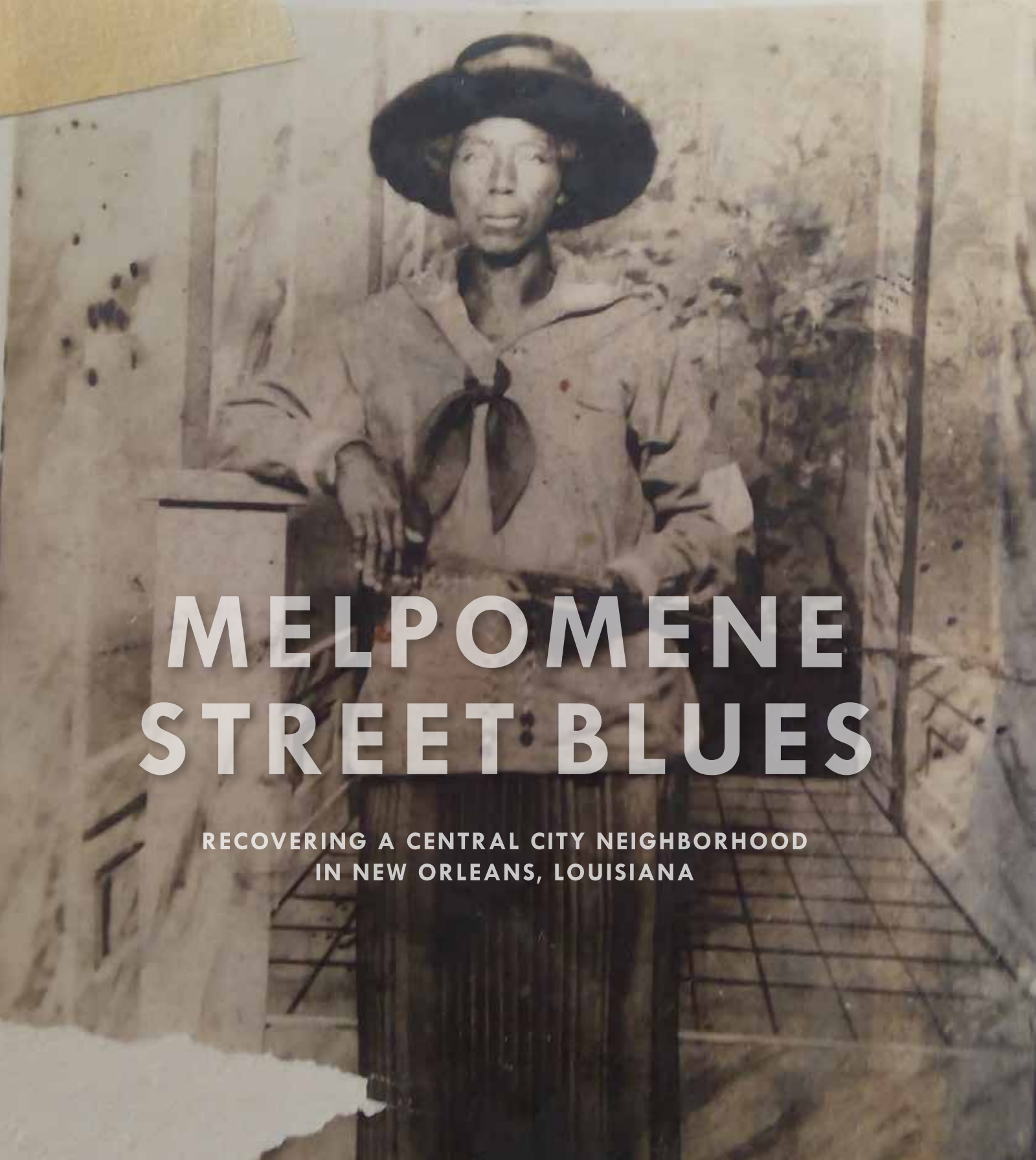

# MELPOMENE STREET BLUES

## RECOVERING A CENTRAL CITY NEIGHBORHOOD IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

# MELPOMENE STREET BLUES

## RECOVERING A CENTRAL CITY NEIGHBORHOOD

Locket cover showing Lady Liberty found in the Melpomene neighborhood during an archaeological excavation.

by
D. Ryan Gray and Rachel Breunlin

Introduction
by
Shana M. griffin

The Neighborhood Story Project
&
PUNCTUATE



This booklet was produced as a collaboration between the Neighborhood Story Project and PUNCTUATE in partial fulfillment of obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on National Register eligible historic properties. As the William Guste, Sr. Homes are administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through a partnership between the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation and the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), and the redevelopment of Guste was funded in part by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), this redevelopment was considered a federal undertaking.

When the low-rise buildings of the Guste were torn down, two local archaeological firms, R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates and Earth Search, Inc., assessed what had been preserved from the Melpomene neighborhood, which had been torn down in the 1960s to build the development. They then targeted specific areas for excavation. This book is based on what was found at the site, and was written in consultation with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office and Division of Archaeology, FEMA, HANO, and GOHSEP. Artifact photographs are by the University of New Orleans Archaeological Lab unless otherwise noted.

# Melpomene

From the Greek word “melpomai,” which means “to celebrate with song and dance,” the name was given to the Muse of Tragedy, often portrayed holding a tragic mask or sword.

A street in Uptown New Orleans that runs from the Mississippi River to back-a-town.

The vernacular name of the William Guste, Sr. Homes, a public housing development in Central City. Bestowed by its residents, it is pronounced “Melphomene,” and sometimes shortened to “the Melph.”

***Previous page:*** Objects found in archaeological excavations of the Melpomene neighborhood from the late 1800s include a knife-style bayonet (most likely from the U.S. Civil War) and a porcelain doll face. ***Above:*** An aerial view of a portion of South Liberty Street from Clio to Melpomene that was torn down to build the William J. Guste, Sr. Homes. Photograph courtesy of the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

Dominoes from the 1870s found
in the Melpomene neighborhood.

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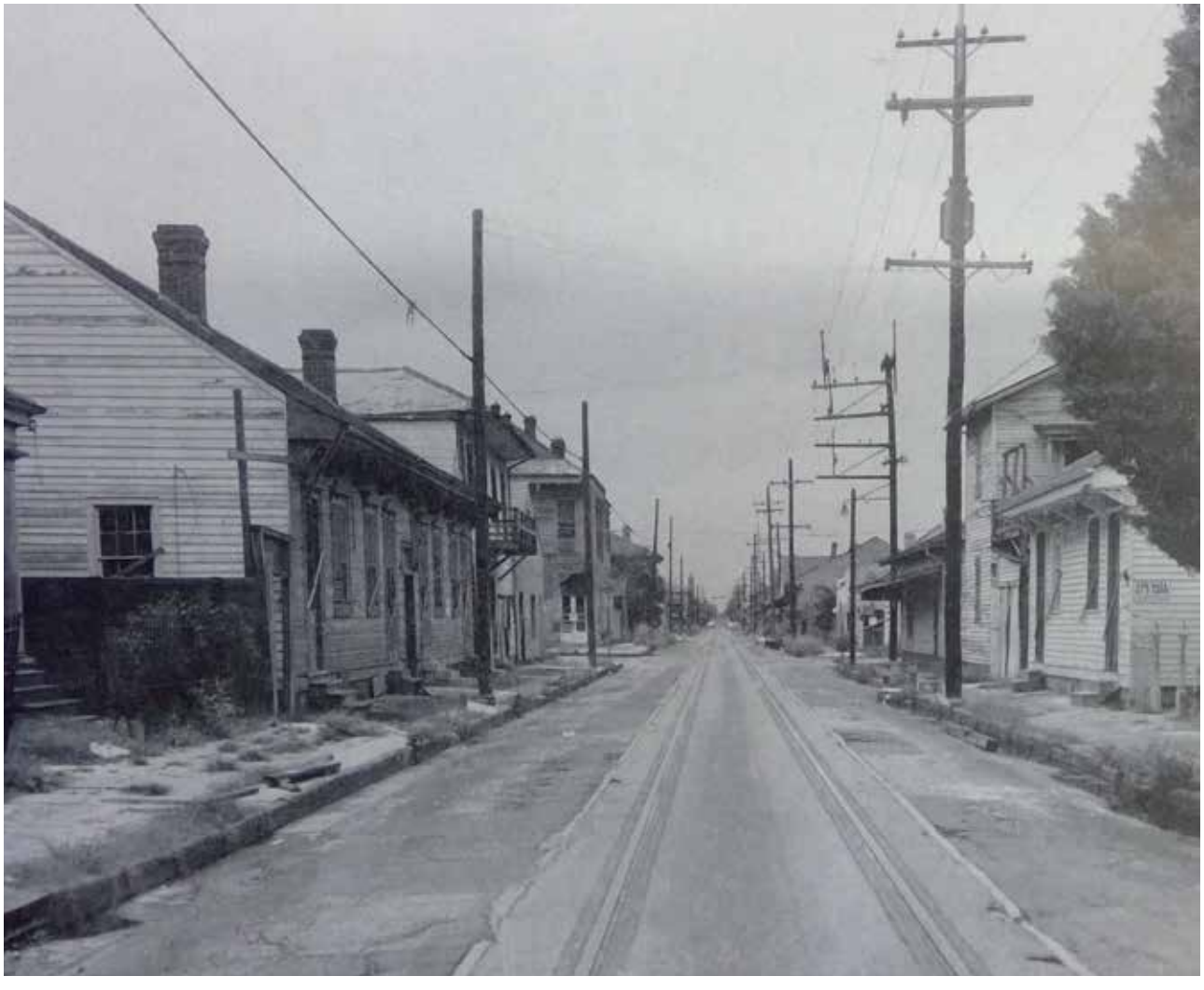


In the Melpomene neighborhood, Erato Street from Simon Bolivar to South Robertson was part of the area torn down to build the Guste Homes. Photograph courtesy of the Housing Authority of New Orleans.

# PREFACE

***by Shana M. griffin***

In 1927, a Black woman named Minnie Puckett purchased a home at 1222-1224 Howard Street, located between the Melpomene Street and New Basin Canals, in a part of New Orleans known as Central City. During this time, it was extremely difficult for Black families to buy homes. Jim and Jane Crow policies of deed restrictions and racial covenants made homeownership opportunities out of reach for most. Defying the odds and refusing to be erased, Mrs. Puckett secured stable housing for her family working as a laundress and living in a neighborhood full of small businesses, cottage industries, corner barrooms, and churches.

During the years that Mrs. Puckett and her family lived in on Howard Street, dramatic changes took place. In 1936, the Louisiana state legislature passed a constitutional amendment to close the nearby New Basin Canal and filled in the turning basin the following year. Slowly in decline since the creation of the Industrial Canal in the Ninth Ward, the once busy commercial area lost a great deal of its industry. The same year, the legislature also passed the Louisiana Housing Act of 1936, which established the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO). The newly formed Housing Authority began submitting proposals to the United States Housing Authority to take advantage of funding opportunities offered by the Housing Act of 1937 (also known as the Wagner-Steagall Bill) to build public housing through "slum clearance" in urban communities.

By 1938, New Orleans became the first city in the country to receive federal funding under the Wagner-Steagall Bill to tear down 19th century neighborhoods for the construction of low-rent public housing. Within a year, it secured $30 million in federal loan contracts. Neighborhoods chosen for public housing through slum clearance policy analyses and federal funding guidelines frequently displaced and confined Black people to racially and economically segregated neighborhoods that would not compete with the private real estate market.

Building on policy decisions put in place in the 1937 Housing Act, the federal government passed further housing legislation in 1949 and again in 1954. The latter housing bill came just two months after the unanimous Supreme Court decision, *Brown V. Board of Education of Topeka*. On May 17, 1954, it argued that "separate education facilities are inherently unequal" and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The Court's decision set the legal precedents needed to overturn Jim Crow laws enforcing segregation in other public facilities. However, each of the housing acts included discriminatory policies that were enacted under the rhetoric of urban renewal. The Housing Act of 1954 went even further than the previous two by offering more flexibility in funding for property acquisition, land clearance, and site preparation. It also included funding for commercial and industrial development, and required all new public housing units to be constructed in areas marked for "slum clearance" to prevent the spread of "urban blight."

Despite the landmark decision of *Brown V. Board of Education*, the 1954 Housing Act expanded racial segregation in urban communities across the country by often allowing local housing agencies to build segregated public housing developments and

targeting predominantly Black and racially-mixed neighborhoods for demolition. Over the next decade, waves of forced evictions, the loss of private homes and businesses, community networks, and livelihoods caused what research psychatrist and urban theorist Mindy Thompson Fullilove has described as "root shock." In 1954, HANO's public housing waiting list for "Negro housing" stood at 30,000 families with "families displaced by public agency actions," being told they would be given priority. The same year, the City of New Orleans announced it would demolish part of the Third Ward to build a new city hall.

In 1955, the City Planning and Zoning Commission approved HANO's requests to tear down another part of the Third Ward to build the William J. Guste, Sr. Homes public housing complex with low and high-rise apartments in the Melpomene neighborhood. The development was named after the Housing Authority's long-time general counsel. By 1958, HANO received federal financing for Guste, allowing the city to move forward with demolition of the area, with construction beginning in the early 1960s. During this period, other urban renewal projects, including the Union Passenger Terminal (1949–1954), the Mississippi River Bridge (1954–1958), and the Pontchartrain Expressway (1955–1962) also destroyed predominately Black neighborhoods.

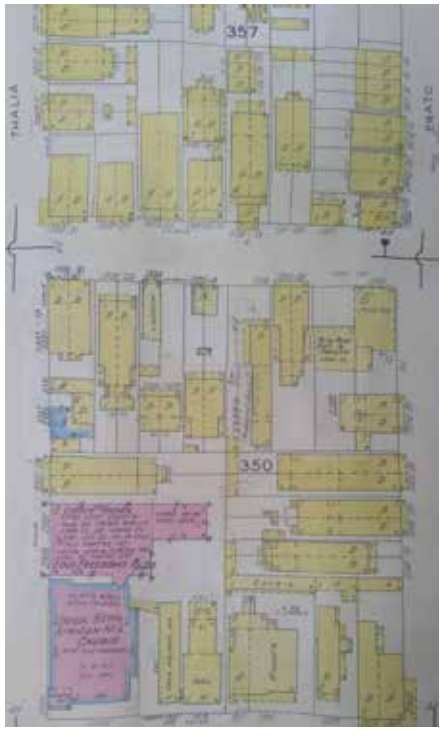
In 1961, HANO announced plans for the William J. Guste, Sr., Homes in its annual report, declaring:

> The project will consist of 993 dwelling units replacing ten squares of rock bottom slums where 500 Negro families have been living in substandard housing. The Housing Authority is dedicated to the eradication of slums in New Orleans. Slums are a breeding place for crime and disease. To remove this slum is a great step forward for our City....It will not only remove this cancer from the heart of our City, but will improve the entire area.

The language describing the Melpomene neighborhood was typical of the era—racist in nature and sexist in its implications that Black women are breeding criminals. Another way of thinking about the same area is to remember that it was home to 469 residential buildings, 11 commercial, 27 mixed-use buildings, and seven churches. At the time of demolition, 726 adults and 607 minors resided in the area. 500 families were relocated, and 100 moved into low-rent public housing. Construction of the segregated Willam J. Guste, Sr. Homes began in 1961, with the opening of the low-rise section of the development occurring on September 30, 1963, followed by the opening of the high-rise building for elderly residents in the spring of 1964.

Like Minnie Puckett's journey to New Orleans for a better life for her family, public housing residents, particularly Black women, moved into developments like Guste Homes for a stable, affordable place to live. As they encountered the everyday realities of low-wage jobs, underfunded after school programs for their children, and police brutality, they began to organize to take control of their community. In 1988, the Guste Homes became the first resident-managed development in the city, a process that continues today through the leadership of Cynthia Wiggins and the Guste Homes Resident Management Corporation.

Although the landscape of the Melpomene community is unrecognizable from its early beginnings, through archaeological surveys, the artifacts left behind by Mrs. Puckett and her neighbors help us recover their stories.




***Left:*** The Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, located within the Melpomene area, has been been a fixture in the neighborhood since 1866 when members of the downtown church, St. James A.M.E., split to form a new congregation. The current building at 2321 Thalia Street was completed in 1921. Photograph from *Louisiana Weekly*, 1949, reproduced from Ryan et al. 2017.
***Right:*** In the Sanborn fire map for Square 350, the church is located in the bottom left hand corner. While the rest of Square 350 was torn down for the Guste Homes, Union Bethel was spared demolition. On September 9, 2007, it was named to the National Register of Historic Places. Sanborn image courtesy of the Southeastern Architectural Archives, Tulane University.

The William Guste, Sr. Homes with Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church on the left in 2003. Photograph by Michel Varisco.

# EXCAVATING HISTORY

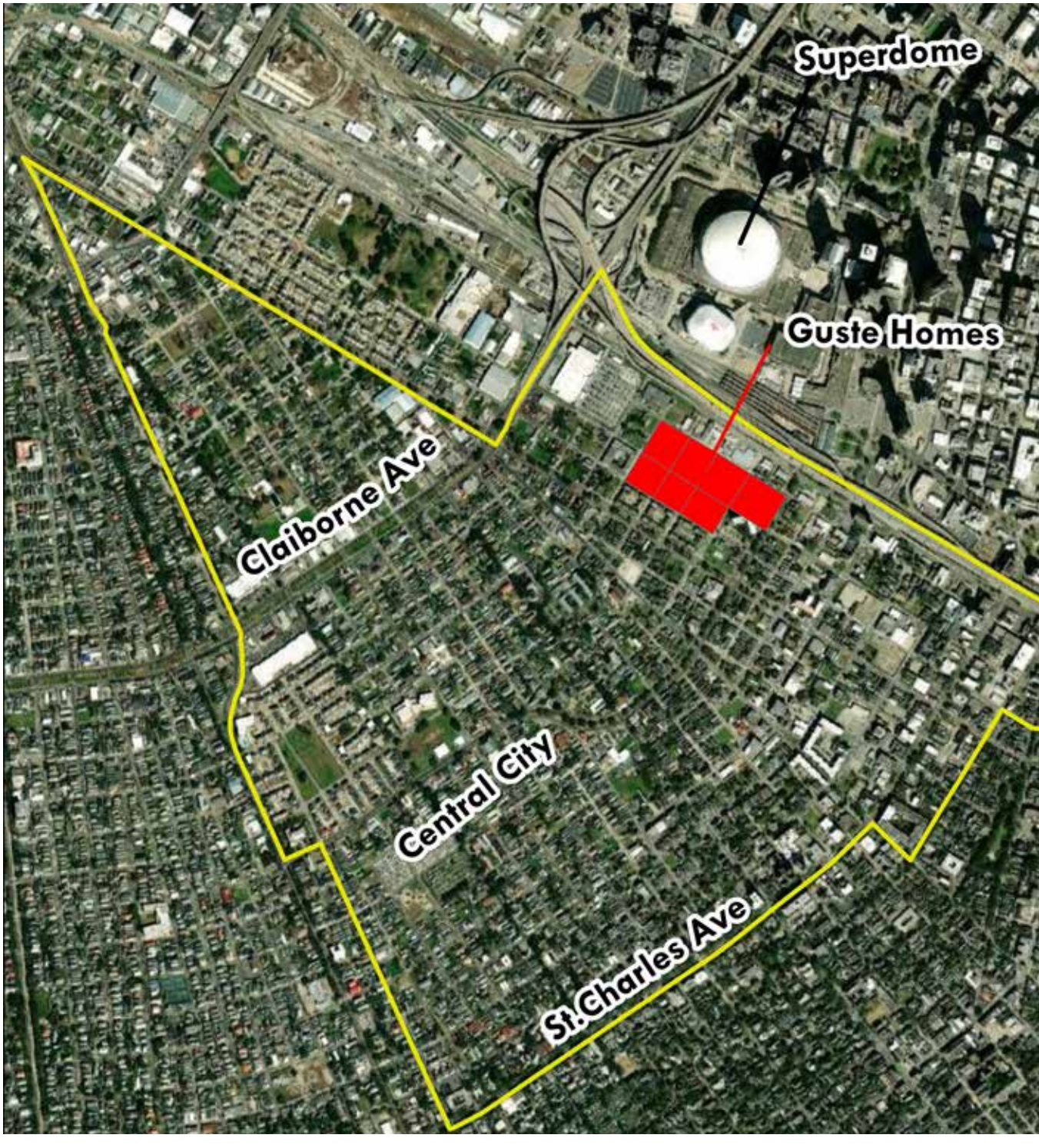
***By D. Ryan Gray***

If you start digging almost anywhere in New Orleans, you can find something from another era: old bits of pottery, glass bottles, buttons, animal bone, nails, old bricks, and more. Archaeologists use objects like this—artifacts and other material remains—to learn more about the history of a particular place. Artifacts that are preserved in or near where they were originally discarded serve as links between people, events, and time periods in the past. Archaeologists are especially interested in finding things that help give new perspectives on what we know about particular places and people, filling in gaps in the historical record. Archaeology thus allows us to create conversations between past and present. It deepens our understanding of how the city's built environment developed and of the conditions that informed the location and construction of neighborhoods. It gives a sense of what we may have lost over time, and how we can recover this knowledge.

This booklet is dedicated to the history of the neighborhood around Melpomene Street in Central City. The William Guste, Sr. Homes was opened in 1964, replacing a historic neighborhood that was home to densely packed houses, corner stores, and other small businesses. When the Housing Authority of New Orleans demolished the buildings, displacing hundreds of families for slum clearance and the construction of low-rent housing, much of what was below ground, like old building foundations and footings, was left behind. Pits previously dug into the ground, like wells and privies, or outhouse pits, were covered over. Before regular trash pick-up, holes in the ground provided a convenient place to get rid of household refuse, like broken dishes, bottles, food remains, and all sorts of small everyday items that were no longer useful. These holes become time capsules, which, once excavated by archaeologists, help illuminate the everyday lives of the people who once lived in the area. Maps and documents can allow researchers to connect what has been excavated to specific households, or even to individuals named in census records and city directories.

During the excavation of 1222 LaSalle/Howard Avenue, a brass pocket watch from the Empire State Company, with its serial number still visible, was found. Photograph courtesy of Earth Search, Inc.

In archaeology, as you dig downwards, you go back in time: the things that are on top are the newest, and the more deeply buried items are older. In this booklet, we share the lives of a few families who lived in the area over the hundred years before Guste was constructed. From a combination of documentary sources, newspaper advertisements, historical images, and maps, we can trace the development of the neighborhood. While some people who lived in the area left more archaeological traces than others, these artifacts allow us to get glimpses of the daily lives of Melpomene area residents in ways other documents cannot.


Superdome
Guste Homes
Claiborne Ave
Central City
St.Charles Ave


# RECOVERING A NEIGHBORHOOD

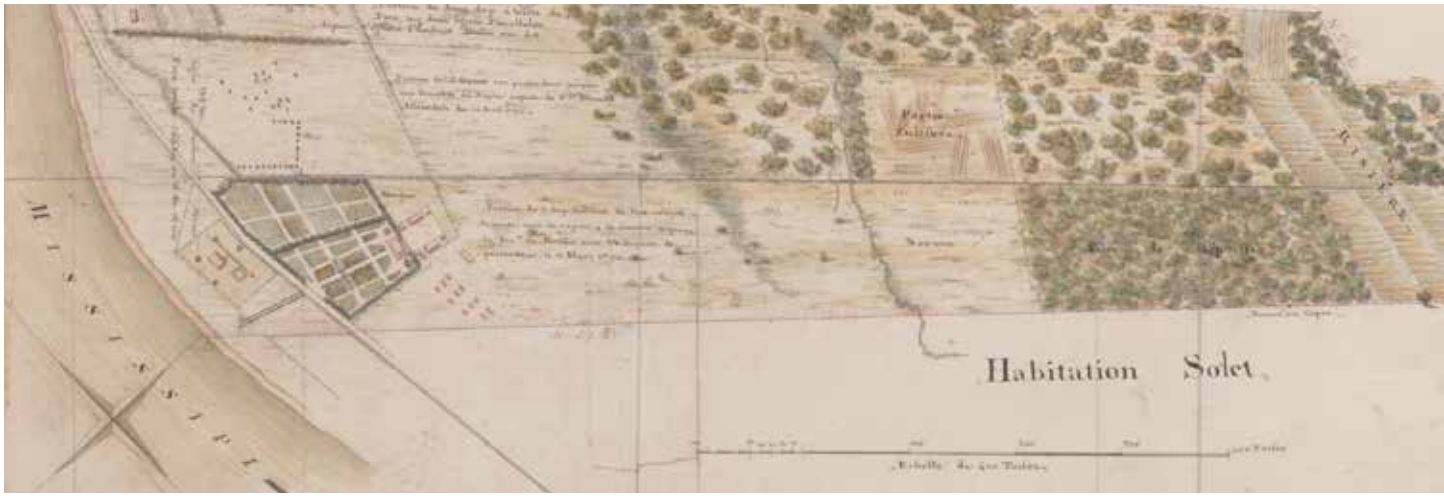
*D. Ryan Gray and Rachel Breunlin*

A map of the Central City area showing the location of the Guste Homes. Graphic developed from the Louisiana Division of Archaeology and the City of New Orleans Open Data Portal on ArcGIS aerial basemap, 2020.

Archaeologist Anthony White of Earth Search, Inc. during the excavation of the Melpomene neighborhood. Photograph courtesy of Earth Search, Inc.

Tin soldiers from the archaeological excavation in Square 350 in the Melpomene neighborhood.

# PART I
# 1700s-1870s



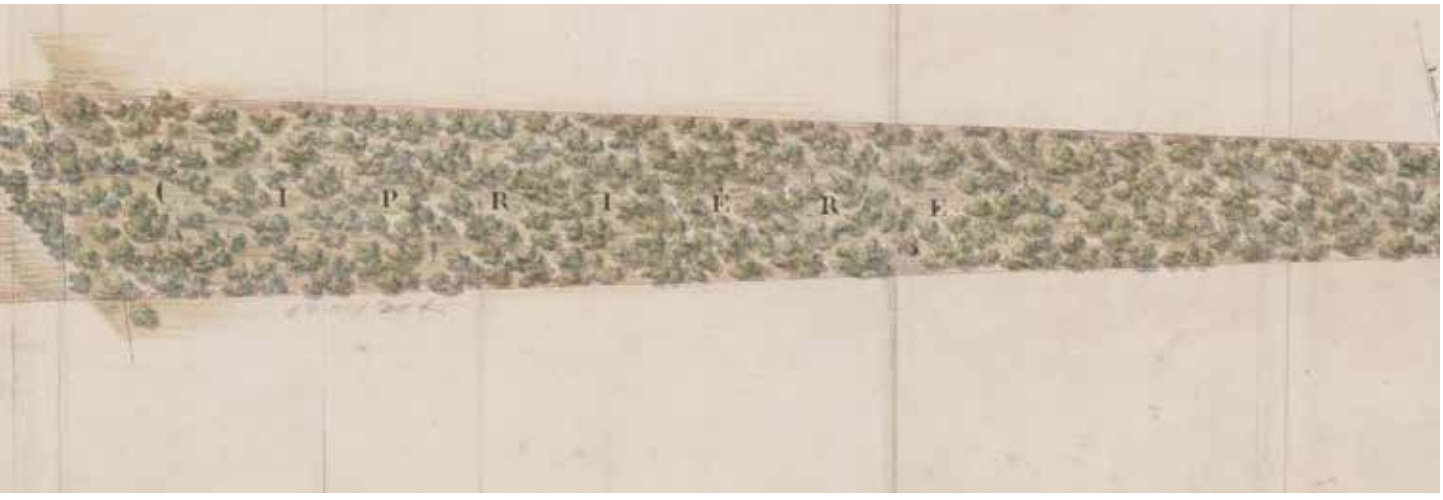

In 1806, Barthélémy Lafon surveyed the land upriver from Felicity Road that later became part of Central City. His map, "Plan de l'Habitation de Feu Jn. Bte. de Marigny pour servir au partage des héritiers," shows how the high ground along the natural levee of the Mississippi gradually lowers into the *ciprière*. Image courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection. Accession Number 1980.96.

In the early 1700s, the high ground created along the Mississippi River around New Orleans was known to Indigenous nations of the region as Bulbancha—"A place of many tongues" in Choctaw. A network of bayous in the area connected people to both the great river that led further inland and to the estuaries that served as a gateway to the Gulf of Mexico. Further away from the river's natural levee, low-lying swamps were used for trapping and fishing. It is in this area that the Melpomene neighborhood eventually developed.

Beginning in the 1720s, the French Crown divided land grants and plantations along the river into long, skinny lots measured in arpents, which began at the river and moved back into wetlands the French called *ciprière*. Arpents were an old French form of measurement equivalent to about an acre of land. During the early colonial era, the Jesuits owned a large plantation from the river to what is now Broad Street between Common and Felicity Road, the upriver boundary of New Orleans. Expelled in 1763 by the Superior Council, their property was subdivided into six tracts along the river and sold to planters.

A French Creole named Jacques François Enould Livaudais, Jr. purchased part of the property. Livaudais' father was a seaman from the island of St. Malo, located off the coast of Brittany, France, who was hired to be the first captain of the Mississippi. His job was to monitor the ever-shifting, snaking passes that led from the mouth of the river to the port of New Orleans. Jacques François' landholdings upriver greatly expanded with his marriage to Céleste de Marigny. He eventually became one of the largest landowners in the colony.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, plantations along the river were cultural crossroads as European settlers, and later, incoming Americans, built wealth by buying and selling enslaved Africans and their descendants, while also enslaving many Indigenous people. In the database "Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820," it is possible to learn about

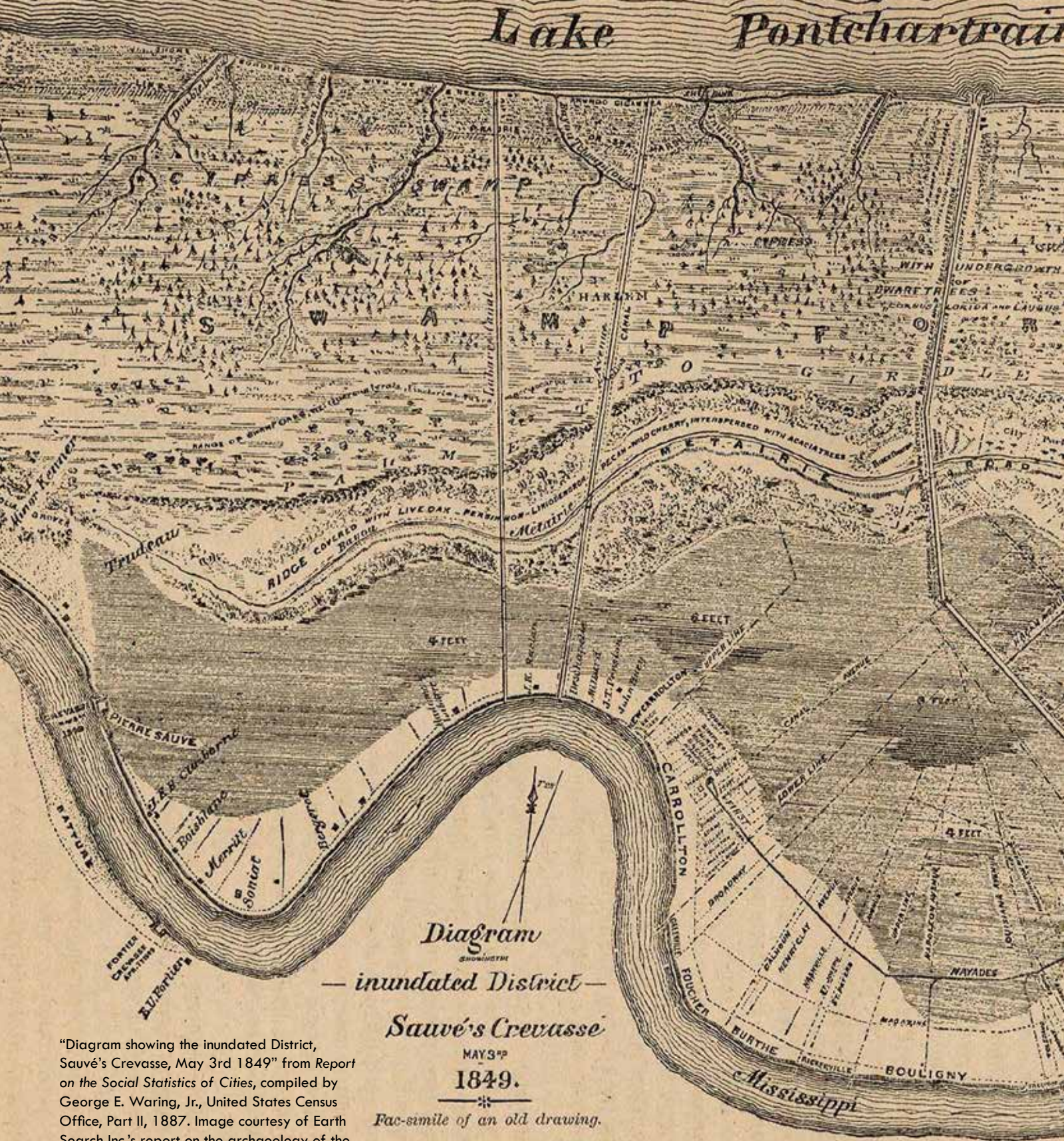


the ethnicities and birthplaces of enslaved Africans. For instance, on the Livaudais and Saulet plantations, people from the Guinea coast and Congo lived and labored alongside people who were identified in documents as Konkomba and Mina (from what is now modern-day Ghana), as well as Igbo and Yoruba (from what is now Nigeria). Other enslaved people were listed as "Louisiana Creole," meaning those born in Louisiana. In many official documents, Indigenous people are referred to by generic names such as "Indian" or "Grif," a term that usually meant a person of both African and Indigenous descent. In both cases, the terms erased their tribal affiliation and land ties.

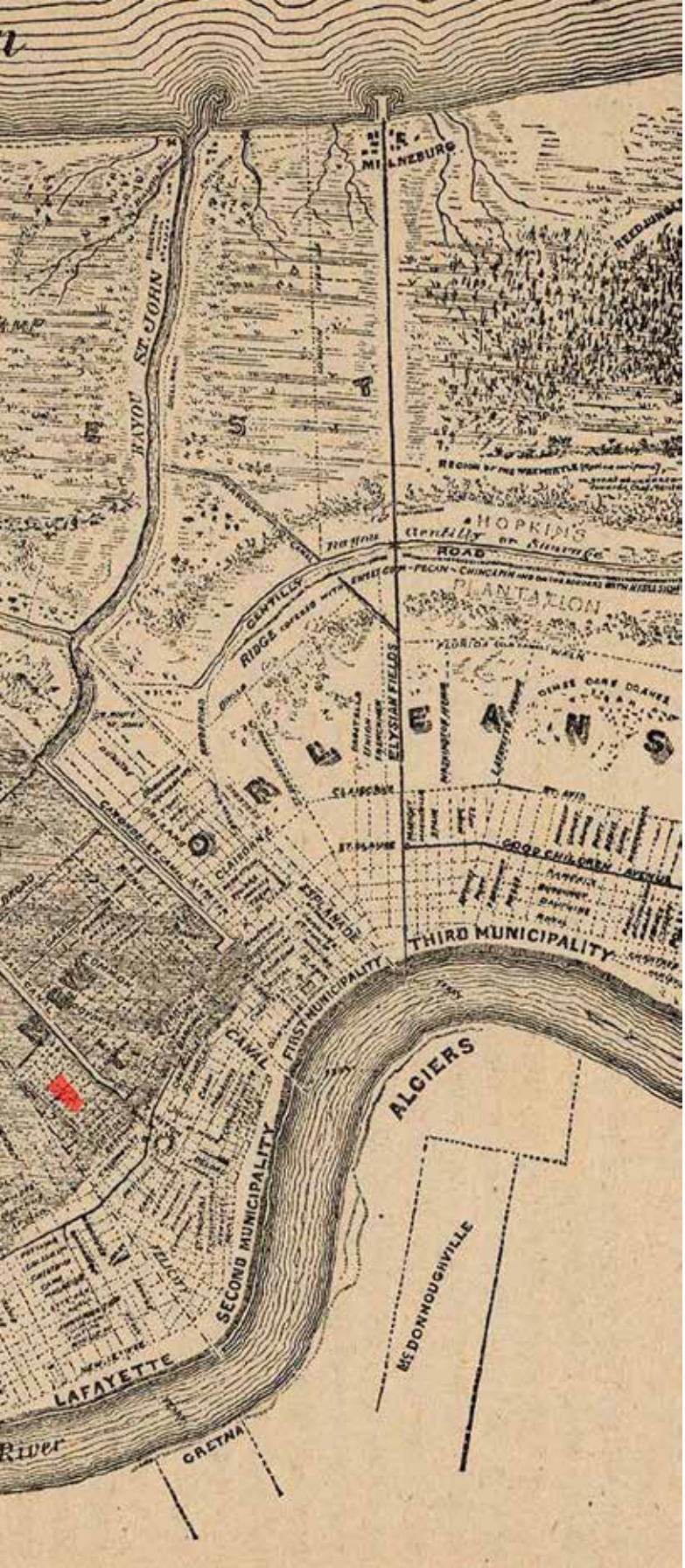
At the time, the only road to the plantations ran along the river's edge on Tchoupitoulas. In *New Orleans As It Was*, Henry C. Castellanos writes that one encountered "delightful rural residences, orange hedges, orchards, and well-tended gardens" along the way. At the Livaudais plantation, an enslaved African man named Acara tended the extensive grounds. When he was sold at the age of 70, he was listed as a *jardineir,* or gardener. The produce grown could have been sold at market by an enslaved Mina woman named Maria Theresa, who shows up in the archival record when she was sold by Livaudais' estate in 1797 to Joseph Deville Degoutin. At 30 years old, Maria Theresa was forced into a new household on the eve of major political change in Louisiana.

Six years later, the United States purchased Louisiana. In 1803, the population of New Orleans was around 8,000. Within three years, the city more than doubled in size as a large influx of white Americans arrived with people they enslaved. Perhaps responding to the housing shortage, on May 12, 1807, Livaudais sold the downriver half of his property, adjacent to Thomas Saulet's plantation, to Robin de Logny, the son of the owner of the Destrehan plantation in St. Charles Parish. Livaudais and de Logny then hired a surveyor, Barthélémy Lafon, to layout their properties into lots and squares. De Logny called his subdivision Faubourg La Course and Livaudais called his Faubourg Annunciation. The Melpomene neighborhood eventually straddled the boundaries between them.

In the first decades of the 1800s, planters built mansions and townhouses in the newly developed faubourgs between the river and St. Charles Avenue. Now known as the Lower Garden District, Barthélémy




"Diagram showing the inundated District, Sauvé's Crevasse, May 3rd 1849" from *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities*, compiled by George E. Waring, Jr., United States Census Office, Part II, 1887. Image courtesy of Earth Search Inc.'s report on the archaeology of the Guste Homes area.

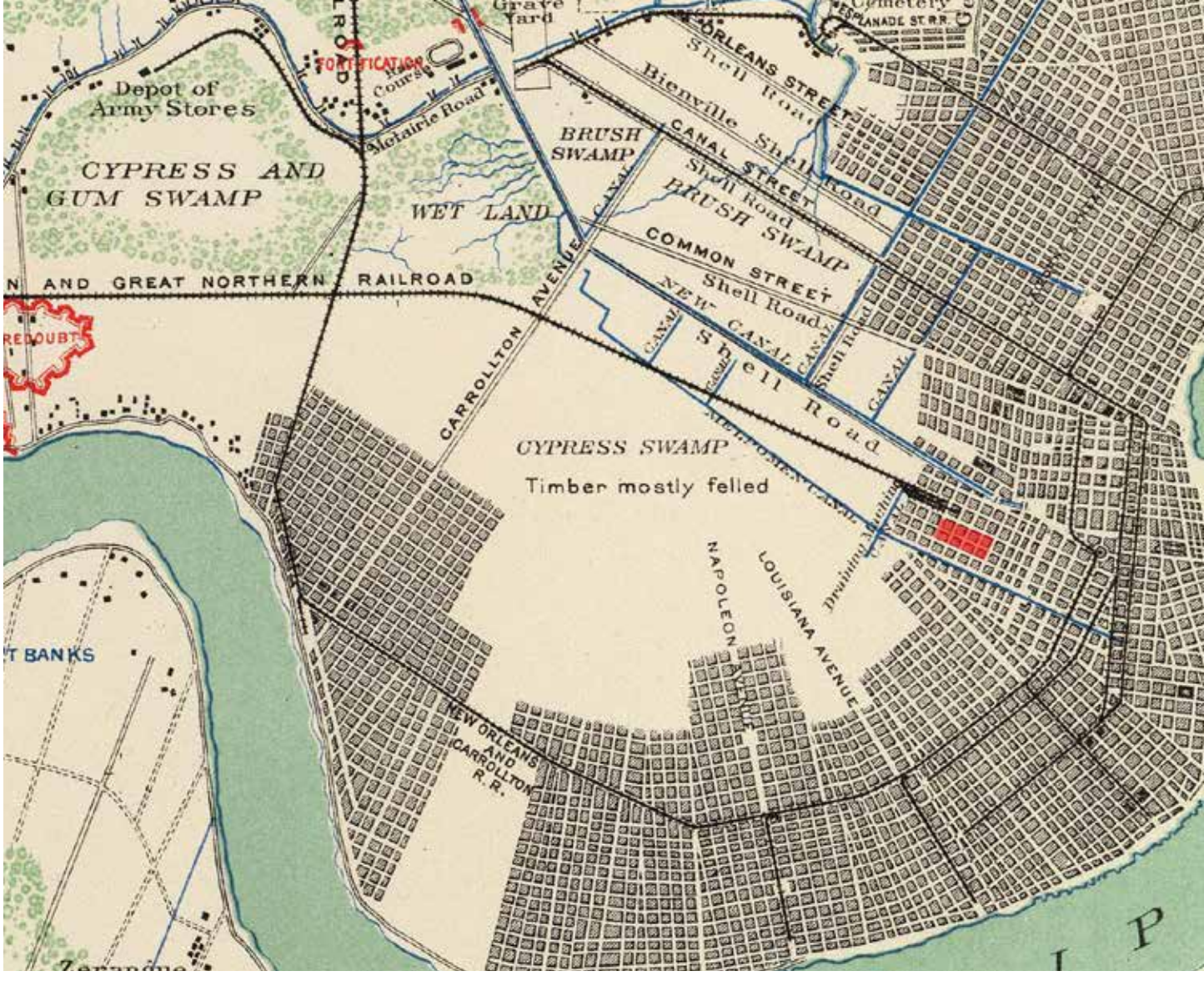



New Basin Canal in 1922, courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection, Charles Franck Collection.

Lafon named the streets after the Greek muses. A drainage canal ran along Melpomene Street from the natural levee into the swamps back-a-town. Residents often called the other side of Dryades Street "the wood side." This low-lying area still flooded, which made further settlement precarious. In 1816, the Macarty Crevasse, named after the city's mayor, submerged the area. Contemporary accounts described the flooding as creating a lake that took lives and a significant amount of time to drain.

In the 1830s, the newly arrived Americans built the New Basin Canal nearby to compete with the old Carondelet Canal downtown. This wide shipping canal bypassed Bayou St. John and ran directly to Lake Pontchartrain. During some of the worst yellow fever outbreaks, recent Irish immigrants looking for work were recruited to dig the canal. It is estimated that more than 8,000 died. After dredging the *ciprière*, they built the "Shell Road" next to the canal.

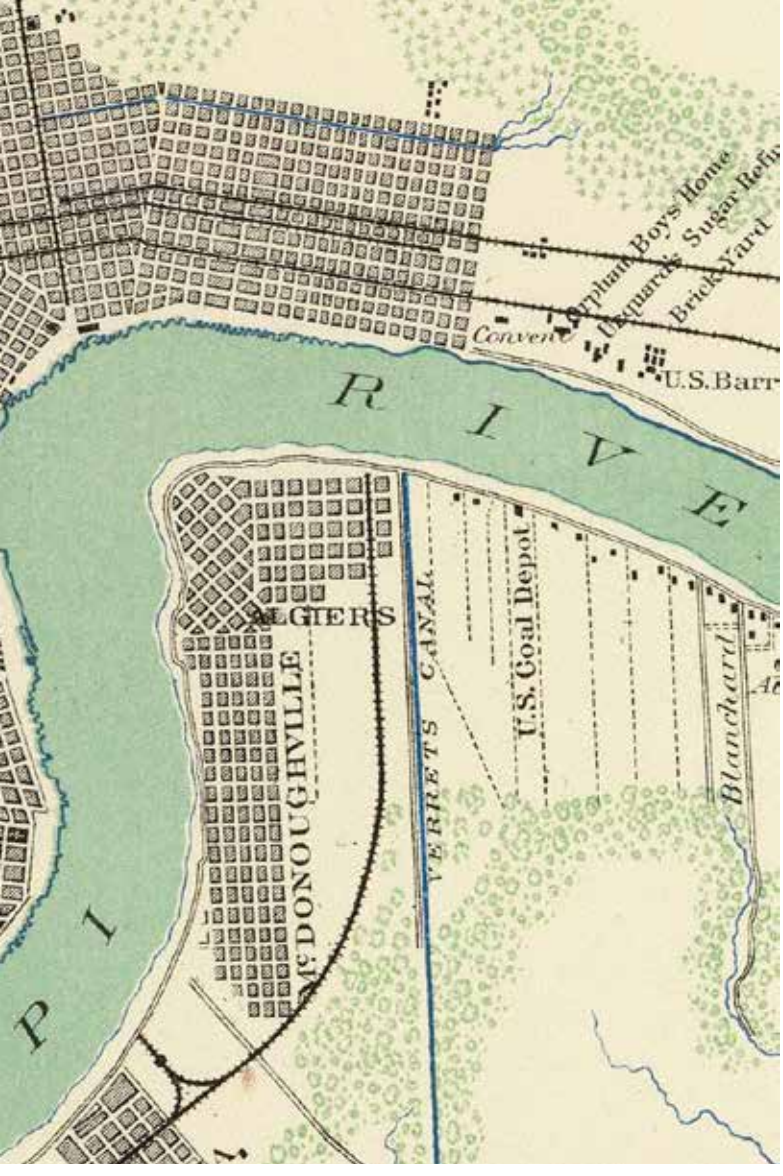
In 1853, the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Railroad built its rail yard at Calliope Street between Magnolia and South Claiborne Avenue, expanding industry. Along this undeveloped edge of




"Approaches to New Orleans, prepared by order of Maj. Gen. N.P. Banks (by) Henry L. Abbot, Capt. and Chief Top Engrs., Feb. 14th, 1863" in *Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Plate XC. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. Image courtesy of Earth Search Inc.'s report on the archaeology of the Guste Homes area.

the city, working-class immigrants and free people of color lived in close proximity. In 1849, Irish businessman Patrick Irwin built a market on Dryades Street. The Melpomene Canal flowed underneath the 325 stalls, which gave businesses the confidence to invest in the low-lying area.

In the mid-1800s, omnibuses—carriages pulled by horses—were the main form of public transportation in the city. William Walker, who resided in the Melpomene area at 354 Calliope Street (not far from the New Basin Canal or the Dryades Street Market), owned a cotton drayage and omnibus business. In the back quarters of his house, a free Black man named




Archaeological finds from the Reconstruction period of the Melpomene neighborhood include a porcelain doll head and a toy pistol.

Gustavus Bolden, who worked for Walker, lived with his wife, Frances, and their children.

In the 1860s, racial segregation on the omnibuses was debated in the newspapers and became the subject of public protests. In 1861, for instance, a white woman reported to the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* that she saw "overdressed negro wenches" on a Dryades Street omnibus and demanded that some form of segregation be implemented. In the years after the Union occupation, omnibus owners responded to the demands of white people by marking the seating for colored passengers with prominent stars. Passengers protested through nonviolent direct action. The dis-

An 1870s privy from City Square 350 in the Melpomene neighborhood contained a particularly large number of tablewares, mostly heavy lead glass tumblers and elaborately molded goblets, along with numerous wine and beer bottles, including one with a seal from a New Orleans distributor, Joseph H. and I. N. Marks. Also notable were products intended for hair growth and care, like "Lyon's Katharion for the Hair" and "Donnaud's Remedy for Baldness."

criminatory practice was condemned in editorials in the Black-run newspaper *The Tribune:*

> All these discriminations that had slavery at the bottom have become nonsense. It behooves those who feel bold enough to shake off the old prejudice and to confront prejudiced associates to show their hands.

Gustavus Bolden died in 1866, the same year a rail company laid a streetcar line on Dryades Street. He did not have the chance to witness the impact of escalating omnibus protests. Over the next year, some Black men practiced nonviolent resistance by refusing to leave the carriages, while other groups commandeered them. Within a year, their demands to end segregation were successful. The city declared discrimination illegal, and New Orleanians rode public transportation together in relative peace until the late 1890s.

In the 1870s, Gustavus's son, Westmore, worked for William Walker as a driver. When he was 25, he married Alice Harris, and they found a house in the same neighborhood where he grew up at 319 (1230-1232) Howard Street (present-day LaSalle). It was in this house that they had their second child, a baby boy they named Charles, and affectionately called Buddy. When Buddy was a young boy, his father died, and his mother moved around Central City to look for homes she could afford to raise their family by taking in laundry. As Buddy came of age, he participated in another reconstruction in the city–this one a revolution in sound.

Two lead-glazed redware pipe bowls recovered depicting U.S. Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Zachary Taylor in City Square 350. Pipes like these were often produced during presidential campaigns to promote specific candidates. The pipe of Taylor, who won the election of 1848 as a Whig, would have been an heirloom at this point, but the election of the former Union General Grant to the Presidency would have still been a very fresh memory in the New Orleans of this era. The third pipe shown here, which appears to depict a soldier, is more ambiguous in its message; the bowl itself is similar to ones produced by the Gambier Company of France but is also reminiscent of the uniform of a Union soldier in the U.S. Civil War.

The turbulence of Reconstruction can be challenging to locate in archaeological assemblages. However, in a large and well-constructed brick-lined privy shaft full of glass containers and ceramic vessels, archaeologists found items in City Square 350 that hint at the era: wooden gunstocks, a trigger guard and assembly, a saber hilt and blade, a second sword handle, and numerous pieces of lead ball shot and bullets. They also found a series of smoking pipe bowls, including two U.S. Presidents, Ulysses Grant and Zachary Taylor, and the bust of a soldier.

Privies were often located at the border of property lines and were shared by numerous households. The early street grid of the neighborhood was erased when the community was torn down to build Guste, so it is difficult to pinpoint exact locations. While we cannot determine the specific owners of these artifacts, there are some intriguing possibilities.

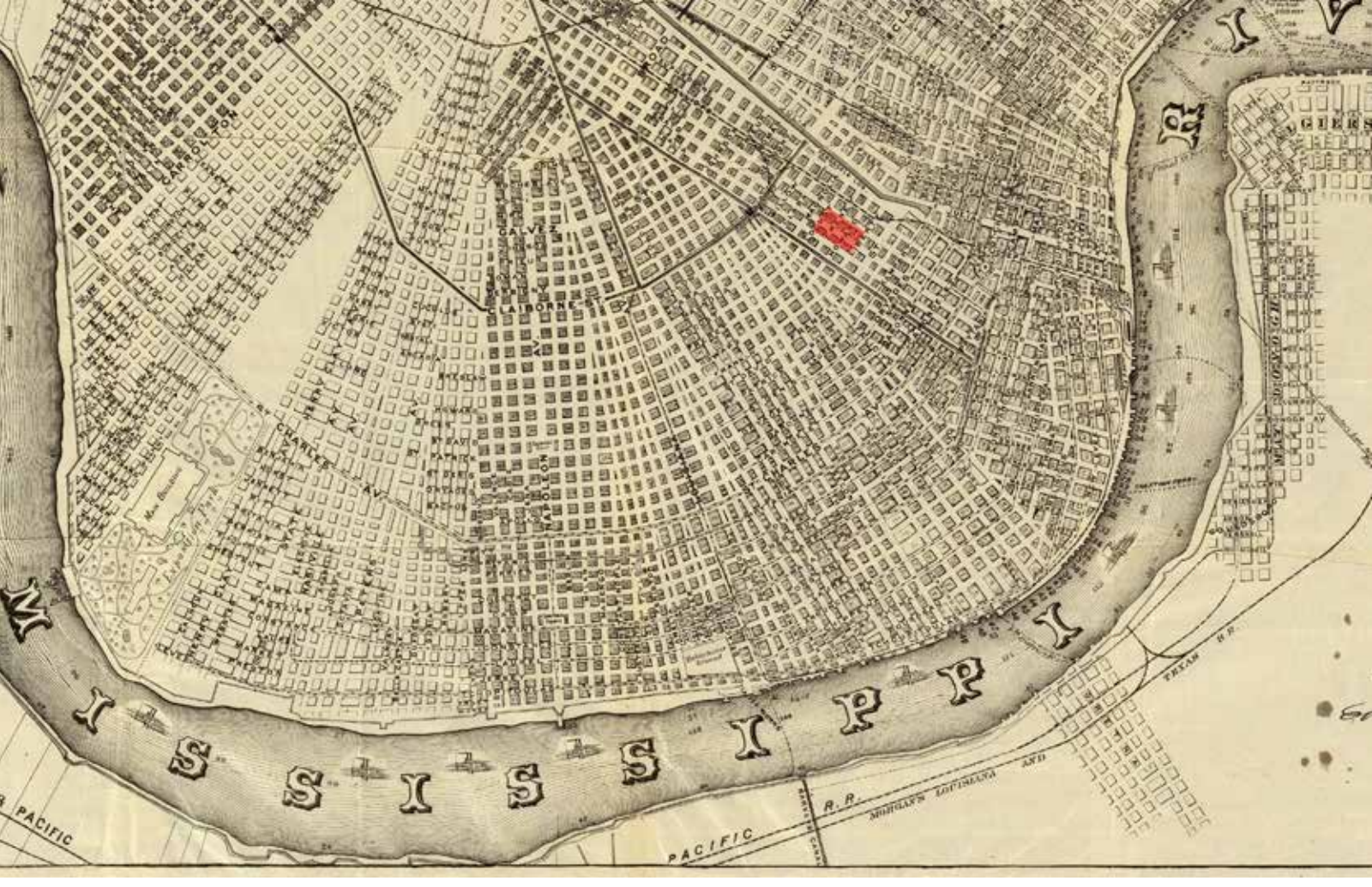
In the early to mid–1870s, city directories list a series of police officers—J.J. Bermingham, Henry Campbell, William H.C. Roust, and Robert Cheevers—living at 344 Erato/2314-2316. In addition, while the 1870 U.S. Census does not connect names with addresses, another police officer named William Moore was also listed in the vicinity. It is likely that all of these men served for the Metropolitan Police, the integrated police force responsible for security in the city during Reconstruction, and aligned with the Republican government. One can imagine a connection with both the armaments and the pipe depicting Grant, the former Union general who won the presidency as a Republican and was wildly unpopular with the former Confederates, who had attempted to regain political power in New Orleans.

In Square 350, archaeologists found a number of fine pieces of ceramic tableware, including an example of lusterware with a butterfly central motif, and another with a printed scene of a horseman. Other items related to grooming, like bone toothbrushes and a hair brush.

At the property line of 346/1307 S. Liberty was the residence of a widow named Mary Wilson. She was described in the 1880 census as a white woman born in Maryland, who had owned the property for 40 years. Mary shared the house with a large extended family, typically including a number of her children. Her married daughter, Elizabeth, her French son-in-law Emile Legien, and their children are listed as residents. Mary is identified as a milliner, while Emile was listed as a plasterer. Many of Mary's sons also went on to work as carpenters, while her daughter Kate was employed as a teacher. The privy contained a vibrant array of items relating to toys and play, hygiene and health, and personal adornment that could be connected to their day-to-day lives. The interplay of domestic life and politics in one corner of the neighborhood point to how neighbors would have interacted with one another—households would have had a familiarity with one another based on the shared uses of the privies.

A fragment of one of the Sarraguemines Pottery's "Nations" found in the 1304 Howard/LaSalle privy.

# PART II
## 1880-1900

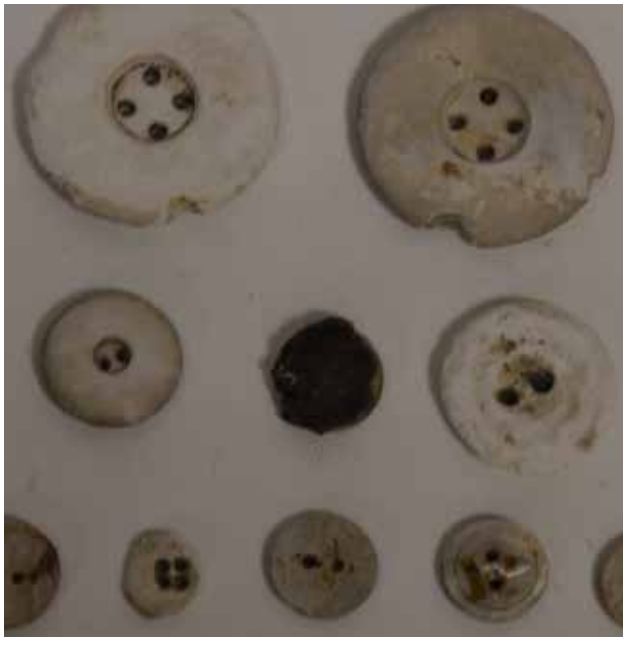



Excerpt from the New Orleans Industrial and Cotton Exposition's 1885 map of the city, with the Melpomene neighborhood highlighted in red. Reproduced by Earth Search, Inc., from David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.

In the late 1800s, the Melpomene neighborhood continued to develop between extremes. Along the Melpomene Canal in the Lower Garden District, grand homes took up entire city blocks like the Saulet plantation home, which faced Annunciation and was bounded by Melpomene, Constance, and Thalia. On the other side of Claiborne, previously enslaved Black families lived on the banks of the canal in small shacks made of palmetto or wood and tin, with fences constructed with willow saplings. They supplemented their incomes by growing okra and trawling for crawfish in the canal.

The Reconstruction era, which had attempted to reconcile the great disparities created in a slave society, was abandoned by Congress in the "Compromise of 1877." The disputed presidential election between Republican Rutherford Hayes and Democrat Samuel Tilden was informally settled by Congressmen who agreed that Hayes could win if federal troops were pulled out of southern states. Effectively abandoning their oversight of civil rights, it only took two years for the Louisiana legislature to write a new constitution, which disenfranchised Black participation in public spaces, education, and government.

The frequency and variety of buttons on some types of historical archaeological sites has been related to the home employments practiced by women. Their household incomes from work as laundresses, milliners, and seamstresses could sustain them and their families. Painted porcelain buttons would have likely been from items like coats and dresses, while the shell buttons derived from undergarments.



In New Orleans, the labor movement countered some of these policies. Along the waterfronts in the city, Black and white unions often cooperated. In 1881, they joined an umbrella trade union organization called the Central Trades and Labor Assembly, with 30 black and white organizations and 15,000 members. The docks were frequently a place of interracial cooperation with draymen—the workers who pull low, flatbed wagons from the ports along the New Basin Canal and Mississippi River—involved in union struggles along with longshoremen. Roger A. Fischer explains what happened when a police officer killed a Black union dockworker:

> an interracial group of 2,000 union members marched in the funeral procession. According to historian Dale A. Somers, several white unions also joined a sympathy strike to help Negro draymen win union recognition. The most notable example of interracial cooperation was the general strike of 1892, which involved twenty thousand men and was, in the words of one scholar, "The first general strike in American history to enlist both skilled and unskilled labor, black and white, and to paralyze the life of a great city."

Women's work, such as taking in laundry, sewing, and domestic housework in private homes, did not receive the same validation.

In 1884-1885, the International Cotton Centennial opened to the public as a desegregated event, and throughout most of the decade, Black voter registration in Louisiana remained high. It peaked in 1888 with 128,150 registered voters. Yet, at the same time, in publicly controlled spaces, social segregation was becoming more entrenched. The writer, George Washington Cable, observed in the mid-1880s:

> the adherent of the old regime stands in the way to every public privilege and place-steamer landing, railway platform, theatre, concert hall, art display, public library, public school, courthouse, church, everything flourishing the hot branding-iron of ignominious distinctions.

‘

Just as the omnibus protests signaled the beginning of Reconstruction in the 1860s, public transportation once again became a lightning rod around racial equality. Streetcar drivers began to enforce new policies of social segregation, telling Black riders to sit in the back of the cars. Local civil rights activists campaigned for years to stop the backlash, but in 1896, the Supreme Court's "separate but equal" ruling in *Plessy V. Ferguson* supported *de jure* segregation. In 1898, the new Louisiana Constitution distinguished the

Archaeological excavation of the Melpomene neighborhood. Photograph courtesy of Earth Search, Inc.

right of citizenship from the "privilege" of the vote. The vague language had real consequences. By the following year, Black voter registration plummeted to slightly over 12,000. By 1930, there were just over 2,000 registered Black voters in the entire state. Schools and public facilities were segregated, and integrated labor organizations were attacked.

Archaeological assemblages can only indirectly hint at the social changes that occurred during this time period. The items found can help document the individual strategies that working-class families employed to live and, in some cases, to prosper in the face of considerable adversity. The household items left behind can also help explain how they experienced these changes in everyday life: foodways and diet, health, childcare, social interactions, and recreation.

During the last decades of the 1800s, many of the people who lived in the neighborhood were renters, and some addresses saw a rapid turnover of residents. Privy shafts were usually filled rapidly, which makes connecting archaeological assemblages to specific families tricky. This was the case at 1304 Howard in Square 350, the block historically bounded by Erato, LaSalle (present-day Howard), Thalia, and South Liberty Streets. Archaeologists excavated a large wood-lined privy shaft near what would have been the rear property line of the address. While most of its material dated to the end of the nineteenth century, it was probably filled in the early 1900s, perhaps as late as 1910.

In 1900, the United States Census recorded a laborer named Leo LeBlanc living there with his wife and two


***Top: left:*** A clay smoking pipe from Marseille. The impressed mark has been restruck, making it difficult to read, but the smoking pipe here appears to have been manufactured by the Bonnaud firm of France, a prominent manufacturer of red clay pipes in the second half of the 1800s. ***Bottom left:*** Hostetter's Stomach Bitters bottles were a common household product around New Orleans. Marketed as a remedy for any number of medical issues, it was also consumed widely for its high alcohol content. ***Right:*** On January 15, 1905, a Hostetter's advertisement was marketed to "Sickly Girls and Women."


***Left:*** A liquor bottle shaped like a soldier, the details of which suggest he may be intended to be Prussian. Such bottles often were marketed as containers for whiskey, though no match for this particular one has so far been identified.

***Right:*** Tappan's, like the more common Hoyt's German Cologne products, were cheap fragrances available at drug stores. There was nothing particularly German about them, other than the branding referencing the German city of Cologne. By the beginning of World War I, many companies dropped the "German" from their name in response to growing anti-German sentiments.

children; a year later, the City Directory lists them as still there, along with a laborer named Paul Manuel. The directories list at least three other residents at the address between 1902 and 1909. When the census came again in 1910, a complex household of renters shows up at the address. William Smith (a laborer identified as Black) lived there with his wife Virginia (a washerwoman identified as Mulatto). Another woman named Mattie Hawkins and her teenage sons (identified as Mulatto as well) also lived on the property, along with a man named Lem Diggins. All three men worked as laborers at a wharf and a lumber yard. We are not sure with whom to directly connect the artifacts within the wood-lined privy at 1304 LaSalle, but some items seem to be associated with the work of this extended household. In 1912, the occupants of the address had changed again.

Moving into the 20th century, residents of a working-class neighborhoods like the Melpomene, with large Black and immigrant populations, faced discrimination from multiple angles. Anti-Irish and Italian sentiments, as well as greater suspicion of German immigrants in the lead up to World War I, were part of a complex social landscape that was mapped into the high and low land of the city.

Artifacts from excavation of Square 383. Photograph by Earth Search, Inc.

# PART III
## 1900-1930

Buddy Bolden's band. Bolden is in the back row second from right with the cornet. Photograph courtesy of the New Orleans Jazz Museum.

In the first years of the 20th century, when the cornet player Buddy Bolden was at the height of his power, his band was hired to play the annual Labor Day parade. A spectator remembered:

> There was a line coming up from Saratoga about to join the parade over on Rampart heading toward Canal Street. And you could hear him. You knew it was him. Could tell his sound over anybody else's. Maybe it was the heat. Or the way the crowd was all packed in. But this was different. He hit a note and kind of threw up the other hand, as if to wave the rest of them back. Like he was saying, "Here I come! Hold it, just hold up. I'm coming on through!" Next thing we knew, there he was, playing his own thing.

While Jim Crow economics marginalized Black workers, labor organizations like the Longshoremen's Union provided protection for dockworkers in the back-a-town neighborhoods as well as opportunities like parades to publicly represent their collective power. While Buddy no longer lived in the Melpomene neighborhood, this multiracial community where his grandfather had raised his father, and he was born, undoubtedly shaped him. Although he only played music a few more years, his "jagged sound" in songs like "Melpomene Street Blues" went on to define his generation.

There were many ways to interpret the blues in Central City. Woven through the historical record, the archaeology of a building at 1300-1302 South Robertson, on the corner of Erato, can take us through some of the turmoil immigrants faced for defying racial segregation. Built in 1895, for over five decades it was both a commercial and residential unit, identified on and off in city directories as a corner grocery, saloon, barber shop, soft drink establishment (as it was called after Prohibition), retail liquor business, and barroom. In 1900, the property was owner-occupied by Hillary

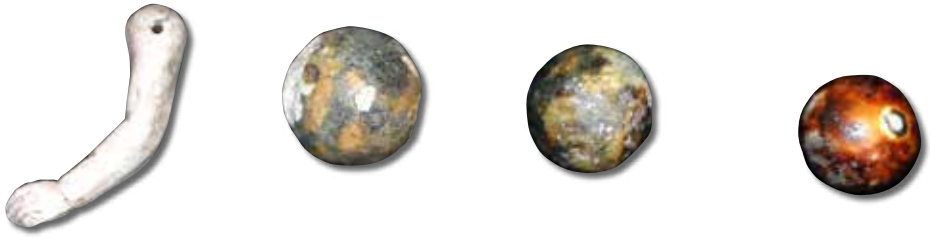

Front and back of a "Quartee," a type of informal currency or trade token commonly found in New Orleans, typically with a value of 2 ½ cents. According to local traditions, many lunch counters and saloons had '2 for a nickel' lunch specials. When an individual just wanted one of these specials, the 'quartee' would be given as change. The initials on one side of the coin identified the issuing business, thus ensuring return patronage. While it is typically very difficult to identify the business referenced, in this case the "H.M.N." almost certainly refers to Hillary M. Nugent.

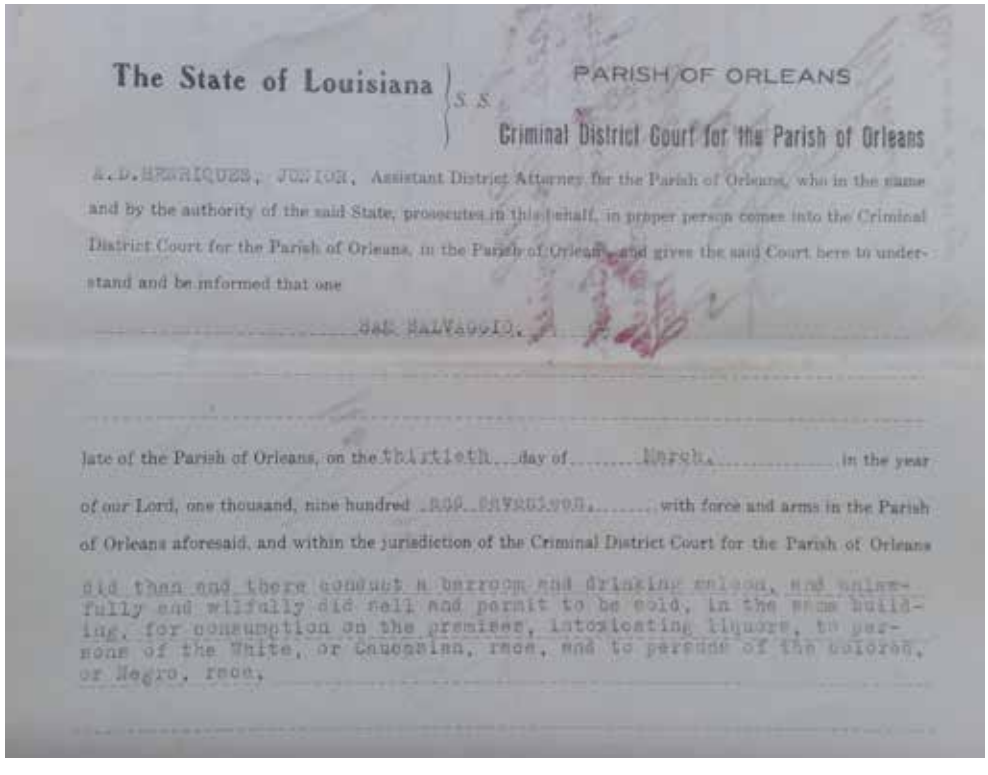
Nugent, an Irish-born clerk, his wife, and four children.

In 1903, a Sicilian family ran a business out of the building. We first learn of Saverio "Sam" Salvaggio in *The Daily Picayune*, which mentions the results of a pool tournament at the address and refers to the corner as "Salvaggio's." In the latter part of the 1880s, Sam emigrated from the hilltop village of Bisacquino in the province of Palermo, Sicily. The name of the town is traced to the Arabic "Abu-seckin," which means "father of the knife"—a reference to the goat horned knives townspeople made—and was built during the age of Moorish settlement.

For hundreds of years, some Italians looked down upon Sicilians for the island's historical connection to North Africa. Upon arriving in Louisiana, Sam may have encountered similar racist rhetoric that sought to cast doubt on his "whiteness" and stigmatized him as a criminal. In 1891, a mob angered over the murder of David Hennessy, an Irish police chief, lynched 11 Italian men. The untried murders became an international scandal, which likely affected the Sam's sense of security in his new country. In 1893, he married Josephine Giuseppa and was naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 1902. Hillary Nugent served as his witness, and sold him the property on South Robertson six years later. In 1917, he ran afoul of the city's increasing attempts to segregate social spaces when he was cited for violating the "Gay-Shattuck" law, which mandated that saloons and bars be racially segregated.

In 1910, the U.S. census records list Sam living in the building with his wife, three children, and mother-in-law. Violence against Italian immigrants was still a concern for them. From 1917 to March of 1919, Italians, who by then operated half of all the corner stores in the city, were targeted by a serial killer named the "Axeman." Said to be a working-class white man in his 30s, his victims lived in similar live/work buildings as the Salvaggios. In 1919, a letter written by someone





The State of Louisiana } S. S. PARISH OF ORLEANS

Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans

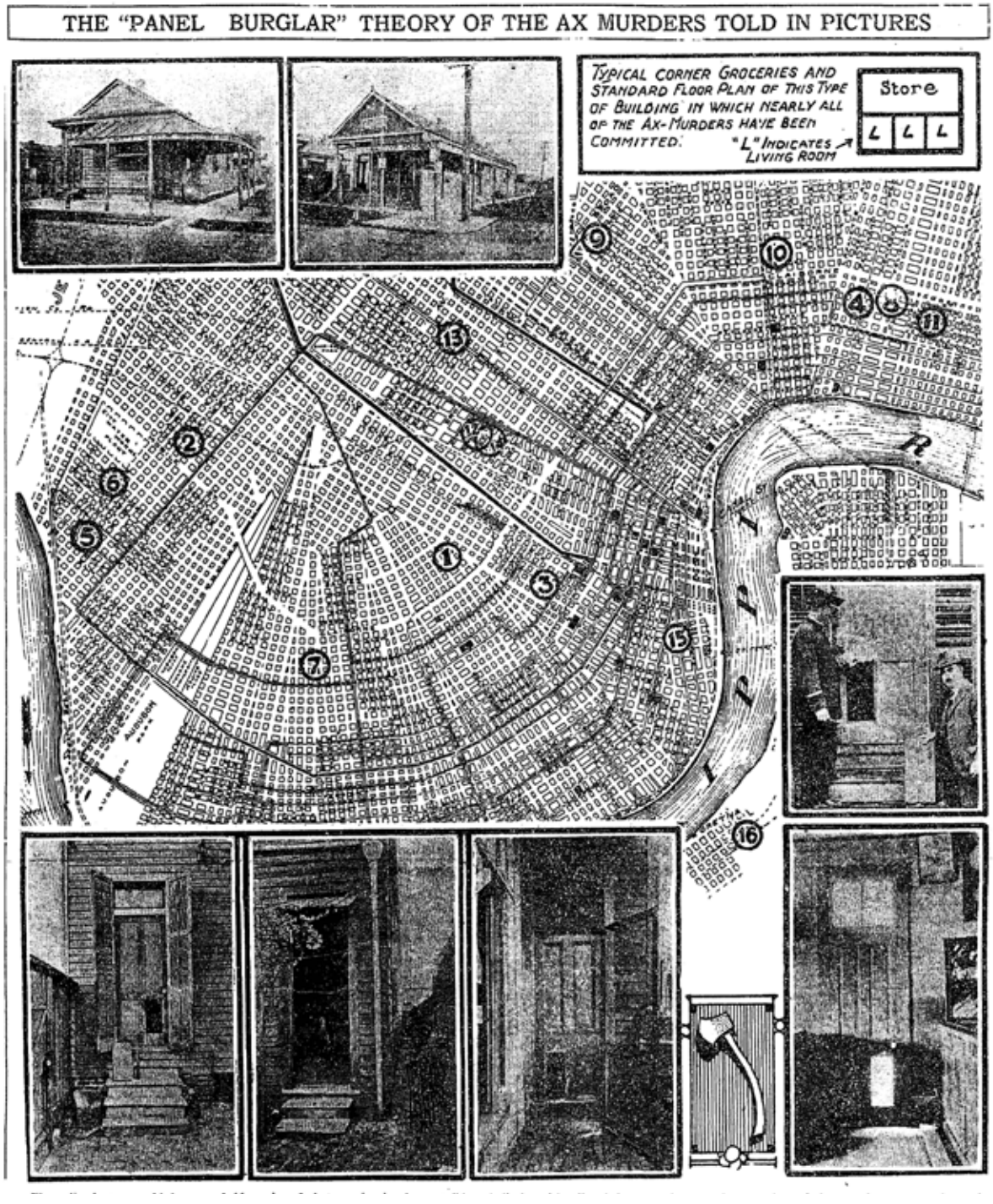
A.D. HENRIQUEZ, JUNIOR, Assistant District Attorney for the Parish of Orleans, who in the name and by the authority of the said State, prosecutes in this behalf, in proper person comes into the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans, in the Parish of Orleans, and gives the said Court here to understand and be informed that one

Sal Salvaggio,

late of the Parish of Orleans, on the thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, nine hundred and seventeen, with force and arms in the Parish of Orleans aforesaid, and within the jurisdiction of the Criminal District Court for the Parish of Orleans

did then and there conduct a barroom and drinking saloon, and unlawfully and wilfully did sell and permit to be sold, in the same building, for consumption on the premises, intoxicating liquors, to persons of the White, or Caucasian, race, and to persons of the colored, or Negro, race,

***Top:*** A bisque doll arm (*left*) and marbles from the Salvaggio family in the 1920s. ***Bottom:*** Sam Salvaggio's citation from the Criminal District Court of Orleans Parish. He was arraigned more than two months later on May 25, 1917 and pleaded not guilty to "willfully" serving "intoxicating liquors" to a mixed-race clientele. Image courtesy of the Louisiana Division/City Archives, New Orleans Public Library.




A newspaper article from March 16, 1919 in *The Times Picayune* maps the "Axeman" murders around New Orleans, which targeted Italian grocery stores.

.22 and .38 caliber shell casings and fragments from a double barrel shotgun found at 1300-1302 South Robertson. The use of firearms for hunting, recreation, or personal safety was not unusual in the turn of the century city, and bullets and shell casings are often found in sparse quantities. However, as firearms were valuable items, they are much less likely to enter the archaeological record. In this case, the concentration certainly evokes the climate of fear for many Italian immigrants in the early 1900s, but may have provided some sense of security during the era of the Axeman.

claiming to be the Axeman was published in the local media. Threatening to strike again on St. Joseph's Night (the following Tuesday) just after midnight, he included a caveat:

> I am very fond of jazz music, and I swear by all the devils in the nether regions that every person shall be spared in whose home a jazz band is in full swing at the time I have just mentioned. If everyone has a jazz band going, well, then, so much the better for you people. One thing is certain and that is that some of those people who do not jazz it on Tuesday night (if there will be people) will get the axe.

The fieldworkers of the Works Progress Administration reported in *Gumbo Ya Ya* that the city prepared itself well:

> Cafés all over town were jammed. Friends and neighbors gathered in homes to "jazz it up." Midnight found the city alive with "canned music" of the period—inner-player pianos and phonographs. In the levee and Negro districts banjos, guitars, and mandolins strummed the jazziest kind of jazz.

Perhaps the Salvaggios joined others in the city by hosting an event at their building to help save themselves and their neighbors, playing neighborhood favorites like "Melpomene Street Blues."

The Axeman did not strike that night. In the following months, he returned two more times. In August, he attacked a young white woman who survived, and in October, he butchered an Italian grocer named Mike Pepitone. The Axeman killed him in his bed while his wife and six children slept in another room. He was never caught. Despite the terror, the Salvaggios continued living in the building. They had another daughter, and their oldest, Virginia, married Leo Conners, staying with her parents and their four-month-old infant.

In 1920, the federal government passed Prohibition laws against the sale of alcohol. A "Savario Salvaggio" was fined $50 for violations of the "Federal Dry Law." In 1924, Sam's son, Frank, was described as a "two-timer" for liquor-related crimes. In 1929, Frank was arrested again with his sister's husband, Vincent Puleo, in association with the discovery of a 75 gallon still.

Perhaps these legal troubles (and the difficulty of operating a "soda" vending establishment profitably) caused Sam to give up the business on South Robertson. He is last associated with it in 1925, and he died in 1929. His wife Josephine lived until 1957, and their family thrived in the city's growing civic-minded Italian American community.

In City Square 349—the block bounded by S. Liberty, Erato, Clio, and Howard/LaSalle Streets—the Puckett family's privy at 1222-1224 LaSalle/Howard, filled with many glass bottles and containers, was excavated by Earth Search, Inc.

# PART IV
# 1930-1960

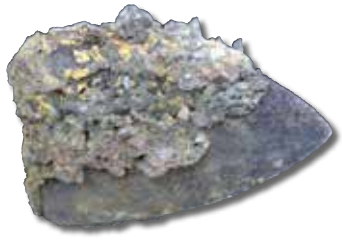
In the first half of the 20th century, Congress passed the Housing Acts of 1937 and 1949 that dramatically reshaped cities around the country. On a national level, they created a two-tiered policy to encourage homeownership and the construction of low-rent public housing in urban areas. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) offered low-interest, long-term mortgages to purchase housing that prevented investment in neighborhoods like the Melpomene with its mixed-used, multiracial, and economically integrated community. Dense, urban areas like this area were "red lined." This informal term refers to the Home Owner Loan Corporation's (HOLC) color-coded "Residential Security Maps" which blocked off areas where loans would not be granted in red ink. The program also promoted homeownership for white families in detached single-family houses in suburban areas. Families such as the Nugents and the Salvaggios would qualify for FHA loans, but they would not be allowed to buy in the Melpomene area due to the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood. The Smiths, whom we met in Part II, would not have been granted a loan because of the color of their skin.

At the same time that the FHA was developing discriminatory lending practices, other federal housing policies encouraged "slum clearance" in urban areas to be tied to the construction and location of racially segregated public housing developments—often tearing down integrated or predominately Black communities in the process. Black New Orleanians had owned property since the early colonial days and continued to rely on their networks for real estate transactions. For instance, a series of porters owned 1216 Freret from 1920-1940. One can imagine that they may have sold the property to each other through their network.

A look through other records shows many houses had stable homeownership. In 1926, a Black family of Puerto Rican descent headed by Jose Fuentes purchased a home at 2317 Erato and lived there through 1949. Another man, Edward Shannon, rented 1219-1221 Howard/LaSalle and purchased the property in 1930 while working as a superintendent for a life insurance company. He later opened a furniture repair business at the same location. Across the street, the Pucketts owned a double at 1222-1224 LaSalle/Howard. Their residency can be traced in both documents and the objects they left behind in a privy shaft, which was filled when they moved in the 1930s, thus locking the items they discarded in a time capsule.

In the 1930 U.S. Census, Minnie Puckett was listed as the owner of 1222 LaSalle. A 49-year-old African-American widow, she was born in Mississippi in the late 1800s to parents from Virginia who may have experienced the last days of slavery and certainly the Reconstruction era. Minnie had her daughter, Lucille, while she was still living in Mississippi. After the death of her husband, she moved her family to New Orleans. In 1920, she worked as a laundress and lived at 2605 Calliope with Lucille and her husband, Eddie Carr, who was listed as a laborer from Alabama. Andrew Puckett, Minnie's son, worked as a brakeman on the railroad, and resided with them until he passed later that year.

In 1927, Minnie purchased the double on LaSalle, valued at $4,400. By the 1930 census, she was living on one side with her 13-year-old granddaughter, and Lucille lived on the other side of the house with her four daughters: Edna (10), Helen (8), Genieve (5), and Minnie (3), named for her grandmother. Minnie resided in her home until her death. Around Christmas of 1937, the property appears in an ad for a property seizure and auction by the Civil Sheriff. The family lost the property, as it had changed hands by the time of the 1940 Census. The privy was filled in, and thus its excavation by archaeologist provides a glimpse back into the daily lives of the Pucketts' beloved home.



***Left:*** A portrait of Minnie Puckett, courtesy of her great-great-granddaughter, Givonna Hymel-Lumpkins, and the descendants of Minnie Puckett. ***Top left:*** The common "sad iron," manually heated on a stove and used to press clothing, was an essential tool for a laundress like Minnie. Heavy and unwieldy, piece work like this was strenuous. ***Top right:*** "City of New Orleans" button. Not only was Minnie employed as a laundress, but her family remembers stories of her using spare time to go and sell foods she prepared at the docks on the riverfront to earn extra money. This small piece of brass embossed with "City of New Orleans" and the city's seal, is likely a composite button front. It may be from a button lost from a city uniform, or it may be related to her work as a vendor.

## SALE BY CIVIL SHERIFF

### JUDICIAL ADVERTISEMENT

Property Nos. 1222-24 Howard Street.

In the Matter Entitled: Reliance Homestead Association versus Minnie Puckett (deceased). Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, No. 223945.

By virtue of a writ of seizure and sale to me directed by the Honorable the Civil District Court for the Parish of Orleans, in the above entitled cause, I will proceed to sell by public auction, at the Real Estate Exchange, No. 820 Union Street in the First District of the City on Thursday, December 30, 1937, at 12 o'clock M., the following described property, to-wit:

A certain lot of ground, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon and all the rights, ways, privileges, servitudes and advantages thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining, situated in Square No. 349, in the First District of the City of New Orleans, bounded by Howard, Clio, Liberty and Erato Streets; said lot is designated by the Number Six (6) and beginning at a distance of one hundred twenty feet from the corner of Howard and Erato Streets, measures thirty-six feet, four inches and two lines front on Howard Street, by a depth on the side line towards Erato Street of one hundred twenty-five feet and a depth on the other side line towards Clio Street of one hundred twenty-seven feet, six lines and closing in the rear to a width of thirteen feet, six inches and five lines. All in accordance with a sketch of survey made by E. L. Eustis, Deputy City Surveyor, dated June 24th, 1925. Improvements on said lot bear the Municipal Nos. 1222-24 Howard Street.

Seized in above suit.

TERMS: Cash. The purchaser at the moment of adjudication to make a deposit of ten per cent of the purchase price.

**LOUIS KNOP, JR.,**

Civil Sheriff, Parish of Orleans.

Nov. 28; Dec. 5, 12, 19, 26, 30, 1937.

Notice of the Pucketts' home going up for sale by the Civil Sheriff's office from *The Times Picayune,* published on December 26, 1937.

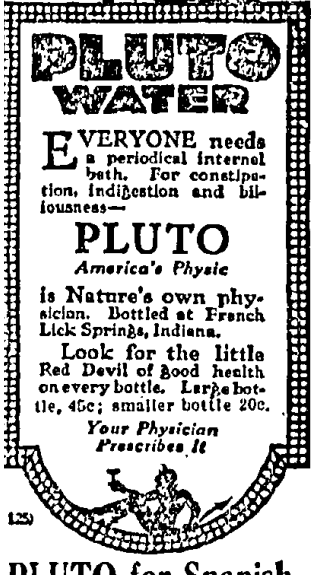
***Left:*** Portrait of Lucille Puckett with a knit shawl she most likely crocheted, courtesy of the Puckett descendants. ***Above:*** Polished bone objects from the Puckett's privy. While the use of plastics was gradually becoming more common for everyday items in the 1930s, many objects were still made of polished bone and natural materials. On the left, a bone handle from a darning needle or crochet hook reminded family members of Lucille Puckett's love of crocheting, as the picture they shared of her shows. The item on the right is from a piece of bone-handled cutlery, while the one in the middle is the handle from a toothbrush. These items would have been dated by the time that the Pucketts left the home on LaSalle, and thus would have been more likely to be discarded.

Of course, the Puckett family's dreams didn't end at the moment in time captured by the assemblage at 1222 Howard. Lucille's children grew up and had families of their own, some eventually moving into the Calliope Housing Project, which was located off of Melpomene Street on the back-a-town side of Claiborne. Lucille's family passed on the story of the lost house at 1222 Howard as a lesson in being careful in business and personal affairs, and a warning to not be taken advantage of. Minnie was remembered as tough and hard-working, taking on extra jobs to provide more for her family. She was insistent that they shouldn't be content with their lot and should strive for better. Her daughter carried some of her tastes for fine china and elegant petticoats.

In 1977, the City Council approved of a name change for Melpomene Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, but only for part of the street. From the river to St. Charles Avenue in the Lower Garden District, the old name remains. Crossing the grand boulevard headed into Central City, the street takes on the namesake of the most iconic civil rights leader in the United States. Traveling back-a-town on the boulevard, Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church still stands tall. It was here, in 1961, that the congregation hosted Martin Luther King, Jr., as he called for a new Emancipation Proclamation to bring equality for Black citizens.


## PLUTO for Spanish Influenza

Guard against this dread epidemic. Freedom from constipation is th surest preventive measure. Don't wait, life and health are too precious. Plut Water, America's physic, is influenza's natural foe.


## PLUTO for Spanish Influenza

ard against this dread epi- nic. Freedom from constipa- n is the surest preventive asure. Don't wait, life and alth are too precious. Pluto ater, America's physic, is in- enza's natural foe.

***Above and bottom right:*** Newspaper advertisements for Pluto Water found in newspapers throughout New Orleans. In the first half of the 20th century, mineral waters were marketed for their beneficial effects for digestion, and Pluto Water, sold in distinctive bottles with a devil-like figure on the base, was particularly popular in the Puckett household. In 1918, Pluto Water was touted for its preventative properties during the Spanish influenza epidemic, something which may have influenced consumers like the Pucketts many years later (*see top right*).

Objects found in the Pucketts' privy. ***Left:*** Porcelain doll head with blue eyes and miniature tea set. Well into the 20th century, dolls and toy tea services were thought to help instill proper morals and polite behavior in children, and such items served a dual role of entertainment and instruction. For Minnie Puckett's grandchildren, the meanings behind the dolls were perhaps more complicated. Mass-produced fashionable Black dolls were still relatively rare, and porcelain dolls also represented a standard of beauty based on European features, which has been critiqued by writers such as Toni Morrison in her novel *The Bluest Eye*.

***Middle:*** A "Richard Hudnutt" brand metal lipstick case with traces of a deep red lipstick inside hints at the glamour for which later generations of Puckett women remembered their relatives.

***Right:*** Minnie Puckett's descendants recalled that some other parts of the tableware set found in the privy survived in their family's china cabinets. They mentioned wondering about the odd, unmatched pieces. Perhaps these were legacies of Minnie's house on LaSalle, which Lucille and her daughter Edna carried with them when they left.

Girls playing cards in the stairwell of the William Guste Homes, Sr. Homes in the early 2000s. Photograph by Michel Varisco.

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In writing about the development of upriver fauborgs, and the Melpomene Canal, we consulted *Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day* (Pelican 2002).

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Information about settlements along the banks of the Melpomene Canal come from a Louisiana Supreme Court court case, *Wall v. Rabito*, published in 1916 as *Louisiana Reports, Vol. 138: Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana Sitting At New Orleans At Term Beginning First Monday of October 1915*.

**Plantation Communities**
Extensive details about the people enslaved on the Livaudais and Saulet plantations can be found on the Louisiana Slave Database. Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall and her research team compiled the information found in official documents of parish courthouses, notarial archives, plantation inventories, marriage contracts, seizures of debt, and death records. Last names of masters can be searched, which leads to an archive of all the sales of people they bought and sold: https://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/

Grace King's *Creole Families of New Orleans* (MacMillan Company 1921) and Henry C. Castellanos's *New Orleans As It Was: Episodes of Louisiana Life* (The L. Graham Company Publishers 1905) provide historical background to the families and regions.

Another important resource is Samuel Wilson, Jr.'s chapter "Early History of the Lower Garden District," in *New Orleans Architecture, Vol. 1: The Lower Garden District, Howard Avenue to Jackson Avenue, Mississippi River to Claiborne Avenue*, which was compiled by Mary Louise Christovich and Roulhac Toledano (with photographs by Betsy Swanson), produced by Friends of the Cabildo and published by Pelican in 1998.

**Public Housing and Urban Renewal**


• Fullilove, Mindy Thompson. 2016. *Root Shock: How Tearing Down City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About it*. New York: New Village Press.

• Gray, D. Ryan. 2020. *Uprooted: Race, Public Housing, and the Archaeology of Four Lost New Orleans Neighborhoods*. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

• Housing Authority of New Orleans. *Report of the Housing Authority of New Orleans*. Annual volumes, 1960-1967. New Orleans: Housing Authority of New Orleans.

• griffin, Shana. 2018. Displaced. New Orleans: PUNCTUATE.

• Hirsch, Arnold. 1998. *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

• Mahoney, Martha. 1985. *The Changing Nature of Public Housing in New Orleans, 1930-1974*. M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Tulane University.


**Reconstruction and Union Organizing**

For an important overviews on Reconstruction in the United States and New Orleans specficially, see Eric Foner's *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution: 1863-1877*. (Perrenial Classics 1988) and John W. Blassingame's *Black New Orleans: 1860-1880*. (University of Chicago Press 1973).

For more detailed study of Reconstruction politics in Louisiana that we drew from in *Melpomene*, see Roger A. Fischer's *The Segregation Struggle in Louisiana: 1862-77* (University of Illinois Press 1974), which he dedicates to the memory of historian Dale A Somers, who published "Black and White in New Orleans: A Study in Urban Race Relations" in *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 40 (1): 19-42 in 1974. We referenced this body of work in writing about the labor and social history of the 1800s, and pull the George Washington Cable quote from this article. Fischer's 1968 article, "A Pioneer Protest: The New Orleans Streetcar Controversy of 1867" in *Journal of Negro History* Vol. 53 (3): 219-233 helped us construct the omnibus protests.

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For more information and resources about the archaeology of Louisiana, please visit the website of the Louisiana Division of Archaeology: https://www.crt.state.la.us/ARCHAEOLOGY/


## ARCHAEOLOGY | URBAN HISTORY

*Melpomene Street Blues* is the story of the Central City neighborhood in New Orleans where jazz legend Buddy Bolden was born. At the height of his musical career, the cornetist played a song dedicated to it. Extending his tribute, this booklet follows the Melpomene's development from colonial times to the mid 20th century, and shares the lives of African American, Sicilian, and Irish families who lived back-a-town. In the 1960s, the neighborhood was torn down to build a public housing development named the William J. Guste, Sr. Homes. Despite the complete change in landscape and architecture, residents continue to refer to the area as the Melpomene. Weaving together archaeology and labor history, the booklet returns to the saloons, corner stores, unions, women's cottage industries, and early jazz bands that were once important to the community.

***Front cover:*** A portrait of Melpomene home-owner Minnie Puckett, courtesy of her great-great-granddaughter, Givonna Hymel-Lumpkins.

***Back cover:*** "Diagram showing the inundated District, Sauvé's Crevasse, May 3rd 1849" from *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities*, compiled by George E. Waring, Jr., United States Census Office, Part II, 1887. Image courtesy of Earth Search Inc.'s report on the archaeology of the Guste Homes area.