts new patients.

Cemeteries

Lower Louisiana is famous for "Cities of the Dead," cemeteries of above-ground tombs and wall crypts, or "ovens." Because much of the area is below sea level, coffins did not readily stay in the ground but rather floated to the top. It only took a heavy rain to raise the dead. To address the problem antebellum authorities at times prohibited interment in the ground. Thus, many south Louisianians were, and still are, buried above the earth's surface.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cemeteries were not only places for burial, but also considered the cause of much disease and death. Miasmas arising from decaying corpses were particularly pernicious, "the source of the most dangerous

sicknesses," according to Attorney General Barrán in 1800. Decrying "frequent burials especially in times of great heat," Barrán warned of "the pestilent exhalations of the dead bodies buried in the surface of the earth." And those pesky "vapors from the excavations in the muddy ground that is so near the city spreads over it immediately." Most dangerous of all, though, were bodies of non-Catholics, who could not be properly buried in the cemeteries, "because those places where they are usually interred are not only too near the town, but are open and exposed so as to become more easily the food for birds and carnivorous beasts."

In 1789 authorities moved the town cemetery from its site within the city walls to a location nearer the newly built Charity Hospital, in part to make the trip from sickbed to grave more convenient. Also in keeping with the popular eighteenth-century image of hospital as death house was the customary monopoly that Charity Hospital had on selling caskets.

Burial construction in antebellum Louisiana varied by class and religion. Well-to-do Louisianians commissioned large, elaborate family tombs, while those with lesser means were buried in smaller units of ovenlike wall crypts. Benevolent, social, and volunteer societies also constructed tombs for their members. The very poor who could not afford tombs or crypts were buried below ground, often in unmarked or mass graves in "potter's field" cemeteries. During epidemics the dead were often buried one on top of the other. Jews also interred their dead below ground. According to Jewish belief, the body had to return to the soil and thus was usually buried in the ground in a wooden casket without nails.

Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley of England gave her impressions of New Orleans cemeteries in 1849:

> **New Orleans has several peculiarities of its own. . . . For instance, the cellars and graves are above ground. . . . The dead are buried in sepulchral houses, which are termed here "ovens." These often contain three or four tiers. Those belonging to the wealthy are frequently very handsome, and built with marble walls. . . .**
>
> **There was something very melancholy in the appearance of the cemetery, that we saw. Altogether, the damp swamp of the unwholesome-looking ground, the low, flat, gloomy inclosure, with its cold and sombre houses of death, and the carelessness and neglect visible, I thought, in general made it a very mournful spectacle.**

The many deaths, especially during epidemic years, kept Louisiana marble-cutters and funeral contractors in business. French traveler P. Forest commented in 1831 on New Orleans funerary dealers and their merchandise: "The Americans have found a way to profit by the epidemic. There are, in New Orleans, as many funeral contractors as there are building contractors."

By the end of the antebellum period New Orleans had twelve marble yards. Primarily dealing in funerary art, most marble yards were located conveniently near the cemeteries. Some of the most noted marble-cutters were free men of color. Eugène Warburg set up shop as a marble-cutter at mid-century and trained and brought his brother Daniel into the business. They were the sons of Jewish commission merchant Daniel Warburg and Marie Rose Blondeau, a former slave from Cuba. While Daniel primarily produced funerary art, Eugène, who was trained in France, specialized in sculpture. During reconstruction of the St. Louis Cathedral in the 1850s, Eugène submitted a proposal for laying a black-and-white checkerboard marble floor. It is likely, though undocumented, that the present central aisle of the cathedral is Eugène's work.

Florville Foy, another free man of color, was one of the most successful marble-cutters and sculptors in antebellum New Orleans. He specialized in funerary objects. Foy learned his trade from his father, Prosper Foy, who came to Louisiana from his native France. Florville's mother was Eloise Aubry, a free woman of color. After studying in France, Florville returned to New Orleans and joined his father's firm. When Prosper retired in the late 1830s, Florville opened his own marble yard. By the 1850s his prosperous business employed eight stonecutters. Florville Foy remained in New Orleans until his death in 1903.

* * *

Conclusion

Death records and contemporary accounts substantiate the assessment of Louisiana in the 1700s and 1800s as "rather a disagreeable place," especially in New Orleans during the epidemic-prone summer months. Like most tropical port cities in the Americas, New Orleans harbored hordes of disease-laden mosquitoes and germ-carrying individuals who passed in and out of the city with frequency and ease. The city's compact population, low-lying soggy terrain, ignorant or deceptive officials, and inadequate public health conditions contributed to its continued "ill" reputation through the nineteenth century.

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Chapter 7

Test of Loyalty: The Battle of New Orleans

The War of 1812 pitted the fledgling United States against its former ruler, Great Britain. Considered a second war for independence, it lasted two and a half years, with its high point the Battle of New Orleans on 8 January 1815. Great Britain finally recognized the United States as an independent nation with the power to defend itself.

Prior to 1814 the war's theater of operations was in the northern United States. That year, however, the British suffered defeat in Baltimore and the Great Lakes, a loss that prevented them from launching a general invasion from Canada. They subsequently shifted their offensive to the south in what was to be the final and decisive blow against the Americans.

The fighting in Louisiana was really a series of Battles *for* New Orleans, lasting from December 1814 through January 1815. On the Chalmette battleground, just below the city, a diverse force of soldiers, sailors, and militia, including Indians and African Americans, defeated Britain's finest white and black troops drawn from Europe and the West Indies.

The American victory in the Gulf region forced the British to recognize United States claims to Louisiana and West Florida and to ratify the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the war. The Battle of New Orleans also marked Louisiana's incorporation into the American Union.

Those Who Fought and Those Who Did Not

British Forces

Britain sent between 11,000 and 14,450 troops to fight in the Louisiana campaign. These included army and navy men fresh from campaigns fought against Napoleon in Europe, as well as veterans of other theaters in the War of 1812. Among the British forces were the First and Fifth West India Regiments, made up of about one thousand black soldiers from Jamaica, Barbados, and the Bahamas. Some of these units recruited and trained American slaves who escaped to British lines, attracted by the promise of freedom.

Major General Sir Edward Pakenham commanded the British army in the Louisiana campaign. Brother-in-law of the duke of Wellington, Pakenham was a seasoned veteran of European wars against Napoleon and was known as the "Hero of Salamanca"

for his bravery in the Spanish Peninsular War. Vice-Admiral Alexander Inglis Cochrane had charge of the British navy in American waters and directed naval skirmishes in the gulf.

United States Forces

United States forces at the time of the Battle of New Orleans were much smaller than those of the British—somewhere between 3,500 and 5,000 troops. This detachment was composed of United States Army troops; Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana militia; Baratarian pirates; Choctaw warriors; and free black soldiers.

Legend has it that Britain's finest soldiers met a ragtag band of enthusiastic but inexperienced woodsmen on the plains of Chalmette. In reality, most of General Andrew Jackson's troops were seasoned in the use of firearms and well-disciplined, with some combat experience—and were better marksmen than the British. They were hampered, however, by a shortage of arms and equipment.

Major General Andrew Jackson, commander of the Seventh Military District, led United States forces in the Gulf campaign against Britain. An ardent expansionist and charismatic leader, Jackson inspired his men and the local populace to fight and defeat the British. Bernard Marigny, a leading Louisianian who disliked Jackson, grudgingly conceded: "Never was a general received with more enthusiasm. His military reputation, his well known firmness of character contributed to call forth a spontaneous movement. From all quarters, the cry was 'to arms!'"

United States Troops

Jackson's forces in the Louisiana campaign included troops from the Seventh and Forty-fourth Infantry Regiments, two of the five regiments that made up the Seventh Military District. The Forty-fourth Regiment came from Louisiana and was commanded by Major Henry Chotard. In addition, artillerists, dragoons, and riflemen from many units converged on New Orleans to battle the British.

Commander Daniel T. Patterson was in charge of the United States Navy in the Gulf region and shared joint command with General Jackson in the Louisiana campaign. Sloops, gunboats, and the USS *Louisiana* and USS *Carolina* made up Patterson's fleet.

Regional White Militia

Militia units from surrounding states joined local troops in defending Louisiana. These forces included Brigadier General John Coffee's Tennessee Mounted Volunteers, General William Carroll's Tennessee Militia, Brigadier General John Adair's Kentucky Militia, and Major Thomas Hinds's Mississippi Dragoons. (Dragoons were mounted troops who rode into battle, dismounted, and fought on foot.) Major General Gabriel Villeré commanded the Louisiana Militia, and Major Jean Baptiste Plauché headed the New Orleans uniformed militia companies. Each of these uniformed companies—Carabiniers, Dragons à Pied, Francs, Louisiana Blues, and Chausseurs—had its own distinctive, colorful outfit. Many of their members had had previous military experience in France, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), and Latin America.

Free Black Battalions

The First and Second Battalions of Free Men of Color played an important role in the Louisiana campaign, just as free black men had during the colonial period in the service of France and Spain. Louisiana was the first state in the Union to commission a military officer of African descent, and an act passed by the Louisiana legislature in 1812 was the first in the nation to authorize a black volunteer militia with black line officers.

This 1812 act basically reactivated the militia organization Louisiana inherited from the Spanish regime. It called for one free black battalion with a white commanding officer and free black officers at lower ranks. At the time of the Battle of New Orleans the First Battalion of Free Men of Color had a total strength of 353, including an eleven-piece band.

The First Battalion impressed General Jackson so much that he ordered the formation of a Second Battalion, mustered into service on 19 December 1814. Joseph Savary, a free black from Saint-Domingue who had been an officer in the French Army, recruited members to the Second Battalion from among the free black refugees from Saint-Domingue and Cuba. As a major, Savary was the ranking black officer in a battalion of 256 members and was the first African American awarded this high position in the United States Army. Colonel Michel Fortier, a wholesale merchant who had served in the Spanish colonial militia, commanded both battalions.

The Second Battalion of Free Men of Color fought in the nighttime battle of 23 December 1814 and at the Battle of New Orleans on 8 January 1815. Both battalions defended Jackson's line on the east bank of the river. Casualties among the free black battalions at the Battle of New Orleans numbered fourteen: one dead and thirteen wounded. Once the main fighting ended, a group of free black militiamen went onto the field to assist the wounded and take prisoners. Some British soldiers fired upon them, killing one and wounding three. Outraged, Savary led a company of free blacks from the Second Battalion to dislodge the British snipers. They were successful but suffered ten more casualties.

Jordan B. Noble

Jordan B. Noble was the black drummer famous for beating the long roll at the Battle of New Orleans. Born in 1800 in Georgia, Noble came to New Orleans in 1811 and joined the Seventh Regiment of the United States Army one year later. He participated in several engagements of the Louisiana campaign. At the Battle of New Orleans he opened with reveille and closed with taps.

Noble's exploits at the Battle of New Orleans were only the beginning of his long career as a military drummer and, later, as a popular New Orleans musician. During the Seminole War in Florida in 1836 he served as a field drummer for the First Louisiana Brigade, and in the Mexican War of 1846–1848 he beat his drum for the Washington Artillery. At the outbreak of Civil War Noble rallied New Orleans free men of color to h

form militia companies on behalf of the Confederacy. When Union forces occupied southern Louisiana, he helped organize the free black Native Guards under General Benjamin Butler and served as a captain in the Seventh Louisiana Volunteers.

Noble also performed at parades and commemorative celebrations. When he died on 20 June 1890, Noble's obituary noted that "many will remember the white-headed old man and his well-worn drum, so often seen during the [World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial] exposition of 1884 and 1885."

Choctaws

Fighting with Jackson's forces in Louisiana was a group of Choctaws, longtime enemies of the pro-British Creek nation. They were under the command of Major Pierre Jugeant, a part-Choctaw scout who grew up among Native Americans and spoke various dialects. In the Louisiana campaign Choctaw warriors harassed the enemy by making nightly raids on British pickets, guarded the approach to New Orleans by Chef Menteur Road, and fought in the battle of 23 December 1814. At the Battle of New Orleans they defended the line that ran through the swamp and woods.

Jean Laffite and the Baratarians

The legendary Baratarian pirates lent assistance to Jackson and the Americans, primarily in the form of military supplies and artillery power. They also helped the United States by not siding with the British. Familiar with several passageways to New Orleans, the Baratarians had been approached by British officials to act as guides and allies. Acting as leader of the "Frenchmen of Barataria," several of whom were free blacks and escaped slaves, Jean Laffite went to American authorities while considering the British offer. He used the situation to his men's advantage, securing from Jackson promises of amnesty for past offenses in return for siding with the United States and committing his men to battle.

Support Personnel

In addition to fighting on the line with Jackson, Louisianians contributed to the American victory in many ways. Although both United States and British officials doubted the loyalty of Louisianians to their new country, local residents expressed their support for Jackson. In the words of Bernard Marigny,

> **When General Jackson arrived in New Orleans, all the inhabitants wished to fight. We know moreover that one cannot be French, or of French origin, without detesting the English domination. . . .**
>
> **It would be impossible for our detractors to cite a single Louisianan, a single Creole, or a single naturalized Frenchman, who in the moment of danger, abandoned the country or refused to fight.**

With a common enemy to confront "nationalities no longer count; we are all Americans," noted Chevalier Anne Louis de Tousard, French consul *ad interim* at New Orleans.

Major Arsène Lacarrière Latour, principal engineer in the United States Seventh Military District, captured the mood of Louisianians in December 1814: "All classes of society were now animated with the most ardent zeal. The young, the old, women, children, all breathed defiance to the enemy, firmly resolved to oppose to the utmost the threatened invasion." And French consul Tousard noted on 6 January 1815: "At the present moment every one is under arms in the camp, while the veterans and the old folks do service in the city and keep watch upon the enemy within our gates. All the French men marched, and I have only one who claimed exemption."

Behind the front lines white and free black men forty-five years and older formed home guards to protect private property and maintain order in New Orleans and surrounding towns and posts. A free black man and former member of the Spanish militia, Gabriel Gerome, commanded a home guard company of seventy-nine free black men. Slaves and citizens helped widen canals and build breastworks along them. Slaves also fortified military positions and fought in several battles of the Louisiana campaign.

Women fashioned silk banners, flags, and bandages for militia regiments and made clothes for the troops. Nuns and free women of color nursed the wounded at hospitals and convents. Throughout the night of 7 January and into the morning of 8 January 1815, the nuns, women, and children gathered at the Ursuline Convent, praying before the statue of Our Lady of Prompt Succor to protect their loved ones, city, and state. During communion at that morning's mass, a courier entered the chapel, crying out, "Victory is ours!"

Plan of Harassment: Preliminary Engagements

Jackson Arrives in New Orleans

General Jackson established his base of operations in New Orleans late in November 1814. Proof that Admiral Cochrane intended to direct the British Gulf Coast campaign against New Orleans persuaded Jackson to leave Mobile and concentrate United States military efforts on the Mississippi.

The citizens of New Orleans had already formed committees of public safety to protect their interests. They and members of the legislature did not entirely trust Jackson and feared that he would burn New Orleans rather than surrender it to the British.

Preparations for War

Once in New Orleans, Jackson moved quickly to prepare for the enemy's expected assault. He prepared defense strategies to match the variety of attack paths available to the British. Jackson deployed Louisiana militia detachments to fell trees, scout enemies, and guard the numerous small streams the British could use to enter the city. To protect Lakes Borgne and Pontchartrain Jackson relied on navy gunboats under the command of Daniel T. Patterson. He also sent Major Plauché's New Orleans militia companies to Forts St. John and Petites Coquilles north of the city to fend off a Lake Pontchartrain approach.

And he ordered Jugeant's Choctaws and the First Battalion of Free Men of Color to guard Chef Menteur Road. In the event of a British advance up the river, Jackson also fortified what he considered the key to the Mississippi—Fort St. Philip near the mouth of the river. As a second line of defense, he prepared Fort St. Leon at English Turn.

The Approach to New Orleans: British Options

In attacking New Orleans from their base at Negril Bay, Jamaica, the British had seven potential routes:

1. Bayou Lafourche, a deep, threadlike stream running from the Gulf of Mexico west of the delta into the Mississippi between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Because of its length and narrowness, the Americans could easily obstruct it.
2. Barataria Bay, opening on the gulf seventy miles west of the main mouth of the river almost directly south of New Orleans. Above the bay, numerous narrow channels connected with the Mississippi at points along the city's shores.
3. The main channel of the Mississippi was the best approach to the city and the only route affording use of large naval vessels. Forts and batteries guarded the river: Fort St. Philip was situated about thirty miles from the mouth, and about forty miles farther up was Fort St. Leon. St. Leon sat at English Turn, a strong point where the river made an S-shaped turn. Sailing ships normally had to wait for a change in the wind to advance up river.
4. Rivière aux Chênes and Bayou Terre aux Boeufs, small streams that emptied into the gulf just east of the river's mouth and extended inland almost to the English Turn. Small boats could navigate them, but a few troops could defend them easily.

The final three approaches were by way of Lake Borgne:

5. Ascend Chef Menteur Road to the Plain of Gentilly, a segment of dry land over which troops could march to New Orleans.
6. From Lake Borgne through one of the small bayous that came within a mile of the Mississippi.
7. The route from Lake Borgne through the narrow straits known as the Rigolets, across Lake Pontchartrain, and up Bayou St. John. A well-known route of commerce, this course would take a landing party within two miles of New Orleans.

The seventh choice constituted the one the British originally intended to pursue, but a shortage of light vessels and Cochrane's belief that the Americans effectively defended this route forced him to abandon this plan. Instead, the British selected option number six, sailing into Lake Borgne and landing below New Orleans via Bayou Bienvenu.

Battle of the Gunboats, 14 December 1814

Determined to land his forces below New Orleans, Cochrane first had to destroy the American gunboats on Lake Borgne. On 12 December Lieutenant Thomas ap Catesby Jones, commander of United States gunboats at New Orleans, sighted the British fleet of 45 barges carrying 1,200 men and 43 large guns. The luckless Americans had only 5 gunboats manned by 183 men and 23 small guns, a dispatch boat, and the tender *Alligator*.

At first Jones believed that the British were just going to dock and pursue a land battle, but instead they came after Jones's gunboats. When the wind died on 14 December the grossly outnumbered Jones could retreat no further. Rather than admit defeat and destroy his boats so that they could not fall into enemy hands, Jones decided to fight to the end. After a grueling battle, the superior British fleet captured all five American gunboats and the *Alligator*, but at a cost of 17 killed and 77 wounded. United States casualties numbered 10 killed, 35 wounded, and 86 captured.

The loss of Lake Borgne was significant. The defeat severed United States sea communication with Mobile, limiting contact to interior roads and completing Britain's blockade of Mobile. In addition, control of Lake Borgne gave the British access to a variety of approaches to New Orleans. British control of the lake, along with the loss of his gunboat scouts, confused Jackson's plans for defense of the city; he had no idea where the British would land or which route they would take.

Fight in the Dark, 23 December 1814

The nighttime battle of 23 December 1814 was fought between advance, or frontline, elements of the British army numbering about 1,600 men and Jackson's army on the Villeré and adjacent plantations below the city. That morning British forces tried to capture General Jacques de Villeré, ranking officer of the Louisiana militia, but he was not home. Instead, they apprehended his son, Major Gabriel de Villeré. Gabriel, however, escaped to New Orleans with news of the British landing and attack.

Jackson detached army, artillery, and marine forces, Tennessee militia, Mississippi dragoons, Plauché's battalion, Captain Thomas Beale's Orleans Rifles, eighteen Choctaws, and the Second Battalion of Free Men of Color south of the city to meet the British. Although they fought to a stalemate on the night of the twenty-third, Jackson's attack threw the British off balance and battered enemy morale. The cost of the engagement was high: 277 British casualties (46 killed, 167 wounded, and 64 captured) and 213 United States casualties (24 killed, 115 wounded, and 74 captured). Hardest hit was Beale's rifle company, composed primarily of New Orleans lawyers and merchants.

The Rodriguez Canal and the Treaty of Ghent, 24 December 1814

Jackson withdrew his army and established a line behind the Rodriguez Canal, a twenty-foot-wide and four-foot-deep abandoned canal on the old Macarty plantation located six miles below the city. The general stationed most of his troops four miles above New Orleans to meet a second attack from Chef Menteur and sent the remainder to defend approaches below the city. The Rodriguez Canal detachment prepared to meet the

enemy by setting up fortifications from the river to the swamp with eight batteries in the line. Jackson used this encampment as his base of operations for the Battle of New Orleans. It placed him two miles from the British position at Chalmette.

Meanwhile, on 24 December United States and British commissioners, meeting in Ghent, Belgium, signed a peace treaty that ended the War of 1812. Both British and American forces in Louisiana continued their efforts, unaware of the official end of the war.

Grand Reconnaissance, 28 December 1814

General Pakenham launched a reconnaissance in force against Jackson's line at Rodriguez Canal. However, Pakenham called off this probing attack at the very moment when, unbeknownst to him, his right wing on the edge of the swamp began to turn toward Jackson's exposed left flank. Heavy fire from Choctaws hidden in the woods helped force back the British. Following this action, Pakenham began to realize the effectiveness of United States firepower and moved to bring more artillery to his line.

Battle of New Year's Day, 1 January 1815

The Battle of New Year's Day was decisive in the eventual United States victory. Once the morning fog cleared, batteries of the two armies started bombarding each other and waged a powerful artillery duel. British shots landed in the fields well behind United States lines, and eventually Pakenham ordered his guns withdrawn. The United States won this engagement. Casualty reports reflect the American victory: 11 killed and 23 wounded on the American side and 32 killed, 44 wounded, and 2 missing on the British.

The Battle of New Orleans

British Offense

Pakenham's plan called for attacking Jackson's forces with four groups. Major General Samuel Gibbs led the main assault with 2,200 troops against the left flank of Jackson's line held by General Carroll. The West India regiments attacked Coffee's unit and the Choctaws from the cover of the woods in an attempt to create a diversion. Major General John Keane advanced with 1,200 men in a column between the river and the levee, also meaning to distract United States forces from Gibbs's attack. Pakenham held a fourth group, General Lambert's 1,400 men, in reserve.

American Defense

Jackson concentrated his men on a 700-yard battle line and left a 950-yard line of swamp for the most part exposed. Because the British could not mass a large attack against a line in the swamp and woods, Jackson placed only about 1,000 men from Coffee's Tennessee Mounted Volunteers and the Choctaw company along it. He massed approximately 1,500 men from the United States Army, Carroll's Tennessee militia, New Orleans uniformed companies, and the two free black battalions behind the earthworks on

Rodriguez Canal. In reserve were the Kentucky and Louisiana militia and the Mississippi Dragoons.

On the West Bank

Simultaneous with the main battle on the east bank of the Mississippi, United States and British forces engaged in combat on the west bank. British Colonel William Thornton led 300 soldiers, 200 marines, 200 sailors, and part of the Fifth West India Regiment against about 1,000 Louisiana and Kentucky militiamen commanded by Brigadier General David B. Morgan. Thornton's mission was to silence United States Commander Patterson's batteries and use them against Jackson's flank.

Battle Overview

The British attacked on two fronts at the Battle of New Orleans: the primary one against Jackson's line on the east bank of the Mississippi and a secondary one against United States positions on the west bank. The former failed and the latter succeeded. Fortunately for Jackson, Pakenham was defeated and killed at Chalmette before the British victory across the river had been ascertained and used to advantage. With Generals Pakenham and Gibbs killed and General Keane severely wounded, command of the British troops went to General Lambert, who decided to give up the campaign just as Thornton was winning on the west bank.

Confusion and Death on the Battlefield: A Contemporary Assessment

Those who fought in the Battle of New Orleans described battlefield action as confused and haphazard in the dark hours of that foggy 8 January morning. Many times they were unaware of the danger that lurked just beyond viewing range. In the words of one Kentucky militiaman:

> **The official report said the action lasted two hours and five minutes, but it did not seem half that length of time to me. It was so dark that little could be seen, until just about the time the battle ceased. The morning had dawned to be sure, but the smoke was so thick that every thing seemed to be covered up in it. Our men did not seem to apprehend any danger, but would load and fire as fast as they could, talking, swearing, and joking all the time. All ranks and sections were soon broken up. After the first shot, every one loaded and banged away on his own hook.**

The same man gave a touching, vivid account of the battlefield at Chalmette following the Battle of New Orleans:

> **When the smoke had cleared away and we could obtain a fair view of the field, it looked, at the first glance, like a sea of blood. It was not blood itself which gave it this appearance but the red coats in which the British soldiers were dressed. Straight out before our position, for about the width of space which we supposed had been occupied by the British column, the field was entirely covered with prostrate bodies. In some places they were laying in piles of several, one on top of the other. On either side, there was an interval more thinly sprinkled with the slain: and then two other dense rows, one near the levee and the other towards the swamp. About two hundred yards off, directly in front of our position, lay a large dapple gray horse, which we understood to have been Pakenham's.**
>
> **Something about half way between the body of the horse and our bre[a]stwork there was a very large pile of dead, and at this spot, as I was afterward told, Pakenham had been killed, his horse having staggered off to a considerable distance before he fell. I have no doubt that I could . . . have walked on the bodies from the edge of the ditch to where the horse was laying, without touching the ground. . . .**
>
> **When we first got a fair view of the field in our front, individuals could be seen in every possible attitude. Some laying quite dead, others mortally wounded, pitching and tumbling about in the agonies of death. Some had their heads shot off, some their legs, some their arms. Some were laughing, some crying, some groaning, and some screaming. There was every variety of sight and sound. Among those that were on the ground, however, there were some that were neither dead nor wounded. A great many had thrown themselves down behind piles of slain, for protection. As the firing ceased, these men were every now and then jumping up and either running off or coming in and giving themselves up.**

Casualties

A major contributing factor to British defeat was the loss of many officers and the confusion that resulted from their deaths. Two out of four generals were killed and another wounded on the battlefield. Many British troops fell back after Pakenham and Gibbs were killed, and their retreat broke morale and threw the whole army into disarray.

British casualties for 8 January were extremely high compared to American losses. On the British side were 291 killed, 1,262 wounded, and 484 captured or missing, a total of 2,037. Jackson lost only 71 men: 13 killed, 39 wounded, and 19 missing.

Aftermath of the Battle of New Orleans

Bombardment of Fort St. Philip, 9–18 January 1815

For nine days following the Battle of New Orleans five British war vessels anchored off Plaquemines Bend and blasted Fort St. Philip. Forces at the fort fired back with cannons, slowly forcing a British retreat downriver. During the bombardment more than a thousand shells rained down on the United States position, killing two and wounding seven men. This diversion, however, helped protect British forces as they withdrew through Lake Borgne and into the gulf.

Martial Law in Louisiana

Unaware of the peace treaty signed 24 December 1814 and fearful that the British might return, Jackson refused to lift an edict of martial law imposed prior to the British invasion. Many Louisianians objected to what they considered harsh, unjust treatment. Among them was Louis Louailler, a state legislator from Opelousas who supported the war effort but criticized Jackson in local newspapers for his continuance of martial law. Jackson threw Louailler in jail, only to have federal district Judge Dominick A. Hall release Louailler on a writ of habeas corpus. In response, Jackson placed Hall and United States Attorney John Dick under arrest, too.

When Hall returned to the bench, he found Jackson guilty of contempt of court and fined him $1,000. Jackson remained bitter about this incident for a long time, and almost thirty years later, Congress refunded his fine with interest.

Treaty of Ghent Ratified: News Finally Arrives

Official word that the United States Congress had ratified the Treaty of Ghent reached New Orleans on 13 March 1815. A few days later the British fleet sailed from Louisiana waters. Jackson revoked martial law, dismissed his troops, returned militia units to state control, and pardoned military offenders.

Images of Jackson

After the Battle of New Orleans Louisianians gave Jackson mixed reviews. Some hailed him as a "conquering hero" and honored him with parades, triumphal arches, religious ceremonies, balls, and parties. Others scorned him as the "butcher of New Orleans" and master of "bloody deeds," blaming Jackson for what relatively few casualties there were from the campaign.

On a national level, Jackson's victory gave him some of the recognition and popularity necessary to win the presidential election of 1828. "Old Hickory" had in part won his reputation at the Battle of New Orleans.

* * *

Conclusion

The Gulf Coast campaign, culminating in the Battle of New Orleans, was of great significance to Louisiana and the United States. Defeat forced British policymakers to ratify the Treaty of Ghent, thereby ending the war and recognizing United States claims to Louisiana and West Florida, areas included in the Louisiana Purchase. Now isolated in the North American Southeast, Spain was then more willing to relinquish East Florida, soon accomplished in the Adams Onís Treaty, negotiated in 1819. In addition, the campaign strengthened Louisianians' loyalty to the United States and resulted in the state's "Americanization" in terms of political identity.

One of the more tragic outcomes of the Gulf Coast campaign was the reduction of the Creek nation. Bereft of their British allies, the Creek were vulnerable to American aggression and land speculation. Both as general and later as president, Andrew Jackson's Indian policy favored removal.

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Chapter 8

Civil War Louisiana

True to its complex past, Louisiana had ties to both the Confederacy and the Union during the Civil War, providing men and supplies to both sides. Its women, children, slaves, and elderly nursed the wounded and sick, helped feed soldiers from their own gardens, stockpens, and fields, and made clothes, blankets, flags, and equipment for the troops. Soldiers who wore the blue and the gray included native and foreign whites, immigrants of all nationalities, free blacks, and slaves, as well as women, who served as army nurses and *vivandieres* (canteen women).

The Civil War changed life in Louisiana. Some of the state's finest young people—men and women, white and black—fought and died or were wounded; others departed with their units for another state and stayed there. On the homefront the elderly, women, and children had to fend for themselves while defending their communities from frequent raids. Many were left without children, husbands, or parents for the long, as well as the short, term. Some Louisianians viewed the changes that war wrought in a positive light: freedom for slaves, the vote for black men, and economic opportunities for those allied with the Union cause. The war devastated others, especially those who lost loved ones or were caught in the path of opposing armies. For better or worse, the Civil War was a major turning point in the history of the nation and the state and in the lives of their people.

Election of 1860

Vote tallies from the 1860 presidential election indicated that in November of that year the Louisiana electorate opposed the ideals of the Republican party yet was reluctant to secede from the Union. A plurality of Louisiana voters chose John C. Breckinridge, nominated by "fire-eating" secessionists who severed their ties with northern Democrats and formed a separate southern Democrat faction. However, the combined votes for northern Democrat Stephen A. Douglas (7,625) and Constitutional Unionist John Bell (20,204), both of whom touted the sanctity of the Union, outnumbered those for Breckinridge (22,680). Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln did not even appear on Louisiana's ballot.

Unionist sentiment was especially strong in New Orleans, where in the November election the vote was three to one against secession. Vote tallies totaled 5,216 for Bell, 2,998 for Douglas, and 2,645 for Breckinridge.

Preparing for War

Once Lincoln was actually elected, however, sentiment in New Orleans and all Louisiana changed rapidly. One visitor described post-election emotions in the Crescent City:

> **The excitement about the result of the election seems to increase fast. The most talk I hear now [in New Orleans] is about the state of the country. Some anxiety appears to be felt as to the result. The Southern people think the result of the election is a sort of declaration of hostility by the North. Nearly every day Lincoln's effigy is hanged in the principal streets and squares. When it is run up it is saluted with the firing of cannon & cheers. Secession is openly talked of, apparently with increasing confidence in its success. (Schultz, "New Orleans in December 1860")**

As early as Christmas 1860, Louisianians flocked to form local defensive units, resplendent with flashy uniforms and shiny, loud weapons. Private military groups included the "Crescent Rifles," "Minute Men," "Home Guards," and "Defenders of Southern Rights." Even firemen turned soldier and organized the Fire Brigade. Convened in December, a special session of the state legislature established a military board headed by the governor and authorized to appropriate half a million dollars to arm and equip companies. Fighting fervor ran high, especially on Christmas Day: "There appears to be about the same amount of firing of guns, crackers and the like as at home on the 4 of July, also parading of military companies, of which there are a great many here, more being constantly organized to oppose the 'Lincoln party'" (Schultz, "New Orleans in December 1860").

By January 1861 Louisiana's political and military leaders were preparing to seize the reins of government from federal officials and to defend their state against a northern attack. As he departed Louisiana in January, the same visitor noted the aura of rising expectations: "The excitement had steadily increased up to the time of our leaving, and 'Pellican' flags were flying in all directions, companies drilling &c."

Governor Thomas Overton Moore organized military units throughout the state. Just before Louisiana seceded from the Union on 26 January 1861, state troops and militia companies seized public property that belonged to the federal government. Five strategic points were identified and taken:

1. the United States arsenal and barracks at Baton Rouge (10 January)
2. Forts Jackson and St. Philip near the mouth of the Mississippi River, which guarded the upriver approach to New Orleans (11 January)
3. Fort Pike on the Rigolets, guarding entrance to Lake Pontchartrain (14 January)

4. United States barracks near New Orleans (14 January)
5. Fort Macomb on Chef Menteur Road, guarding the eastern water approaches to New Orleans (28 January)

With the capture of the Baton Rouge arsenal, Louisiana solved its critical firearm shortage, at least for the time being. In fact, state troops confiscated so many arms that they were able to send some to Mississippi for that state's defense.

Secession

South Carolina seceded from the Union on 20 December 1860, and in a chain reaction, six other Deep South states quickly followed suit. On 7 January 1861 Louisiana voters elected delegates to the state's secession convention: 80 immediate secessionists, 44 cooperationists, who wanted to delay action and consult with other slave states, and 6 uncertains. The press and public's militant attitude also influenced the secession convention's vote. One of the leading proponents of slavery and secession in Louisiana was New Orleans Presbyterian minister Dr. Benjamin M. Palmer, "the golden orator of Southern Rights." Such popular pressure and a pro-secession convention majority combined to make Louisiana the sixth state to secede, on 26 January 1861.

Motivations for Secession

Louisiana was an anomaly among the eventual eleven Confederate states in that it had very strong economic ties to the North and logically should have stayed in the Union. Whereas most of the agricultural South decried protective tariffs enacted by northern legislators as detrimental to the cotton trade, powerful Louisiana sugar producers and distributors supported such tariffs. They relied upon tariffs on sugar imported from Cuba, Brazil, and other nations to compete in the United States market. In fact, much of Louisiana's trade in all products was with the northern states.

Like other southern states, however, Louisiana resented northern dominance of its economy. Lower population growth due to lack of opportunity and competition with slave labor, along with less canal and railroad mileage and a significantly smaller, almost stagnant, manufacturing capacity, reinforced Louisiana's and other southern states' sense of economic subordination to the North. Northern firms also controlled banks, access to credit, and major wholesale and retail enterprises.

The slave labor system was a major bone of contention. While northerners touted the merits of free labor and industrial capitalism, southerners argued that slave labor was productive and profitable and that masters treated their slaves better than industrialists treated wage laborers. Above all, slaves represented a major capital investment that owners would not relinquish without generous compensation. Southern political rhetoric revolved around states' rights and the individual's right to property, especially slave property. Southern slaveholders particularly resented federal enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, part of the Compromise of 1850.

Even though Abraham Lincoln swore only to contain slavery where it already existed, the Louisiana electorate feared that if elected, Lincoln would move to abolish slavery throughout the United States. Actually, Lincoln had no power to abolish slavery singlehandedly in a state where it already existed. This perception of a threat to state sovereignty and a "southern way of life" propelled Louisiana's political representatives to vote for secession. A *New Orleans Daily Crescent* editorial shortly after Lincoln's election expressed the sentiments of many of its readers: "The southern people, driven to the wall, have no remedy but that of political independence ."

Many Louisianians, be they white or free black, slaveholders or not, took exception to what they perceived as northern infiltration and destruction of "the southern way of life." Throughout the antebellum period northern reformers attacked the slow pace of southern life, low worker productivity, lack of educational facilities and other public services, and the southern penchant for gambling and drinking, especially noticeable in Louisiana. Northerners attributed most of these deficiencies and bad habits to the debilitating effects of slavery. Southern defenders responded by attacking the cold, inhumane character of industrial capitalism with its exploitation of child and female labor, filthy living arrangements in dreary tenements, pollution, and loud, driving, unrelenting machinery. To many white southerners, the living and working conditions of their slaves compared favorably with those of factory workers. (Of course, they never bothered to ask the slaves themselves.)

The issues of social control and racial superiority also contributed to Louisianians' defense of slavery and decision to secede. At the time most whites, including many abolitionists, believed that they were superior to persons of African descent simply because of their race. Thus, they thought it essential to maintain dominance over the "inferior race." If the institution of slavery were dismantled, whites thought they would lose all means of control and total chaos would reign. (After Reconstruction in both the North and the South whites found ways other than institutional slavery to maintain their position of power.)

When analyzed carefully, the several factors and influences that contributed to secession and civil war can be reduced to the primary component of slavery and the slave system. The southern slave system and way of life were primarily but not solely economic in nature. They also incorporated social, racial, religious, intellectual, and emotional factors that when woven together provided a formidable defense against what many southerners considered to be unnecessary change. Their world was threatened by a modernizing nation. In the end, differences between North and South seemed to outweigh similarities in the minds of contemporary actors.

Post-Secession Preparations

Following the official declaration of secession, increasing numbers of Louisiana men rushed to organize and join military units in support of the Confederate cause. Inspired by European and African campaigns, the Zouave craze, with its flashy uniforms and style, swept across Louisiana and the rest of the country, North and South. The colorful romance associated with Zouave units helped increase their enrollment.

By November 1861 Louisiana had enrolled 23,577 troops in Confederate service. According to a Richmond source quoted in the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, "the Pelicans have done better in proportion to their population than any other Confederate state outside Virginia" (23 August 1861). These volunteer contributions to Louisiana's military defense reflected the strong spirit of southern patriotism throughout the state, but also revealed and exacerbated the chaos and the lack of standardization that plagued the state's military efforts in the early years of the war. The absence of a central organizing authority cost the state heavily in terms of money, lives, and battlefield success.

In February 1861 the secession convention claimed for its own the New Orleans Mint with its nearly $500,000 in gold and silver and transferred the Custom House and its funds of $147,520 to the Confederate government. The convention also endorsed Jefferson Davis for president and adopted a state flag for Confederate Louisiana.

Even with war clouds on the horizon, Louisianians marked the social season with continuous balls, lavish banquets, theater and opera performances, and, of course, Mardi Gras. Comus' theme for 1861 depicted "Scenes from Life" with representations of Childhood, Youth, Manhood, Old Age, and Death. Although slightly less extravagant than previous years due to uncertainty about the future, the parades, balls, and masked revelers exuded a merry, hopeful air, full of high expectations.

On the Battlefield

Strategic Importance of Louisiana

Northern strategy called for dividing the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy along the Mississippi River, which formed much of Louisiana's eastern border. The Union wanted to capture valuable Louisiana ports on the Mississippi, such as Baton Rouge and New Orleans, and a string of strategic Confederate forts: Forts Jackson and St. Philip, primary defenses for the Crescent City; the newly and hastily constructed fortifications at Port Hudson; and Vicksburg, key to control of the Mississippi. Louisiana's Confederate forces thus had to defend against both downriver and upriver Union attacks. A Confederate fleet composed of Confederate ships, state ships, and a private river flotilla patrolled the Gulf Coast and the Mississippi River.

Louisiana was also strategically important as a conduit for such military supplies as munitions, foodstuffs, clothing, and livestock. Goods from Mexico and Texas flowed eastward and northward along Louisiana railroads and rivers into other Confederate states.

As a major manufacturing center, New Orleans contributed to the Confederate cause during the first year of warfare, supplying early issue armaments, clothing, knapsacks, tenting, and tinware. The Confederacy's ability to produce manufactured goods was severely curtailed by the fall of New Orleans and Nashville. Richmond and a few other small manufacturing centers were left as the only remaining sources of southern production until after 1863, when Atlanta, Georgia, and Selma, Alabama, were able to increase their manufacturing capabilities. In addition, workers in New Orleans shipyards constructed naval vessels for the Confederacy, including the ironclads *Mississippi* and *Louisiana* and the gunboats *Livingston* and *Carondelet*.

Prior to Union occupation in April 1862, several companies manufactured armaments and equipment in New Orleans. Among the arms makers were Cook & Brother at 1 Canal Street, Thomas, Griswold & Company at the corner of Canal and Royal, and A. H. Dufilho, a cutler at 21 Royal Street. These firms made rifles, swords, cutlasses, and bayonets. Magee & George produced leathergoods at its 6 Magazine Street shop.

Major Battles Fought in Louisiana

Fall of New Orleans

Union naval forces established a blockade of the Gulf Coast in the early months of the war and waited just off the mouth of the river. Forts Jackson and St. Philip on either side of the Mississippi River guarded the upriver approach from the gulf. Because Louisiana sent so many troops out of state to support the Confederate cause during the early months of the war, these forts were poorly defended. Actually, they had never served as an effective defense of the river.

Because both Forts Jackson and St. Philip were weak, Louisiana military leaders planned their strategy around an obstruction technique that would halt an enemy advance and subject it to bombardment from the forts. Confederate Major General Mansfield Lovell, who was in charge of defending New Orleans, ordered his men to construct a raft across the river, leaving an opening large enough to admit only one vessel at a time. He hired R. F. Nichols, a New Orleans merchant, to procure chains, anchors, and cordage from as far away as Pensacola and Savannah. When completed, the contraption "consisted of forty-foot-long cypress trees placed four or five feet apart and held by two-and-a-half-inch chains and by large timbers. The raft was fastened to trees on the left bank by chains and to the treeless right bank to capstans and huge anchors buried deep in the ground and buttressed by heavy timbers" (Winters, 1963).

This chain- and timber-raft obstruction gave Louisianians a false sense of security. Moreover, Lovell regarded General Benjamin Butler, commander of the Union Gulf Coast department, as harmless. Disastrous floods in February and March 1862 dispelled some of this confidence. Violent high waters inflicted irreparable damage upon the rafts. Then, over the course of six days in April 1862 Admiral David Farragut, commander of the largest fleet the United States had ever assembled, bombarded the forts, whose

Confederate commander was General Johnson K. Duncan. Impatient at his fleet's failure to force surrender immediately, Farragut decided to run the blockade. Early in the morning of 24 April 1862, under the cover of darkness, Farragut and seventeen federal vessels attempted the run. Though pummeled mightily, they were successful. Farragut faced little Confederate opposition as he sped toward New Orleans.

In the meantime, United States forces under General Butler took possession of the forts. Casualties from this campaign totaled 11 killed and 39 wounded on the Confederate side and 39 killed and 171 wounded on the Union.

New Orleans was the first Confederate city invaded and occupied by Union troops. During the afternoon of 25 April 1861, just one and a half days after running his fleet past Forts Jackson and St. Philip, Farragut dropped anchor slightly downriver from the Crescent City and pointed his guns toward it.

Confederate crises farther north had stripped New Orleans of most of its troops; the remaining forces were primarily Home and Native Guards. Officials, however, utilized the city as a warehouse and central point for Confederate supplies. To prevent federal use of these goods, including armaments, clothing, cotton, and other raw materials, Confederate troops under Lovell's direction transported as much as possible northward by rail, river, and road.

Among items left behind were the plantation bells that General Beauregard had gathered at the Custom House in New Orleans to supply metal for Confederate cannon manufacture. Louisianians had shipped these bells from all over the state. Confederate troops decided to abandon the bells because of their weight. Upon taking New Orleans, federal officials transported the bells to New York, where they were sold at public auction.

At the time, Confederate officials accused each other of preparing the way for the fall of New Orleans. Looking for a convenient scapegoat, President Jefferson Davis strongly condemned General Lovell for the loss, whereas Lovell just as adamantly (but not as effectively) blamed Davis. Scholars today generally defend Lovell: Davis and his officers had depleted the city of necessary manpower and other resources, and if Lovell had not removed his troops in the face of Farragut and Butler's advance, the city most likely would have been destroyed.

On 26 April 1862 Farragut and his marines raised the United States flag over the New Orleans Mint. Three days later he marched to city hall to take formal possession of the city. Writer George Washington Cable witnessed the scene:

> **About 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon (as I remember), I being again in the store with but one door ajar, came a roar of shoutings and imprecations and crowding feet down Common street. "Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Shoot them! Kill them! Hang them!" I locked the door on the outside, and ran to the front of the mob, bawling with the rest, "Hurrah for Jeff Davis!" About every third man there had a weapon out. Two officers of the United States**

navy were walking abreast, unguarded and alone, looking not to right or left, never frowning, never flinching, while the mob screamed in their ears, shook cocked pistols in their faces, cursed and crowed, and gnashed upon them. So through the gates of death those two men walked to the City Hall to demand the town's surrender. It was one of the bravest deeds I ever saw done.

Bringing up the rear, General Butler and his 1400 troops arrived in New Orleans on 1 May 1862. Butler ordered that martial law govern the city, as it had since March of that year, but allowed Mayor Monroe and his council to continue running the city government.

In her diary entry on 9 May 1862, Julia Le Grand depicted the despair many New Orleanians felt at the prospect of occupation. She also described women's protest:

A pitiful affair it [the surrender of New Orleans] has been. . . . First and last then, this city, the most important one in the Confederacy, has fallen, and Yankee troops are drilling and parading in our streets. Poor New Orleans! What has become of all your promised greatness! . . .

. . . Never can I forget the day that the alarm bell rang. I never felt so hopeless and forsaken. The wretched generals, left here with our troops, ran away and left them. . . . Of course the greatest confusion prevailed, and every hour, indeed almost every moment, brought its dreadful rumor. After it was known that the gunboats had actually passed, the whole city, both camp and street, was a scene of wild confusion. *The women only* did not seem afraid. They were all in favor of resistance, *no matter how hopeless* that resistance might be. . . .

. . . The ladies of the town signed a paper, praying that it should never be given up. We went down to put our names on the list, and met the marines marching up to the City Hall with their cannon in front of them. The blood boiled in my veins—I felt no fear—only anger. I forgot myself and called out several times: "Gentlemen, don't let the State Flag come down," and, "Oh, how can you men stand it?" . . .

. . . The cotton and sugar have been burned; that is one comfort, and the work of destruction still goes on on the plantations. I shall never forget the long, dreadful night when we sat with our friends and watched the flames from all sorts of valuables as the gunboats were coming up the river.

Battling for Baton Rouge

Control and occupation of Baton Rouge rotated between Confederate and Union armies. Admiral Farragut and his gunboats took the city for the Union on 30 May 1862. Baton Rouge resident Sarah Morgan poignantly narrated her flight from Baton Rouge on that day:

> **I was going I knew not where; it was impossible to take my bird, for even if I could carry him, he would starve. So I took him out of his cage, kissed his little yellow head, and tossed him up. He gave one feeble little chirp as if uncertain where to go, and then for the first and last time I cried, laying my head against the gate post, and with my eyes too dim to see him. O how it hurt me to lose my little bird . . . ! . . .**
>
> **As we stood in the door, four or five shells sailed over our heads at the same time, seeming to make a perfect corkscrew of the air—for it sounded as though it went in circles. . . . We [had] reached the back gate, that was on the street [Laurel], when another shell passed us. . . .**
>
> **It was a heart-rending scene [outside of Baton Rouge]. Women searching for their babies along the road, where they had been lost, others sitting in the dust crying and wringing their hands, for by this time, we had not an idea but what Baton Rouge was either in ashes, or being plundered, and we had saved nothing.**

Another young Baton Rouge woman, Céline Frémaux, described her family's escape under the direction of her mother, a strict French woman. Because Céline's father, a Confederate engineer, was away, the family sought refuge at a neighboring plantation. In the ensuing days, Union gunboats randomly fired upon riverside plantation homes, including the one in which Céline was staying. The family had to flee again:

> **An hour later, at eleven P.M., a gunboat was anchored opposite the front avenue and a regular bombardment of the place began. Everybody was called up and dressed. The most precious of our few possessions were all gathered, every vehicle on the place prepared. Mr Dubroca [who owned the plantation] desired all the family to go to safety at the Duralds' place. In great silence the departure was effected. The horses' and mules' feet were muffled in clothes and bagging. The chains of the wagons gave a deal of trouble to swathe and silence. At last we left. Léon rode a pony, so did Maurice. Ma and the five others of us had been assigned to an old carriage. . . . To occupy our time, or for fear that we might miss our next day's**

schooling, Ma kept us reciting geography, verbs, fables, and mythology. I found it unpleasant but *natural* at the time. Schooling was the *one* thing to Ma, as far as we were concerned. Ma called Léon to ride at the side of the carriage and recite the verb *to escape.*

In August 1862 Confederate troops attacked Union-held Baton Rouge, forcing General Butler to abandon that city. He feared an attack on New Orleans and wanted to concentrate all available forces there; in addition, Union officers failed to control rank-and-file looting excursions, unnecessarily angering local residents. Butler at first ordered Baton Rouge burned to the ground but rescinded his directive in consideration of the orphan and insane asylums that would be inhumanely destroyed. To increase his troop strength Butler enlisted convicts from the penitentiary. As they left Baton Rouge, Union soldiers pillaged many of the houses, including Sarah Morgan's:

They entered my room, broke that fine mirror for sport, pulled down the rods from the bed, and with them, pulverized my toilet set, taking also all [the] china ornaments I had packed in the washstand. The débris filled my basin, and ornamented my bed. My desk was broken open. Over it was spread all my letters, and private papers, a diary I kept when twelve years old, and sundry tokens of dried roses, etc., which must have been *very* funny, they all being labeled with the donor's name, and the occasion! . . .

. . . The whole talk is about our dreadful treatment at the Yankees hands.

. . . I could hardly believe that Abraham Lincoln's officers had really come so low down as to steal in such a wholesale manner. The papier maché workbox [my sister] had given me, was gone. The baby sacque I was crocheting, with all knitting needles and wool, gone also. . . .

Not a book remained in the parlor, except Idylls of the King.

Federal troops under Brigadier General Cuvier Grover once again took Baton Rouge on 17 December 1862. Soldiers camping in the state capitol accidentally set fire to it on the night of 23 December. Flames lit the skies above Baton Rouge; by morning only the exterior walls remained. In his diary one of Grover's men, Henry C. Gardner, related the toll warfare had taken on Baton Rouge:

The town or city of Baton Rouge is or *must have been* a very handsome place. It is on land much higher than any of the surrounding country, well wooded. Much of the town however has been destroyed. The State House, a very fine building, stands in a

very commanding position near the center of the town. It bears many marks of the battle fought here.

The Teche campaign of 1863

While General Ulysses S. Grant advanced on Vicksburg, Union General Nathaniel P. Banks battled Confederate General Richard Taylor for control of Louisiana's rich cotton and sugar regions along Bayou Teche. Banks had succeeded Butler as commander of the Department of the Gulf in December 1862. Taylor, son of former president Zachary Taylor, owned slaves and a large plantation in Louisiana. Taylor's superior was General Edmund Kirby Smith, commander-in-chief of all Confederate forces west of the Mississippi River.

Banks prevailed in the Teche campaign, forcing Taylor to retreat to Alexandria by mid-April. Taylor later withdrew to Natchitoches, and Banks entered Alexandria. At the same time Kirby Smith relocated his headquarters from Alexandria to Shreveport and remained there for the duration of the war. Rather than pursuing Taylor any further, Banks decided to move against Port Hudson.

The Teche campaign was very destructive. In advance of Banks's march, prosouthern planters burned their cotton, while their slaves escaped to Union lines. Banks's men foraged off the land and demolished the salt works at Avery Island, one of the Confederacy's important sources of salt. Writing to his family in New York from a Union camp near Opelousas in April 1863, Private Henry Rufus Gardner recounted his company's activities:

We have lived on top shelf since we started, subsisting almost altogether on the people. Fresh meat, eggs, chickens &c &c are our daily rations. . . .

Paid a foraging visit to a plantation a few days since which contained 1900 acres of fine southern soil as the sun ever shown upon. The owner . . . being with his Reg't. we drew liberally on his stock of corn and sheep.

Banks tried to minimize his troops' pillaging. According to one Union officer, William H. Root, who resented Banks's efforts during the Teche campaign:

Gen'l Bank's chief anxiety on this march seems to be to prevent our soldiers from disturbing the property of the secesh [secessionist] citizens along the road. A guard is posted over every house of more than two chimnies till the cavalcade passes to keep the soldiers from taking anything, though the smaller houses of the poor are left unguarded. . . . The men say he cares more for the property of rebels than he does for the comfort of his own soldiers.

Port Hudson

Aided by Farragut's warships, Banks's army laid siege to Confederate General Franklin Gardner's forces at Port Hudson the last week of May 1863. Even though Union troops outnumbered the Confederates 20,000 to 7,000, natural and man-made defenses made the fort a formidable stronghold.

Two frontal assaults on 27 May and 14 June did not shake the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson. In the 27 May assault Union regiments composed of Louisiana blacks—the First Louisiana, made up primarily of free men of color, and the Second and Third Louisiana of former slaves—proved their bravery and willingness to fight by making six charges across an open field. Although all failed, General Banks reported to his superior that the black troops' "conduct was heroic, no troops could be more determined or more daring."

Union Second Lieutenant William H. Root depicted the battlefield on 14 June:

> **As the day advanced the heat of the sun became very oppressive and it was most heartrending to hear the wounded begging to be moved into the shade, and we unable to do anything for them. . . . Darkness put an end to the scene of conflict and threw a veil over the field whereon lay hundreds of dead and dying.**

Almost starved into submission and subsisting on mules and rats, the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson surrendered when news arrived that Vicksburg had fallen. One week later the steamer *Imperial* arrived in New Orleans, sailing unmolested down the now entirely Union-held Mississippi River.

The siege and surrender of Port Hudson was an important part of the Civil War. The fort was the last Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi River and site of the longest true siege in American military history, in which the fortification was completely surrounded and cut off from outside supply. Located 250 miles downriver of Vicksburg, Port Hudson was necessary to complete the Union's control of the river. Its surrender to federal forces on 9 July 1863 opened up all of the Mississippi and divided the Confederacy in two.

African-American regiments from Louisiana who fought at Port Hudson on behalf of the Union were the first black units in the Civil War to engage in large-scale combat with and against white soldiers. Their actions laid to rest the attitude prevalent among whites that blacks would not fight. Newspaper accounts of their bravery and military capabilities helped convince northerners to accept enlistment of black soldiers in the Union army.

Milliken's Bend

Louisiana black troops faced a second test of their military skills at the Battle of Milliken's Bend on 7 June 1863. Two new regiments of former slaves and a couple of white companies defended this Union garrison on the Mississippi River above Vicksburg

against attack by a Confederate brigade. The Confederates hoped to disrupt a Union supply line to Vicksburg and open one of their own, but after much bloodshed the federal forces emerged victorious.

In his report Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana touted the black soldiers' courage: "The bravery of the blacks [in the battle at Milliken's Bend] completely revolutionized the sentiments of the army." Both Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend preceded the more publicized exploits of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's unit of African Americans, the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, popularized in the movie *Glory*.

Battle of Grand Coteau

Skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces continued in western Louisiana following the Teche campaign of spring 1863. One of the more important of these forays was the Battle of Grand Coteau, fought in November 1863. The Confederates soundly defeated the federals and convinced Banks of the need to embark on a major campaign to bring all of Louisiana under Union control.

The Red River Campaign

The Red River campaign was the last major operation of the Civil War fought in Louisiana and was a defeat for the Union. In the spring of 1864 Union General Banks resolved to take what remained of Louisiana and invade Texas by way of the Red River Valley. One of Banks's other goals was to capture the thousands of bales of cotton stored along the Red River, which could help pay for the campaign and Union victory.

Banks gathered all his available troops and marched first on Alexandria. Commodore David Porter and his fleet of gunboats and transports accompanied Banks up the Red River. Alexandria's only defense, Fort De Russey, fell to the Union forces on 15 March 1864. They remained in and around Alexandria until the Red River rose high enough to allow Porter's larger naval craft to ascend the river's rapids. Banks's men then advanced on Natchitoches, with Shreveport as their final objective.

As Union forces advanced up the river, Confederate commander Kirby Smith ordered most of his troops in the trans-Mississippi region to western Louisiana. Smith strengthened General Taylor's army after he retreated from Alexandria to Natchitoches but did not dare venture against Banks's troops, assisted by Porter's powerful gunboats, while they remained on the Red River.

Rather than advance to Shreveport by the river route under protection of Porter's gunboats, Banks opted for the shorter overland route through Pleasant Hill and Mansfield. The Confederates erected a line of defense at Mansfield and waited for Banks. An initial skirmish took place on Wilson's Plantation, and the next day, 9 April 1864, General Taylor attacked the federals and drove them from the field. Union troops retreated to Pleasant Hill, where the next day the Confederates attacked again. This time the Union line held, but Banks's losses were so great that he decided to withdraw to his base of operations at Grand Ecore on the Red River. Confederate land forces attacked Porter's gunboats and transports as they, too, retreated to Grand Ecore.

Banks intended to move toward Shreveport as soon as the river rose to a level that allowed Porter's fleet to ascend it. Rather than rise, the river fell, and Banks decided to withdraw from the Red River Valley altogether. At Alexandria, where the water was shallow, army lieutenant colonel and engineer Joseph Bailey designed dams that raised the river high enough so that Porter's gunboats could get over the rapids and into deeper downriver water. Bailey also put together a boat bridge that enabled Banks's troops to cross the Atchafalaya.

Shreveport: The Final Hold-Out

Holed up in his headquarters at Shreveport, Kirby Smith was the last Confederate commander to surrender to Union authorities. He signed a treaty on 5 June 1865 that officially allowed his weary men to return home, which most of them had already done.

* * *

Men in Gray and Blue: Louisiana Officials and Troops

Confederate Officials from Louisiana

Several Louisianians served in the highest echelons of the Confederacy's government and military apparatus. Among them were Judah P. Benjamin, John Slidell, Duncan Kenner, and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard.

Benjamin was a United States senator from Louisiana prior to the state's secession. Politically, Benjamin was a conditional Unionist who advocated giving President Lincoln a chance to prove his moderate intentions. Nevertheless, he went along with the passions of his constituents, withdrew from the senate, and served the Confederacy first as attorney general, then as secretary of war, and finally as secretary of state. After the Confederacy's defeat Benjamin practiced law in England.

The other United States senator from Louisiana, lawyer John Slidell, also resigned his office to represent the government of the Confederacy in its diplomatic affairs. Prior to the Mexican War the United States government had sent Slidell to Mexico City to try to negotiate a settlement. The Slidell Mission failed, but Slidell's diplomatic experience was extensive and respected, and Jefferson Davis appointed Slidell minister to the court of Napoleon III. Slidell, however, failed to secure Napoleon's support. Following the war, Slidell remained in England. The city of Slidell, Louisiana, is his namesake.

A prominent member of the Confederate house of representatives and one of the South's largest slaveholders, Duncan F. Kenner of Louisiana undertook a last-minute diplomatic initiative to secure British and French recognition of the Confederate States; a desperate Confederacy even offered to abolish slavery. Convinced that slavery hindered diplomatic efforts, Kenner himself had advocated its abolition since 1862. In December 1864 President Davis sent Kenner to England and France to negotiate recognition based on abolition, terms the Confederate Congress did not support. In the face of numerous

southern military failures and half-hearted support for abolition, England and France once again rejected the Confederacy's efforts, and Kenner's mission failed.

The most noted Louisianian to serve the South in the Civil War was P. G. T. Beauregard, the Confederacy's first brigadier general. As commander of Confederate forces at Charleston, South Carolina, Beauregard ordered the bombardment of Fort Sumter on 12 April 1861, thereby firing the first shot of the Civil War. He also led Confederate troops in the battles of Manassas, Shiloh, and Petersburg.

Beauregard, like many Civil War troops and officers, received his early combat experience in the Mexican War of 1846–1848. During that war, Beauregard served as an engineer on the staff of General Winfield Scott and was promoted for his conduct in the battles of Contreras and Chapultepec. As chief engineer for New Orleans in the 1850s, Beauregard supervised repairs to the United States Mint. On 23 January 1861 Beauregard accepted a position as superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point, but resigned five days later to offer his services to the Confederate States of America.

Daily Life in Camp: Confederate Troops

Over 56,000 whites from Louisiana contributed to a total Confederate force of 850,000 to 900,000 soldiers and sailors. This represented more than one-sixth of the 350,000 whites residing in Louisiana at the outbreak of civil war. In addition, about 10,000 boys, older men, and foreigners served in home-guard units, protecting and policing their homes, neighborhoods, and towns.

Washington Artillery Battalion

One of the most famous Louisiana units to fight with the Confederacy was the Washington Artillery. A distinguished unit that traced its origins back to 1838 and fought in the Mexican War, the Washington Artillery placed four companies on the field in May 1861. The battalion fought valiantly at the Battle of Manassas (July 1861) and earned the praise of commanding General P. G. T. Beauregard. Further service included the Battle of Second Manassas (August 1862), the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 1862), Gettysburg (July 1863), and the siege of Petersburg (July 1864–April 1865).

A fifth company of the Washington Artillery was transferred to Confederate service on 6 March 1862, just prior to Union occupation of New Orleans. Unlike the other four companies, the Fifth mainly engaged in western campaigns. It fought at Shiloh (April 1862) and accompanied the Army of Tennessee at the Battle of Chickamauga (September 1863) and in the Atlanta campaign (1864).

Early in the war the battalion acquired the nickname "Louisiana Tigers." In time the sobriquet applied to all the Louisiana units in Virginia. Though associated with Zouave uniforms, the battalion had only one such company—the Tiger Rifles.

Home Guards

Following Lincoln's election and threats of war, Louisiana men rushed to form and join citizen patrols and home guards. Members of hunting and political clubs, veterans of

former wars, firemen, planters, older men, foreigners, and others organized to protect their property and loved ones. These groups had no desire to do more than police their own areas and often refused to enter Confederate service outside the state of Louisiana.

Pressed by the Confederate government to supply more and more troops and fearful of leaving Louisiana unprotected, Governor Thomas O. Moore decreed in September 1861 that all citizens between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were subject to militia duty. Thus, the state militia absorbed most of Louisiana's home-guard units. Foreigners and men over the age of forty-five composed the remainder of the home guards. These units assumed various names, including "Home Defenders" and "Vigilance Committee." By policing the slaves and guarding against Union raids, these citizen patrols defended their jurisdictions against internal subversion and external invasion.

Hardships and Conditions of Camp Life

The clothing, equipment, and overall morale of southern soldiers deteriorated as the months and years of warfare dragged on, seemingly forever. Early in the war, in addition to arms, Confederate troops often carried with them photographs, hymnbooks, tinware, and hardtack. With more battle experience and less opportunity to replenish their supplies, they kept only the essentials—a canteen, a pan for cooking, and a blanket.

Soldiers gradually, and usually painfully, adapted to camp life. Ironically, by the time many of them learned to cook and set up tents properly, few foodstuffs, utensils, tents, bedrolls, and other supplies remained. As Private Isaac Dunbar Affleck put it in 1864: "A fellow dont know how to enjoy good living while at home, but let him stay in camp a short time and it makes his mouth water of what they have there, and that he too could be enjoying it if not for this blarsted [*sic*] war."

Joseph and William Carson, brothers and fellow Confederate cavalrymen from Louisiana, complained of "our lack of tents and adequate clothing. . . . In general, officers and men alike lay on the ground and took the weather as it came. . . . The wear on our clothes was great and none were to be bought even though we had the money." They even went so far as to steal clothes from Union soldiers: "As clothes were scarce, we drew on the enemy as far as possible for things to wear. These we dyed, generally brown or black as opportunity afforded."

Military rations were fairly generous in the early stages of the Civil War, at least compared to those issued in the last year or two. From near Alexandria during the 1864 Red River campaign Private Affleck noted: "We generally draw three days rations and eat them up in three meals the rest of the time until issuing day we either starve or steal something to eat. The beef we draw resembles india rubber in toughness but is quite as flexable [*sic*]." Many, including Affleck, lived off the land to supplement their diet:

> **We get abundance of sugar from the sugar houses around here that belong to men who took the oath [Union loyalty oath], we get it for nothing, and use it freely. We send out every other day and get about fifty pounds which is enough for the whole company. We make blackberry pies, apple dumplings and peach pies, also candy, and**

syrup which we eat until every one makes himself sick. We have had a few ripe peaches, and apples also a few figs; corn is not quite ripe yet but as soon as it is we will live high and will be dependent on the government for rations no longer.

Confederate soldiers in Louisiana continually grumbled about the numerous insect and animal pests, especially mosquitoes, that disrupted their sleeping and waking hours:

The musquitoes are very bad here, worse than I ever saw them in my life, we have had no rest from thim [*sic*] since we have been here. . . .
. . . I . . . thought I would try and take a nap, but the flies and mosquitoes were so bad I had to give it up as a vain effort. (Affleck, 1864)

Even worse than mosquitoes were the long hours of waiting in between engagements and during sieges, as Affleck testified: "It is so lonesome here in camp that a fellow will get home sick directly if he does not get a letter occasionally to cheer him up."

To fill the time, soldiers played cards, drank whiskey, sang and danced, and wrote home. In their letters many asked for additional supplies to make their lives a little easier. In a letter to his parents dated 3 August 1864, Affleck included a "list of things I should like to have you send me":

30 lbs of coffee
1 hat (sombriero) [*sic*]
1 pr boots or shoes
1 pr shoes for Alex [his black body servant]
1 pr drawers
2 check shirts
2 or 3 wallets for mess
a good pack mule with all the riging [*sic*]
two good horses
1 pr of buckskin gloves
1 pr of buckskin pants
Some tin plates knixes [*sic*] and forks for mess and tin cups three of each will do—
I dont remember what I wrote for, but you can read my letters over and see what there is. But if I continue to write you for the purpose of geting [*sic*] things only you will not want to hear from me often but this will be the last time if I get the before named things.

Daily Life in Camp: Union Troops

Hardships and Conditions of Camp Life

Union troops, like Confederate ones, had to adjust to the life of a soldier during wartime, as Henry Rufus Gardner commented:

> **Nothing truer was ever said of soldering [*sic*] than that it takes a man a Year to get into it & learn the little ways to save himself, and live comfortably. . . . They will have had experience in cooking their rations, and that what causes more sickness among "green" troops than anything else.**

According to the journals that Union men in Louisiana kept, the army supplied them mainly with hard bread and coffee. Soldiers thus had to turn to other sources to supplement their diet. After building a bridge across the Vermilion River during the Teche campaign, William H. Root, wrote,

> **the men went right in for forage in spite of Gen'l Banks; and judging from appearances had plenty to eat in the shape of fresh meat & sweet potatoes, chickens etc, etc. The day seemed very long but the rest & feed was just what we all needed. Several of the boys went out and picked some splendid blackberries which they say were as thick as they could grow. I ate about 2 quarts or less of them.**

They also slaughtered cattle, Root reported: "Had orders to prepare cooked rations for two days and a detail was sent out to kill all the beef we needed. Cattle seem to be plenty and everything seems to be as flourishing as it would be any time."

Louisiana mosquitoes did not discriminate; they attacked Union as well as Confederate troops. "I laid down and slept till noon," complained Root, "for the musketoes [*sic*] would not let me sleep much last night." Private Lawrence Van Alstyne lamented, "Mosquitos are the pest of our lives. They hide in our tents. . . . Their name is legion."

Apparently camp life was no more exciting for Union than for Confederate troops, especially during the siege of Port Hudson. Root grumbled, "Time hangs heavy. Nothing to read, nothing to do but lay around and hear the continual crack of rifles and the occasional louder report of cannon." Gardner wrote, "Camp life here is rather dull, too much so to suit us. We eat, sleep, blow and yawn." A few days later, he reported, "We are still lying comparatively inactive, only firing a shot now and then, whenever anything new attracts our attention."

Writing letters home and receiving them helped relieve the monotony of camp life. Gardner described the anxious wait for mail:

After a long delay we were gratified while camping one night near "Molasseville" to hear the welcome cry "fall in for mail." The arrival of a mail set all in a hurry for its distribution. A circle is first formed around the Officer sitting down and the rest crowd around as best they may. As each name is called, a happy smile brakes over the face of the fortunate recipient, at last all is given out, and those who are among the unlucky go off wondering "what under the sun is the matter," and epithets not very commendatory, are heaped upon the P.O. authorities, while his friends at home are the real ones to blame, who think a man dont need a letter here oftener than once a month.

Immigrant Troops

Much of the large immigrant population in Louisiana rallied to the Confederate call to arms. Many of the companies raised in Louisiana in 1861 were composed largely of foreign-born troops, and their numbers were especially strong in New Orleans. Immigrants joined Confederate units for a variety of reasons: a sense of patriotism, concern about job competition from slaves if they were freed, the need for jobs and income from military service, and fear of harassment from pro-Confederate whites.

Units made up of men of French, German, Irish, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Scandinavian, Scot, Belgian, Slavonian, British, and Polish descent were incorporated into Louisiana companies, regiments, and brigades. Among these immigrant organizations were the French Chasseurs-à-Pied, the Irish Brigade, and the Louisiana Tigers. The Thirteenth Louisiana Regiment included French, German, and Italian groups, and the Louisiana Zouaves were composed of French and Italian veterans of the Crimean, Italian, and African wars.

Other units by nationality included:

1. French
   French Legion (5 companies by June 1861)
   Louisiana Zouaves
   Polish Brigade
   Spanish Cazadores
   Tenth and Thirteenth Louisiana regiments

2. Irish (with Germans most numerous)
   Irish Brigade (company of the Sixth Regiment)
   Madison Tips (from northeast Louisiana)
   Landrum Guards (Shreveport)
   Sons of Erin (Donaldsonville)

3. Germans
   Protection Guards (New Orleans)
   Blucher Guards (New Orleans)
   National Guard (Baton Rouge volunteers)
   Florence Guards (New Orleans merchants, brokers, and clerks)
   Shreveport Rebels
   Twentieth Louisiana, Tenth Louisiana, Polish Brigade, Avegno Zouaves of the Thirteenth Regiment

4. Italians
   Garibaldi Guards
   Thirteenth Regiment (Zouaves)
   Louisiana Zouaves

5. Spaniards
   Spanish Cazadores
   Spanish Legion (with Cubans)

6. Greek Company

7. Scandinavian Guards

8. Scotch Rifle Guards

9. Belgian Guards

10. Slavonian Rifles

11. Polish Brigade

12. British Guards

Louisiana Tigers

Immigrant troops belonged to Louisiana's best-known Civil War unit, the First Special Battalion, nicknamed the "Louisiana Tigers" or "Lee's Tigers." Originally a unit commanded by Major Chatham Roberdeau Wheat, the Tigers' reputation led in time to the name being applied to all Louisiana units in Virginia. The battalion was the first Louisiana unit to be engaged in the Civil War, on 28 June 1861 at Seneca Dam on the Potomac River.

The Foreign Brigade

In response to the threat of federal invasion, foreign-born citizens of New Orleans formed the Foreign Brigade, also known as the European Brigade, in February 1862. This organization acted as a home guard, with its sole purpose to defend and police New Orleans. When the menace of a Union approach became reality, Mayor John T. Monroe ordered the Foreign Brigade to restore order in the chaotic city. He used the brigade to control mobs, looters, and arsonists. Union General Butler kept the Foreign Brigade intact. It continued to act as a home-guard unit, maintaining peace and order during the federal occupation of New Orleans.

Immigrants for the Union

Union commanders in Louisiana also recruited immigrants and formed foreign units. Willing to fight for whichever side would employ them, Germans and Irish, in particular, joined federal units.

African Americans in Gray and Blue

Louisiana's free men of African descent formed units to fight on both the Confederate and Union sides. The Union also enlisted ex-slaves into military service.

Louisiana was the first southern state to provide black troops to the Union, and its regiments were the only ones in the Union to have black officers. More African-American soldiers from Louisiana served the federal cause than from any other state.

Confederate Native Guards

Statewide by early 1862 more than 3,000 free African Americans had formed military organizations—called Native Guards—and offered their services to the Confederacy. These units included one cavalry and one infantry company in Natchitoches, an infantry company in Plaquemines Parish, a unit of thirty free black men in Baton Rouge, and a regiment in New Orleans. Their primary duties were similar to those of home guards, to protect their areas of residence from internal and external threat.

Motivating Factors

At the beginning of the Civil War many free people of African descent in Louisiana favored the Confederacy, and some continued to support it through the war years. They provided their own uniforms, horses, arms, and ammunition. Some were large land- and slaveowners, who, like white planters, opposed the end of slavery and loss of their possessions. Many free blacks recognized and wanted to maintain distinctions between themselves and slaves or the newly freed. By joining Native Guard units, Louisiana's free blacks expressed their physical and ideological support for the Confederate States and for their hometowns.

The First Native Guards, Louisiana Militia

Formed in May 1861, the First Native Guards was a Confederate militia regiment made up of 440 free blacks, most of them residents of New Orleans. The regiment had black officers and drilled and paraded but never engaged in combat.

Jordan Noble, veteran drummer of the Battle of New Orleans and other wars, was the organizing force behind the First Native Guards. In April 1861 he placed an announcement in the *New Orleans Daily Delta* calling the city's free blacks together to offer their services to Louisiana's Confederate government:

TO FREE COLORED PERSONS.

All Free Colored Persons wishing to offer their services to the Governor, to serve as a HOME GUARD, are requested to attend a meeting, without further notice, over the Carrollton Railroad Depot, on Perdido street, at 5 o'clock THIS EVENING, April 27, 1861.

JORDON

A few weeks later Mayor Monroe and Governor Moore accepted the offer.

Integrated Confederate Units

Louisiana, unlike other southern states, primarily maintained separate white and black military organizations. A few Louisiana free blacks, however, served in white Confederate units and received Confederate pensions. Among them were Charles Lutz, Jean-Baptiste Pierre-Auguste, and Leufroy Pierre-Auguste of St. Landry Parish, who fought with Confederate army troops at Shiloh, Fredericksburg, and Vicksburg.

Serving the Stars and Stripes

About 24,000 of the 200,000 black troops who served in the Union army and navy were from Louisiana, more than from any other state. This number is especially impressive considering that much of the state was under Confederate control during the course of the war.

First Louisiana Regiment

Although initially reluctant to organize and arm free black units, General Butler gave permission on 22 August 1862 to form the Louisiana State Guard, later reformed as the First Louisiana Regiment and also known as the First Louisiana Native Guards.

The First Louisiana was a select force of more than 1,400 free black volunteers recruited statewide, many of them former members of the Confederate Native Guards. Like members of the Foreign Brigade and other home guard units, men in the First Native Guards of New Orleans stayed with their homes and property when the city went from Confederate to Union control. The majority of men in the First Louisiana were skilled workers: 20 percent were bricklayers, 15 percent carpenters, 12 percent cigar makers, 6 percent shoemakers, and 2 percent plasterers. The remaining 45 percent were laborers.

The First Louisiana Regiment conducted skirmishes in the Teche region, rebuilt Union defenses at Baton Rouge, and led several charges at the siege of Port Hudson.

Second and Third Louisiana Regiments

Both free blacks and ex-slaves belonged to the Second and Third Louisiana Regiments. Whereas all line officers of the First and Second regiments were African Americans, both whites and free blacks commanded the Third. Most soldiers in the Second and Third regiments were farmers or laborers. These regiments accompanied other federal troops in the Teche region and at Baton Rouge, Port Hudson, and Ship Island.

Major F. Ernest Dumas, a wealthy free black planter and retailer, organized a company composed of his own slaves to form part of the Second Louisiana Regiment. Both he and Captain Andre Cailloux of the First Regiment led their troops in the charges on Port Hudson, 27 May 1863. Although the charges failed and Cailloux was killed on the field, General Butler praised Dumas's military skills: "He has more capability as a major than I had as a Major General."

Among officers of the Louisiana black regiments were:

Captain Noel J. Bacchus (carpenter)

Captain Michael Duphart (shoemaker)

Captain Louis Rey (clerk)
Captain Alcide Lewis (mason)
Captain Virgil Bonseigneur (plasterer)
Captain Ludgere Boguille
Captain Andre Cailloux (cigarmaker, horseman, boxer)
First Lieutenant Arnold Bertonneau (wineseller)

Slaves and Ex-Slaves

As Union forces swept through a particular region, they attracted large numbers of runaway and abandoned slaves, some of whom joined the federal army. Labeled "contraband" early in the war, former slave women and men labored for the Union as domestics, nurses, hospital orderlies, and cooks. Union commanders also organized freedmen into military units, generally known as the Corps d'Afrique. Former slaves also made up most of the Second and Third Louisiana Regiments.

The Union often recruited runaway slaves hiding in the swamps and woods of Louisiana. They and other former slave soldiers used their skills to build roads, fortifications, dams, and canals, repair levees, herd cattle, shoe horses, and act as scouts and guards, in addition to fighting battles.

Slaves also accompanied Confederate troops, primarily as body servants and domestics. Louisiana slaves also served as manual laborers for the Confederacy.

Racial Tensions and Hostilities

Many white Louisianians deplored and feared the Union's arming of free men of color and freedmen. Black soldiers, in turn, resented their role as manual laborers, employed under conditions similar to slavery. Late in 1862 the British merchant Richard Bentley noted some of the tension between the races:

> **While I was in New Orleans two events occurred which would certainly have provoked an outbreak, if the population had been armed. The first was the marching of a negro regiment about 800 strong, down the whole length of Canal-street at noon on a fine Saturday, with flags flying, bayonets fixed, drums beating, the band playing 'Yankee Doodle,' and Colonel Stafford, a white man, at their head. One negro, as the regiment passed the store of his former master, who was then in the Confederate army, shook his rifle at the name over the door, and shouted, "Dat's de man *I* wants to meet on de field ob battle!"**

Native Americans and the Civil War

Most Native Americans living in Louisiana did not participate in either the Union or Confederate war effort. They took little interest in the Civil War and chose not to risk their lives to defend slavery or their rights, because at the time they had none.

On the Homefront

War: Theme of Everyday Life

Before and during Union occupation of south Louisiana, war affected and dominated everyday life. By the end of the Civil War children's dress took on a distinctly military look, songs with war themes gained popularity, and residents adapted their tastes in food, clothing, and other material goods to correspond with scarce supplies. As early as April 1861 one traveler to Louisiana noticed the influence of anticipated and actual warfare on the populace: "The children play only with toy cannons and soldiers; the oldest inhabitant goes by every day with his rifle to practice; the public squares are full of companies drilling, and are now the fashionable resorts" (quoted in Straubing, 1985).

Buildings Converted to Military Use

Confederate and Union officials converted several sites to military use. In New Orleans Confederates set up Camp Walker at the Metairie Race Course, and Union officials used the New Orleans Mint and Custom House as officers' headquarters and military barracks. Federals also quartered Confederate prisoners in the Custom House.

Many public and private institutions were turned into hospitals, among them the Deaf and Dumb Asylum at Baton Rouge. Travelers to New Orleans, like Richard Bentley, found hotel rooms hard to come by, "the St. Charles being closed, and others used either as hospitals or as headquarters of some Federal departments."

Caring for the Sick and Homeless

During the Civil War and for two decades after, Margaret Gaffney Haughery cared for children orphaned by warfare and the epidemic diseases that constantly attacked Louisiana residents. To the hungry citizens of occupied New Orleans, Haughery also distributed wagonloads of bread and flour, fresh from her bakery on New Levee Street. An Irish immigrant, Haughery came to New Orleans in the 1830s with her husband and daughter, who both died soon after arriving in the city. After their deaths Haughery, an orphan since age nine, devoted her life to caring for orphans and other people in need.

In hospitals, hotels, private homes, and even tents, professionals and local residents cared for the sick, wounded, and dying. Conditions in these facilities were awful, particularly in army camps. Phoebe Farmer, a volunteer nurse in Union hospitals, wrote in December 1863:

> **A few days ago I visited a hospital in one of our convalescent camps, where the sick are hurried out of mortal existence at a double quick. . . .**
>
> **. . . To my positive knowledge they buried more than two-thirds of all the patients that it [the hospital] contained two months ago, and they die much more suddenly than I have ever known them to do in the other hospitals.**

. . . I tremble for the sick in that hospital and the surgeon in charge will not permit any of the patients to go out to private houses.

During the Civil War more soldiers died of disease than from wounds received in battle. Entries in Private Lawrence Van Alstyne's diary noted that almost every day someone died, not from wounds but from sickness and disease. In addition, many soldiers with even minor wounds died due to inadequate medical care.

The war left many women and children without husbands and fathers. Widows and other women spent many hours nursing wounded and sick soldiers and comforting the dying during their final moments. Sarah Morgan lamented that she could not do more:

If I was independent, if I could work my own will without causing others to suffer for my deeds, I would not be poring over this stupid page, I would not be idly reading or sewing. I would put aside woman's trash, take up Woman's duty, and I would stand by some forsaken man and bid him God speed as he closes his dying eyes. *That* is Woman's mission!

The Struggle for Basic Necessities

New Orleans was one of the main targets of a federal blockade put in place along the Gulf Coast in May 1861. The blockade disrupted and reduced the city's trade but did not entirely close it off. A few ships ran the blockade, reaching New Orleans through Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River. Union officials lifted the blockade when they took New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the lower river valley in 1862.

The blockade and other war disruptions caused severe shortages in Louisiana, particularly in the occupied and more urban southern part of the state. Scarce items included such ready-made goods as dresses, shoes, dry goods, and soap. Coffee prices rose so high that south Louisianians had to search for such substitutes as cocoa and parched sweet potato and corn.

Because of paper shortages people had to scrawl first horizontally and then vertically when writing letters and publishers had to print newspaper on the back of wallpaper. While engaged in the Teche campaign of 1863, Second Lieutenant William H. Root noted in his diary that he had "sent one Alexandria paper to [his sister] Jennie of May 2nd. These papers are printed on the plain side of wall paper which seems to be more plenty than other paper."

Even though the South was rich in cotton, it lacked the textile factories of the North. Out of necessity Louisianians returned to domestic manufacture of cloth to furnish clothing for civilian and military use. As the war dragged on, soldiers ran out of equipment. They repaired goods over and over until finally worn out, or they made do with substitute materials.

Cut off from their usual suppliers, urban merchants suffered shortages of almost every commodity. English merchant Richard Bentley described Louisiana retailers twiddling their thumbs in empty shops, waiting for the next rare boat to dock: "Merchants, commission-agents, brokers, and tradesmen lounged about their empty stores and offices until about two P.M., taking occasional drinks with quiet toasts, and then went home to curse the common foe in peace."

Free Markets in New Orleans and Baton Rouge

In response to shortages brought on by the blockade and the public's growing anxiety, in August 1861 the mayor of New Orleans, John T. Monroe, opened the first free market in the Confederacy. General Butler reestablished the free market when New Orleans fell under Union occupation.

Impetus for the free market came from the women of New Orleans, who acted as the primary provisioners for their families. By August 1861 the city's needy had exhausted the aid provided by private benevolent societies (especially the Aid to Volunteers' Families committee). A group of three hundred hungry women, frustrated by shortages and government inaction, marched from the Aid to Volunteers' Families office on Gravier Street to the mayor's office at Lafayette Square. They demanded immediate relief, and Mayor Monroe responded by setting up the free food market. By 16 August the city opened a relief center near the levee at the foot of Canal Street. It provided food to people unable to afford it and helped distribute goods that were in short supply. Contributions from grocers, bakers, butchers, planters, and farmers and a continuous fund drive kept the free market in business. In an attempt to gain loyalty or at least peace by addressing the population's material needs, General Butler subsidized the free market with government funds. Revenues from concerts and dioramas (also known as tableaux) gave further support to a free market in Baton Rouge.

"Beast" Butler: The Most Hated Man in Louisiana Folklore

The Man Behind the Horns

General Benjamin F. Butler directed Union actions and policy during the first eight months of the occupation of New Orleans and lower Louisiana. He was a Massachusetts Democrat who later converted to the Republican Party, and President Lincoln asked Butler to be his running mate in the 1864 election. A man of ambition and intense egotism, Butler alienated northern business interests, even though he himself was a millionaire. In both Massachusetts and New Orleans he built his powerbase on the

working class, the poor, and the needy. During the course of the Civil War, Butler commanded Union troops in Maryland, the Gulf Coast, Louisiana, Virginia, and Delaware.

Butler has always been a controversial figure in Louisiana. He earned the undying enmity of some people and the praise of others. P. G. T. Beauregard was the first to affix the negative term "Beast" to Butler's name. He reflected the sentiments of many Louisianians, yesterday and today. Not bombarded or burned to the ground like many other southern cities, New Orleans had relatively little to complain about besides the "Beast" and his occupation rule.

Many citizens of lower Louisiana openly showed their contempt for Butler and his occupation government. They resented his orders against treating the United States flag with disrespect, showing contempt for Union officers and soldiers, assembling in groups on public streets, and singing treasonable songs. Butler sent some to prison for violating these injunctions, including Mayor Monroe, and even executed a few. White Louisianians in general also objected when Butler decided to arm black troops and organize them into Native Guard units.

The Hanging of Mumford

The execution of William Mumford for treason constituted one of the most infamous incidents of Union occupation and brought the wrath of Confederate sympathizers down upon Butler. Mumford was a professional riverboat gambler who lowered the Union flag Farragut raised over the former United States Mint and then bragged about his act. A court martial ruled this action treasonous, and Butler resolved to make an example of Mumford; in actuality, he created a martyr for the southern cause. Though harsh, Mumford's punishment was completely legal: one provision of Butler's martial law proclamation stated that the United States flag "must be treated with the utmost deference and respect by all persons, under pain of severe punishment."

A visitor to the city in 1873, Edward King, described the Mumford affair and the building at which it took place:

> **The Ionic building at the corner of Esplanade and New Levée streets, once used as a United States branch mint, is noted as the place of execution of Mumford, who tore down the flag which the Federal forces had just raised on the roof when in 1862 the city was first occupied by the Northern forces. Mumford was hung, by General Butler's order, from a flag-staff projecting from one of the windows under the front portico of the main building.**

The Woman Order

Although Butler managed to quiet the city's male population with the example of Mumford's hanging, New Orleans women continued to express their disapproval—and utter contempt—for Butler. Pro-Confederate women of all social stations displayed their disdain for occupying forces through gesture, word, and deed.

Butler issued his inflammatory "Woman Order," General Order No. 28, on 15 May 1862. Butler modeled his order on similar ones passed in Maryland and Europe. The general was most likely prodded into acting by Mrs. Butler, who deplored the "insolence" shown by New Orleans women "beyond endurance."

Short and to the point, the New Orleans "Woman Order" stated:

> **As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insult from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall by word, gesture, or movement insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her avocation [as a prostitute].**

The "woman order" curbed rebellious activities of local women but made Butler a hated man. Mayor Monroe, whom Butler had allowed to stay in office, denounced and refused to enforce it. Faced with threats of removal, Monroe soon backed down and even signed a formal apology. The next day, however, he withdrew the apology. Monroe's recalcitrance earned him a lengthy jail sentence at Fort Jackson.

Loyalty Oaths and Confiscation Acts

Butler required all citizens who wished to remain in New Orleans and lower Louisiana to swear allegiance to the Union, just as General Lovell before him made citizens swear allegiance to the Confederacy. Butler then ordered those who refused to take the Union loyalty oath to register as enemies of the Union. All registered enemies had to leave Union-held territory, carrying with them only their personal clothing and no more than fifty dollars.

Butler based his decrees on the Confiscation Acts that the United States Congress passed in July 1862. Butler moved first to confiscate the property of former Confederate civil and military officers. He gave other Confederates sixty days to lay down their arms and swear allegiance to the Union. Once this sixty-day period ended in November 1862 Butler began to seize property belonging to "registered" enemies. He did so in an orderly manner, though, and tried to prevent plundering by his troops.

Foreign Consulate Controversy

Butler also alienated many of the foreign consuls who resided in New Orleans. He considered them disloyal and sympathetic to the Confederate cause, not a totally unfounded belief. For example, when federal troops forcibly entered the Dutch consulate, they found several hundred thousand dollars worth of Confederate gold. Butler suspected that other foreign consuls were smuggling goods and acting as go-betweens for the Confederate and foreign governments, so he refused to allow diplomatic immunity in the

seizure of Confederate property. Butler also freed foreign consuls' slaves and enrolled these freedmen in the Native Guards. Butler acted upon former Confederate Governor Moore's precedent and enlisted foreigners in the state militia.

Myth of the Stolen Spoons

The tale that Butler stole spoons and other goods from New Orleanians for his own benefit is largely myth. Well-to-do New Orleanians, those contemporary to the times and succeeding generations, made popular the legend of "Spoons" Butler. These families refused to swear loyalty oaths to the Union and consequently had much of their property confiscated, probably some of it in the form of silver spoons.

Following the war, the federal government investigated Butler and completely exonerated him of any misconduct. Even during the war Lincoln endorsed all but one of Butler's acts. Post-Reconstruction governments breathed new life into accusations against Butler but failed to provide conclusive evidence. Political motivations drove both sides in this controversy and obscured whatever remains of the “truth."

Emergency Measures to Feed and Employ the Population

To broaden local support for the Unionist movement in southern Louisiana, Butler pursued several tactics, most of which benefited the poor and those left destitute by the war. He distributed beef and sugar seized by his troops to the New Orleans poor, reinstituted the free market, and organized massive projects to reconstruct the levee and clean the city's filthy streets.

A Bath for New Orleans

One of Butler's public works projects was to give New Orleans a much-needed bath. Prosouthern sympathizers anticipated the summer of 1862 with great glee, sure that the deadly, almost-annual yellow fever epidemic would kill off the Yankee forces, their most-hoped-for victim being General Butler. Butler, however, moved to contain the dreaded disease by cleaning the city from top to bottom. He put unemployed New Orleanians to work scouring the city, especially its grimy neighborhood markets. Butler also instituted and enforced trash pickups twice a week, prohibited residents from throwing anything into streets or yards, ordered owners to whitewash their homes regularly, and established a quarantine station below the city. Butler's measures seemed to prevent the disease. Officials reported only two cases of yellow fever in New Orleans that summer of 1862 and no yellow fever epidemic until 1867.

Education Reforms

Butler modeled his education reforms on the Boston system with which he was familiar. He consolidated the city's four school districts into one to centralize education and make it more efficient and egalitarian and less susceptible to corruption. Butler created and appointed one superintendent and one bureau of education, and he also replaced prosouthern teachers and texts with pro-Union ones.

Butler, however, did not establish public schools for African Americans. Blacks, slave or free, had never had access to public education in Louisiana, and this situation continued under Butler.

Restoration of Order: Tyrannical but Effective

While under the iron grip of Butler's martial law lower Louisiana witnessed the most efficient and health-conscious administration it had ever had. The "bath for New Orleans," along with strict enforcement of sanitary and quarantine measures, rid the region of deadly yellow fever and smallpox epidemics. The Crescent City almost gained a reputation for salubrity. Thanks also to Butler's local and federal police forces, urban gangs no longer roamed the streets. By late summer 1862 even the pro-Confederate *Picayune* grudgingly admitted that New Orleans had never been "so free from burglars and cutthroats." Of course, corruption continued under Union as well as Confederate rule, but such practices occurred in almost every war-torn or occupied territory.

To Butler's credit, he made his views and actions clear to the populace. They knew where he stood and what to expect from him. Butler's policy stands in marked contrast to that of his successor as commander of the Department of the Gulf. General Nathaniel P. Banks's wavering, moderate policies foreshadowed the problems of Lincoln's, and especially Johnson's, reconstruction plans.

Role of Free Blacks

Despite pressures and precedents, Butler was reluctant to arm free blacks in occupied Louisiana. He, like many other Union commanders, did not trust the capabilities of black troops and feared alienating the local white population. Nevertheless, a combination of factors finally persuaded him to form the Louisiana Native Guards and enlist free black units into the Union army:

1. persistence on the part of free black members of the former Confederate Native Guards. Almost as soon as Butler arrived in New Orleans representatives of the Native Guards began to petition him for continuation of their organization and actual combat participation, something they had not experienced under Confederate rule.
2. precedents for the use of free black troops in Louisiana set by General Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans and by General Lovell when New Orleans was in Confederate hands.
3. a desperate need for armed forces in New Orleans. By late summer 1862 reinforcements had not arrived from the North, Confederate forces were massing at Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and Baton Rouge, and prosouthern sentiment in the Crescent City was on the rise.

Butler was shrewd. When he finally gave in to demands to form free black Union companies, he did so under the shroud of continuing a former Confederate policy. He

invited all free blacks who served under the Confederacy to join Union ranks, thereby sidestepping the accusation that he introduced armed African-American units.

Status of Slave "Contraband"

One of Butler's most controversial actions concerned the occupation government's approach to slavery and the status of what Butler in Maryland had termed slave "contraband." As federal forces swept into former Confederate territory hundreds of enslaved persons deserted the lands and homes of their masters and sought refuge with Union troops. Obviously, the Union benefited from depriving pro-Confederate planters, farmers, and manufacturers of their labor and human capital, but what were officials to do with this contraband? Were these persons to be considered slave or free? Where would the army find the resources to care for this "contraband"? On the other hand, to what extent could officers and soldiers exploit contraband labor for the benefit of the Union? What about arming the fleeing slaves and enlisting them in the army?

Butler looked to Washington for answers and found none. The major problem was that the Lincoln administration did not want to take a stand on the issue of human contraband. Antislavery forces advocated freeing the slaves and arming them to fight for their fellow slaves' freedom. Abolitionists adamantly objected to work projects resembling slave labor, such as clearing land and building fortifications. Within Louisiana General John W. Phelps refused to use contraband as laborers at Camp Parapet and pushed for arming them. After much debate, however, Lincoln postponed freeing the slaves and enlisting them in actual combat units until 1863.

In the meantime, Butler accepted all escaped slaves into Union camps and employed them in manual tasks. Faced with declining troop numbers, he even consented to arming and enrolling them in military service. Several hundreds of these runaway slaves, whom Butler came to regard as manumitted, served in the Native Guards. They were at least nominally free even though never officially sanctioned as such. Not until after Butler had been relieved of command of the Department of the Gulf did the United States War Department approve enlistment of free and slave persons of African descent.

* * *

Conclusion

Controversy surrounding the character and actions of General Butler reflects much of the ambivalence Louisianians felt toward the conflict that tore apart their state and nation. Just as they divided on the issue of secession, they held differing views as to what shape their state should assume as they reconstructed it in the years following the Civil War. For some the future offered promise, for others despair, but for all it proved to be filled with contention, strife, and bloodshed.

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Chapter 9

Politics and Race Relations in Reconstructed Louisiana

Reconstruction was the period following the Civil War when Congress readmitted the southern states to the Union. In Louisiana Reconstruction lasted from the capture of New Orleans in spring 1862 until federal troops left in spring 1877. Occupied by Union forces early in the Civil War, New Orleans was the first Confederate city to undergo the ordeal of Reconstruction. The Crescent City also served as a prime testing ground for race relations under the new order.

Louisiana was the only region deep within the Confederacy where Union authorities implemented Reconstruction policies during the Civil War. Experimental practices in Louisiana shaped presidential policy, influenced congressional legislation, and became heated points of debate.

While War Still Raged: A State Divided

Within occupied southern Louisiana citizens were torn in their loyalties, goals, and visions for the future. These divisions were present even before the war, as seen in the secession controversy. When parts of Louisiana returned to Union control, some residents championed conciliation, cooperation, and occasionally even partial citizenship rights for free blacks and freedmen. Other Louisianians just as strongly resisted any show of reconciliation. Seeking vindication for southern deaths and wounded honor, they opposed moderate policies and rejected any rights for blacks, free or ex-slave. They advocated white supremacy and the need for social control within a changed racial order.

White New Orleanians were especially stubborn in refusing to accept defeat and occupation. Because the city fell early and did not suffer from battle, they were not driven by desperation to want an end to the Civil War. They refused to give up hope for a southern victory and thus were reluctant to cooperate with federal forces.

The "Battle of the Handkerchiefs" reveals the hostility many white Louisianians felt toward Union occupation. When General Banks ordered Confederate prisoners of war shipped out of Louisiana in February 1863, hundreds of women gathered along the New Orleans levee to wave goodbye to their friends, relatives, and "protectors." This sea of waving white handkerchiefs signaled undying resolution. Banks and other occupation

leaders often found it more trying to quell popular subversion than to defeat Confederate armies.

Lincoln's Strategy: Moderation and the "Ten Percent" Plan

President Lincoln thought his experiment in Reconstruction stood the best chance of success in Louisiana, and he and his successor, Andrew Johnson, worked hard to put these moderate policies in place with all possible speed. Called the "Ten Percent Plan," Lincoln's program for restoring seceded states to the Union was made public on 8 December 1863. Designed in part to calm southerners' fears and bring about a quick end to the war, this conciliatory plan moved to restore southern states to their antebellum status, minus the institution of slavery and without compensation to former slaveholders. Presidential Reconstruction under Lincoln and Johnson was much more moderate than the succeeding congressional plan, known as Radical Reconstruction, would be.

Although General Butler introduced Union policies to occupied Louisiana, Lincoln really launched his reconstruction experiment during the command of Butler's successor, General Nathaniel P. Banks. Banks offered full pardon and restoration of all rights, except the right to own slaves, to all Louisianians who took an oath of loyalty to the Union and pledged to accept an end to slavery. When the number of "loyal" Louisianians reached ten percent of the number of votes cast in the state in 1860, these persons could establish a new state government, which entailed a new state constitution and elections for state and national representatives.

Prior to calling a constitutional convention, Louisiana's restored voters elected Michael Hahn, a German-born New Orleans lawyer, as their new governor in February 1864. The moderate Hahn overwhelmingly defeated Radical candidate Benjamin F. Flanders and the conservative, pro-slavery Unionist candidate, J. Q. A. Fellows. General Banks's wife celebrated Hahn's victory by throwing a grand *bal masqué* at the French Opera House. Ironically, several noted Confederate sympathizers mingled among the masked guests.

Louisiana selected delegates to write a new constitution. Reform-minded professionals, small businessmen, artisans, civil servants, and a few farmers composed the constitutional assembly. The delegates were determined to break the power of the planters, which they associated with the backward antebellum regime, and to "modernize" the state. Although the Constitution of 1864 did not give African Americans voting power, it abolished slavery and overthrew Louisiana's old order of rule by planters and merchants. The first state charter to incorporate Lincoln's moderate approach, Louisiana's 1864 constitution was the leading test case for postwar policy.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 did not apply to the thirteen Louisiana parishes under Union control, where slavery continued. After much debate, convention delegates agreed to abolish slavery without compensation for masters but not to give the vote to African-American men. The 1864 constitution, however, authorized the state legislature to extend voting rights to black men who fought for the Union, owned property, or were literate.

The constitution also enabled the legislature to establish a free public school system for all children aged six to eighteen, with no mention of race. Legislators elected under the Constitution of 1864 established schools for whites but not for blacks. The new constitution also provided for an income tax and for minimum-wage levels and nine-hour days for laborers on public works.

Those Louisianians who could vote ratified their new constitution on 5 September 1864 by 6,836 to 1,566. An increasingly radical United States Congress, however, refused to recognize the newly reorganized state government or to seat Louisiana officials in Congress. Meanwhile, Presidents Lincoln and Johnson, both moderates in their approach to Reconstruction, did recognize Louisiana's constitution and government.

"To Give Meaning to Freedom": A New Racial Order in Louisiana

Goals of the African-American civil rights movement of the 1860s changed over time as advocates gradually increased their demands. They began by calling for voting and citizenship rights for black males who had been free before the Civil War, served in the military, or owned property. Initial goals did not include the abolition of slavery but eventually took on the cause of freedom for all African Americans. As the civil rights movement in Louisiana and the nation gained strength, African Americans and their white allies escalated their demands to include universal male suffrage and other civil rights.

A Testing Ground for Race Relations

Occupied by Union troops one year after the outbreak of Civil War, southern Louisiana was the setting for the earliest civil rights campaign of the Reconstruction era. In addition, the nation's most articulate and politicized free black community lived in Louisiana. It used its colonial and antebellum tradition as a distinct, large, propertied, and educated group to its advantage and influenced debate on the status of the ex-slave in postwar society.

The Freedmen's Bureau

The United States Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau—on 3 March 1865. Agents of the Freedmen's Bureau tried to solve many of the problems associated with the ending of slavery. Not convinced that former slaves were ready to enter society, the federal government, through the Freedmen's Bureau, provided assistance and protection as part of a transitional training program.

The bureau took over many relief efforts previously handled by the Union army and aided in the transition from slave to free labor in Louisiana. Charged with easing postwar problems of the emancipated slave, agents of the Freedmen's Bureau worked to solve labor disputes, prevent reenslavement of former slaves, protect freedpersons from

violence, operate schools for blacks, keep former slaves on plantations and actively employed by means of annual labor contracts, and distribute clothing, food, and fuel.

Marshall Harvey Twitchell, a Freedmen's Bureau agent in the upper Red River Valley, explained his mission:

> **My duty was to inform both black and white of their changed relations from master and slave to employer and employee, giving them the additional information that it was the order of the government that old master and old slave should remain where they had been [and] work as usual in the harvesting of the crop, at which time I would fix the pay of the ex-slave in case he or his former master did not agree about the amount. I expected all to obey.**

As its official title indicated, the Freedmen's Bureau assisted refugees—loyal southern whites—as well as freedmen. For example, the Louisiana Bureau obtained rations for 1500 whites and 600 blacks in Assumption Parish when floods destroyed crops in 1866 and 1867. Congress deliberately expanded the Bureau's authority to include white refugees to counteract an impression of preferential treatment toward African Americans.

Most southerners viewed the Freedmen's Bureau as either friend or foe, but the bureau actually followed a middle road. Bureau agents served mainly as moderators rather than reformers and could do little to affect postwar social and economic relations. Restricted resources—especially manpower—and lack of initiative also hampered the bureau's efforts.

Louisiana's black leaders especially questioned the bureau's ability to protect their constituents. Visitors to Louisiana, such as the Italian traveler Giulio Adamoli, who was in New Orleans in 1867, even remarked on the Bureau's limitations:

> **Zealous reformers from the North have established the Freedmen's Bureau for the laudable purpose of protecting the newly emancipated slaves and regulating their relations with their former masters. The Negroes are required to register at the Bureau, and planters apply to it for whatever laborers they need. The Bureau supplies the planter with Negro hands, collects their wages for them, and sees that the contracts made with them are carried out. Its other functions are to look after the Negroes who are not yet employed and to provide them with sufficient instruction to enable them to exercise the franchise. Theoretically, this is very fine. In practice, it is a failure.**

The Black Press: Advocate for African-American Rights

Louisiana had the first black newspaper in the South—*L'Union*—and the first black daily in the nation—the *New Orleans Tribune*. Working along with other groups and institutions, the free black press strove to give voice to and unite the desires of Louisiana African Americans.

L'Union was founded on 27 September 1862 and circulated as a biweekly and triweekly. Published primarily in French, *L'Union* ran a few issues in English beginning July 1863. The paper suspended publication on 19 July 1864.

Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez was *L'Union*'s primary financier and Paul Trévigne its editor. Both men were prominent leaders in Louisiana's civil rights movement. The wealthy son of Louis Roudanez, a French merchant, and Aimes Potens, a free woman of color, Roudanez earned medical degrees from the University of Paris and Dartmouth College and practiced medicine in New Orleans prior to the war. Trévigne was a teacher and ardent abolitionist.

L'Union primarily spoke for Louisiana's established community of free people of African descent, although also for slaves and newly freed blacks. In the pages of *L'Union* free black leaders campaigned for political equality with whites, as well as advocated the abolition of slavery. By mid-1864 the civil rights movement in Louisiana had become even more radical; it demanded equal rights for all African Americans, including the right to vote. These issues increasingly polarized Louisiana's citizenry. In such a charged atmosphere, *L'Union* found that it could exercise only limited influence on the debate and stopped publication.

Into this world stepped the *New Orleans Tribune*, the first black daily published in the United States. When *L'Union* folded, its owner, Louis Charles Roudanez, immediately purchased the old newspaper's equipment, rehired Trévigne as editor, and started a new paper.

Founded on 21 July 1864, two days after *L'Union* published its last issue, the *Tribune* started as a triweekly newspaper but began publishing daily on 4 October 1864. It ceased publication in April 1868, reappeared later that year, and published weekly from March 1869 until its demise early in 1870.

The *Tribune* served as a rejuvenated voice for both free and freed African Americans in Louisiana, reflecting the changing attitudes of civil rights leaders. Its writers and editors called for political, social, and economic equality for former slaves as well as for freeborn blacks. They recognized "the necessity of being united and acting as one body" (*New Orleans Tribune*, 8 January 1865).

To attract newly freed slaves as readers and supporters, the *Tribune* published in both French and English, the latter mainly read, spoken, and understood by freedpersons. Its stated goal was to be the "spokesman and guide for the masses of African descent." Managing editor Jean-Charles Houzeau, who replaced Trévigne in November 1864, was one of the leading forces behind the *Tribune*'s push to extend civil rights to freedmen and freeborn alike. In his own words: "Rather than speaking in the name and interest of a small group, the *Tribune*, I thought, should defend the masses of the proscribed race [blacks] and unite this oppressed population completely around its standard." Because of

his long association with the civil rights movement, many Louisianians thought that Houzeau, a white journalist from Belgium, was of African-American ancestry. Houzeau never let them think otherwise: he wanted to live the black experience, discrimination and all.

Throughout its history the *Tribune* was the mouthpiece for Louisiana radicalism. It started as the official organ of the Friends of Universal Suffrage, a political group that promoted extending the vote to all African Americans and evolved into the Republican Committee. In 1867 the federal government designated the *Tribune* an official paper of the United States, one of only two in the state. Its major responsibility as an official newspaper was to publish the authentic texts of laws, administrative announcements, and judicial decisions.

Getting Out the Vote: Enfranchising African-American Men

The persistent efforts of African Americans and their white allies in Louisiana forced the issue of voting rights for blacks into the national arena. In 1864 they sent a delegation to Washington to petition for enfranchisement. When riots broke out in 1866 during a recall of the convention to rewrite the state constitution, those who wanted to enfranchise black males called attention to the need for suffrage extension on a national scale, realized in the First Reconstruction Act of 1867.

Most Louisiana African Americans valued the right to vote above all other rights. Without political power, they could not hope to protect their property or their lives. Freeborn blacks were the first to demand voting rights. Their efforts culminated in several meetings held at Economy Hall in New Orleans. Almost 700 free African Americans and numerous white radicals attended the first of these mass meetings in November 1863. At this assembly and subsequent ones in January 1864, participants delineated conservative goals. Free blacks and their radical white allies called for enfranchisement of the former free black population and permission to vote in the 1864 elections for state officials and delegates to the constitutional convention.

The reluctance of state authorities, especially the newly elected governor, Michael Hahn, to extend suffrage to free blacks hardened their resolve. They appealed directly to federal officials and sent a delegation to Washington in March 1864. Their representatives were Jean Baptiste Roudanez, an engineer and brother of *L'Union*'s owner Louis Charles Roudanez, and E. Arnold Bertonneau, a New Orleans wine merchant. Over 1,000 free men of African descent, including 27 veterans of the Battle of New Orleans, signed the petition Roudanez and Bertonneau presented to Radical Republicans and President Lincoln.

The petition demanded "that all the citizens of Louisiana of African descent, born free before the rebellion, may be, by proper orders, directed to be inscribed in the registers, and admitted to the rights and privileges of electors." Radical leaders persuaded Roudanez and Bertonneau to include voting rights for former slaves as well as freeborn blacks before they presented the petition to President Lincoln.

Lincoln sympathized with Louisiana's free black population. He claimed, however, that he could do little but put in writing his support for provisions in the 1864 Louisiana

constitution that permitted the enfranchisement of certain groups of free black men. Even with Lincoln's approval of the extension of voting rights, the Louisiana legislature did not act.

Recognizing their mutual dependence, freeborn and newly freed blacks came together at the Convention of Colored Men in January of 1865. Calling for the organization and unity of all persons of African descent, the convention's 107 delegates voted to petition commanding military authorities to integrate streetcars and rejected extending voting rights to only a small group of black men. Their failure to issue a strong statement in favor of suffrage for all blacks, however, indicated that divisions still prevailed.

One Step Back: Louisiana Black Code of 1865

Not only did African Americans fail to gain civil and political rights, they also experienced increased regulation over their private lives, particularly in the form of labor contracts. To control the behavior and actions of former slaves in the "free" postwar society, Louisiana and other southern states enacted Black Codes, modeled on restrictions in force under slavery.

Although the Louisiana Black Code of 1865 extended some civil rights to freedpersons, its primary purpose was to force blacks to enter into labor contracts with planters, enforce these agreements and plantation discipline, discourage planters from competing against each other for black workers, and punish as vagrants those blacks who refused to contract their labor. To make African-American women and children work in the fields, Louisiana, along with Texas, ordered that labor contracts include all members of a family.

The severity of Louisiana's and other states' Black Codes convinced many northerners that only with more radical forms of reconstruction would southern society change to accommodate ex-slaves as citizens and free workers. In response, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which defined the rights that all citizens were to enjoy equally without regard to race: to protect person and property, make contracts, and bring lawsuits. This federal legislation prevailed over all state laws and revealed the Republican Party's acceptance of what it had once considered Radical policy.

Riot of 1866 (The Mechanics' Institute Massacre)

Radical Republicans in Louisiana, both black and white, reacted to passage of the Black Codes and the legislature's refusal to enfranchise black men by recalling delegates who had written the Constitution of 1864. In addition to voting rights, African Americans sought such civil rights as serving on juries and holding political office. Twenty-five delegates, along with some two hundred supporters, met for their first day of deliberations on 30 July 1866 in New Orleans at the Mechanics' Institute, then used as the statehouse.

That afternoon a group of white citizens, aided by New Orleans police and firemen, attacked the delegates and their black supporters. These white assailants, many of them Confederate veterans, opposed the convention's goals and new Reconstruction policies.

Federal troops at Jackson Barracks were called in to stop the violence, but by the time they arrived the mayhem had run its course. Official reports from the massacre listed 37 persons (34 blacks and 3 white Radicals) killed and 146 wounded. Contemporary witnesses, however, believed the numbers to be much higher. One of those killed was the Reverend J. W. Horton, who stood in the doorway of the Mechanics' Institute and implored oncoming rioters to spare the lives of those inside. Waving a white handkerchief, Horton cried, "We surrender, we are peaceable, don't fire, take us prisoners, but don't fire." His plea went unheeded. He was shot in the right arm, and received fractures to his hand and skull. He died of his wounds six days later.

Dr. Anthony P. Dostie, a white dentist, was also killed during the riot. A Unionist and true Radical Republican, he came to New Orleans sometime before the Civil War. He openly and loudly opposed secession and the Confederacy and was an outspoken advocate of African-American enfranchisement and civil rights. An extremely controversial figure, Dostie was a particular object of the mob's rage. He was shot in the spine and received a swordthrust in his stomach during the uprising.

Jean-Charles Houzeau, the editor of the *New Orleans Tribune*, witnessed the massacre:

> **At about one o'clock in the afternoon during a recess in the meeting [of the constitutional convention], the city hall bell [rang]. . . . At that sound, squads of policemen armed with revolvers, companies of voluntary firemen also armed with pistols and axes, and auxiliaries organized from secret proslavery societies, set off from different points in the city. . . .**
>
> **From the front door I watched for a moment this odious massacre, a sort of ambush into which unarmed victims continually fell. Those wounded who still had some strength dragged themselves under the columns whose drenched tiles had become a large pool of blood. . . .**
>
> **The massacre lasted until after three o'clock. The room where the convention had met and where many men had remained was broken into behind blazing weapons. There the Protestant minister, Horton, was shot down as he waved a white flag; Captain Loup was slashed to ribbons by hunting knives; Dr. Dostie was mortally wounded, then dragged through the gutters, and finally thrown on a trash heap, around which the assassins danced and shouted hurrahs for Jefferson Davis. More than one hundred and thirty people lost their lives—all, of course belonged to the unarmed crowd: not one single person died on the other side. . . .**
>
> **The night was spent removing the bodies and transporting the wounded. But the troops were few and could not guard more than a**

few points; the colored population and its white friends still lived, alas, under the threat of an all too natural terror.

When news of the massacre reached the North, moderate Republicans united with radicals to wrest control of Reconstruction from President Andrew Johnson. With public opinion behind them, Republicans in Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts of 1867. Republicans also won overwhelming victories in the 1868 congressional and presidential elections.

Radical Reconstruction in Louisiana

Contrary to legend, Radical Reconstruction in Louisiana was not characterized by the corrupt rule of either a black majority or so-called "carpetbaggers." It was, however, an intense, sometimes violent, contest between those who favored Radical Republican policies and those who fought for white supremacy as the philosophy that would guide public policy in Louisiana.

On paper, supporters of civil rights for all men regardless of race appeared to emerge victorious. In reality, their struggle failed. Civil rights legislation passed and applied in Louisiana placed the burden of proof on the injured parties. Without much federal, state, or local protection, African Americans and their white allies found that they had very little power to enforce laws that attempted to erase the color line.

African Americans did not hold a majority of government positions in Louisiana in the 1860s and 1870s. An equal number of white and black delegates wrote the Constitution of 1868, considered one of the best of its time. Also, fewer blacks than whites served in the state legislature and in many other government bodies during the Reconstruction era.

The government agencies in which African Americans did participate were often less corrupt than those in antebellum or post-Reconstruction administrations. The state treasurer's office, headed from 1868 until 1878 by Republican Antoine Dubuclet, a free man of color from Iberville Parish, provides one revealing example. A bipartisan investigation, initiated by Democratic opponents, found Dubuclet's tenure free of corruption. Dubuclet's white successor, Democrat E. A. Burke, on the other hand, allegedly robbed Louisiana of more than one and a half million dollars during his ten-year term. Burke came to Louisiana seeking his fortune in 1870. As a result of his misconduct, Burke fled the country and lived as a fugitive from justice in Europe and Honduras until his death in 1928.

"Carpetbaggers"—black and white northerners who moved to the South after the Civil War—were never in the majority in the 1867–1868 Louisiana constitutional convention or subsequent Reconstruction legislatures. White supremacist opponents of Radical Reconstruction developed and perpetuated the tale of the greedy, corrupt northern "stranger" who stripped Louisiana of its resources. They looked favorably upon white

Northerners, like Burke, who joined the Democratic party and upheld white supremacy, but denounced as carpetbaggers those who aligned with Republicans and defended the rights of African Americans

Most carpetbaggers were former soldiers from middle-class families who went south seeking a livelihood, not political office. Carpetbaggers who did participate in politics usually did not seize power, but rather were elected by black and white voters or appointed by Radical Republican officeholders.

"A State Constitution Magnificent for Its Liberal Principles": The Louisiana Constitution of 1868

The Constitution of 1868 was one of the best in Louisiana history and at the time one of the most forward-looking constitutions in the United States. It extended voting and other civil rights to black males, established an integrated, free public school system, and guaranteed blacks equal access to public accommodations. The 1868 constitution was also the first Louisiana constitution to provide a formal bill of rights.

In April 1868 Louisiana voters ratified the constitution 51,737 to 39,076, with the backing of a solid black voting block. At the same time voters elected new legislators and other state officials.

Louisiana Constitutional Convention

The convention met at the Mechanics' Institute in New Orleans in November 1867. Among the forty-nine black delegates were few former slaves; most had been free before the Civil War. The forty-nine white delegates were split almost two to one between Radical and Unionist factions of the Republican Party. More conservative than Radical delegates, the Unionists supported legal and political, but not social, equality for blacks and whites, and they opposed desegregation.

Louisiana's Constitution of 1868 attempted to create a society based on egalitarian principles. It incorporated provisions of the First Reconstruction Act of 1867 by extending the right to vote and hold public office to African-American men. All officeholders had to swear an oath accepting the political and civil equality of all men. The Black Codes of 1865 were eradicated, as were property qualifications for holding office. Writers of the constitution also disfranchised former Confederates.

African-American delegates played a crucial role in passage of Articles 135 and 13 of the new constitution. Article 135 established at least one free public school in each parish, with children six to eighteen years of age eligible to attend regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Article 13 guaranteed to all persons "equal rights and privileges upon any conveyance of a public character; and all places of business or of public resort." Delegates defined a place of public character as any business that required a state, parish, or city license to operate.

The year before the constitution, New Orleans had outlawed the "star car" system, which relegated African Americans to streetcars marked with a star. In protest, blacks

boarded unmarked cars and made drivers halt transportation until one of the parties backed down. Their actions forced General Sheridan, military governor of the Fifth District, to paint over the stars and integrate the streetcars. Louisiana legislators strengthened Article 13 with passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1869, which allowed injured parties to sue owners of public facilities who refused to abide by Article 13.

In real terms Article 13 and the Civil Rights Act did little to end racial discrimination in public places. Although blacks tested antidiscrimination legislation in the courts and authorities occasionally enforced its provisions, the color line was rarely challenged in Louisiana. Most African Americans could not afford to ride trains and steamboats, attend the opera, or drink at exclusive clubs, nor could they pay the costs associated with suing offending institutions.

Primary Black Leaders

In general, African-American leaders in Louisiana during Reconstruction were very different from the people they sought to represent. Most were free before the Civil War, born in Louisiana, financially secure, and literate. They were skilled workers, businessmen, or professionals, and had owned property, including slaves, prior to the war. *Tribune* editor Jean-Charles Houzeau described them as "a core of men of African race, who in their intelligence, sense of rectitude, commercial talents, and acquired wealth, held a peculiar place, a unique place, in the southern states. Here was a sort of elite; here was the vanguard of the African population of the United States."

John Willis Ménard

John Willis Ménard was the first African American in the United States to speak from the floor of Congress. Son of the first lieutenant governor of Illinois, Ménard settled in New Orleans in 1865, one of the many African-American carpetbaggers to come to Louisiana. Although voters in the second congressional district of Louisiana elected Ménard to the United States House of Representatives in 1868, Congress contested the election. Still hesitant to accept black representatives, they allowed Ménard to plead his case but in the end refused to seat him.

Charles E. Nash

Charles E. Nash was the only African American to represent Louisiana in the United States Congress during the Reconstruction period. He served the sixth district in the Forty-fourth Congress, from 1874 to 1876. A native of New Orleans, Nash was a bricklayer and a former sergeant in the Union army.

Oscar J. Dunn

Oscar J. Dunn was the first black lieutenant governor of Louisiana, elected in 1868 and serving until his death in December 1871. Dunn was born in New Orleans, learned

the plasterer's trade, and rose from private to captain in the Union's First Louisiana Regiment of black troops.

Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback

P. B. S. Pinchback finished Dunn's term as lieutenant governor of Louisiana from 1871 to 1872. He served as acting governor of the state during the thirty-five-day period when the state legislature impeached and convicted Governor Henry Clay Warmoth. Voters elected Pinchback to the United States House of Representatives in 1872, but his opponent contested the vote and won. In 1873 Pinchback was elected again, this time to the United States Senate, and once more he lost when the vote was challenged.

Born in Georgia, Pinchback worked as a ship's steward prior to the Civil War. He commanded a Union company in the Second Louisiana Native Guards and organized a company for the Corps d'Afrique. A delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1867 and 1868 and to the national Republican convention, Pinchback was elected to the Louisiana senate in 1868. Following Reconstruction, Pinchback earned a law degree at Straight University, a black university in New Orleans, and accepted a presidential appointment as surveyor of customs in New Orleans.

Antoine Dubuclet

Antoine Dubuclet served Louisiana as state treasurer from 1868 to 1878, the only African American in the reconstructed South to hold that office for more than one term. Although he could not rescue Louisiana from bankruptcy, he kept the deficit from rising higher. Republicans and Democrats alike respected his abilities and honesty.

Dubuclet was born free in Iberville Parish, married twice, and had twelve children, nine of whom were educated in France. A sugar planter, Dubuclet was the wealthiest free black in Louisiana prior to the Civil War. In 1864 his estate was valued at $94,700 and included more than 100 slaves.

Dubuclet's sister, Josephine Decuir, also worked to advance the civil rights of Louisiana blacks. In 1872 she sued a steamboat owner who refused to give her a stateroom in the “ladies’ cabin,” reserved for the exclusive use of white women. This and other cases tested Article 13 of the 1868 constitution and the Louisiana Civil Rights Act of 1869. Although a state court upheld Article 13, the United States Supreme Court eventually overturned the lower court's decision and declared the provision unconstitutional.

C. C. Antoine

The third black lieutenant governor of Louisiana was C. C. Antoine, who served from 1872 to 1876. In 1876 he ran for reelection with Republican gubernatorial candidate Stephen B. Packard but stepped down when federal troops withdrew from Louisiana and the Democratic administration took over. Antoine held other political offices during Reconstruction, including state senator from Caddo Parish, from 1868 to 1872, and Caddo Parish school board member, 1875.

Although born in New Orleans, Antoine moved to Shreveport following the Civil War. During the war he organized and served as captain of a company in the Louisiana Corps d'Afrique. Antoine was a barber, grocery store owner, and planter.

Thomy Lafon

Thomy Lafon, an active Republican party member, provided important financial contributions to the civil rights movement. A New Orleans native, Lafon built a fortune as a merchant and real estate investor. When he died in 1893, he left much of his $413,000 estate to charitable, educational, and cultural institutions that served African Americans.

Some Black Delegates to the 1867–1868 Constitutional Convention

Dennis Burrel. A blacksmith and former slave of a sugar planter, Burrel represented St. John the Baptist Parish in the 1867–1868 constitutional convention and served in the state house of representatives.

Robert I. Cromwell. A delegate from the second district (New Orleans), thirty-seven-year-old Cromwell was a medical doctor and native of Virginia who had come to New Orleans from Wisconsin in 1864. Severely beaten and robbed by a policeman during the 1866 riot, this black carpetbagger brought charges against the offending officer, who was jailed for his misconduct.

Pierre G. Deslonde. Deslonde served as a constitutional delegate and later as Louisiana secretary of state from 1872 to 1876. Of African and French parentage, Deslonde was a wealthy Iberville Parish sugar planter.

Thomas and Robert Isabelle. The Isabelle brothers were born free and served as officers in the Union army. Thomas managed a sewing-machine store on Baronne Street in New Orleans, and Robert worked as a dyer and part-time clerk.

Charles LeRoy. LeRoy represented Natchitoches Parish at the convention and later served as the Natchitoches postmaster.

William Meadows. An ex-slave farmer from Claiborne Parish, Meadows was murdered in 1869 by white opponents in his own backyard, in full view of his family.

Solomon Moses. Moses was a forty-one-year-old builder and later a Custom House official.

Robert Poindexter. Poindexter represented Assumption Parish as first a constitutional delegate and then a state senator.

Curtis Pollard. A Baptist preacher and farmer, Pollard represented Madison Parish at the convention and served as a state senator for eight years. In response to terrorist activity directed against him, Pollard migrated to Kansas in the late 1870s.

David Wilson. A native of Kentucky, Wilson operated a barbershop in New Orleans at 152 Calliope Street.

Primary White Leaders

Henry Clay Warmoth

Henry Clay Warmoth, a white carpetbagger from Illinois, served as the first Reconstruction governor of Louisiana, 1868 to 1872. A mere twenty-five years old in 1868, Warmoth tried to please all Louisianians, failed to take a firm stand on important issues, and alienated most of the population. During his term Warmoth became increasingly conservative; he vetoed civil rights legislation, refused to enforce desegregation of public schools, and appointed Democrats to Custom House offices, a stronghold of Radical Republicans. In the 1872 election Warmoth went so far as to ally himself with the Democrats to prevent victory by the Radicals, popularly known as the Custom House Ring because they controlled lucrative positions in the regulation of commerce.

Both Democrats and Republicans claimed victory in the 1872 elections; a federal returning board decided in favor of the Republicans. Radical Republicans in the Louisiana legislature immediately moved to impeach Warmoth. They convicted him in December 1872, leaving Lieutenant Governor Pinchback to act as governor during the last thirty-five days of Warmoth's term.

Unlike most carpetbaggers, Warmoth spent the rest of his life in Louisiana. In addition to practicing law and acquiring a sugar plantation, Warmoth served as a Louisiana state representative from 1877 to 1879 and as a member of the constitutional convention of 1879. He died in New Orleans in 1931.

Thomas J. Durant

A lawyer who had lived in New Orleans since the 1830s, Thomas Jefferson Durant was one of the few Louisianians who supported Lincoln's candidacy in 1860. During the occupation period and Presidential Reconstruction Durant emerged as the leading spokesperson for the Radical faction. He actively campaigned for black voting rights and helped organize the Friends of Universal Suffrage and the Radical Republican Club.

William Pitt Kellogg

The state's leading Radical Republican, William Pitt Kellogg served as its second (and last) Reconstruction governor, from 1873 to 1877, a period of intense political turmoil. Kellogg initially tried to appease Democrats, but when this failed, he actively courted blacks and white Republicans. During his administration Kellogg and the

Republican legislature enacted additional civil rights legislation, reduced state expenditures and tax rates, allocated money to charities, and tried to eradicate corruption and bribery.

Prior to his term as governor, Kellogg was collector of the port of New Orleans and a United States senator. He returned to the Senate in 1877, serving until 1883, and then was elected to the United States House of Representatives, from 1883 to 1885.

James Madison Wells

Louisiana voters elected James Madison Wells lieutenant governor on the Michael Hahn ticket in 1864. When the state legislature chose Hahn as Louisiana representative to the United States Congress, Wells took over as governor. He then ran successfully for governor in the November 1865 election. Wells was what was known as a "scalawag," a native-born white who supported the Republican party. Following the Reconstruction era, Wells retired to his plantation in Rapides Parish.

Opponents of Reconstruction: White Supremacy Groups

Several terrorist organizations sprang up in Louisiana during the Reconstruction era. They primarily aimed to intimidate Republican voters and officeholders of both races, obstruct implementation of Radical Republican policies, and restore Louisiana to rule by native whites. The main instruments of white terror in Louisiana were the Knights of the White Camellia and a later group, the White League. The earliest white supremacy organization in the South, the Ku Klux Klan, formed in Tennessee in 1866, but evidence of the Klan's activity in Louisiana is scanty.

Both the Knights of the White Camellia and the White League were formed with the immediate goal of keeping white and black Republicans away from polling places, the former in the 1868 election and the latter in the 1874 election. The Knights developed as a new force in Louisiana politics from 1868 to 1874. Their successor, the White League, gained influence in the lower Red River Valley and spread to New Orleans and the rest of the state by the summer of 1874.

Whites, many of them Democrats, joined these terrorist organizations when they began losing power to Radical Republicans, both white and black, in Reconstruction Louisiana. The election of dual Democrat and Republican governments in 1872 and federal use of force to install and maintain Radical candidates persuaded many native white supremacists to join para-military groups like the White League.

In the words of Edward King, a writer for *Scribner's Monthly* who visited Louisiana in 1874: “The Louisiana white people were in such terror of the negro government that they would rather accept any other despotism. A military dictator would be far preferable to them; they would go anywhere to escape the ignominy to which they were at present subjected.”

Acts of Violence against Individuals

Violent acts aimed at blacks and their white supporters soared in the postwar years. One North Carolina visitor to Louisiana in 1865 reported that white locals governed "by the pistol and the rifle." Henry Adams, a Louisiana ex-slave, testified before

Congress that he "saw white men whipping colored men just the same as they did before the war" and that "over two thousand colored people" were murdered near Shreveport in 1865 alone.

Black leaders within Louisiana were primary targets of such violent acts. A mob killed Joseph L'Official in 1870 on the night that he was elected to the state legislature from East Baton Rouge Parish. Another mob murdered Franklin St. Clair, a Monroe schoolteacher and candidate for state representative, while he was returning from a speaking engagement in April 1868. St. Clair's white killer, J. T. Payne, went free. Black State Senator Alexander François was killed while he was serving in the legislature.

Riots

During the Reconstruction era riots erupted throughout the state, in St. Bernard, St. Landry, Bossier, and St. Mary Parishes, New Orleans, and elsewhere. Republican forces rarely controlled areas outside of New Orleans. In rural areas near-anarchy or guerrilla warfare often prevailed. Some of the most violent activity took place in north Louisiana with the Colfax Riot of April 1873 and the Coushatta Massacre of August 1874.

The Colfax Riot was the bloodiest single instance of racial violence in the Reconstruction era in all the United States. It revealed the lengths to which some opponents of Reconstruction would go to regain their accustomed authority and the mighty forces against which African Americans had to struggle, seemingly hopelessly, to gain equality. According to John G. Lewis, a black educator and legislator in Louisiana, blacks tried to defend their rights, with the result that "on Easter Sunday of 1873, when the sun went down that night, it went down on the corpses of two hundred and eighty negroes." Other reports listed 105 African Americans and 2 whites murdered.

Disputes over the 1872 election results had produced dual governments in Louisiana, one Republican, the other Democrat, from the governor on down. Fearful that local Democrats would seize power, former slaves under the command of black Civil War veterans and militia officers took over Colfax, the seat of Grant Parish. After a three-week defense, these black and white Republicans succumbed to a white Democrat assault. A massacre followed, including the slaughter of about fifty African Americans who had laid down their arms and surrendered.

White League influence spread to northwest Louisiana in the summer of 1873. Its brutal actions targeted whites as well as blacks, especially those whites who courted black votes. One such episode was directed against white Republican leaders in Coushatta, the family of carpetbag politician Marshall Harvey Twitchell. Twitchell had moved to Bienville Parish after the Civil War, where he became a prominent cotton planter and businessman. In 1871 he was elected the youngest member of the state senate, representing Bienville Parish in the Reconstruction legislature, where he played a key role in the creation of Red River Parish.

In August 1874, while Twitchell was in New Orleans, White Leaguers arrested and executed Twitchell's brother, two of his brothers-in-law, and three other white Republicans. Twitchell returned to Coushatta from New Orleans with two companies of federal troops, his goal to restore Republican rule in the parish. Democratic leaders

continued to control local politics, however. In 1876 they assassinated Twitchell's third brother-in-law, and tried to kill Twitchell, who lost both his arms in the fray.

First Battle of the Cabildo, 1873

The First Battle of the Cabildo fought on 5 March 1873 pitted Democrats supporting John McEnery against the Metropolitan Police of New Orleans, an integrated militia that protected the Republican administration under Governor Kellogg. In the 1872 election McEnery had run against Kellogg for governor. Both candidates claimed victory and established dual police forces and legislatures.

The Metropolitan Police put down the McEnery militia's coup attempt, directed at Metropolitan headquarters in the Cabildo on 5 March. The next day they dispersed the McEnery legislature, which met in Odd Fellows' Hall. Kellogg and the Republicans were restored to power, although their tenure was unstable for the remainder of Reconstruction.

Battle of Liberty Place

On 14 September 1874 the Metropolitan Police once again clashed with Democratic militia forces, now organized as the Crescent City White League, in what is known as the Battle of Liberty Place. This time the Metropolitan Police lost, and federal troops had to be called in to restore Governor Kellogg to office. They helped maintain Kellogg in power, at least in New Orleans, until the end of Reconstruction two years later.

Metropolitan Police

Made up of black and white recruits, the Metropolitan Police acted as a Republican militia during Radical Reconstruction in Louisiana. General James Longstreet and Superintendent A. S. Badger commanded a force of 500 Metropolitan Police, 100 additional armed police, and some 3,000 black militia at the Battle of Liberty Place. They faced about 8,400 White Leaguers and other dissidents.

One of the leaders of Republican police forces in New Orleans was James Lewis, a black man from Mississippi who rose from sergeant to captain of the Metropolitan Police and finally to city council commissioner of police and public improvements. From humble beginnings as a boat steward, Lewis gained prominence in Louisiana during Reconstruction and beyond. He organized free Freedman's Bureau state schools for African Americans, served as state surveyor general, became grand master of the Louisiana Free Masons, and commanded the Grand Army of the Republic in Louisiana and Mississippi.

The Action

White Leaguers and Metropolitans waged a hard-fought battle at the foot of Canal Street on the afternoon of 14 September. Angry whites had gathered at the Clay Statue on Canal Street that morning to protest Republican rule, and the meeting escalated into an armed revolt. The Metropolitan Police established a diagonal line of defense from the third precinct headquarters in the Cabildo to Canal Street. While many Republican

officials took refuge in the Custom House, the St. Louis Hotel served as the Republican State House and a stronghold of the Metropolitan police. Metropolitans, fearful of another White League attack, surrendered the hotel without a fight on the morning following the battle. The Cabildo, used as a courthouse during the Reconstruction period, also housed the state's arsenal. On the day of the battle, the Cabildo remained in the hands of the Metropolitan Police. During the night all but six Metropolitans deserted their posts, a severely wounded Metropolitan Police captain, Joseph H. Lawlor, surrendered the building to victorious White Leaguers the following morning.

The Crescent City White League, under the command of General Fred N. Ogden, quickly defeated the Metropolitans and forced them to retreat into the Cabildo and the Custom House. Casualties included eleven killed and sixty wounded Metropolitans and sixteen killed and forty-five wounded of the White League.

Federal troops arrived in New Orleans on the evening of 16 September, to put down the White League rebellion and reinstate the deposed Kellogg government.

Continuing Presence of the White League

The White League remained powerful in New Orleans and Louisiana throughout the remainder of Reconstruction and into the post-Reconstruction era. Its activities helped restore white supremacist rule in Louisiana in 1877. Once Democrats were returned to power, they paid homage to the "heroes" of the Battle of Liberty Place with presentation swords, poems, songs, and statues.

Return to Home Rule: The Election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877

Louisiana was one of three remaining states, the others being South Carolina and Florida, still under federal military rule in 1875 and 1876. Following the 1872 election, Republicans and Democrats in Louisiana both claimed victory and established dual governments. A Republican returning board ultimately decided against Democrat John F. McEnery and in favor of the Radical ticket of Kellogg and Antoine, thus continuing Reconstruction in Louisiana for four more years.

Kellogg's Republicans, the so-called "Custom House Gang," constantly had to call in federal troops to maintain their hold on the political system. With the disputed election of 1876 and Compromise of 1877, the Republican Party finally gave up in Louisiana and the South and returned the state to Democratic home rule.

Gubematorial Campaign of 1876

Republican Stephen B. Packard faced Democrat Francis T. Nicholls in the 1876 race for Louisiana governor. Just as in 1872, both candidates claimed a majority of the votes and established separate governments. In January 1877 representatives in the two legislatures met separately: the Packard legislature in the State House and the Nicholls legislature first in St. Patrick's Hall and then in Odd Fellows' Hall, all in New Orleans.

Second Battle of the Cabildo, 9 January 1877

Tensions between Radicals and white supremacists climaxed as the dual governments wrestled for control of the state. On 9 January 1877, the morning after his inauguration, Democrat Nicholls sent 3,000 men under the command of Frederick N. Ogden to take the Cabildo, seat of the Louisiana state supreme court and a precinct of the Metropolitan Police. Ogden's troops were made up of White Leaguers who had fought at Liberty Place in 1874 and Washington Artillery members. Heavily outmanned, federal and Metropolitan Police forces offered no resistance. The state supreme court justices gave up their courtroom, and Nicholls appointed a new judiciary.

Disputed Presidential Election: Tilden v. Hayes

Political happenings in Washington, however, decided whether the Packard or Nicholls government would triumph. On the national level the two major parties disagreed over which presidential candidate, Democrat Samuel J. Tilden or Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, had truly won the election of 1876. A compromise worked out in February 1877 provided that disputed votes went to Hayes and in exchange Hayes permitted southern Democrats, also known as Redeemers, to take over governments in the three remaining militarily occupied states, Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

Once the federal government agreed to pull its troops out of Louisiana, the Nicholls administration took over. Packard's Republican supporters, holed up in the State House, maintained a shadow government until the end of April 1877. Delegates, primarily Democrats, wrote a new constitution that voters ratified in 1879. Louisiana returned to home rule, with white supremacist Democrats controlling most state, parish, and municipal institutions.

* * *

Conclusion

Although the promise of change pervaded Louisiana during the era of Reconstruction, few lasting transformations took hold. African Americans were now legally free—a major advance for democracy and humanitarianism—and for a while at least, black men could vote. Suffrage, however, only had symbolic value if citizens could not earn enough to provide basic necessities for their families and had to send their children to substandard, underfunded schools. Few Louisiana blacks and even many whites could purchase their own plot of land, with such economic arrangements as tenant farming, sharecropping, and debt peonage reducing them to continued dependency. As a result, many of the civil rights battles fought in the 1860s and 1870s had to be waged again one hundred years later.

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