

2013

Two histories, one future : Louisiana sugar planters, their slaves, and the Anglo-Creole schism, 1815-1865

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TWO HISTORIES, ONE FUTURE:
LOUISIANA SUGAR PLANTERS, THEIR SLAVES,
AND THE ANGLO-CREOLE SCHISM, 1815-1865

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by
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B.A., Iowa State University, 2006
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2009
May 2013

For Harper

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The saying goes that “it takes a village...” but I find this to be entirely inaccurate; if I only had a village to help me, my venture likely would have ended in failure. I can attest that, at least in my case, it required a *city* to achieve the task. Fortunately, I could not have possibly asked for a better safety net than the one that has surrounded me over the span of twenty-nine years and I have traveled across the western hemisphere to find its components. From my childhood on a hog farm and my recent years spent working the draft horse show at the Iowa State Fair, to my time spent in Cork, Ireland, and that perfect day at Terrell House in New Orleans, I have been instilled with an incredible work ethic (perhaps I simply do not know better?) and I have met an incredible assortment of people who altered every course of my development in life and academia.

Fortunately, I benefitted from a pleasant research experience during the course of this dissertation. I enjoyed my time spent at the Historic New Orleans Collection where I listened to the calliope as I worked feverishly in the heart of the French Quarter. Perhaps the staff at Hill Memorial Library at Louisiana State University tired of my appearance every morning at 9am when the front doors opened but they never showed it as they pulled every single box from every single collection that pertained to nineteenth-century sugarcane agriculture. Judy Bolton, Tara Laver, Germaine Bienvenu, Leah Wood Jewett, and Jason Ford all made the reading room (and my routine table) a comfortable place to work.

Louisiana State University proved to be an extraordinary place to conduct my graduate career. When I began my graduate my graduate career in the 2006 I served as a graduate assistant in the Interlibrary/Borrowing department where my supervisor, Gayle Campbell, provided a great work environment while I completed my MA degree. In 2009, LSU Libraries

granted me the privilege of serving as the editor of *Civil War Book Review*, allowing me to connect with some of the most prominent historians in the field which inspired me to hone my skills as a future historian while gaining invaluable hands-on experience. Faye Phillips and Elaine Smyth gave me every tool necessary in this endeavor and any success of the *CWBR* resulted from their encouragement and vision.

My dissertation committee provided me with useful support as they read my manuscript. Gaines M. Foster, one of the scholars whom I most appreciated during my time at this institution, has provided constant support, both with my work and with personal ideas or panic attacks. Andrew Burstein and Alecia Long encouraged me to consider this project beyond the dissertation by offering their insight for the project moving forward.

I attempted to repay what LSU and the Department of History gave to me by co-founding the History Graduate Student Association at LSU with Katherine Sawyer. This tireless effort proved to be one of the most rewarding and worthwhile efforts of my graduate school career. As someone who failed to participate in extra-curricular activities (at least constructive ones) during his undergraduate years, the HGSA at LSU helped me to understand selfless hard work while strengthening relationships my fellow colleagues in the department.

Relevant to the HGSA but extending so far beyond that, the friendships that I have forged over the years have done a great deal to inform my development. Joe McElwain remains a steadfast friend even if his studies focused more on picture books than “real text;” he remains one of the few childhood friends with whom I maintain close contact. Lauren Chan, Carlton Johnson, Marie Ozanne, and Emily Snively made my semester in Ireland a memorable experience and I am grateful that our friendship has continued beyond those short months many years ago. Chris Childers, Adam Pratt, and Michael Robinson all have influenced my graduate

career to a great extent. They have kept me calm, given sound advice on countless questions, and stood as some of my closest friends.

Leading the charge with utmost patience, William J. Cooper, Jr. has my enormous respect and I owe my greatest professional debt to him. With great trepidation I ambled into his office on numerous occasions to meet with him about chapters of my thesis and dissertation and he exhibited extraordinary patience as I worked to break all of my terrible writing habits. I only hope that I can continue to hone my skills as a researcher, writer, and historian so that someday I might live up to the impeccable standard that he has set.

While my friends provide the greatest support and sustenance, my family has served as the backbone for my time on this journey. Not everyone made it to see me accomplish this lifelong goal (others probably thought they would not), but those who cannot stand by me physically today, including Tyler and Fado, inspired me along the way to continue to reach forward for success. Joe and Bonnie Buman, my five siblings, their five spouses, and my thirteen nieces and nephews probably cannot understand what they have meant to this voyage but they have provided constant support and given me a place in which I could feel comfort. Lastly, but most importantly, my partner during much of my graduate school career (and the rest of my life), Harper Levy, has inspired me to fulfill my life's goals but also given me a purpose. I have not always understood why I forged through school to the goal of becoming a historian but now I do and I owe that debt to her.

The successes of my efforts in these pages can be attributed to this city of support but they do not possess any blame for its shortcomings. This project is entirely my work and I accept complete responsibility for it.

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ABSTRACT

During the five decades between the War of 1812 and the end of the Civil War, southern Louisianans developed a society unlike any other region. The vibrant traditional image of moonlight and magnolias, the notion that King Cotton dominated the South's economy as Anglo-Saxon masters lorded over their enslaved African-American workers still dominates the image of the American South. This image of a monolithic South, however, does not give a clear indication of the many sub-regional distinctions that both challenged and rewarded the inhabitants of those areas and provides exciting ways to understand slaveholding society culturally.

Louisiana's slaveholding class consisted of Creoles and Anglo-Americans who stared at one another across a chasm of cultural tension for much of this period. Only the necessity of achieving a profit through sugarcane production that demanded the two ethnic communities come together helped to blend the distinct characteristics that separated them. Slavery slowly bound them together as the Civil War approached. While they maintained a strong cultural awareness that made them either Creole or Anglo-American, the distinctions between the two groups in terms of slaveholding began to disappear. The Civil War and the abolition of slavery largely ended the tension between the two groups. Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans entered the Reconstruction period believing that they needed to work together in order to ensure that white Louisianans remained at the top of the social ladder. Essentially, Creoles and Anglo-Americans came turned their attention away from what separated them (ethnicity) and focused their attention on what brought them together (race).

INTRODUCTION

Historians' understanding of the American South and slavery has slowly become more sophisticated as we progress through the twenty-first century by incorporating nuanced ways of exploring the complex social relationships between slaves and masters as well as the interactions among individual slaveholders in the society that developed during the nineteenth century.¹ Nevertheless, the vibrant traditional image of moonlight and magnolias, the notion that King Cotton dominated the South's economy as Anglo-Saxon masters lorded over their enslaved African-American workers still dominates the image of the American South. From popular culture, spurred by movies such as *Gone with the Wind*, to much of the historiography of the early twentieth century, Americans have viewed a picture painted with broad strokes. In an attempt to understand the mindset of the planter class as a whole, much of the work that historians have done emphasizes the similarities among white southerners throughout the region as North and South hurtled toward civil war. This image of a monolithic South, however, does not give a clear indication of the many sub-regional distinctions that both challenged and rewarded the inhabitants of those areas and provided exciting ways to understand slaveholding society culturally.

Many historians have sought to understand slaves and the slaveholding class by gathering as much evidence as they could to support broader and generally successful arguments for the role that slaves played in the creation of an overarching slave society in the American South.² A

¹ Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Deliver us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

² Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (1982; repr., New York: Knopf, 1998).

shift in scholarship has begun to examine localized regions as a way of understanding the mindset of slave and slave master and the worlds that they cohabited together.³ Slavery in south Louisiana differed from the institution as practiced in other southern states, perhaps only closely comparable to the rice-growing region of coastal South Carolina and Georgia. The multi-ethnic and multicultural history of southern Louisiana, combined with its unique climate that allowed for the growth and production of sugarcane, guaranteed a unique environment for slavery. Very few studies have examined this region in particular.⁴

Historians often have studied slaveholding and slave societies from a class perspective. Edmund Morgan argues that race-based slavery helped smaller farmers and small-scale slaveholders to go along with the agendas of the large landowners and social elites.⁵ Likewise, Lacy K. Ford and J. Mills Thornton have examined the process whereby small slaveholders bought into the social and political agenda of the elites during the 1850s as the South journeyed toward secession.⁶ Always cognizant of class, elite white southerners constantly sought to establish support among small-scale slaveholders and non-slaveholders in order to legitimize their rule. In the sugar parishes of Louisiana, however, ethnicity often transcended class as

³ Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).

⁴ Richard Follett, *Sugar Masters*; John M. Sacher, *A Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana, 1824-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003). Follett explores the slaveholding practices of the areas sugar plantations and Sacher examines the ethnicity of Louisianans during his political narrative. This dissertation will bring the two studies together in order to analyze the intersection of ethnicity and slaveholding.

⁵ Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975).

⁶ Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *The Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); J. Mills Thornton, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

Creoles and Americans more easily ignored class distinction to wrestle power away from the other ethnic faction in favor of their own.⁷

Too often historians have studied either slavery or slaveholding apart from one another. In order to tell the entire story and understand both black and white southerners, one must examine the slave and the master in relation to one another. As they occupied the space of the plantation, slave and master affected the society, economy, and political outlook of the other reciprocally, though not always in equal parts. Eugene Genovese first overturned the traditional approach of earlier scholars by seeking to analyze white and black together to examine the society that they created mutually.⁸ Charles Joyner and Judith Carney added to this narrative by examining the folklore and material and technological culture of the rice-growing area above Charleston, South Carolina.⁹ Joyner's and Carney's approaches best explain the society created under slavery as whites and blacks became dependent upon one another. No other scholar has attempted to write a systematic history of the society created by the sugar planters of southern Louisiana, examining both the slaves and slaveholders equally, through the lens of the Creole-

⁷ Throughout the course of my study, I will define Creole in strict terms of ethnicity; Creole will refer to those Louisianans of French, Spanish, and/or German descent who typically arrived in Louisiana prior to the American period. Historians have often defined the term "Creole" differently throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and debate continues over this problematic term that carries a significant degree of cultural baggage today; but that debate helps to point the necessity of this study. For an interdisciplinary look at the challenges of the term "Creole" to the population of Louisiana, specifically New Orleans, today see Virginia R. Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification of Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

⁸ In *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, Eugene Genovese first takes the slave seriously as an actor in the slave-master relationship countering directly the earlier theses put forth by U.B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Slave Regime* (New York: Appleton and Co., 1918) who asserted that slave masters practiced a benevolent slavery wherein their slaves had no reason to object to their situation.

⁹ Judith A. Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*.

American ethnic schism. Some have focused on other characteristics of sugarcane production or merely alluded to the ethnic challenges, but the historiographical record remains incomplete.¹⁰

Studies often focus primarily on economic, political, or social approaches. Although my dissertation will ultimately serve as a social history that details the society created during this period, to achieve a balanced narrative, I will strive to include political and economic factors that weighed on these white and black historical actors. I believe that an interdisciplinary approach to the study of a region during a period of time allows for the best possible and most accurate understanding of those people because all of those dynamics influenced their actions, decisions, and the results that they experienced. Political, economic, and social catalysts all influenced Creoles and Americans as they navigated the antebellum period in the sugar parishes of southern Louisiana, attempting to create a slaveholding society unlike anything else in the region. The role of complex politics (in a state dominated by ethnic tension), economics (in a sugarcane region surrounding the large cosmopolitan center of New Orleans), and social interests (in a state consisting of many diverse ethnicities as well as a large enslaved and free black population) all contribute to make a multifaceted study of Louisiana extremely beneficial because it will help to inform future scholars about the difficulties of oversimplification.

I will show how Creole and American planters influenced one another while analyzing sharply the subtle differences between the two groups by balancing the analysis as evenly as possible between the white slaveholders and their black slaves. The ethnic schism weighed

¹⁰ Glen R. Conrad, *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette, LA: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1960); Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1795-1995* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); Follett, *Sugar Masters*; John Alfred Heitmann, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Industry: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953). These studies have all examined slaveholding, sugarcane production, and the history of the sugarcane industry but none have attempted to glean any ethnic distinctions from the historical record.

constantly on the minds and decisions of antebellum Louisianans as they sought to establish and grow their empire. Paying careful attention to the disunity of southern Louisiana sugar planters will give a careful and detailed illustration of one group that historians have often thrown under the umbrella of southern slaveholder and will help to illustrate the complexity of the antebellum slaveholder.

Antebellum Louisianans developed a slave society that rivaled any that the world had ever seen. On the eve of the American Civil War, Louisiana's sugar planters had amassed such extraordinary wealth that they possessed the ability to purchase almost anything that their families wanted. But under the surface of this powerful elite class of slaveholders, lay various cleavages that signaled a disunited community.¹¹ The wealth of Louisiana and its swampy wilderness where sugarcane agriculture thrived attracted American slaveholders to the region from the late eighteenth century. But when they arrived, the Anglo-American planters who had migrated across the American South with their family and slave property found a proud society already existent, consisting of Creoles.¹²

These long-time inhabitants of Louisiana maintained a proud French or Spanish heritage and occasionally strains of both cultural backgrounds. They clung to their celebrated cultural distinctiveness and conflicted with the Anglo-Americans who moved to the territory of Louisiana, resisting much of Anglo culture. In large part, their Francophone world held no place for Anglo-American intruders and, with very few exceptions, Creoles did not allow them to take

¹¹ For an exploration of the differences between "slave societies" and "societies with slaves," see Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹² For a deeper understanding of the way that long-time inhabitants viewed the Louisiana Purchase, see Anne Farrar Hyde, *Empires, Nations, and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011). Hyde highlights those peoples who already lived in the purchase territory, illustrating that the Americans did not move into an uninhabited wilderness but, rather, a land of already complex social networks with a long history.

part in it. Creoles had already devised their own slave society with its own management theories, methods for dealing with slaves, and business practices. Inevitably, the influx of American settlers and Creoles' interactions with this new population put all of these proven strategies to the test.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Americans thirsted for expansion of its territory and commercial interests, however. The Louisiana Purchase, originally intended to be the purchase of New Orleans, opened up a vast new territory for American settlement and guaranteed the extension of American influence across the continent. Additionally, as the negotiators of the purchase originally proposed, Americans now had vital access to New Orleans's markets and shipping outlets. Intended to help strengthen the farming interest, American agricultural producers celebrated that they would no longer have to ship their goods across the Appalachian Mountains to the East Coast. With the Louisiana Purchase they could ship their goods reliably via waterways which flowed naturally southwestward to the port of New Orleans. This development helped to ensure that the farming interests of the Old Northwest Territory would remain strong for generations to come.

Lastly, largely unbeknownst to many Americans at the time, the purchase would also give the nation access to a sweetener that had exploded in popularity across the western world: sugarcane. Louisiana gave American planters the only option on the continent in which they could raise sugarcane productively. Traditionally, sugarcane had thrived in the Caribbean but Louisiana's slaveholders had just recently perfected the process of granulating sugar in a climate that demanded careful attention and as much time to ripen before the killing frost as a planter could allow. Growing this booming crop domestically would strengthen American commercial interests while giving southern slaveholders another outlet for the spread of their institution.

As Thomas Jefferson, satisfied with the expansion of American territory, celebrated the Louisiana Purchase, the inhabitants of Louisiana grew concerned over much more personal and fundamental concerns. They feared that the imminent invasion of Anglo-American ideals, culture, and government would soon threaten their Creole identity. They worried that the power structure that they had built over nearly a century would crumble under the weight of the new American entrepreneurs, whom the Creole inhabitants viewed as more capitalist than themselves. The Creole government, business ventures, and slaveholding practices would all come under question, they feared, when the Anglo-American planters moved into the territory, brushing aside what they had built up.¹³ Creole cultural characteristics survived the onslaught however, and the *ancienne population* thrived, helping to build a unique bi-cultural society alongside their Anglo-American counterparts.

Upon his appointment from President Jefferson, Louisiana's first governor, William Charles Cole Claiborne, faced extraordinary difficulties in attempting to formulate a society out of several ethnic factions that did not want to become a cohesive state. Governor Claiborne's *Letterbooks*, littered with episodes of ethnic dissension, detail countless instances where he had to struggle in order to achieve balance and harmony between the dissenting groups.¹⁴ Additionally, Clément de Laussat, the last French governor of Louisiana, who oversaw the transfer of power from France to the United States gave some account of the disdain for American principles that he viewed among the French and Spanish inhabitants. The Creoles expressed concerns that the Americans' banking and business practices would overwhelm them,

¹³ Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana* (1867; repr., New Orleans: F.F. Hansell & Bro., Ltd., 1903); Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (New York: Manzi, Joyant & Co., Successors, 1904); Clément de Laussat, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. Robert D. Bush, trans. Agnes-Josephine Pastwa (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

¹⁴ *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Jackson: Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, 1917).

and they worried that their penchant for land speculation would effectively dilute the landholding practices that the Creoles had used for several generations to maintain power in southern Louisiana.¹⁵

The transfer to American power effectively opened the floodgates for American merchants, small farmers, and large planters to pour into Louisiana in search of new opportunities and the promise of financial gain through the production of sugarcane. Since 1795 when Etienne de Boré had first produced sugarcane profitably on his plantation in the area that is today Audubon Park in New Orleans, the vastly profitable cash crop wound its way up the Mississippi River, soon turning southwestward and, by the 1820s, snaking down into Bayous Lafourche and Teche. From that point until the secession of Louisiana and the Civil War, sugarcane production dominated the time, energy, and capital of southern Louisianans, white and black. Almost unanimously, slaveholders in this region turned their attention to sugarcane and drew others from across the nation, North and South, as well as from abroad, to try to make their fortune in the crop. But the Creole-American division remained vibrant, and the two factions created two disparate worlds side-by-side but these worlds slowly melded together, finally becoming one with the Civil War and the end of slavery.

While land prices surged because of the population boom spurred by the Anglo-Americans raised the demand for new lands, the Creoles found a way to adapt to the changing landscape. The Creole population maintained their strict adherence to Roman Catholicism, continued to write and speak French, and exhibit other cultural characteristics important to their identity. They bound themselves tightly to many of the things that made them Creole and as

¹⁵ For an on-the-ground view of Creole concerns over the transfer to American control, consult Laussat, *Memoirs of My Life*.

long-time residents of Louisiana, they made unique choices regarding sugarcane agriculture and plantation management. My study explores some of these exceptional decisions that Creoles made but also hints at an increasing intersection with their Anglo-American colleagues as the century progressed from the War of 1812 to the Civil War. Both communities planted cane and hoped to reap the harvest of the land to achieve wealth, prosperity, and elite status. Thus, out of necessity, they often exhibited very similar management practices in terms of how they cared for and treated their enslaved laborers.

Different interpretations of the role of the American nation prevailed between the two ethnicities; Anglo-Americans believed in the overarching strength of a national network through which they could purchase goods and conduct business while migrating progressively westward while Creoles preferred their local business connections in Louisiana and showed no interest in moving away from Louisiana. Creoles simply wanted to strengthen their families' standing in the state and maintain the dynastic estates that they had established since the colonial period. Americans used Louisiana as a stepping stone in their ever-constant push west in the effort to seek new, cheap western lands and spread the institution of slavery.

The cultural distinctions remained vibrant between 1815 and 1865, and both groups exhibited ethnocentric behavior; but as slavery came under increasing attack from northern abolitionists and anti-slavery forces, they had to close ranks. While in 1815, Creoles and Anglo-Americans largely opposed one another across a chasm of ethnic tension and differing impressions of accepted culture, they lived alongside one another for the next fifty years and grew to understand that they actually possessed very similar motivations. Despite their cultural differences, Creoles and Anglos both wanted to strengthen, not weaken, the slaveholding interests of the state of Louisiana and the region of the American South. The sectional tension

superseded the ethnic tension, and when civil war erupted in four long years of bitter conflict, the racial tension that emerged resulting from the abolition of slavery largely erased any remaining ethnic tension entirely.

CHAPTER 1
“I SHALL BE DISAPPOINTED IF WE ARE NOT FLOODED AGAIN”:
LAND, HOUSES, AND IMPROVEMENTS IN SUGAR SOCIETY¹

Edward Russell, travelling from Portland, Maine to Natchitoches, Louisiana, stood on the deck of the ship as it passed by the Mississippi Delta and through its mouth, winding upstream on its way to one of the most unique cities in the entire world. Writing his observations in January 1835, he recounted: “Passed this forenoon some beautiful plantations and Brigs lying by the bank in front of the houses taking in sugar. We have seen many cattle and horses feeding and grass looks more green.”² Like many visitors, he commented on the visual, the tangible observations that he could make with his eyesight. But Louisiana, throughout the entire nineteenth century, held many complex secrets that one could only observe by talking with the inhabitants and seeing the people and the society that they, themselves, created. Throughout the period, Louisiana remained one of the most complicated and ethnically diverse areas in the nation. Anyone visiting or settling, especially the southern parishes of Louisiana, had necessarily to negotiate difficult cultural tensions that lay before them, created by the history and tradition of the region, even more so than by the inhabitants’ actions.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, leading up to the American Civil War, the society of Louisiana slowly and tensely came together with French and Spanish Creoles, on one hand, and Anglo-Americans on the other cautiously feeling one another out as they attempted to create a society that benefitted both. Examining the geographic characteristics unique to the region, the rich colonial history and the foundation of the sugar industry, the architecture of the plantation homes, and the ways in which settlers spread plantation society and laid out their

¹ This footnote, and all subsequent footnotes, derive directly from quotations in the chapter and can be found cited directly in their entirety as they appear in the text of the chapter.

² January 25, 1835, Edward Russell Journal, Historic New Orleans Collection.

empire offers insight into the complex relationships between the two ethnic factions. Once one understands the world that these planters lived and operated within, he or she may be able to achieve a deeper grasp on the reasons that society formed in the manner that it did.

Much of the American South contains piney woods and rolling hills, the geography and climate conducive to planting cotton. With the exception of certain swampy regions of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, the southern portion of Louisiana presented a geography and climate pattern unlike any other in the United States. Southern Louisiana more closely resembles that of the Caribbean or Latin America than it does more traditional regions of the South, making it a unique region for the study of American slavery. The planters and their slaves faced exceptional difficulties when confronting the swampy, humid climate of southern Louisiana while trying to forge a sugar empire. The French and Spanish Creoles often came to Louisiana with a great deal of experience from their time in the Caribbean before they emigrated to Louisiana but the Anglo-Americans who poured into the territory (and after 1812, the state of Louisiana) faced exclusive obstacles that very few other southern planters faced.³ They had to navigate a new geography, a new ethnic climate, and an economy dominated by a new staple crop; but therein lay the reason that they came in the first place.

First and foremost the Mississippi River placed a unique stamp on the environment. This river, known by regional native peoples as *Misi-zibi* or “Great River,” challenged cartographers, explorers, settlers, and Louisiana’s earliest inhabitants. Even the first explorers of Louisiana,

³ Throughout the course of my study, I will define Creole in strict terms of ethnicity; Creole will refer to those Louisianans of French, Spanish, and/or German descent who typically arrived in Louisiana prior to the American period. Historians have often defined the term “Creole” differently throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and debated with one another over this problematic term that carries a significant degree of cultural baggage today; but that debate helps to point the necessity of this study. For an interdisciplinary look at the challenges of the term “Creole” to the population of Louisiana, specifically New Orleans, today see Virginia R. Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification of Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

having sailed the length of the river through the heart of the continent, had difficulty locating the mouth from the Gulf of Mexico when they attempted to find it and sail upriver in search of a suitable place to establish a colony. One such explorer, René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, traversed the entire course of the Mississippi River, placing a plaque at the mouth of the river that claimed all of the territory from that point to Canada for King Louis XIV. When La Salle returned in 1684-1685, hoping to spur permanent colonization efforts near the mouth of the river, he could not relocate the entrance to the river due both to his inferior maps from the initial voyage and the complex Mississippi Delta which constantly changed the course and appearance of the river itself to one so unfamiliar with its geography. Unable to locate successfully the mouth of the Mississippi and ending up in Texas, La Salle and his expedition decided instead to build a fortified settlement on the coast at Matagorda Bay; they abandoned this colony only two years later following the assassination of La Salle by the desperate and unsatisfied French colonists⁴

The swamps and rivers served as both a hindrance and a benefit to sugar planters. While they did make transportation difficult due to the meandering nature of the bayous of southern Louisiana, none of which flowed directly to the market in New Orleans, they did act effectively as roads and highways, and planters took advantage of them in getting their goods to the marketplace with greater ease. If the Mississippi River served as the commercial heartbeat of the continental interior-and it most assuredly did, spurring the negotiations for the Louisiana Purchase-the bayous and tributaries of Louisiana itself acted as the arteries to the aorta. The settlement pattern followed directly these water accesses because, at the time, the waterways of

⁴ For early exploration accounts of the French in Louisiana, consult Lawrence N. Powell, *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008); Adam Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001).

Louisiana provided a more reliable mode of transport as long as one had a boat or pirogue available.

The waterways essentially served as the nexus of settlement and commercial activity, not only because they provided direct access to the marketplace, but because they most typically marked the geographic high point in the surrounding area. Because, as Thomas Ashe observed in his travels early in the nineteenth century, “There is, therefore, on the East [bank of the Mississippi] but a very narrow slip along the bank of the river...the land is not generally susceptible of cultivation more than a mile back from the river; the rest is low and swampy to the lakes and the sea,” planters consciously built their dwelling houses and plantation grounds directly along the rivers, bayous and streams because they acted as the highest elevation, the land away from the river falling away into the swamp.⁵ Settlers chose these backlands to drain in order to plant their crops, typically sugarcane, but also to raise vegetables and hay and maintain pastureland for grazing animals including cattle and sheep. Earliest land grants assured settlers and planters that they would have at least the tiniest strip of access to the water, the lifeline of society, and thus, the French system still appears today when one looks at an aerial map of the southern portion of the state. Instead of the traditional Anglo block-shaped settlements, one observes long narrow strips of land perhaps as small as 2 arpents wide by 40-80 arpents deep.⁶

Thus the landscape itself challenged those who settled the region during the colonial, territorial, and antebellum periods. In addition to the unique social environment whereby Anglo-American settlers moved into areas often inhabited for several generations by earlier Creoles,

⁵ Thomas Ashe, *Travels in America, Performed in the Year 1806, for the Purpose of Exploring the Rivers Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio, and Mississippi, and Ascertaining the Produce and Condition of Their Banks and Vicinity* (London: R. Phillips, 1809), 236.

⁶ The Arpent is one of the prime indicators of Louisiana’s French heritage. This measurement continued in use even after the influx of Anglo-American settlers after 1815 and each arpent stands at 192 feet.

they had to contend with a hot and humid climate and the pursuit of a crop unknown in the rest of the American South, sugarcane. While some early settlers who tried their hand at establishing a plantation on the frontier of Louisiana grew the cotton that was familiar to them, bugs and humid, wet weather threatened to rot the cotton plants as fast as they grew. As a few short decades passed, sugarcane eventually came to dominate the entirety of southern Louisiana below Baton Rouge.

One such man, and one of the wealthiest early American settlers, Colonel Joseph Erwin, moved to Louisiana in 1807 following the death of his son-in-law Charles Dickinson in a duel with the future president Andrew Jackson over a horserace forfeiture. Historian Andrew Burstein notes that “Jackson insisted that Dickinson was goaded into seeking the duel by the villainous Joseph Erwin...who had been heard to say, with reference to Jackson, ‘by God, Sir, I think you can kill him.’”⁷ Whether to start anew in a different land after feeling responsible for the death of his son-in-law or simply to expand his landholding on the western frontier, a tradition James Oakes certainly holds responsible for the constant westward expansion of slaveholding, Erwin soon found himself carving out new holdings in Louisiana.⁸

Nearly fifty years of age when he purchased land on the west bank of the Mississippi River in Iberville Parish, Erwin planted cotton initially, a crop he had raised for many years back home in Tennessee before adding a second staple to diversify his holdings in 1822 when he began raising sugarcane. Erwin built his estate into one of the largest in the parish before the

⁷ Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 59. Burstein recounts a full detailed narrative of the duel between Jackson and Dickinson, after which Jackson’s honor and morality became questioned severely until he redeemed himself with his service during the War of 1812 on pages 51-59.

⁸ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (1982; repr., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

economic crisis of 1819 and the debts of such speculation overcame him and he took his own life at the home of his daughter in 1829.⁹ One letter from Eliza Wilson, Erwin's daughter to her sister's husband and the eventual benefactor of the Erwin estate, describes Joseph Erwin's mentally unraveling state. "Papa is living here. The most miserable man you ever saw now I don't believe he will ever be anny better," she informed Andrew Hynes in a January 1829 letter and later reported to him that "He is now once more compleately deranged. His sufferings is beound description. It is most pitiful and truly distressing to here his aginising complaints he...never gose out of doors. Last night he never slep one wink but hollerd all night. There is no one that attend to him but Gobe." Unable to right himself mentally, an April 1829 letter informed Hynes that "Captain Erwin's derangement has unfortunately terminated in self destruction yesterday morning he was found raped up in his cloak with his head in the water jar at Mrs. Wilsons," and all attempts to revive him failed. Andrew Hynes assumed control of Erwin's holdings, before, after his own death, passing it on in the 1850s to his son-in-law, Edward J. Gay, a merchant from St. Louis.¹⁰

Before his business failures and over-extension, Erwin had helped to blaze the trail for settlement in Iberville Parish, becoming one of the earliest settlers that far up the river toward Baton Rouge and his Anglo-American descendents would always control his property, continuing to do so today. They, along with John H. Randolph and John Andrews largely

⁹ This famous Louisiana dynasty has drawn significant attention over the years and one can find additional discussion of the Erwin, Hynes, and/or Gay family in William E. Clement, *Plantation Life on the Mississippi* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1952); Harnett T. Kane, *Plantation Parade: The Grand Manner in Louisiana* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945); Alice Pemble White, "The Plantation Experience of Joseph and Lavinia Erwin, 1807-1836," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 27 (April 1944).

¹⁰ Eliza Wilson to Andrew Hynes, January 5, 1829(first quote); Eliza Wilson to Andrew Hynes, January 29, 1829 (second quote); William Robertson to Andrew Hynes, April 14, 1829 (third quote), all in Edward J. Gay and Family Papers, LSU. Quotations taken from primary sources will be cited literally as they appear in published works or manuscript; this includes misspellings, italics, and sentence format.

dominated plantation agriculture and society along this stretch of the Mississippi River until the eve of the Civil War. Areas farther south along the river, however, saw steady control by Creoles throughout the entire period because they succeeded in maintaining generations-old familial land, holding it for themselves.

Erwin faced over-speculation and fluctuating cotton and sugar prices that sent him into mental disarray but other planters also faced tremendous challenges stemming from the Louisiana climate. Planters could experience a drought and a flood all in the same twelve-month period, not to mention the constant potential for hurricanes that would devastate the plantation complex and blow down any sugarcane in its path. Facing such unpredictable weather, the best thing that Louisiana sugar planters could do was simply to bear down, hoping to achieve better luck and fantastic profits down the road. Moses Liddell informed his son of concerns over having to live with the consequences of planting in this country, suggesting that “I will be able to help you to reestablish yourself for a crop next year. It will not do to abandon your place for this flood because you cannot sell now, and this overflow no doubt may drive some or many to sugar planting if that part of the country should chance to escape, and cause sugar lands to be more sought after than heretofore but I fear much for the country below, the levees are giving way at many places and no doubt but that many plantations will be more or less injured.”¹¹ In fact, Moses Liddell sold his Woodville, Mississippi plantation to move nearer his son. They simply had to stick it out and, as long as the capital lingered or the creditors submitted willfully to their desires, they often remained steadfast to fight at least another year or two.

The unfortunate truth about nature remains that it favors or targets nobody specifically. Creoles and Anglo-Americans both faced the heartbreaking realities of failed crops and the fact

¹¹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, July 3, 1844, Liddell Family Papers, LSU.

that, for all they could control on the plantation—every minute of the slaves’ day if he chose to do so—he or she simply could not wield the power of weather over the plantation landscape. Planters littered their correspondence and daily logs with observations of the rising and falling rivers and bayous around them. These waterways, while a transportation blessing in the swamps of Louisiana, tested the endurance of sugar planters almost annually. Nearly every spring induced increased tension at the rising water when the snows of the North melted and flowed downstream.

Alexander Pugh, one of the North Carolina Pughs that settled along Bayou Lafourche in such great numbers that they inspired the old tongue-in-cheek adage that the river resembled a church’s aisle because Pughs lined both sides, wrote constantly in his journal about the waterways around him. Early one spring, Pugh wrote that “the news from the upper rivers is very bad rising all the time. I shall be disappointed if we are not flooded again.”¹² A couple of weeks later, on May 5, he noted that he “could hear very distinctly [that] morning at [Boatner] the rush of waters from the crevasse below Malhiats.”¹³ Even if one escaped the rising waters of the Mississippi and its tributaries in the spring, a planter still encountered the wet winters of Louisiana. Pugh wrote on 5 February 1860 that it had “rained very slightly in the morning, but in the afternoon we had more rain than we have had in one day since July. It was an immense rain and flooded everything. It will be a week before the land will be in order to plant again.”¹⁴ Thus, their entire agricultural calendar was offset by the torrential rain; planting would start later and, in turn, working the crop and getting it to maturity would be delayed. All of this in a

¹² Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), February 25, 1859, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

¹³ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1859.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, February 5, 1860.

climate where the production of sugarcane acted as a race against time due to the short growing season and the unpredictable frost in the fall.

All planters across the American South had to negotiate volatile weather but only Louisiana sugar planters faced the potential total loss wrought by an untimely early frost that could devastate a cane crop and set a planter back several years in revenue. While planters overcame the shorter ten-month growing season in Louisiana, they still experienced the uncertainty of the weather that could turn at a moment's notice, pushing their agricultural prowess (and luck) to the limit. Valcour Aime, one of the dominant Creole planters and certainly one of the most progressive sugar planters in the region, battled constantly against drought, flood, and frost. An astute businessman, he kept a detailed journal of plantation activities, noting the weather and the ways in which they navigated the changing seasons on the plantation. Aime observed on 5 December 1836 that his cane had struggled from a very cold end of November with ice and frost, noting that the cane "[was] killed to the ground."¹⁵ Unfortunately, even the seed cane that he had kept aside, protected against the elements, for the proceeding crop in 1837, he wrote, entered the danger zone because the "cane under cane-shed [was] frozen until noon."¹⁶ At times the cane, intended for the sugar mill, froze so hard that they could not even grind it until it had thawed.¹⁷ For all of his progressive planting techniques and agricultural fortitude, the balance of his successes and failures depended on the whim of Mother Nature.

¹⁵ Valcour Aime *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime, Formerly Proprietor of the Plantation Known as St. James Sugary Refinery, Situated in the Parish of St. James, and Now Owned by Mr. John Burnside* (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1878), 47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 141.

Aime could not control the weather but he could take measures to maximize his achievements, even in the face of an early frost. He and the planters around him attempted to develop various procedures that they could utilize to ensure the success of the cane crop in the face of cold weather. These methods included windrowing the cane at the first sign of frost, thus preventing the stalks themselves from freezing, and experimenting with how they cut the cane to make sure that they could extract the most sugar from each arpent of cane land despite any early freeze that they might encounter. After a particularly dangerous frost, Aime recorded that he “began windrowing at once...with the whole gang,” noting afterwards that he received “very fine sugar” from that batch “cut immediately below the adherent leaves, eighteen days after the ice of the 1st of December.”¹⁸ Several times, Aime noted the specificity of where to cut the stalks to ensure that they wasted no sugarcane juice by leaving it in the field.

The unpredictable climate also influenced greatly the availability of Louisiana’s waterways. Those tributaries, the vital commercial heartbeat of the sugar planters, they, on occasion, could not even use the waterways. If the southern parishes experienced an early frost, for example, the waterways flowing into the Mississippi froze so that planters could not get ships to their plantations, and the Mississippi itself froze farther north around St. Louis, making it difficult to get sugarcane and molasses to the western markets. On the other hand, in the warmest months of the summer, the river may become so low that any but the shallowest drafting boats could not even maneuver on certain waterways including the Bayous Teche, Lafourche, or Plaquemine. The planters truly depended on the weather more so than any other planters across the American South, making Louisiana an unusual and challenging landscape.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

The immense profits in sugar certainly came at a tremendous price and despite extraordinary odds.

Sugar had not always dominated the landscape of the southern parishes in Louisiana. During the colonial period, French, German, and Spanish settlers invested in myriad ventures in order to earn a living in the harsh Louisiana environment. Lacking a concerted effort from the metropole, the colony failed to thrive under French and Spanish governance, however, not because of a shortage of effort.¹⁹ After a brief period when the initial endeavors on the part of the colonists proved stagnant and ineffective, they renewed their energy, attempting to capitalize on the fertile soil and make the best of the harsh, tropical climate that allowed them to produce valuable cash crops. Almost immediately following the foundation of New Orleans in 1718, farmers and planters began spreading up and down the Mississippi, carving out land claims upon which they could establish themselves as producers for the New Orleans marketplace.²⁰ They sought to use New Orleans as a portal to the markets of the Caribbean as well as the home markets in France.

They focused their energy on traditional cash crops, employed in most colonial ventures during the period in the western hemisphere. Initially, the French efforts, led by Scottish economist, John Law, worked within the mercantile scheme to establish Louisiana as an “agro-

¹⁹ Alan Taylor and Lawrence Powell both give an excellent detailed analysis of the challenges that early settlers faced on the frontier of Louisiana, unable to enjoy any concerted support from the home government in Europe.

²⁰ Some of the best examples of recent scholarship on French colonial Louisiana and the struggles that the earliest colonists faced include Dawdy, Powell, and Taylor in addition to Ira Berlin *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Ned Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008).

export” colony, one that would focus its efforts on the production of a single cash crop (in this case, tobacco) through the use of slave labor and the plantation system. Additionally, one of the requirements of this system called for the establishment of an important government and exportation center, thus Jean-Baptiste LeMoyne de Bienville founded La Nouvelle Orléans in 1718. Early officials planned for an urban center to serve as an important strategic position to govern the colony directly, overseeing the tobacco production and providing an important port for the tobacco in addition to the furs and other items from the heart of the continent but they had not planned to establish the colony where New Orleans stands today. Bienville, after a great deal of stubbornness and personal sacrifice had overpowered the wishes of the Company of the West who originally wished that the city be located at the entrance of the Bayou Manchac, just downriver from present-day Baton Rouge.²¹

Colonists focused their early efforts in cotton, indigo, timber, and tobacco, etc. but not until the end of the eighteenth century did Louisianans finally find enough profitability in sugarcane to turn their attention to a full-time focus on the crown jewel cash crop of the French colonies.²² The shift to nearly universal sugarcane production in Louisiana’s southern parishes can be attributed to three early simultaneous developments: the Haitian Revolution, the failure of indigo and cotton along the Mississippi River during this period, and successful efforts in sugarcane processing in and around New Orleans. Also, the Natchez uprising in 1729, when local Native Americans rose against the French Fort Rosalie southeast of present-day Natchez,

²¹ Powell, 25-32. John Law convinced the French crown to invest in his plan to off-set the extraordinary national debt that resulted from the constant wars of Louis XIV by establishing a tobacco colony modeled after the English Chesapeake region that would supply France’s tobacco addiction. Previously, French merchants and consumers had purchased all of their tobacco from the Chesapeake.

²² Other colonial ventures in Louisiana included raising cattle and even the attempted domestication of buffalo. For a discussion of the buffalo farming and other essays on French Colonial Louisiana, see Bradley G. Bond, ed., *French Colonial Louisiana and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005).

helped to encourage a shift away from indigo and tobacco, but not necessarily toward sugar yet; it just made the previous crops difficult to produce.²³

In August of 1791, when the French colony of Saint-Domingue erupted in a three-caste social revolution, wherein white planters, black slaves, and free people of color wrestled for control of the island, the wealthiest colony in the western hemisphere—one predicated almost entirely on the production of sugarcane for the European market—was torn asunder.²⁴ The white planters and any slaves who they succeeded in taking with them embarked from Saint-Domingue, seeking refuge from the carnage in other regional colonies, primarily Cuba and Louisiana. Cuba, a Spanish colony, provided the closest refuge for those seeking shelter from the revolution while Louisiana, offshoot colony of Saint-Domingue, provided a culturally similar opportunity for French colonials to re-establish their plantation regime.

The Haitian Revolution, and the resulting downfall of Saint-Domingue sugar production, provided an economic vacuum and an opportunity for other colonial forays into sugarcane. As

²³For a thorough account of the Natchez Uprising of 1729, see James F. Barnett, *The Natchez Indians*; Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire*; Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and its Peoples: From Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); 76-79; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 388-391.

²⁴ Many books have told the tale of the Haitian Revolution over the years but none have done so more successfully or more recently than Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005). Throughout the eighteenth century St. Domingue dominated French sugarcane production with output rising from 9,700 tons in 1720 to 36,959 tons by 1767 and the numbers of sugar estates rising from 170 in 1716 to 793 in 1785 according to Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 102, 108. Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies," *Journal of Social History* 3 (Summer 1970): 406-430 provides the best in-depth conversation about the complexity of the slaves societies that developed in Louisiana and St. Domingue and their relationship to one another. For further analyses of early sugarcane production in the Caribbean that include Haiti, see Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of the Plantation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004); Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Sydney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Stuart Schwartz, *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

the crown jewel of sugarcane production, Saint-Domingue had dominated the market for several generations and planters across the Caribbean world, especially in Louisiana, soon seized this opportunity to boost their own production, filling the void in the market. Additionally, those who fled the island during the conflict possessed significant knowledge of sugarcane agriculture and processing techniques and the financial capital to provide a boon to sugarcane production in both Cuba and Louisiana. By the middle of the nineteenth century Cuba and Louisiana became the leading competitors for the highest stakes in the sugar market, with Cuba typically leading the way globally.²⁵

Since the early colonial period, Louisiana farmers and planters had focused their efforts on cotton, indigo, and tobacco production, thinking sugarcane had reached its geographic limits in the Caribbean and would not survive the cold, damp winters of Louisiana. Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville first introduced sugarcane into Louisiana in the earliest colonial period but any initially gains that he and other French settlers made during that period faltered during the Spanish period; Spain wanted Louisiana to produce indigo for use in Europe and several successive years of challenging weather essentially put a stop to early gains in sugarcane. But the uncertainty began to fade at the dawning of the nineteenth century. The refugees from the Haitian Revolution encouraged planters to look more seriously at sugarcane with the influx of their

²⁵ Carl A. Brasseaux, *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1992) discusses the movement of these emigrants who escaped the Haitian Revolution. A series in *De Bow's Review* reported the total worldwide sugarcane production for 1844 to be 780,000 tons, of which Cuba produced 200,000 tons. In 1852, worldwide production rose to 1,044,522 tons, of which Cuba produced 320,000 and the United States lagged just behind the British West Indies at 110,000 and 140,000 tons respectively. It must be noted that, as of 1852, sugarcane prospects were ascending in the United States but descending in the British West Indies as Cuba dominated the Caribbean export market. J. D. B. De Bow, "Sugar-Its Culture and Consumption in the World-No.1" *De Bow's Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 19 (August 1855): 236-241; De Bow, "Sugar-Its Culture and Consumption in the World-No.2" *De Bow's Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 19 (September 1855): 350-358.

knowledge and capital but natural factors *forced* producers of the first colonial staple crops to look more seriously at a shift toward sugarcane more generally.²⁶

Despite their determination, Louisiana planters failed to raise a competitive quality of either tobacco or indigo. While the European wars and the tremendous growth of Europe's military powers increased the demand for indigo worldwide, the inferior quality of their product, resulting from the extraordinarily humid and hot climate, prohibited Louisianans from developing a successful export market. Additionally, a significant increase in insects that targeted indigo and diseases that ravished the plants forced Louisiana's indigo planters to explore other opportunities.²⁷ Tobacco efforts failed as well when John Law's scheme to settle the region surrounding New Orleans fell apart around him. Investors in the Company of the Indies had demanded returns and reimbursements before the tobacco ventures began to enjoy any significant profit and production of both staples waned during the final decades of the eighteenth century. Finally Etienne de Boré and some of his early colonial colleagues succeeded in turning the tide of economic stagnation in favor of sugar.²⁸

Etienne de Boré, born in the Illinois District of the Louisiana Territory, arrived in Louisiana proper following an education in France and an early military career during which he rose through the ranks to become a captain in the king's personal troops. His marriage to the

²⁶ For thorough examinations of the history of Louisiana's sugar industry from its foundation to the most recent developments, see Glen R. Conrad, *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette, LA: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1960); Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1795-1995* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Industry: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953). For a later overview of the sugarcane industry, beginning in the antebellum period, see Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); and John Alfred Heitmann, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

²⁷ Heitmann, 9.

²⁸ Taylor, 387; Sitterson, 4-5.

daughter of Jean Noël Destrehan, a prominent French colonial official in Louisiana and one-time treasurer of the colony, brought de Boré to settle in just upriver from New Orleans. This important alliance between two powerful French families would bear the fruits of agricultural innovation that pushed the colony to greater success on the eve of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.²⁹

While de Boré, often considered the grandfather of Louisiana's sugarcane industry, did contribute a great deal to the earliest development of production methods and techniques that made planting sugarcane, not only possible, but profitable in the Louisiana climate where an annual frost remained a possibility, he had several accomplices who assisted him in building the foundation for one of the wealthiest and most distinguished-not to mention most complicated regions socially-in the entire American South by the eve of the American Civil War. When sugarcane boomed, beginning in the 1820s, the new economic promise helped to fuel American immigration into Louisiana where the newcomers encountered a Creole society a long time in the making. For that to take place, however, De Boré tapped into a knowledge base, recently arrived from the island of Saint-Domingue since the 1791 rebellion.

Glen Conrad and Carlyle Sitterson, two of the preeminent historians of Louisiana's sugarcane industry both shed light on the lesser-known accomplices who helped de Boré and other early sugar planters get their agricultural complex off of the ground in the final decade of the eighteenth century. Most notably, Antoine Morin, Antonio Méndez, and Josef Solis, all with origins in Saint-Domingue played just as important of a role as de Boré in promoting and proving the viability of sugarcane in Louisiana's climate.³⁰ De Boré's main contribution came

²⁹ For a full account of the Destrehan family, see Eugene D. Cizek, John H. Lawrence, and Richard Sexton, *Destrehan: The Man, the House, the Legacy* (Destrehan, LA: River Road Historical Society, 2008).

³⁰ Conrad and Lucas, *White Gold*, 6-7.

from the capital that he provided, allowing them to prove that sugar, when produced on a large enough scale in Louisiana, could be extremely profitable to those willing to invest in its production. Solis had actually grown sugarcane in Louisiana since his arrival in the colony from Saint-Domingue in 1785 and he later sold his processing equipment to Antonio Méndez. Méndez employed the sugar-making expertise of Antoine Morin, himself a Haitian sugar maker who had fled the revolution. Together Méndez and Morin proved that sugarcane would grow in Louisiana and de Boré finally took it the final step in proving the effectiveness of its granulation. After purchasing the seed cane from Méndez and erecting his own mill, drying room, and shed, de Boré hired Antoine Morin who aided him in the first full-scale profitable experiment in sugarcane production; he proved that one could make significant profits by shifting from tobacco, indigo, and cotton, to full-time sugarcane.³¹

Thus, while Etienne de Boré cannot receive full credit for the success of sugarcane production and the increased efforts in favor of sugar by Louisiana planters, he certainly provided the proverbial shove off of the ledge that reckoned an increasingly widespread devotion to the crop that would earn the moniker “white gold” among Louisianans, enriching the French and Spanish planters already in the area while attracting Anglo-American planters and merchants. An increasing focus on the southwestern American frontier by slaveholders in states farther east boosted New Orleans’s status as an important cosmopolitan marketplace for western farmers in the Ohio Valley, making the lands around New Orleans increasingly enticing for American settlers’ movement westward.³²

³¹ Ibid.; Conrad, *Green Fields*, 22; Sitterson, 4-6.

³² The Lower Mississippi Valley currently stands as fertile territory for historical studies and scholars continue to take advantage of the fact, beginning with Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013); Adam Rothman, *Slave*

Such interest in this new corner of North America, on the western periphery of United States territory, precipitated a growing interest from the American government, in acquiring New Orleans for itself. American diplomats ventured to Paris and, following perhaps the greatest real estate coup in American history, succeeded in completing the Louisiana Purchase, obtaining the entirety of the Louisiana Territory, a grand sum of 828,000 square miles for \$15 million. While this arrangement benefitted the growing nation exponentially, it also deeply influenced the society in Louisiana's southern parishes that had adopted sugarcane production in prior to 1803.³³

Following the Louisiana Purchase, the stream of Anglo-American settlers coming into the region at the turn of the nineteenth century soon became a flood, impacting greatly the make-up of Louisiana's sugarcane society and altering its course during the nineteenth century. For years, many prominent American settlers had ventured to New Orleans and the lands surrounding the important mercantile center, including William Kenner and his father-in-law, Stephen Minor, the last Spanish governor of Natchez. With Minor's help, Kenner and his bride moved to New Orleans, setting up their mercantile commission business, capitalizing on New Orleans's valuable location as a tributary for market goods from the local environs. After early success, they both turned their efforts to planting, establishing some of the earliest Anglo-American sugar plantations in the region along the Mississippi River above New Orleans. They came for the

Country: Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); and the current work by scholars of this region including Adam Rothman "The Great South Gate: New Orleans in the 19th Century."

³³ For a broader overview of the Louisiana Purchase, consult Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson* (New York: Random House, 2010), 382-385 and 392-396; Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987), 262-267; Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Pierre Clément de Laussat, *Memoirs of My Life*, ed. Robert D. Bush, trans. Agnes-Josephine Pastwa (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

economic opportunity and stayed for the wealth that sugar planting provided following de Boré's advances in sugarcane production. Their early arrival, before the torrent of American immigration and the onset of American intervention following the Louisiana Purchase, allowed them to blend more amiably into the Creole society that ruled the region.³⁴

To take control of the new Louisiana Territory following its purchase, President Thomas Jefferson appointed twenty-eight year-old William Charles Cole Claiborne, native of Virginia and recently governor of Mississippi since 1801, as governor of American Louisiana. During the first year of his tenure, Claiborne described the territory's complexity and the challenges he faced in attempting to introduce American government and laws. Particularly frustrating for him, Claiborne spoke of the "various and rapid rapid transitions and transfers which [had] taken place in [the] Territory."³⁵ While used to shifts in governance from French to Spanish rule and back again, the inhabitants of Louisiana had not yet adjusted to the monumental change of an entirely new central government ruling closer to home. Claiborne tackled the task of balancing prominent factions including French and Spanish, Americans, *gen des couleur libres* or free people of color, and enslaved Africans all within a confined territory.³⁶

³⁴ Philip Chadwick Foster Smith and G. Gouverneur Meredith S. Smith, *Cane, Cotton, & Crevasses: Some Antebellum Louisiana and Mississippi Plantations of the Minor, Kenner, Hooke, and Shepherd Families* (Bath, ME: The Renfrew Group, 1992); Philip Chadwick Foster Smith and G. Gouverneur Meredith S. Smith, *Supplement to Cane, Cotton, & Crevasses* (Bath, ME, 1994); Craig A. Bauer, *Leader Among Peers: The Life and Times of Duncan Farrar Kenner* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993). The Bauer biography of Kenner provides a useful framework for a general overview but should not serve as the final word on any analysis of Kenner's lifetime.

³⁵ W.C.C. Claiborne to James Madison, New Orleans, October 26, 1804, in *Official Letter Books of W.C.C. Claiborne, 1801-1816*, ed. Dunbar Rowland (Jackson: Mississippi State Department of Archives and History, 1917), 2:376.

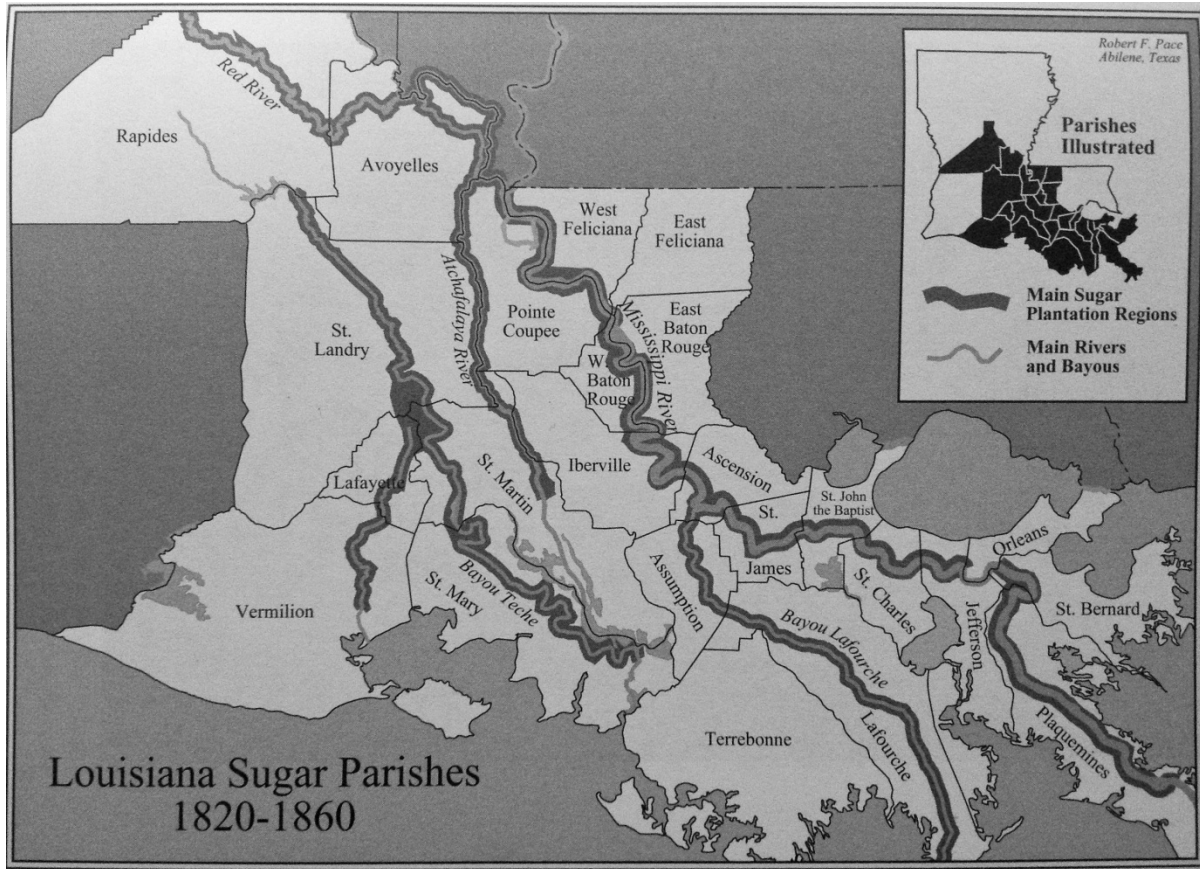
³⁶ When W.C.C. Claiborne became Governor-General of Louisiana, he took control over a large, sparsely-populated area. The majority of settlement historically occurred in New Orleans and along the Mississippi River toward Baton Rouge. Few citizens inhabited the area above Baton Rouge and beyond Point Coupee very little settlement occurred before Claiborne took his post.

Claiborne, and the Americans who entered the territory after the purchase, encountered a population thoroughly content with its French and/or Spanish identity who struggled to glean any perceived benefit from the new American ideals, laws, customs, and the people themselves. As one legal historian has suggested, the local population taught Claiborne and the national government an important lesson that they would implement in future western expansion, claiming that, “as a result of the Louisiana encounter, the new American nation was compelled to elevate the level of tolerance it was willing to display toward a foreign population caught in its midst, and in that way it too profited from the experience.”³⁷ This tolerance, which took some growing pains to embrace in Louisiana itself, benefited mutually both Creole and American settlers who worked to create a sugarcane society predicated upon a unified desire for wealth and status while, at the same time, both ethnic factions continued to preserve their personal customs and preference for an ethnic exclusivity.

As if Claiborne did not already have enough challenges on his mind with efforts to integrate the local Creole population into the American governmental system, the Florida Rebellion of 1810 and the 1811 slave revolt also significantly challenged his rule, forcing him to maneuver very carefully in order to achieve a degree of stability. Resulting from the Louisiana Purchase, the French portion of Louisiana west of the Mississippi River and south of Lake Ponchartrain transferred to American control leaving the present-day region known as the Florida Parishes under Spanish control. Populated largely by Americans who had migrated from the Mississippi Territory and areas further to the east, the Florida Parishes began to push for

³⁷ George Dargo, *Jefferson's Louisiana: Politics and the Clash of Legal Traditions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 174.

unification with the Louisiana Territory.



1. Map of Louisiana's Sugar Parishes

Following the West Florida Rebellion of 1810, by which the settlers in and around the present towns of Baton Rouge and St. Francisville declared a temporary independence, they immediately applied to the United States to become a part of the national lands of the American government. President James Madison agreed to the annexation of the Republic of West Florida in October of 1810, essentially succeeding in claiming previously Spanish territory without the necessity of warfare or treaty.³⁸

³⁸ For the most recent and definitive account of these events read William C. Davis, *The Rogue Republic: How Would-Be Patriots Waged the Shortest Revolution in American History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011).

Even more dangerous to the establishment of a harmonious plantation regime, Claiborne faced the largest slave insurrection in North American history on January 8, 1811, when Charles Deslondes led up to 500 slaves on an attack toward New Orleans. Seeking to replicate the successes of the Haitian Revolution, and most assuredly having experienced significant exposure to the events on that island twenty years prior, Deslondes and his fellow leaders gathered tremendous numerical strength, hoping to capture the city of New Orleans and take control of the fledgling government. Unfortunately, for those participants, the rebellion broke up promptly when it faced the strategic and tactical superiority of Claiborne's militia, a vigilante planter force, and members of the United States military.³⁹

The rebellion quickly fell apart but served as a reminder for the next five decades of the tribulations of creating a successful planter society. The rebellion also fueled the ethnic fire as Creoles and Americans continued to look at one another across a gulf of distrust; Americans hinted that the harsh treatment of slaves by French Creole planters had encouraged the rebellion and Claiborne worked to implement a more consistent-but still harsh-plantation regime. It so happened that the rebellion occurred in a portion of the Mississippi River, known as the German Coast, consisting of planters of primarily German and French descent. American planters certainly believed that this indicated an ethnic problem with the slaves of French planters, but the slaves mostly probably capitalized on the vacuum that the ethnic tensions created among the ruling whites in Louisiana following the Louisiana Purchase.

³⁹ For the most thorough published accounts of the 1811 rebellion, consult James H. Dormon, "The Persistent Specter: Slave Rebellion in Territorial Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 18 (Fall 1977), 389-404; Albert Thrasher, *On to New Orleans!: Louisiana's Historic 1811 Slave Revolt* (New Orleans: Cypress Press, 1996); Robert Paquette, "'A Horde of Brigands?': The Great Louisiana Slave Revolt of 1811 Reconsidered," *Historical Reflections* 35 (Spring 2009), 72-96. Robert Paquette has a book forthcoming that will provide the best and most complete analysis of the 1811 slave rebellion to date. Additionally, Daniel Rasmussen published his own account with *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America's Largest Slave Revolt* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011) but this problematic account fails to tell the story adequately and provides no new material not found in previous publications.

Using deft political maneuvering and tremendous patience, Claiborne succeeded in calming the waters of ethnic division and both Creole, and Anglo-American planters settled into a pattern of passive aggression, both sides choosing instead to focus on developing their own sugar planting empire, stretching upriver and downriver from New Orleans. When the Americans first began to arrive, they attempted to integrate into the society as best they could. William Kenner, Duncan Kenner's father, for example, made his way to New Orleans where he established, with his father-in-law, a mercantile company to trade in goods traveling through the New Orleans market. They would set a long-term precedent as many other young entrepreneurs from throughout the United States ventured to New Orleans before the Civil War, first making a living in trading ventures, legal practice, or other avenues, before investing a tremendous amount of capital into the establishment of a sugarcane plantation and entering slaveholding society.

At the age of twenty-five, Kenner, with the aid of his fourteen-year-old bride's \$70,000 dowry from her father, Stephen Minor, achieved early success in the mercantile commission business and soon turned his profits into land ownership. Partnering, initially, with Benjamin Morgan, William Kenner purchased a tract of land several miles upriver from New Orleans known as Cannes Brûlées—"Land of the Burnt Cane." This tract served as the foundation for what became Oakland Plantation, an important Kenner and Minor holding for most of the rest of the nineteenth century. Kenner's records show that he had experienced returns from his "Sugar Estate" as early as 1811, making him one of the earliest sugar planters in the region and certainly one of the first Anglo-Americans to do so.⁴⁰ This familiarity with Louisiana's society from an early period, made it easier for his family to enjoy a smoother integration into Creole society

⁴⁰ Smith, Smith, and Smith, 24-25.

when William's son, Duncan, married into one of the most notable Creole families, the Bringiers.

Most of the landholdings directly above and below New Orleans had long been in possession of French and Spanish Creole planters for several generations when the Americans began arriving. This tradition helped to set the precedent for decades to come because Anglo-American planters often had to venture farther upriver toward Baton Rouge or down the Mississippi's tributaries, Bayous Lafourche and Teche, in addition to other smaller bayous and streams. Americans necessarily ventured westward in search of unoccupied lands, establishing a unique settlement pattern that reflects both the Creoles' desire largely to maintain their exclusive society and Americans' desires to invest in sugarcane wherever they could do so. As the sugar planters would learn, the line where sugarcane remained profitable lay somewhere around Rapides Parish and present-day Alexandria, however, sugarcane shared the region above Baton Rouge with cotton, while the region below Baton Rouge experienced almost total domination by sugarcane after the 1830s with a few exceptions.

Anglo-American planters found periodic opportunities when individual Creoles chose to sell their plantations in the parishes immediately surrounding New Orleans but, generally, had to travel upriver. And so the parishes of Iberville, Ascension, East Baton Rouge, and West Baton Rouge welcomed the innovative and determined planters looking to clear the land and establish sugar plantations. They bridged the gap between New Orleans and the Florida Parishes, primarily East and West Feliciana which had been settled for some time by American planters moving south from Mississippi. Additionally, Americans found opportunities along the calmer bayous, snaking southwestward from the Mississippi River along Bayous Teche and Lafourche. The Acadians had found refuge along these tributaries and the prairies to the west of them when

they fled Nova Scotia in 1755, but the Americans found little trouble in buying out these planters and cattle farmers, bringing their land together in the process. Before long, Americans had consolidated the undersized holdings of the *petits habitants*, those smallholding Acadians, who found themselves relegated to the areas on the backside of the swamp, away from the river itself.⁴¹

By the 1830s, Americans had firmly entrenched themselves in the parishes south of the Mississippi River, known generally as the Attakapas region, and they challenged the Creoles who had lived there for decades. The Anglos brought “with them their own notions of things. Creoles and Creole ways fought, if they fought at all, a losing battle against this ever mounting influx.”⁴² Many of the Creoles in the region attempted to live alongside these Americans, choosing to maintain their Creole identity and customs while creating a different society with the Americans. Both sides chose to work together in a tense balance to achieve greater success in planting sugarcane in the region but still safeguarding cultural uniqueness.

Perhaps the most visible area where Creoles and Anglo-Americans could tout their cultural bias lay in the architecture that they chose for their dwelling houses. The “Big House” served as the ultimate embodiment of a master’s power over slavery and his or her wealth in society at large. Often located directly on the road-or in Louisiana’s case, the river-that passed in front of the plantation, these dwelling houses reflected the master’s strength, providing the perfect venue for him or her to display their cultural leanings. The southern Louisiana parishes

⁴¹ John B. Rehder, *Delta Sugar: Louisiana’s Vanishing Landscape* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 45-51; Perry H. Howard, *Political Tendencies in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1971), 44; Sitterson, 25.

⁴² Sitterson, 25.

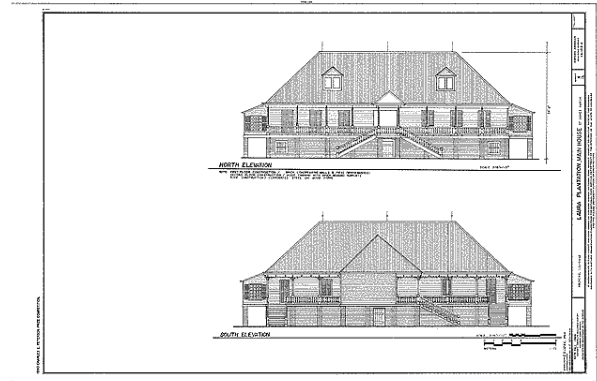
certainly provide a fascinating opportunity to investigate the differing architectural techniques and choices made by builders and plantation owners.⁴³

One still can almost always identify the ethnicity of a plantation house's owner by looking at it, with a few exceptions, of course. One of the preeminent geographers of the Louisiana sugar industry's past, John Rehder illustrated brilliantly the role that the owner's ethnicity played in, not only the building and design of the big house, but also the set-up of the plantation itself. Suggesting that tracing the Anglo-American architectural traits in Louisiana to the Atlantic Coast, specifically the Virginia Tidewater, it becomes clear that the Americans' homes do stand out apart from the rest.⁴⁴ Often looking more like the traditional Greek Revival houses made popular by Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, they typically evolved from an

⁴³ One of the most exciting fields for an analysis of cultural variances, scores of publications highlight the architectural features of Louisiana plantation homes. This vast list includes David W. Babson, *Pillars on the Levee: Archaeological Investigations at Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation, Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana* (Normal, IL: Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, 1989); H. Parrott Bacot, Sally Kittredge Reeves, and John H. Lawrence, *Marie Adrien Persac: Louisiana Artist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Fred Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1820-1840* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2005); Fred Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2006); Mills Lane, *Architecture of the Old South: Louisiana* (Savannah, GA: The Beehive Foundation, 1997); John Clarence Laughlin, *Ghosts Along the Mississippi: An Essay in the Poetic Interpretation of Louisiana's Plantation Architecture* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1961); Marc R. Matrana, *Lost Plantations of the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Jessie Poesch and Barbara Sorelle Bacot, *Louisiana Buildings 1720-1940: The Historic American Building Survey* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Richard Sexton, *Vestiges of Grandeur: Plantations of Louisiana's River Road* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999); John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Rehder, xii.

Anglo-American tendency for American architectural features.



2. Anglo-Creole Architectural Comparison

The Anglo-style Madewood Plantation (courtesy of LOUIS Libraries) *The Creole-style Laura Plantation (courtesy of HABS)*

On the other hand, the French, Spanish, and German Creoles chose to stay loyal to their Creole background, building houses that adapt much more fluidly to the sub-tropical climate of Louisiana and resemble more closely those of the West Indies. Built for the warmer, wetter climate, Creole owners typically chose to build their houses on tall pillars with the living quarters upstairs and rooms built in a block pattern. Windows and doors faced one another to allow for cross-ventilation.

Rare exceptions do exist, however, when the architectural features of houses include features from both ethnic traditions that complement one another. The two cultures, while they often chose to remain independent of one another, focusing their attention inward, did occasionally trade information, techniques, and influences. Anglo-American planters benefitted from the knowledge of the Creole planters who had cultivated the crop since the end of the eighteenth century while French planters began to incorporate certain “traits of material culture in settlement patterns, buildings, dwelling types, and agricultural practices.”⁴⁵ The two factions of society enjoyed their cultural traditions but did not live mutually exclusive from one another.

⁴⁵ Rehder, 45.

Perhaps the most unique example of a cross-cultural architectural influence in a plantation house occurred at L'Hermitage, the plantation home of Michel Doradou Bringier, a member of a premier Creole family in Louisiana.⁴⁶ The Bringier family serves as the perfect example for the complexity of sugarcane society in the southern Louisiana parishes. A long-time, proud Creole family, they dominated the Mississippi River socially and, as William Scarborough points out, almost always married within the Creole social circle, especially within the Tureaud family.⁴⁷ M. D. Bringier's wife, Elizabeth Aglae DuBourg de St. Colomb, gave birth to nine children, five of their six daughters marrying Anglo-American men, notably, General Hore Browse Trist, Thomas Jefferson's ward; Martin Gordon, Jr., a commission merchant in New Orleans; Duncan Kenner, son of William Kenner; Richard Taylor, son of President Zachary Taylor; and General Allen Thomas. The final daughter, Marie Elizabeth, married her cousin Benjamin Tureaud while the two remaining sons, Marius St. Colomb and Amedee, married cousins as well, choosing as their brides Augustine Tureaud and Stella Trudeau respectively. These choices illustrate a gradual generational shift in thinking among the Creole elite; M. D. Bringier's siblings had all married Creoles. The family patriarch and Michel Doradou's father, Marius Pons Bringier, certainly approved of their marriages. Thus this family can show very clearly both the stubbornness and strength of the Creole identity and the slow transition toward the incorporation of Anglo-Americans into that society where it benefitted both.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Michel Doradou Bringier and his wife decided to name their plantation L'Hermitage, in honor of their friend General Andrew Jackson with whom he had served during the battle of New Orleans.

⁴⁷ William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 25.

⁴⁸ Craig A. Bauer, *Creole Genesis: The Bringier Family and Antebellum Plantation Life in Louisiana* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2011).

The house that Michel Doradou and his wife built contained characteristics of both Anglo-American and Creole culture. The big house at L'Hermitage serves as one of the earliest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the Lower Mississippi Valley, with construction beginning around August of 1812. As visitors approached the house, moving up the tree-lined avenue they witnessed a modest manor house with an interior staircase and four rooms opening off of a central hall.

The relatively small rooms, especially compared to later, more grand big houses, served the family adequately enough until they added another wing onto the back of the house in the 1830s, more than doubling its size. When built initially, however, the



3. L'Hermitage Plantation House

L'Hermitage Plantation (courtesy of LOUIS Libraries)

house included twenty-four massive Tuscan columns encircling the house that later came to define the architecture of the region on many homes. They helped to support a gallery that surrounded the upper-level living quarters, essentially extending the living quarters outside, a very useful tool on the hot, still summer nights. Family members and guests reached the second floor via the central hall's staircase, a feature unique to L'Hermitage, because most Creole builders installed the staircase into the outside gallery, excluding any central hall entirely. The

design of the doors and windows, while not perfectly symmetrical due to the interior chimneys, did allow for a degree of cross-ventilation that most homeowners sought during the period.⁴⁹

Records fail to indicate whether Michel Doradou or his father, Marius Pons Bringier, who built the family's original Louisiana estate at *Maison Blanche*, or White Hall, hired a designer to draw the plans for their homes. Bringier most certainly did when he added the wing onto the back in the 1830s, hiring the Dakin and Dakin architectural firm, the same group that designed the Old State Capital in Baton Rouge. Many plantation owners chose to use a designer or architect and two of the builders during the period who remained popular with sugar planters and the society in which they served were Charles Paquet and Henry Howard. They both have provided modern historians with exciting examples that illustrate perfectly the architectural preferences of sugar society and the immense wealth that they accumulated during this period.

Charles Paquet, a free man of color, appears on the building contract between himself and Robin de Logny, the original inhabitant of the dwelling house, for the construction of Destrehan manor house, first begun in 1787. Records indicate that Paquet likely designed *and* built, in 1791, the plantation house known as Home Place (later became the Keller Plantation) on the west bank of the Mississippi River for Pierre Gaillard on his 10,000-acre Spanish land grant.⁵⁰ These two houses show a tremendous resemblance to one another with very similar features, though Destrehan underwent several renovations throughout the nineteenth century that slightly altered its style and appearance. Both houses initially featured French colonial floor plans with

⁴⁹ Bauer, 44-45. The author had the pleasure of visiting L'Hermitage, currently the private residence of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Judice, to examine the home first-hand. The homeowners continue a thorough restoration project of the home which remains largely intact as it stood the day that the Bringiers built it; the back wing addition from the 1830s no longer remains.

⁵⁰ Mary Ann Sternberg, *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2001); Lane, 62.

rooms laid out three wide by two deep surrounded by a gallery and exterior staircases at both ends. Family members and house servants used the first or ground floor for storage, service areas, and dining room, while the upstairs remained dedicated to living quarters and areas for entertaining. The twelve-foot deep gallery, as specified on the de Logny-Paquet contract served to cool the entire house by ensuring that the exterior walls on all sides of the house remained in the shade during the hottest summer months.⁵¹

Today, Destrehan especially, looks a great deal different than when Paquet originally built and designed the house. Later owners, including Jean-Noël Destrehan, who married Robin de Logny's daughter, Marie Céleste in 1786, and later his sons-in-law Stephen Henderson and Pierre Adolphe Rost. Rost, a Frenchman from Paris, chose to update the house, giving it the look that visitors see today. He made the doorways more American, following the mounting Greek Revival style which became very popular in the region after 1830 and altered the columns from a colonial masonry style to Doric. He replaced the Creole box mantels over the fireplaces inside the home and replaced them with more modern marble mantels. He enclosed the back gallery, a popular alteration throughout the period to provide additional living space, bringing the exterior double staircases inside the house. Generally, however, Rost chose to maintain many of the "Creole forms and proportions," a decision that recent experts of Destrehan house stated "makes the house of great architectural significance."⁵²

While Paquet's Destrehan and Home Place provided two of the earliest and finest examples of Creole design at the end of the eighteenth century, Henry Howard rose to prominence in the years immediately preceding the Civil War, building some of the most

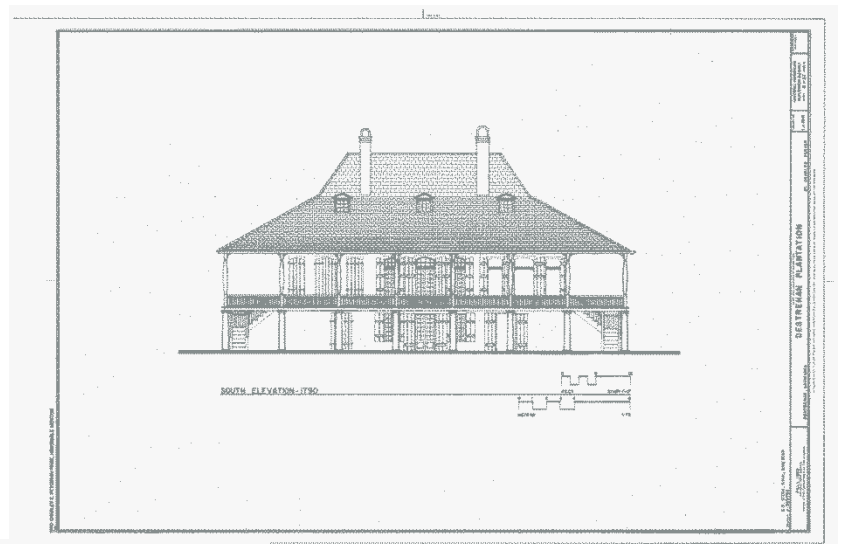
⁵¹ Cizek, *Destrehan*, 17-20.

⁵² Cizek, *Destrehan*, 23.

architecturally splendid homes of the American South and adhering much more closely to the traditional Greek Revival style popular in the rest of the cotton South. John Randolph and John Andrews hired Henry Howard to design and oversee the construction of their plantation houses, Nottoway and Belle Grove respectively. The result, two of the show places of the entire length of the Mississippi River, with Belle Grove remaining the largest antebellum home across the entire American South when the war broke out.⁵³ Both Randolph and Andrews, moving to

Figure 4. Three Phases of Destrehan Plantation

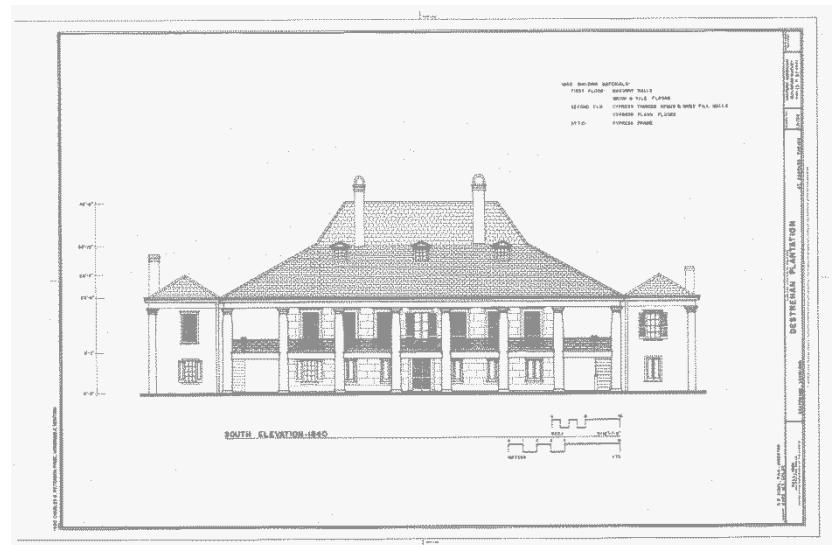
Destrehan Plantation House as it appeared in the Creole style when originally constructed in 1787 by Charles Paquet. (Courtesy of HABS)



In the 1790's the Destrehan family added the adjoining *garçonnières* to help accommodate their fourteen children. (Courtesy of HABS)

⁵³ Longwood Plantation, owned by Haller Nutt, cotton planter, south of Natchez, Mississippi measured more square footage than Andrews' Belle Grove but Dr. Nutt cancelled construction by his Philadelphia architect when the war broke out; it was never completed.

(Figure 4 continued). In the 1840's, Destrehan's son-in-law, Pierre Rost added the columns and other Greek Revival features that appeared in the third phase of renovation. (Courtesy of HABS)

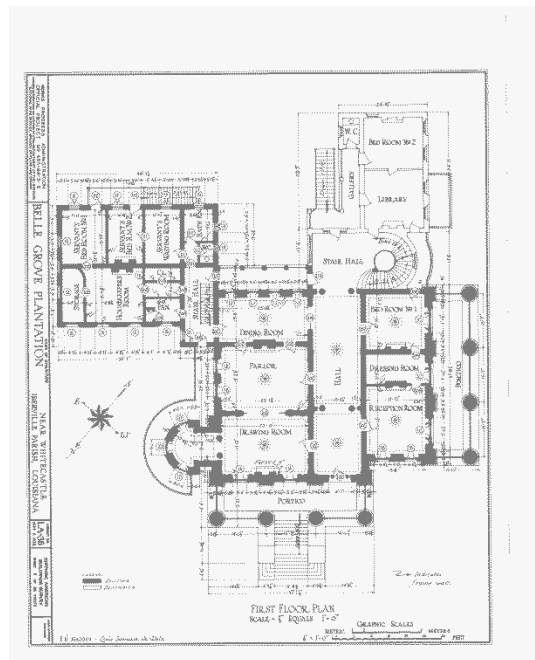


Louisiana from Virginia (Randolph arriving via Mississippi) made fortunes as sugar planters, enabling them to build these massive modern homes through the use of slave labor which significantly cut the costs of construction.

Both Nottoway and Belle Grove follow a similar floor plan, with one architectural historian referring to them as “fraternal twins,” and tradition states that these two men built them with a competitive spirit in mind, challenging one another to build the grandest manor house along the Mississippi.⁵⁴ While Andrews’s Belle Grove beat out Nottoway initially, it did not survive the test of time, burning down in 1952; Nottoway remains open to visitors to this day. Howard, trained with James Dakin, builder of the Old State Capital in Baton Rouge before setting out on his own course and forming a partnership with Albert Diettel. Together they undertook the difficult task of designing and overseeing the construction of these two great structures. Records indicate that, on 8 June 1857, John Randolph contracted to pay Howard and Diettel handsomely to “design and prepare all proper and necessary drawings, specifications, and contracts between him and his workmen,” agreeing on the amount of \$1,250. They also agreed

⁵⁴ Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 237.

to purchase all materials required for the project and charge the same to Randolph without a commission. Two such examples show that Howard and Diettel charged Randolph \$1,289.25 for the purchase of railing and \$624 for the purchase of two flights of steps and the setting of the same by two men representing Newton Richards of New Orleans. Under this contract, Howard and Diettel possessed a great deal of control over the project and the ability to use Randolph's slave labor to complete the contract. Such unusual features for the period that helped Nottoway to achieve its position as a great antebellum showplace, even if only briefly, included a gas works for lighting in the house, a ten-pin bowling alley on the ground floor, and two water tanks under the roof that collected rain water and allowed for running water throughout the house



5. Belle Grove Photograph and Floor Plan

*Belle Grove Plantation house view
from the Mississippi River
(Courtesy of HABS)*

Belle Grove floor plan (Courtesy of HABS)

Several years earlier, between 1852 and 1855, Howard designed and constructed Belle Grove for John Andrews, who reportedly enjoyed a profit of \$97,000 from his 1856 sugar crop,

resulting in an asymmetrical plan and lavish materials and ornament in a style [called] Romantic Classicism.”⁵⁵ Truly a monstrosity at seventy-five rooms, John Andrews, by this time a widower, built Belle Grove for his five daughters at a reported cost of \$80,000. While Belle Grove contained seventy-five rooms officially, one architectural expert has stated that “careful study of the plans of both houses reveal Belle Grove contained only sixty-seven spaces-including stair halls, water closets, and baths; Nottoway was divided into fifty major spaces.”⁵⁶ During the decade in which Andrews and Randolph built these two homes, any “space” containing door or a window could be classified as a “room.” Both houses feature more than adequate living space and overshadowed the modest, yet elegant, homes that the Creole sugar planters had built during the prior decades.

Two other familiar examples of plantation architecture that illustrated the complicated social values during the antebellum period include Le Petit Versailles, built by Valcour Aime and Bon Sejour, more popularly Oak Alley, built by Jacques T  l  sphore Roman. Both prominent members of Creole sugar society and related by marriage, Aime and Roman built two iconic plantation homes of two differing styles.⁵⁷ Both men, typically stuck close to the Creole social elite instead of integrating in Anglo-American society, but Roman chose a design that featured certain Anglo architectural elements for his home. In addition to aiding several daughters in building their own showplaces along both banks of the river, Valcour Aime built his home, known as Le Petit Versailles that would become the place of historical legend.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Lane, 94.

⁵⁶ Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 245.

⁵⁷ Valcour Aime married Jacques T  l  sphore Roman’s sister, Josephine, in 1819.

⁵⁸ Aime’s plantation became a showplace for some of the legends of Louisiana’s planter aristocracy, including two stories that explain why Aime threw his golden place settings into the river. By one account, he did so after serving dinner to the future king of France, Louis Philippe to prevent anyone else from eating off of the

Expanding on a French colonial house already built on the property by his father, Aime worked to enlarge the residence to accommodate his growing family, always maintaining the Creole-style architecture with encircling gallery, doors that opened onto the gallery, and exterior staircases for the families to access the two levels.⁵⁹

Moving outside the dwelling house, to the plantation grounds, many distinct cultural characteristics ascend to the forefront that, generally speaking, indicate the ethnicity of the plantation's owner. Aside from the big house, the most distinguishing feature of a Louisiana sugar plantation was, of course, the sugarhouse. As visitors and settlers moved upriver, coming to the deck of the steamship to observe the plantations as they floated past, they usually saw the dwelling house at the front of the plantation and, behind it, the sugarhouse, with its chimney rising tall into the air. If they travelled during the months of November or December, they most assuredly saw smoke billowing from the chimney and a flurry of activity surrounding the sugarhouse as cane made its way into the yard around the sugarhouse, ready for processing. When visitors looked closer, however, they might also observe the outbuildings that appeared on every plantation, serving almost as a little independent town, serving the needs of the master, his or her family, and the slaves. These buildings often helped to distinguish the ethnicity of the masters and their family.

Rehder, in his thorough geographic and archaeological examination of the Louisiana sugar plantation landscape, hinted that, aside from the habitation and the plantation set-up, "the

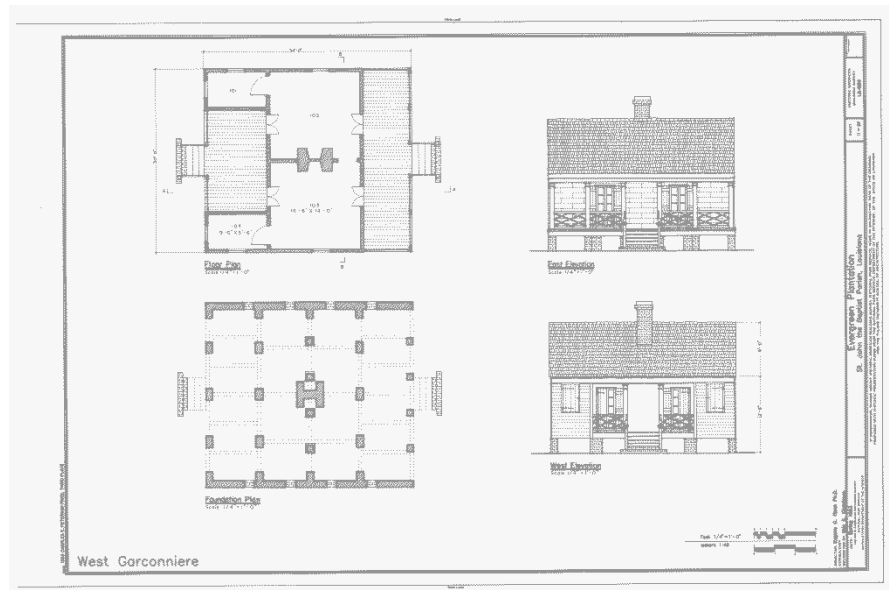
tableware that served royalty. The other legend states that he threw them into the river so that the Union forces could not confiscate them. Oral tradition and family lore have likely fabricated both stories which seek to romanticize the planter class. While conducting an excellent architectural study, Marc Matrana's *Lost Plantations of the South* gets bogged down in these types of legends and helps to repeat them for future generations. Matrana discusses Aime and the incident with the tableware on page 183.

⁵⁹ Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1820-1840*, 149-154; Roulhac B. Toledano, "Louisiana's Golden Age: Valcour Aime in St. James Parish," *Louisiana History* 10 (Summer 1969), 211-224.

remaining landscape elements-in barns, sheds, stores, roads, fields-contain insufficient [diagnostic features] for a reliable cultural association.”⁶⁰ But where planters did indicate their cultural identity lay in the outbuildings closer to the house, most notably, the Creole *garçonnière* and *pigeonniers*. These buildings, distinct to Louisiana, typically stood within the plantation yard flanking the house and they most commonly appeared on plantations owned by Creole slaveholders. The occasional outlier to this rule did occur in several instances, for example Duncan Kenner’s Ashland Plantation but the master had distinct connections to Creole society, indicating an affinity for certain elements of Francophone architecture and plantation design.

The *garçonnière*, the root French word “*garçon*” meaning “boy,” acted as a place where unmarried men lived,

serving essentially as a bachelor pad for young Creoles who had to move out of the house in order to learn independence but still wanted to remain on his parents’ plantation grounds. They often



6. The *garçonnière* at Evergreen House (Courtesy of HABS)

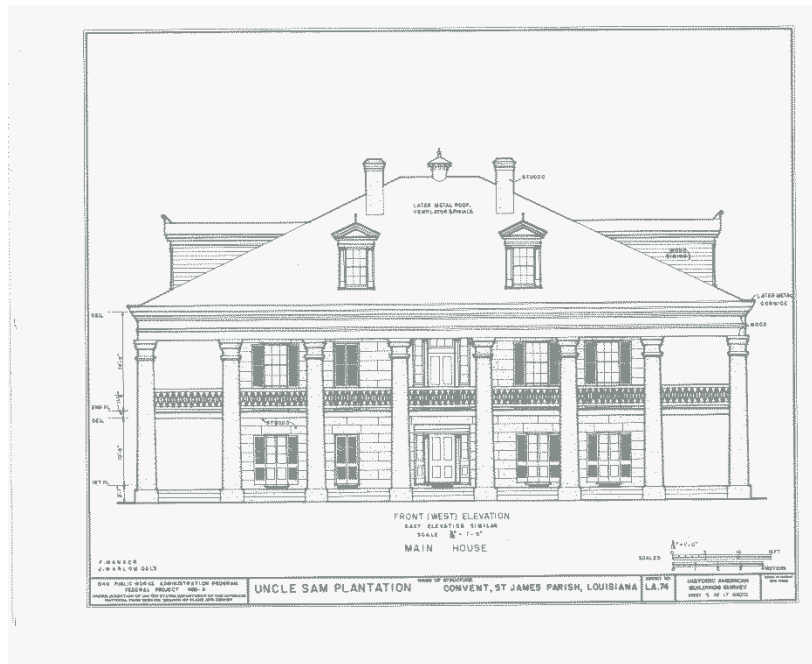
looked like stand-alone cottages and some, for example, the one on the grounds of Houmas Plantation, took on more unusual features. Typically, they featured a very simple design with one or two

⁶⁰ Rehder, 64.

floors and several rooms built in a square pattern, much like Creole big houses. These buildings provided privacy for a young man during his formative years of adolescence and beyond; it also freed up room in the main house for the master, younger children, and any visitors that might pass through the area.

One of the most iconic plantation complexes that arose during the period, Pierre August

Samuel Fagot’s *Constancia*, more commonly known today as *Uncle Sam*, provides the perfect example of the symmetrical use of *garçonnière* and *pigeonniers*. The main house resembled a large Greek temple and the flanking buildings all resembled smaller versions. The result featured a design that



7. *Constancia* Plantation House

“effectively framed the main house, [with] two *garçonnières*, two offices, two *pigeonniers*, a stable, and carriage house,” within a 300- by 500-foot yard enclosure.⁶¹ Fagot, possessing a refined taste and desiring to stand out chose to forego the traditional square *pigeonniers*, building instead “octagonal *pigeonniers* thirty feet in height [that] flanked the outer corners of the rear court—each with storage chambers on the first level and pigeon cotes on the upper floors under

⁶¹ Daspit *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 170-174.

roofs which curved to form high peaks culminating in weathervanes.”⁶²

Uniquely, Fagot built his entire plantation complex, one of the largest in the American South, using Greek Revival architecture even though Fagot had come to Louisiana from France. But by the time he



Figure 8. Constanca Pigeonnier (Courtesy of HABS)

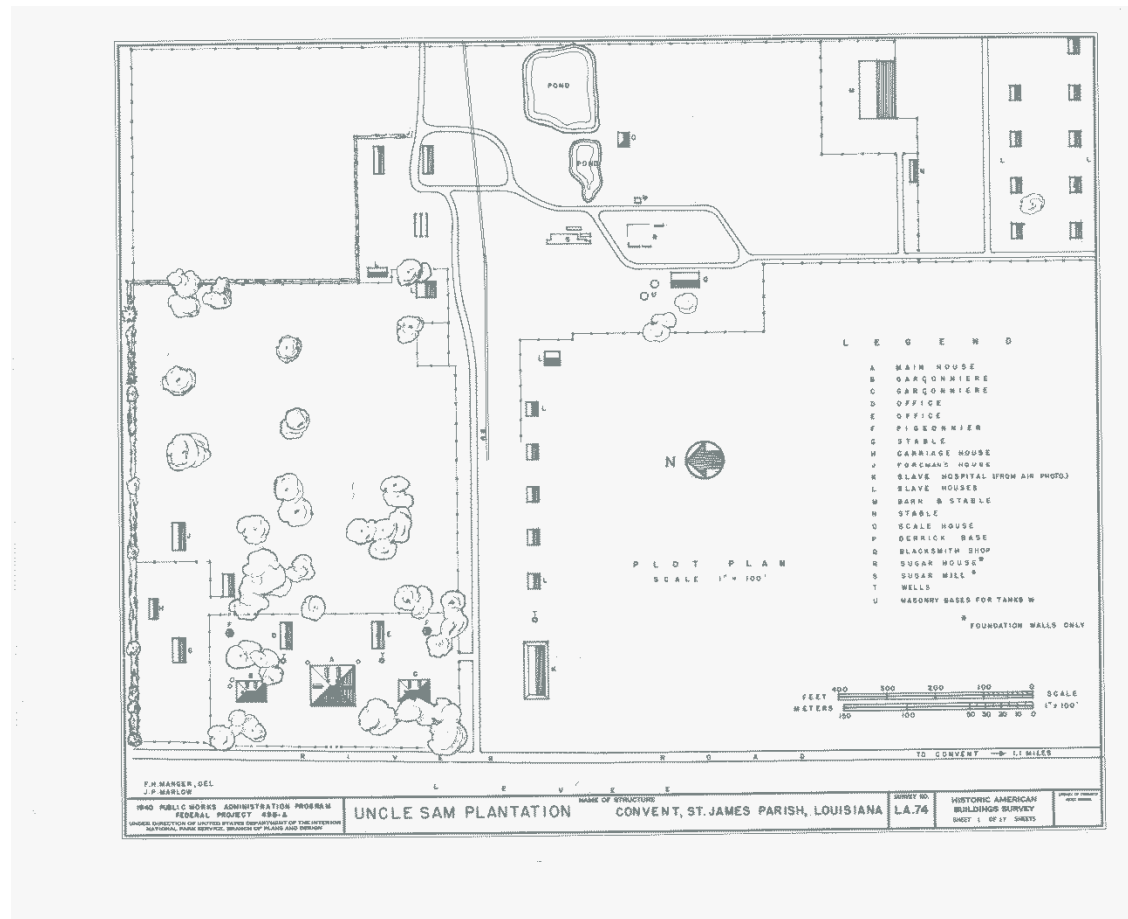


Figure 9. Constanca Plantation Layout (Courtesy of HABS)

⁶² Ibid.

began his 6-year, \$100,000 construction project, the markedly Anglo architectural style had achieved greater prominence in Louisiana.⁶³ Creole architecture remained important to many throughout the period but the American style certainly ascended in popularity with many planters during the period.

The arrangement of the buildings themselves also helped to diagnose the ethnicity of the plantation owner because in this world “Geometry [became] culturally important because linear settlements are identified with original French plantations and block-shaped settlements have been traced to Anglo plantation sources.”⁶⁴ Rehder describes traditionally Creole linear settlement patterns as “alignments of plantation buildings set perpendicular, or at right angles, to streams” while “Block-shaped plantations with squares gridded by streets have an Anglo-American identity.”⁶⁵ The notion that one can largely determine the ethnicity of the owner by the way in which he or she chose to lay out their plantation indicates a fascinating source for study that provides some insight into how the slaveholder saw the function and purpose of the plantation.

Rehder held up Madewood Plantation, Thomas Pugh’s Bayou Lafourche home, as the most emblematic of Anglo-American design. One of the most extraordinary big houses that remains today, Madewood featured a block-pattern design; “Tidewater mansion with a front-facing gable, a central hallway, end chimneys, Georgian symmetry, and Greek revival ornamentation;” the family graveyard on the property, a signifier of Protestantism; and the grounds contain pine and pecan trees, a feature that Rehder argued, while seemingly irrelevant,

⁶³ Ibid., 170.

⁶⁴ Rehder, 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 64.

actually denotes an Anglo-American identity.⁶⁶ One should also note that Henry Howard designed and oversaw the construction of Madewood Plantation, a fact that becomes noticeable when compared to Randolph's Nottoway and Andrews's Belle Grove due to a shared tendency toward Greek Revival architecture based primarily on the implementation of columns, a central hall, and symmetry and proportion of design.⁶⁷

On the other hand, Whitney Plantation, the Creole plantation built by Jean-Jacques Haydel, provided a reliable example of a linear plantation design. The house stood on the west bank of the Mississippi River and all other buildings fanned out away from the river. Early nineteenth-century conveyance records indicate that, in 1820, the plantation contained "two *maisons de maitre* [master's dwellings] (one is a two-story structure), kitchen, storehouses, mills for rice and maize, a sugarhouse with a steam-driven mill, purgery, *cases a Negres* (Negro cabins), stables, and so forth," all aligned in a linear formation like long avenues instead of a grid-like block pattern.⁶⁸ A later purchase by Jean-Jacque's son, Marcelin, indicate that he added onto the original inheritance from his father, purchasing nearby property that also contained a dwelling house, kitchen, storehouse, two *pigeonniers*, and two slave cabins, a modest tract but nonetheless, a tract that enabled him to expand his holdings and solidify stability for the ensuing decades. Not until after the Civil War, when Louisiana's sugar society turned upside down did the Haydel family, in 1867, sell the property to the Bradish Johnson Company.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 286.

⁶⁷ Detailed descriptions of Belle Grove, Madewood, and Nottoway can be found in Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 245-253, 60-63, and 237-245 respectively.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 259-263. A purgery refers to the drying room where hogsheads of granulated sugar rest, awaiting shipment. While there, gravity often drained the molasses out of the casks of sugar into troughs that slaves or sugar makers would, in turn, barrel and ship to market. Slaveholders typically built the purgery into or onto the main sugarhouse.

Observing the ways that plantation owners laid out their plantations helped to indicate how the owner thought. Creole planters had long adapted to the narrow riverfronts that opened up at angles toward the back of the property widening the farther back the land went. Americans preferred a set-up that looked and acted almost like a small agro-industrial town, hinting that their entrepreneurship perhaps held the sharper edge of capitalism. In other words, the Creole linear pattern adapted to the environment while the Anglo-Americans attempted to meld the environment to their will and their tendency toward capitalism.

Examining the geography, colonial history, and architectural evidence of Louisiana helps set the stage for the study of the society that developed out of conflict in Louisiana as two dissimilar ethnic groups with differing goals and viewpoints of themselves attempted to forge a new society together. Only the great American conflict, the Civil War, succeeded in ultimately bringing them together by forcing them to focus on their similarities, whiteness and power. The space between the battle of New Orleans and the peace several decades and thousands of miles away at Appomattox, Virginia featured one of the wealthiest empires on American soil where Anglo-American planters who claimed, and attempted to tame, the wilderness in search of greater profits while the Creole planters focused their efforts on wealth for the purpose of maintaining their familial dynasty for generations to come.

CHAPTER 2
“OUR INTERACTION WAS SUBJECT TO MANY...MISTAKES”: CULTURAL
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CREOLE AND ANGLO-AMERICAN POPULATIONS

As Joseph Holt Ingraham approached New Orleans, he relished in the opportunity and the exotic land that lay out before him, writing “We are now within twenty miles of the city of Frenchmen, and garlic soups, steamboats and yellow fever, negroes and quadroons, hells and convents, soldiers and slaves, and things, and people of every language and kindred, nation and tribe upon the face of the earth.”¹ Countless Americans poured into this very same land with the same astonishment and wonder of any outsider during the nineteenth century, hoping to make their fortune but having to negotiate the “foreign” lands before them. The cultural makeup of the Americans that came to Louisiana and the Creoles who already lived there would influence the society that developed as a sugar planting class in southern Louisiana for generations and understanding what made those cultures unique helps to inform the decisions and choices that they made in that process.

The heart of any culture lies in the strength of one’s ethnic pride and the choices that an ethnic community makes help to bind it together through shared customs and cultural characteristics. Education, religion, entertainment and pastimes, political tendencies, and the viewpoints of one ethnic group toward another give strong indications of the cultural identity of any given people, and Louisiana’s southern sugar parishes provide a magnificent backdrop for the examination of the cultural crossroads between Creole and Anglo-American sugar planters. Even as they both sought profits and while both groups participated within the broader slaveholding social class, they maintained their cultural biases vehemently, often preferring to interact with the other group only at the convenience and benefit of their own. Of course, as in

¹ Joseph H. Ingraham, *The South-West, by a Yankee* 2 Vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835), 1:73.

any society, some exceptions to the rule muddled the overall picture until the American Civil War and the abolition of American slavery, Creoles and Anglo planters often looked at one another from a comfortable distance, preferring to adhere tenaciously to their traditional customs and pastimes.²

Examining the way that a society views education often provides a useful lens through which to study the values inherent in the people of any given group. This concept certainly helps to explain the cultural environment in the state of Louisiana during the period 1815-1865. As the two ethnic communities, Creole and Anglo-American, clashed during these decades, they often maintained differing views on the necessity, implementation, and overall value of education, both public and private. Creoles and Anglo sugar planters seemed to have placed similar value on the necessity of education but the forum in which and degree to which they sought to achieve this education deviated between the two ethnic groups; they often attempted differing paths to educate their children. Living on the frontier of the American Southwest for much of the period,

² For examples of cultural analyses of the planter classes, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional & Intellectual Life* (New York: The Universal Library, 1959); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Charles W. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003); William Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990); Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989). Several of these works deal with the concept of class but no scholar has previously studied the cultural characteristics of the planting class from an ethnic perspective to help determine the influences in their slaveholding practices and the development of slave society in any particular region of the American South. Several works have used ethnicity to examine the slaves themselves, most notably Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992) but none has done so thoroughly with consideration of the slaveholders' ethnicity.

Louisiana residents often lacked access to institutional education. Some chose to send their sons and daughters to a boarding school and/or university while others selected various tutors and in-home educators that lived with the families themselves. “Whether it was to prepare sons for careers in agriculture, business, the professions, or the military, or daughters for their roles as wives and as the initial tutors of their young children,” William Scarborough correctly illustrates, “virtually all of the planter nabobs...deemed a solid educational foundation indispensable to success.”³

The historical record contains an abundance of examples that help to illustrate the importance of education to many individuals’ families, but they most often occurred in the form of local, informal, or private education. Choosing to keep the children near the plantation, many slaveholders, especially Creoles, opted to hire tutors that lived on the plantation or, on occasion, send them to temporary boarding schools where they would live with a mistress, learning the important lessons of the day. Often these lessons included French language, dance, music, and writing, the curriculum that Creole planters held in highest regard, believing they would better prepare their children for entering into the adult social world and continuing the family’s dynasty in Louisiana.

Formal education did not achieve any notable level of success in Louisiana until after the Louisiana Purchase because the Anglo-Americans, who flooded the state, often pushed the efforts to institutionalize education, something they had done in New England and along the Atlantic Seaboard for several generations. The influx of American slaveholders threatened the Creoles who feared that their culture and influence would weaken as a result of the torrent of new values and customs. Defensively, they began fueling efforts to increase educational

³ Scarborough, 65.

opportunities with a Francophone curriculum in the sugar parishes, even outside the city of New Orleans. Valcour Aime, always the progressive, forward-thinking Creole slaveholder, led efforts for the foundation of a college that would teach Creole children in an environment conscious of and sensitive to their family's values. Chartered in 1831, Jefferson College became the embodiment of efforts by Aime and his brother-in-law, Governor André Bienvenu Roman. They hoped this college would replace the failed College of Orleans and provide a French-speaking alternative to the College of Louisiana, founded by Anglo-American slaveholders in the town of Jackson. Roman and Aime led efforts to raise subscriptions to the college, obtaining twelve thousand dollars from St. James Parish sugar planters alone. The governor-as most Louisianans called him-and a noted Whig used his influence and belief in internal improvements to aid the chances of success, funneling state funds into the private school annually. With the finances in place, construction began in the next year on the plantation of Jean Vavasseur who had given his land for the purpose.⁴

By 1841 the college peaked at an enrollment of 238 students, employing twenty-nine staff members but the bullish beginning would not continue for long. The next year saw a damaging fire, the end of state funding during the administration of Democratic Governor Alexander Mouton, and general economic difficulty in the region, but Jefferson College continued to hold on, albeit barely, for seventeen more years. Finally, at the end of the 1858-1859 school year, Valcour Aime purchased the college before deeding it to his sons-in-law, advising them to sell shares in the college. Shortly after the war, and the end of slavery's opulence, the college became the property of the Marist Fathers who operated it as a Catholic school before ownership transferred to the Jesuit Fathers who used it as a retreat site; it remains

⁴ Roulhac B. Toledano, "Louisiana's Golden Age: Valcour Aime in St. James Parish," *Louisiana History* 10 (Summer 1969): 211-224, 218.

in operation for this purpose today. Not everyone supported formal education however. Several Creole planters argued that they would rather save the money in order to grow the legacy that they left to their children. When well-known British lawyer and geologist travelled through Louisiana he learned from a Creole planter that “he did not send his boy to college...’because it would cost me 450 dollars a year, and I shall be able to leave my son three more negroes when I die, but not incurring that expense.’”⁵

Some American planters used the educational opportunities to arm them with the tools to interact with the Creole element of Louisiana sugarcane society more easily because many planting patriarchs believed that education held the key to integrating into the slaveholding society of sugar planters. Even those Anglo settlers who adhered stringently to American ideals understood the advantages of communicating with the local Creole planters and farmers in their native language. The Palfreys, a prominent Louisiana sugar family with its origins in Boston, certainly understood the possibilities that a French-language education could provide. Arriving in New Orleans very shortly after the turn of the century, John Palfrey established a mercantile business before entering into the planter class by 1810. After his initial planting venture went bankrupt, he finally settled his family near St. Martinville and worked to integrate as seamlessly as possible into the surrounding society. John Palfrey wrote to an acquaintance about the choices he had made for his sons’ education, indicating that he had sent Henry William to “Mr. Visineir’s who keeps a French school to learn French, and Edward lives with Mr. Chase the clergyman of this place who keeps an excellent school and under whose tuition he improves very

⁵ Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1855), 2:158.

fast, their expense is very great, but the advantages resulting from their situation will amply compensate.”⁶

Over a year later, while settling into the new Palfrey home in the “Atacapas” region, Palfrey preached directly to his son, the recommendation “to endeavor to progress in your knowledge of the French language and also to acquire the Spanish, which will probably be of great use to you when you grow up.”⁷ He placed such importance on immersion in the French language that he placed two of his sons, William Taylor and George, in the homes of two nearby Frenchmen, Captain Benois de St. Clair and Captain De Benelet, respectively in August 1815.⁸ Palfrey continued to favor education in the French language as a way to integrate into the society that had existed for many years, and he used it as a springboard to become one of the leading sugar planters in the area.

On the other hand, one historian of Louisiana has argued that “the fact remains that [Creoles] used their French heritage less as a source of spiritual strength than as a stick with which to beat the Americans. The vast majority of Creoles, blinded by resentment at the growing influence of their American neighbors, refused even to consider bilingual education and by this stance condemned their children to parochialism and isolation.” Liliane Crété suggested that this helped ensure that the two social groups would not come together entirely because, over time, “the Creoles’ attachment to their native language began to border on fanaticism.”⁹ A letter to one of the younger Destrehan boys while attending college in Chicago illustrates this point.

⁶ James Palfrey to Mark Pickard, January 25, 1811, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁷ James Palfrey to Henry Palfrey, April 15, 1812, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁸ James Palfrey to Thomas L. Harman, August 16, 1815, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁹ Liliane Crété, *Daily Life in Louisiana, 1815-1830* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 126.

Azby Destrehan's guardian, Fèlix Larue scolded his young charge, stating "Perhaps you will be astonished, my dear Azby, to see that, despite your request, I am writing you in French. That is because it is not only easier for me but also because I have learned from you that you have nearly forgotten it, and I want you to get back to it and to do so with ardor. So bear in mind, my good friend, that you would be the only member of your family who did not know French and that you even have a few relatives whose affection you can nevertheless expect but with whom you could not chat because they do not know English." Even worse, Larue continues, would come the time, "when you are allowed to come be with us and go out in society, where you will find the prettiest young ladies, the nicest, the most fashionable young Creole girls speak English more or less well but will certainly find much more agreeable if you converse with them in their own idiom."¹⁰ Destrehan began attempts to correspond more regularly in his family's native language.

Evidence of both his tremendous personal wealth and the emphasis that he placed on education, John H. Randolph "engaged a tutress for his children, [who] is very highly recommended from Vermont, accomplished to teach Latin, French, English, arithmetic, grammar, geography, etc with music at a salary of \$500 per annum."¹¹ Additionally, Randolph hired a musical instructor for his children and a "Mr. Plifsy" to serve as a "dancing master."¹² On many occasions, even the Americans employed foreign-born instructors for their family members in music and dance. According to a fine study by a music historian, the family of Judge Thomas Butler helps "illustrate the role of foreign-born and ethnic labeling within the

¹⁰ Felix Larue to Azby Destrehan, July 23, 1849, Destrehan Family Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

¹¹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, January 1, 1848, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

¹² Expense Book, 1847-1853, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

regional music culture.” Judge Butler encouraged the art of music in his family and his children learned to play the flute, violin, in addition to taking dancing lessons in their home. They continued their music education at school and his sons attended northern colleges while his daughters spent time in several New Orleans boarding schools. “Although not a typical antebellum Louisiana family,” Ostendorf writes, “the Butler plantation household reveals common attitudes toward music in the region and exposes the activities of the more emblematic purveyors of the region’s music culture, thus allowing an exploration of the relationship between music and ethnicity”¹³ Musical interests would continue to dominate the ways in which the two ethnic communities communicated with one another through dance, concerts, balls, etc. for the remainder of this period.

As American slaveholders continued to move into Iberville Parish below Baton Rouge, the Butler family rose to prominence across the territory. Based in what some considered the “American sector,” St. Francisville, the Butler family came to dominate the society and politics of the local area up to the Civil War. Colonel Edward Butler, (husband to George Washington’s grandniece), wrote to his father Judge Thomas Butler, the family patriarch based at their Cottage Plantation home just east of St. Francisville, about his interest in the French language. While Thomas Butler lived among fellow Anglo-American planters for the most part, Edward Butler found himself entrenched among both Anglo and Creole planters at his Dunboyne Plantation home in Iberville Parish,. Edward’s letters, which provide some excellent social commentary for the period, especially on the notion of education. Writing to his father in 1839, Edward asked

¹³ Ann Ostendorf, *Sounds American: National Identity and Music Cultures of the Lower Mississippi River Valley, 1800-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 93. Ostendorf’s fascinating study dovetails very nicely with my own work in this study. She successfully blends a study of all ethnic groups in the Lower Mississippi River Valley to show the blend that resulted as the differing communities came together; much of that analysis necessarily focuses on the Creoles and Americans. I would direct readers to her fine study for a deeper understanding of the role that music played in this ethnic tension.

“Do you want a private tutor? The young gentlemen have been recommended to me from the North (one by Professor Silliman and the others by a young West Point acquaintance), and, if you would like to have one of them, I will write to him accordingly. I prefer the latter, on account of his knowledge of French.”¹⁴ Clearly, Edward considered the possibility that he could obtain a tutor with a solid knowledge of French beneficial, especially considering the \$400 annual fee to obtain him.

Those American slaveholders who wanted their children to achieve a mastery of the French language possessed several enticing options. Aside from a private tutor to educate the children in the home or the immersion of a son or daughter with a local French-speaking family, parents could send their children to a boarding school or institution for education. One advertisement promoted the Saint Charles Institute for Young Ladies, an institution offering instruction in either French or English. The handbill highlighted the school’s curriculum regarding language that would “render pupils familiar with [the] French and English [that] they are required to speak these languages alternately and by an excellent method, the American scholars succeed promptly in speaking the French language, and becoming familiar with its difficulties.”¹⁵ This small, local institution, and others like it worked to break down the barriers between the two ethnic factions that existed in the decades following the Louisiana Purchase. Gone were the days when government officials, including Governor W. C. C. Claiborne could not communicate with the majority of the population in their native language; the future lay in both groups understanding one another’s language so that they could discuss more pressing issues going forward as they worked to create a society together.

¹⁴ E. G. W. Butler to Thomas Butler, September 17, 1839, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁵ Handbill for Saint Charles Institute for Young Ladies, undated, Kenner, Duncan F. Papers, LSU.

Typically, planters who sent their children to college outside of Louisiana hoped that they would obtain a classical education. Many attended school in New England where they could achieve a more rounded approach to their schooling efforts. During his formative years, William J. Minor, for example, travelled through New England, writing to his mother about his trip and his efforts learn languages. Writing to his mother, Katherine, at home in Natchez, he mentioned that he planned to go to Philadelphia “and remain until the fall as I can there board in a French family, and obtain the best teachers of the French and Spanish languages, neither of which advantages can at present be had in N[ew] Haven,” Connecticut, a popular destination for many children of the southern planting class.¹⁶ A month later, Minor informed his mother of his motivations for studying with a French family, stating that his “reason for wishing to have a native French-man, is that I believe no foreigner, capable of teaching the correct pronunciation of a language, so difficult as the French.”¹⁷ Minor certainly understood the necessity of acquiring more than just a working knowledge of the French language; he knew that he would have to communicate in French effectively in order to operate as a businessman in Louisiana’s sugar industry.

One of the descendents of Jean Noël Destrehan, his grand-son, Nicholas Azby Destrehan, the last male heir of the prominent Creole family, found himself stuck in the North when his father died in 1848. When his father died, fifteen-year-old Azby Destrehan, was attending St. Mary of the Lake College in Chicago and later Georgetown College in Washington. His appointed guardian, Fèliz Larue, the husband of Azby’s cousin Louise, wrote him several letters to keep him abreast of his current predicament. Unfortunately for the younger Destrehan, Larue

¹⁶ William J. Minor to Katherine Minor, June 19, 1827, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁷ William J. Minor to Katherine Minor, July 7, 1829, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

informed him that the inheritance “is less than you expected, for I know how people have exaggerated your father’s fortune,” but he attempted to soothe Destrehan, encouraging him to “take my advice: should such be the case, do not be disappointed or sorry. On the contrary thank God for the immense advantage He had given you compared to so many men who come into this world having nothing but their arms and brains to make their way with.”¹⁸ This almost certainly provided little solace to Destrehan, however, because he stood to lose even more money if he returned to Louisiana too quickly; his father had devised a clever clause “just a few days before his death that, to put to rest a worry that disturbed his final moments, he placed in a codicil his ultimate wish that [Azby] remain outside of this state until [age] 21, on pain of forfeiting two-thirds of,” his inheritance.¹⁹ To circumvent this rule, Larue and Destrehan had to apply for special permission from the state legislature. A legislator, and fellow family member, Pierre Rost, assured Larue that they would likely grant Destrehan this wish but that it also hinged upon the acceptance of his family members, and he had a particularly egregious relative who would rather take charge of the young Destrehan’s forfeiture than see him back in the state so quickly.

Often planters, both Creole and American, chose to send their children to school several states-or an ocean-away in order to expose them to worldly values and a better opportunity for the education that their parents deemed vital to their adulthood. Typically, the sons ventured away to college while the daughters attended local boarding schools nearby or took advantage of in-home tutors to learn the life skills that they would need to become a wife and/or plantation owner. As Scarborough illustrated in *Masters of the Big House*, many planters sent their sons north to attend school in New England. Colonel Thomas Butler, who served on the Board of

¹⁸ Felix Larue to Azby Destrehan, August 30, 1849, Destrehan Family Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

¹⁹ Felix Larue to Azby Destrehan, May 12, 1849, Destrehan Family Papers.

Trustees of the Anglo-founded College of Louisiana in Jackson, chose to send his son, Robert, to attend Yale University in the 1840s. The Butlers placed significant emphasis on institutional education and in 1854 Edward Butler, grandson of Colonel Thomas Butler had accrued \$390.03 in expenses that his father, Pierce Butler, paid to the College of St. James in Maryland.

While many Creole parents sent their children to school in France, believing that studying abroad provided a more proper education, several chose to keep them stateside. Ernest Pedesclaux, while attending College of St. Mary in Maryland, wrote to his brother, Philippe about the tribulations of learning English. “My letter is very short but excuse me, as it is the first one I have written in English, I do not thin[k] myself able to write a longer one,” he laments, requesting his brother to “please to tell me if there is many faults in the letter for you know yourself, I will let no body examine my letters.”²⁰ Pedesclaux, whose family would soon forge an alliance with that of the Landrys, clearly understood the necessity of learning English in 1844, but did not necessarily enjoy the process. Truly illustrating the complex decisions made by a family in the interest of the children’s education, Louis V. Landry, while attending Georgetown College, wrote to his brother Prosper Landry in Paris where he attended school, mentioning that one of their relatives, “accompanied by her niece Felicie had gone to the Nazareth convent Bardstown,” Kentucky.²¹ The Landry family certainly sought far and wide for higher education, perhaps indicating why other sugar planters respected the Landry family so highly.

Oftentimes the religious nature of a school played a significant role in choosing the institution for the education of one’s young family members. Both Catholic Creoles and Protestant Americans had plenty of access to educational opportunities based on religious

²⁰ Ernest Pedesclaux to Philippe Pedesclaux, September 19, 1844, Landry-Pedesclaux Family Papers, LSU.

²¹ Louis V. Landry to Prosper Landry, June, 1847, Landry-Pedesclaux Family Papers, LSU.

instruction. One of the preeminent institutions to arise out of this period, the University of the South manifested both; a southern Episcopalian's want to have a southern-centric institution and the desire that the church involve itself in that education.²² One of the most colorful figures of the antebellum and Civil War period, Leonidas K. Polk, an Episcopal bishop and (briefly) a Louisiana sugar planter, played an integral part in the establishment of the University of the South. Alexander Pugh mentioned Polk's visit to his area 9 June 1859 on a "tour for the Southern University."²³ Records do not indicate if Polk wooed Pugh successfully or not but others clearly supported the cause. John Randolph made a payment of \$1,080 to the University of the South 16 January 1860.²⁴ One's choice of educational opportunities played a great role for the continuation of cultural characteristics but perhaps even more important than education, religion dominated the split between Creoles and Americans during this period.

Like any community throughout the world, religion helped to shape the make-up and identity of Louisiana sugar society. Religion came to play a vital role in shaping the society of sugar planters while helping to promote the cultural divide between the almost unanimously Catholic Creoles and Protestant Anglo-Americans. The religious differences between the two ethnic factions helped fuel the split between the two groups who often viewed the cultural chasm between them as a sign of their impregnable differences. Protestantism took several decades to make inroads into Louisiana, only beginning to realize any success after the Louisiana Purchase and the flood of American settlers began to compete numerically with the Creoles. One's

²² This institution, of course, still exists today as Sewanee.

²³ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), June 9, 1859, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU. Leonidas Polk also established a plantation for a period of time on Bayou Lafourche called Leighton Plantation shortly after becoming the 1st bishop of the Diocese of Louisiana, formed in 1838. For an excellent biography of Polk, see Joseph H. Parks, *General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A.: The Fighting Bishop* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962).

²⁴ Account Sheet for June 1859-June 1860, Page 3, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

personal religious ideology often helped to dictate his or her interaction with the environment, with slavery, and with one another, creating a unique avenue for exploration of the differences between Catholics and Protestants in Louisiana that helped to define the cultural problems between Creoles and Anglo-Americans who encroached upon them.

Marius St. Colomb Bringier wrote to his mother, Aglae the utter importance of religion to society, noting his happiness that his sister, Rosella “is thinking about her religious duties.” The younger Bringier declared “we have a real need for religion and it is incontestable that the Catholic religious beliefs ease the moments of pain and sorrow that encompass, as it were, so much of human existence. Happy is he whose haughty pride can adapt itself to religious beliefs, for even in his misfortunes religion can provide him with a consolation, perhaps the greatest, that is the idea and the thought of a reward in after life.” Clearly Bringier believed that religion provided the bedrock of any respectable civilization.²⁵ The planters’ letters often speak of religion and the importance of maintaining one’s piety in order to seek guidance for the decisions he or she makes on a daily basis. Both Catholic Creoles and Protestant Americans adhered to this concept, holding religious trappings in high personal regard. The differences between the two groups lay in the interpretation of those religions and the differing manifestations of what it means to exhibit pious behavior.

While many Catholic Creoles adhered to strict religious beliefs and maintained the vitality of the Roman Catholic faith, their failure to stick to a stringent and complete observance of the Sabbath created a cultural divide. American travelers and settlers viewed the activities on Sundays, both inside the city of New Orleans and in the surrounding countryside, as a barbarous

²⁵ M. S. Bringier to his mother Mrs. M. D. Bringier, May 19, 1849, as quoted in Craig A. Bauer, *Creole Genesis: The Bringier Family and Antebellum Plantation Life in Louisiana* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 2011), 35 from a letter provided to him by L’Hermitage owner, Robert Judice.

tendency that signaled the ascendancy of Mammon.²⁶ Cr  t   suggested that, perhaps “, the American failed to appreciate the Creoles’ buoyant humor and joie de vivre, nor did they share their devotion to dancing and other forms of revelry. In addition, they strongly disapproved of participating in such pastimes on Sunday, the Lord’s Day,” but the Creoles’ concept of religion inspiring cheerfulness and happiness did not dovetail with the old, traditional Puritan sentiment. She continues by arguing that “The Americans hoped that their upright example would lead the Creoles to mend their ways,” but the opposite held true as Protestants continued to respect the Sabbath while relaxing their views of dancing and boisterous entertainment the remainder of the week.²⁷

Aside from the seemingly unscrupulous Creoles, the well-ordered Protestant Anglos also feared that a liberal Catholic tradition during the Spanish and French period would encourage racial unrest. In order to prevent racial unrest and promote paternalism to achieve a more harmonious society in a state that contained such a significant number of slaves, the Spanish administration under Baron de Carondelet encouraged a marked advance toward liberalism because the governor believed that he had a duty to regulate slavery by protecting slaves from the slave owners.²⁸ African slaves had attended Sunday mass for decades at St. Louis Cathedral,

²⁶ The concept of Mammon derives from the Biblical tales of greed and material wealth and the sinfulness of adhering to principals of material things rather than a high regard for the supreme deity through respect and deference. For an adequate description of how this idea relates to early travelers’ views of New Orleans, in which the author defends New Orleans as a city dealing with the same problems as all urban centers in the United States during the period, see Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718-1819* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999).

²⁷ Cr  t  , 207-209.

²⁸ For an analysis of the Spanish period, consult Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1763-1803* (Durham, NC Duke University Press, 1997); Lawrence Powell, *The Accidental City: Improvising New Orleans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Ned Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008). This marked Spanish racial liberalism carried over into the American period when the American

and American planters feared the message that they learned from the priest during mass. The Anglo-American laws and customs inherent in the society that these new settlers attempted to create “were incompatible with the French-Spanish religious and legal traditions of [Louisiana] and resulted in a diversification, to some degree, in racial attitudes of whites toward blacks.”²⁹ Harriet Martineau, on her travels to New Orleans, commented on blacks’ access to Catholicism when she observed “among Catholics of this class only the most abject worship of things without meaning, and no comprehension whatever of symbols.” She found herself persuaded by the most enlightened aspects of religion in a symbolic sense more so than those who paid it literal worship. “I could not but think that if the undisguised story of Jesus were presented to these last, as it was to the fishermen of Galilee, and the peasants on the reedy banks of the Jordan,” she proffered, then “they would embrace a Christianity they, as slaves, never will and never can have, as its whole spirit is destructive of slavery.”³⁰ A full acceptance and access to the religious values of Christianity, Americans feared, threatened the very foundation of American slavery.

Thomas Hamilton, voiced his admiration for the Catholic Church in New Orleans and its role in accepting responsibility for the souls of slaves. Setting the contrast to Protestant churches with their neatly ordered congregations where barriers separated the slaves from the free people and arranged the classes, even within the white participants, he spoke glowingly of the Catholic Church in south Louisiana where “the prince and the peasant, the slave and his

administration continued to fear that the Spanish on their border (to the west and the east) would encourage slave rebellion and dissent in order to regain control of the Territory of Louisiana after the Louisiana Purchase. Governor Claiborne and Wade Hampton, who helped to suppress the 1811 slave revolt incorrectly blamed the Spanish for inciting the rebellion; the fear of Spanish racial policy grew out of the Spanish administration’s policies during its governance in the region 1763-1800.

²⁹ Lucius Ellsworth, Ed., *The Americanization of the Gulf Coast, 1803-1850* (Pensacola, FL: Historic Pensacola Preservation Board, 1971), 68.

³⁰ Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel 2 Vols.* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1838), 128-130.

master, kneel before the same altar, in temporary oblivion of all worldly distinctions. They come there but in one character, that of sinners.” Hamilton continued, explaining “from the hands of the Catholic priest, the poor slave receives all the consolations of religion...can it be wondered, therefore, that the slaves in Louisiana are all Catholics; that while the congregation of the Protestant Church consists of a few ladies, arranged in well cushioned pews, the whole floor of the extensive Cathedral should be crowded with worshippers of all colours and classes?”³¹ To some, this environment provided a sense of peace, knowing that all men and women could worship equally but when the American planters began pouring into Louisiana to make their fortune in sugar they feared that these freedoms would weaken the very foundation of slavery, encouraging dissent and creating an unhealthy environment-at least for the white slaveholder.

This notion helps to illustrate some of the inherent differences between Creoles and Anglo-Americans and their diverging views of Louisiana sugarcane society. The Creoles hoped to maintain a society more analogous to Sunday service at St. Louis Cathedral where all contributed to the success of society, not necessarily equally but in a more fluid environment. They looked at slaves as tools to achieve wealth and maintain the family’s dynastic influence in Louisiana, continuing to exhibit their conservative aristocratic aura in the face of the encroaching American planters. These Anglos, on the other hand, came into Louisiana with a much different concept of slave society. Slaves served the purpose of capitalism, simple as that. They sought to use Louisiana to spread the slave society as they saw it, an ordered and regulated hierarchical paternalistic society where everyone knew their position and only whites had access to the higher rungs of the ladder. They wanted to make as much money as they possibly could in Louisiana but, unlike the Creoles, they did so because they wanted to continue spreading this society,

³¹ Thomas Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1843), 344.

marked by the purchase of newer and larger plantations. Even though American planters came to Louisiana with enthusiasm, they always continued to look westward, eventually working vigorously to spread American slavery to Texas and beyond. The differing views of the purpose of slavery and sugarcane society appeared in the pews of the churches in all congregations across southern Louisiana.

While religion often served as a barrier between the two differing ethnic factions who saw the values inherent in their respective religions as proof of the character flaws that the “other” possessed, many Louisianans viewed religion as a doorway to opportunity and the potential integration into that society. Duncan Kenner, for example, one of the most esteemed of the American sugar planters, both before and after the Civil War, converted to Catholicism at an early age, perhaps to entice the attraction of his young bride, Anne Guillelmine Bringier (known to family as Nanine), daughter of Michel Doradou and Aglae Bringier.³² Elizabeth Aglae DuBourg, herself, had descended from a very devout Catholic family; her uncle and godfather, L’Abbé William DuBourg, served as the Catholic bishop of Louisiana the Floridas.³³ Clearly the Bringier family had committed themselves fully to the Catholic faith, and Duncan Kenner perhaps assumed conversion to Catholicism would only help his efforts to enter into the powerful Creole family. Additionally, Kenner learned to speak and write French, another characteristic that allowed him to establish himself on the Mississippi River among Creoles rather than having

³² At the age of sixteen, Anne Guillelmine Bringier, married a twenty-six-year-old Duncan Kenner. Traditionally, girls in the Creole community often married at a younger age than their American counterparts.

³³ “The Floridas” refers to the time when East and West Florida existed alongside one another. East Florida denoted the land that we call Florida today, including the Panhandle and stretching westward to the Perdido River while West Florida started at the Perdido River and ran westward to the Mississippi River, through the lower portions of modern-day Alabama and Mississippi as well as the portion of Louisiana east of the Mississippi River and north of Lake Ponchartrain. Today, this part of Florida is still referred to as the Florida Parishes.

to settle farther upriver toward Baton Rouge. For the remainder of his life, Duncan Kenner operated at the heart of the Creole sugar-planting power base.

The records do not indicate accurately the degree to which slaveholders regularly attended church, but one can decipher certain clues from the daily journals and logs of activity where they exist. Many planters, including James Bowman of St. Francisville, one of the prominent Anglo-American families who raised cotton and sugarcane maintained a pew rental at Grace Church, the beacon of the Episcopal Church in St. Francisville. The wife of Colonel Thomas Butler continued to pay pew rental fees as well, even after her husband's death.³⁴ Traversing the graveyard behind the church illustrates almost a perfect social stratum of East and West Feliciana families that dominated Anglo society during the period, intermarrying with one another and forming powerful economic alliances. Most planters in this region on the frontier of sugarcane society north of Baton Rouge remained Episcopalian, the religion that Scarborough suggests maintained dominance throughout the American South among the elite planters in his study.³⁵

Two of the more personal indicators of a community's ethnic and cultural customs, marriage and burial, most assuredly illustrated the marked differences between the Creoles and Anglo-Americans in Louisiana during this period. Church custom and doctrine drove the decisions of both when one observes where these sacraments took place. As Eliza Ripley points

³⁴ Mrs. Thomas Butler paid \$60 for the rental of two numbered pews in 1858 while James Bowman paid \$70 for a pew in 1860. See Pew Rental Receipt for the year 1858, January 1, 1858, Butler Family Papers, LSU; Pew Rental Receipt for 1860, undated, Bowman (James P. and Family) Papers, LSU.

³⁵ Scarborough, 53. Scarborough provides an excellent view of religion among the upper echelon of slaveholding society (planters holding more than 250 or more slaves throughout the South); in his sample, he found that he could reliably identify 80 percent of 148 such planters whose religious affiliation was Episcopalian or Presbyterian. On the other hand, the only five planters whom Scarborough could classify as Catholic lived near Natchez, Mississippi or the sugar region of Louisiana, the heart of the Spanish and French settlement for more than a century.

out in her memoirs, only Catholics went to the sanctuary for a wedding ceremony. Protestant weddings were home affairs, necessarily confined to family and nearest friends.”³⁶ John Randolph purposely built a large, rounded parlor to host the weddings of his daughters at Nottoway Plantation, exuding the elegance that he strove to display to his future sons-in-law and the community surrounding him. Not wanting to appear outdone by his neighbor, the competitive John Andrews, according to local stories, oversaw the wedding of his daughter at Belle Grove Plantation shortly after he completed the house. He hosted fifty house guests, including maids and valets, and another five hundred guests reportedly arrived by steamboat to attend the wedding.³⁷ The same held true for burials as Catholics (Creoles) typically buried their dead on the sanctified property of the parish church while Protestants (Americans) did so on the family’s plantation, a desire that their relatives always remain present with them. John Rehder pointed out, in his study of Louisiana sugar plantations, that a family graveyard typically indicated the owner’s Anglo status.³⁸ On the other hand, one can still observe the well-known family grave sites of the Aimes, Bringiers, and Romans, for example.³⁹ The Aime and Roman grave sites currently sit in St. James Cemetery while the Bringier family tomb remains in the Ascension Catholic Cemetery in Donaldsonville.⁴⁰

³⁶ Eliza Ripley, *Social Life in Old New Orleans: Being Recollections of my Girlhood* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 87.

³⁷ Harnett Kane describes this wedding and the appearance of Belle Grove in great detail in Harnett Kane, *Plantation Parade* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1945), 241-243.

³⁸ John B. Rehder, *Delta Sugar: Louisiana’s Vanishing Landscape* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 286.

³⁹ It should also be noted that Duncan Kenner is buried with the Bringier family as well.

⁴⁰ A historical marker denotes the original burial site of several members of the Roman family in the St. Jacques Cemetery on Cabahanoce Plantation which succumbed to the historic 1927 flood. In its aftermath, locals reinterred them in a tomb at their current location. The original Aime burial site sits here as well but Valcour Aime and his wife, Josephine now rest in St. Louis Cemetery #3 in New Orleans where family members relocated them in

Alexander Pugh, on the other hand, attended several local churches along Bayou Lafourche when he could, noting every time that he attended service in his daily journal. Pugh's commentary provides a wonderful opportunity to view how he saw his trips to church and the role of religion for his family. He always made sure to provide a bit of detail about Sunday sermons, including attendance (he once noted the unusually large attendance at the Episcopal Church to hear the bishop give a sermon), which church he attended, and, on occasion, the specific dogma that the reverend discussed on that particular Sunday. In the course of his journal, he mentions attending service at the Methodist, Episcopal, and Catholic churches in the nearby countryside or in New Orleans when in the city for business. Not adverse to engaging in thought about what he had heard at the service, Pugh once remarked that he had attended the Episcopal church to hear Reverend Fulton speak "on the Holy Ghost. It is a hard subject to handle as explained by his denomination, and I think is beyond the grasp of mortal mind. The fact is, it is, to my mind, inexplicable and I think those who believe it as his denomination does should take it as a [blank] and not explain."⁴¹ While not necessarily agreeing with his doctrine at all points, nonetheless, Pugh professed a month later after attending another Episcopal service that "I have quite a high opinion of [Reverend Fulton] both as a man and a Christian, should be very sorry to see him leave the bayou. I trust his church members will use every exertion to retain him for I believe they may get many before they will secure as good and useful a man."⁴² It seems that they did so, and Pugh continued to critique Reverend Fulton's sermons throughout 1860.

1929. Many prominent Creole graves are located at this site but one can note a "Protestant Row" for non-Catholics who also rest in the same location.

⁴¹ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), June 12, 1859, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

⁴² Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), July 31, 1859, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

The slaveholders' religion often necessarily rubbed off on their slaves. Slave religion will play a larger role in later chapters during a discussion of the slaves' life on Louisiana sugar plantations but, the role of the master in the religion practiced by slaves did have a clear effect, at least on the surface. One former slave, Henry Reed stated to an interviewer that "[I] was raised up with Creoles until 1865. When I got the 'real' American, I learned how to talk. You see, I was Catholic then, but am a converted man now. I belong to the Baptist church. I had a good Ma: She was the cause of me being converted. It is the faith you has got in the Lord dat gets you through this world."⁴³ The master's religion dictated Reed's Catholicism but when he had a choice-and perhaps as a symbol of that *freedom*, he chose to convert to the Baptist church. On several Louisiana sugar plantations the master, not only allowed for their slaves to practice religion, but encouraged and provided for their participation.

Edward Gay actually hired a reverend to live in residence on his St. Louis Plantation, south of Baton Rouge. P. M. Goodwyn spoke of the necessity of religion to create order and voiced his concerns that many of the neighborhood slaves did not have religion. He wrote to Gay, on the eve of the Civil War that "My spirit is stirred within me, as I look out upon the public highway, and else where around and witness so much desecration of this sacred day." The servants, Goodwyn decried went about their commercial business without any sense of the Sabbath and he believed that he could remedy this "Evil" by allowing the slaves to use their free Saturdays, which they typically had to themselves, to go to town for trading purposes. "If it be necessary that any of them should go to town to do trading (and it is not so often necessary as

⁴³ Ronnie W. Clayton, *Mother Wit: The Ex-Slave Narratives of the Louisiana Writers' Project* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 185-186. The Louisiana slave narratives, compiled as part of the Works Progress Administration, for unknown reasons undiscovered by me, are one of the few collections that do not appear in George Rawick, *The American Salve: A Composite Autobiography* 12 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979). The original transcript of the interview, before Clayton brought together all of them into a single volume, appears in W. P. A. Ex-Slave Narrative Project, LSU.

might be supposed) let one or more carts be hitched up and let them go [Saturday], accompanied by the overseer or driver; and then,” Goodwyn believed “not only may it be seen what is purchased, but what is more important, this Sabbath trading is stopped...the master is enabled to free that one important step, at least, has been taken toward having the holy Sabbath property regarded by those who are under his charge.”⁴⁴ The St. Louis Plantation minister clearly believed that Gay possessed the responsibility to his charges for their salvation, and Gay certainly appeared as if he would need to learn some of the more intricate details of running a plantation since taking over for his father-in-law not ten years prior. Certainly the religion of the slave and the religion of the master intersected on a daily basis but the make-up of that religion, whether Catholic or Protestant played a significant role on the values of those involved, helping to indicate the cultural characteristics that dictated the management of and life on any given sugar plantation. Often those religious values conflicted with one’s concept of entertainment and the kinds of entertainment that the two ethnic communities enjoyed marked a stark contrast between them.

People at all points in history have enjoyed their leisure time, no matter how brief, and the Creoles and Anglo-American sugar planters certainly understood the meaning of entertainment. But the ways in which they entertained themselves (and others) differed between the two unique ethnic communities, helping to define them as well as enforce the split between the two groups. As time has progressed, some of the Creole parties have become the stuff of lore, often through family tales and oral traditions, coming to modern readers through the words of early Louisiana writers.⁴⁵ The Bringier family became the center of one of Louisiana’s

⁴⁴ P. M. Goodwyn to Edward J. Gay, August 27, 1860, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁴⁵ Louisiana history, especially plantation and plantation owners’ history has attracted a significant deal of attention, typically from local Louisianans themselves throughout the early decades of the twentieth century;

greatest legendary tales. According to Pere Augustin, one of their overseers or drivers, the family once hosted a dinner party for their guest, the Duc d'Orleans, who later became the future Louis Philippe, King of France⁴⁶. Mystery surrounds the tableware that the Bringier family used during this dinner. Some believe the story "that the plates were of costly Chinaware and that, as the last bit of food was cleared away, Bringier and his relatives lifted them one by one and smashed them against the marble fireplace. No less than royal fingers would ever touch dishes so honored. Dissenters insist that the plates were of silver; that the party concluded the fete by repairing to the levee, where Marius [Pons Bringier] tossed each utensil into the river."⁴⁷

Whether this story actually took place or not, it certainly illustrates some of the mystique that surrounded the Creole planters, often founded in varying degrees of truth; it clearly shows a propensity for grand entertaining and lavish hospitality that it Creole entertainment became the subject of myth and legend in the first place.

some of the more useful works include, but are not limited to William Edwards Clement, *Plantation Life on the Mississippi* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1952); Albert Grace, *The Heart of the Sugar Bowl: The Story of Iberville* (Plaquemines, LA: Franklin Press, 1946); Kane, *Plantation Parade*; Grace King, *Creole Families of New Orleans* (Baton Rouge, LA: Claitor's Publishing, 1971); Vernie Alton Moody, *Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations*, Reprint 1924. (New York: AMS Press, 1976); Lyle Saxon, *Old Louisiana* (New York: New York, London, Century, and Company, 1929); Herman Boehm de Bachellé *Old Plantation Homes and Family Trees* 2 vols. (New Orleans: Pelican Press, 1941). Many of these works center their focus on the slaveholder, often ignoring slavery almost entirely and several factual errors do occur throughout them but, together, they help to present an image of the society that slaveholders created, seen through the eyes of early twentieth century writers, often Louisianans themselves. Moody, particularly, provides the earliest and most detailed account prior to Richard Follett *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005). Moody, a student of U. B. Phillips, cannot help but include the racist rhetoric present throughout the study of slavery during the first decades of the twentieth century but, nonetheless, succeeded in providing an invaluable analysis of early slaveholding and sugar plantation agriculture in Louisiana.

⁴⁶ It is important to note that, while the story recounts that Pere Augustin was an overseer or driver, the difference between those two positions on a plantation were vastly different from one another. An overseer, usually a white man hired by the plantation owner, watched over the plantation and managed day-to-day activities for the slaveholder. On the other hand, the driver, usually a favored black slave, served as a foreman for the labor force and provided the much-needed link between overseer and the slave population. Unfortunately, no evidence exists to determine whether Augustin held the position of overseer or driver.

⁴⁷ Kane, 64.

Melpomene, the Bringier's town home in New Orleans and center of their social circle, most certainly did host luxurious parties on many occasions, and there the family hosted some of the most notable and influential people of the nineteenth century. Records indicate that several of the South's and nation's most celebrated personalities visited the home during the nineteenth century, including Andrew Jackson, Jefferson Davis, John Bell Hood, Edward Canby, Braxton Bragg, Dabney Maury, Thomas Overton Moore, Hamilton Fish, Bishop DuBourg, and Nicholas Philip Trist."⁴⁸ On several occasions, more than fifty guests gathered in the house, described by one noted architectural historian as "two stories in height with galleries on three sides supported by twenty-two square columns." Two two-story wings flanked the main block which connected to the main part of the home by breezeways and gardens surrounded the home where the family's guests enjoyed their extravagant parties.⁴⁹

Planter Valcour Aime's reputation for hospitality during the nineteenth century helped to emphasize the Creole tradition. In her anecdotal reminiscences of the antebellum period, Eliza Ripley devoted a great deal of space and attention to her trips to Aime's plantation upriver from New Orleans in St. James Parish. Arriving after midnight, on one occasion, Ripley and her fellow visitors to Le Petit Versailles immediately retired to their rooms because the family had gone to bed not knowing when the riverboat *Belle Creole* would arrive. She noted that, though the family had retired for the evening, house servants brought basins of hot water "for the inevitable foot bath of the Creole," and they provided her with what she called *tisane*, herbal tea, which she recalled "I thought it might be ambrosia, fit for the gods, it was so delicately refreshing." Almost immediately falling asleep for the night, she awoke to a "full-blown rose on

⁴⁸ Bringier Papers, Vol. IV: 94-94a, 95a, 103, Historic New Orleans Collection.

⁴⁹ Fred Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1820-1840* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 2006), 21-22.

my pillow,” and “a steaming cup of *café au lait*,” before descending the stairs to a cordial welcome by Valcour Aime and his wife, Josephine.⁵⁰ When she wrote her memoirs, Ripley lamented a world gone, remembering “the charm of my visit to that incomparable mansion, the like of which is not to be found on the Mississippi River to-day.”⁵¹

In addition to Aime’s treatment of guests at Le Petit Versailles, he, his servants and his garden’s overseer, Joseph Mueller, devoted a great deal of attention to the design and construction of the garden on his plantation which would become a long-lasting manifestation of the wealth he exhibited as well as the attention to detail and hospitality that he shared with others.⁵² The style of garden known as “English,” had gained significant popularity in France, and Aime spent a great deal of time plotting and laying out his garden. A twenty-acre space, Aime’s extraordinary garden contained ponds, rivers, and faux ancient ruins, the style of the period.⁵³ He grew exotic plants from around the world, as far away as Asia, taking great pride in the bountiful harvest that he reaped from the garden to use in the household and at the dinner table. Aime maintained proudly that he could provide for a full meal with only the produce of his gardens, including coffee that he grew in a greenhouse, wine made from his own grapes,

⁵⁰ Ripley, 185.

⁵¹ Ripley, 186.

⁵² One architectural historian notes that Aime hired Mueller from Jardin des Plantes, a botanical garden and museum in Paris, France to help him design and construct his garden. Richard Sexton, *Vestiges of Grandeur: Plantations of Louisiana’s River Road* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999).

⁵³ Toledano, 215-217. For a useful analysis of architectural landscaping during this period, see Justin Martin, *Genius of Place: The Life of Frederick Law Olmsted* (New York: De Capo Press, 2011). Olmsted, best-known for helping to design Central Park in New York City, also provided a useful narrative of his travels through the American South before the Civil War. Another useful, though somewhat tangential source for Louisiana plantation gardens during this period, focusing on the Turnbull family near St. Francisville who produced both cotton and sugarcane during this period: Martha Turnbull and Suzanne Turner, *The Garden Diary of Martha Turnbull: Mistress of Rosedown Plantation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012). This book provides especially useful information regarding the plants available to these planters during this period and the ways in which they viewed leisure space on their plantations.

fancy cheeses made from his own dairy, cigars made from his own tobacco, rice, tropical fruit, and the list continues.⁵⁴ Some accounts even mention that Aime built a small zoo including kangaroos that inhabited the garden for visitors to view.⁵⁵ Ripley described her time spent in the gardens at Le Petit Versailles, remembering “summer houses draped with strange, foreign-looking vines; a pagoda on a mound...with stained-glass windows...further on was-a mountain! Covered from base to top with beds of blossoming violets...it was enchanting. There I saw for the first time the magnolia frascati, at that date a real rarity.”⁵⁶

Aime’s undertaking of the garden project required a tremendous amount of desire, capital, and labor to reach fruition. He noted that between September 3-9, 1842, over 120 slaves “prepared the ground for an English Park, and dug a basin in front of dwelling house.” They completed this superfluous task while also clearing ditches across the plantation to encourage drainage in his cane fields and getting ready for the fall’s harvest.⁵⁷ He still found the time to dedicate 120 slaves to the project of constructing his garden. One year later, Aime continued to dedicate significant energy to the project as his garden began to take shape. “Begun digging an artificial lake and the rivulet in English Park, on the 4th of September,” Aime wrote, completing the “artificial pond and rivulet on the 7th” threatening weather demanded a break from the project. They continued work on the 15th “working again in leveling ground, etc., in ‘English

⁵⁴ Toldeano, 216-217. One must remember that many other Louisiana sugar plantations had a dairy, tobacco production, or other useful foodstuffs in order to produce, not only the necessities, but also items of extravagance, but Aime became well-known for having an entire production facility that could produce almost anything that he wanted without having to rely on the markets of New Orleans.

⁵⁵ Sexton, 197. While Sexton suggests some skepticism at the idea that animals as exotic as kangaroos roamed Aime’s gardens, he does not refute it, illustrating the grandness of Aime’s undertaking.

⁵⁶ Ripley, 188-189.

⁵⁷ Valcour Aime *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime, Formerly Proprietor of the Plantation Known as St. James Sugary Refinery, Situated in the Parish of St. James, and Now Owned by Mr. John Burnside* (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1878), 83.

Park,” and work would continue for several years when time permitted.⁵⁸ These gardens, now overgrown, serve as the only remainder of Le Petit Versailles and Aime’s great expenditures that resulted from sugarcane production. One can still view the bridge that once traversed the river that had flowed throughout the garden and several other features, the only remaining evidence of this famous Creole hospitality.

Dinner parties, hosting up to fifty or one hundred guests became commonplace in certain circles of the Creole population. Juan Ursin, owner of Lavillebeuvre, just upriver from New Orleans, hosted Marquis de Lafayette on his American tour in 1825, celebrating his assistance during the American Revolution. Able to find common ground between American republicanism and the revolutionary history on one hand and their French heritage on the other, Creoles welcomed a man at once a national hero and French man with open arms. Ursin hosted a dinner in his dining room around a mahogany table with enough leaves (and space in the room) to extend the table to accommodate fifty guests! An extraordinary feat just to seat them, this undertaking also speaks volumes about the nature and almost certain efficiency of his servants who likely worked around the clock to prepare the house for their visitor and prepare a meal worthy of such a distinguished occasion.⁵⁹

Some families put extraordinary pressure on themselves to achieve such lavish hospitality, even in spite of any unforeseeable challenges that arose. Louis Amedee Bringier wrote to his wife Stella about a dinner that his family hosted on the Bringier estate for neighboring planters who had come to view some of the newer sugarcane technology features that they had installed on their plantation. After viewing the shaving machine and the

⁵⁸ Aime, 90.

⁵⁹ King, 347-349.

sugarhouse with its recent improvements, John and Steven Minor, Emile Tureaud, M. S. Bringier, C. Bienvenu, and others went to the house for a dinner “to be shared by ten intruders (intruders they were for they were invited for 4 P.M. and they came at 1 O’clock). Well I immediately ordered fried ham, sliced ham, ham and eggs and omelette. (They would not give time to kill chickens.)...(I didn’t dare eat much for fear of eating the table dry before my guests’ appetites were half satisfied. (I forgot to mention that we had opened two boxes of sardines.) and ate everything that said renowned maitre d’hotel [headwaiter] and his most graceful and accomplished Son, Mash would put on the table.” Despite the fact that his guests’ early arrival had caught them unprepared, Bringier did his best to entertain them satisfactorily. “As I was rather put out about the quantity and quality of my dishes, I thought I would palliate this evil by drowning it in good wines,” wrote Bringier, “so I ordered out our ‘Chateau Lafitte,’ ‘Chateau Haut Midoé’ in fact all our Chateaux and some good wines beside.” Bringier went to the wine cellar and emerged with two bottles “much covered with cobwebs and dust, that they all came to the wise conclusion, that it must be something.” He refused to brush away the cob webs and dust the bottles before presentation so that his guests could marvel at their vintage. After “the two bottles of “Grand Vin Chateau Lafittte” expired, [Bringier and his guests] retired to the library and devoted [their] idle moments to the agreeable pastime of a little game of ‘Draw.’”⁶⁰ Clearly, Bringier shook off his annoyance at their early arrival and entertained his guests as any Creole family would do in the same situation.

Even within the Anglo-American circles, Creole hospitality carried a certain vitality and appreciation. Sarah Butler, proprietor of Evergreen Plantation wrote to her daughter, Anna,

⁶⁰ Louis Amadee Bringier to Stella Bringier, April 25, 1860, Louis A. Bringier Family Papers, LSU.

about a party that she attended begrudgingly at the home of a nearby French family.⁶¹ She recounted “I tried to find an excuse but finally had to agree to go...we did not get there until after the fishing was over, the ladies danced on the grass but I begged to be excused, the sun was a part of the time obscured by clouds but, when it did come out, thought it enough to give a brain fever. After dinner the old French lady invited us in the house to dance. I then danced two sets but the heat was intolerable we started home,” later that evening.⁶² It seems Mrs. Butler would have to build up her stamina to keep pace with her Creole neighbors. The Creole propensity for dance became quite well-known during this period and, over time, Americans joined in and embraced this fondness for dance.

A French traveler to New Orleans in 1817, Lagarde de Montieyant, described the activity surrounding a dance that he had observed while spending time in the city. “The ball commenced at eight o’clock and was prolonged up to three o’clock,” Montieyant recalled. “The women retired afoot with all the dignity of a primitive epoch. Before the city had sidewalks the women had to walk barefoot to the ball room, accompanied by their slaves, carrying the costumes they were to wear at the ball.”⁶³ Colonel W. W. Pugh remembered one of his early experiences with a New Orleans ball on a rainy, miserable day in the city. He recalled his wonderment at how the attendees, specifically the ladies would reach the ball room on the far edge of the city with the muddy streets that they had to traverse blocking their path, and the city had not yet implemented

⁶¹ I failed to identify the locale of this plantation and, problematically, several plantations with the name “Evergreen” appear on the historic record. Without a doubt, however, this was not the Evergreen Plantation owned by Joseph Erwin’s daughter, Eliza or the Evergreen Plantation that exists today in St. John the Baptist Parish which remains open to the public as one of the most complete complexes remaining in the American South, complete with twenty-two slave cabins arranged in their original double-row configuration.

⁶² Sarah Butler to Anna Butler, March 18, 1850, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

⁶³ Quoted in Albert A. Fossier, *New Orleans: The Glamour Period, 1800-1840* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1957), 453.

public transit of any kind “but the means were much more simple and easy than we, in our ignorance could have conceived.” After the ladies presented themselves to their male counterparts, “the young ladies doffed their...stockings, (for which were carefully tied up in pocket handkerchiefs) and took up their lines of march, barefooted for the ball room; after paddling and wading through mud and mire, we reached the scene of action, without accident before entering the house, the ladies hailed at the door.” After a brief moment of respite at the front door where each lady cleansed her feet in a bowl of water let by the entryway to the house, “the feet were freed from accumulated mud and in a proper state of being wiped dry, to receive the silk stocking and satin slipper.”⁶⁴

Observing the New Orleans’s tradition of grand balls in the 1830s, Englishman Charles Augustine Murray remembered that the “conversations [were] carried on in French, and the customs of the same nation were observed during the evening: according to these, I was privileged to address and to dance with any young lady in company, without going through the ceremonial ordeal of introduction; and it is impossible to conceive an assembly with more *agrément* and with less restraint, than this Creole coterie.” Comparing his experience in this bastion of civilization on the frontier of the American Southwest to the balls that he had attended at home on the continent, he had to “acknowledge, that I had seen nothing so like a ball since I left Europe: the *contre-danses* were well danced, and there was waltzing without swinging, and a galloppade without a romp. The supper was exceedingly handsome, and in one respect, superior to most of those given at ball suppers in London: namely, the wines were of the same description which our host would give to his friends at dinner.” Considering himself satisfied, Murray declared that “on the whole I went away much pleased with the mirth and agreeable manners of

⁶⁴ Record Book, 1837-1866, Col. W. W. Pugh and Family Papers, LSU.

Creole society.”⁶⁵ Murray also made sure to point out that the Americans and Creoles presented themselves as two distinct populations within the city that did “not mingle much together; the former, being composed mostly of persons actively and constantly engaging in making fortunes, have little time for gayety...the gayest and merriest part of New Orleans is to be found in the Creole society.”⁶⁶

The Anglo-Americans certainly had their own pastimes that kept them entertained and provided myriad opportunities to flaunt the wealth that they garnered from the sugarcane fields. First and foremost among the American sugar planters, and almost none-existent in the Creole population was the sport of American turf, or horse racing.⁶⁷ A Creole who owned race horses remained so obscure that William Russell noted during his travels that “It is observable, however, that the creoles do not exhibit any great enthusiasm for horse-racing, but that they apply themselves rather to cultivate their plantations and to domestic duties.”⁶⁸ Leading the charge for the horse racing industry in Louisiana, the Minor and Kenner families promoted and participated in the sport while parting ways with thousands of dollars in the interest of entertainment and friendly (though not always so) competition. The period saw several world-renowned and nationally-famous race horses rise to prominence as the sport gained in popularity, taking off in the nineteenth century and capturing the nation’s imagination. Kenner and his

⁶⁵ Charles Augustus Murray, *Travels in North America during the Years 1834, 1835, & 1836 Including a Summer Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians, in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri, and a Visit to Cuba and the Azore Islands* 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1839), 131.

⁶⁶ Murray, 129-130.

⁶⁷ Those who engaged in thoroughbreds referred to the sport as horse racing or turf. They used both terms during the antebellum period and turf remains in use today, typically in relation to the type of racing surface.

⁶⁸ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* 2 vols. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863), 1:414.

relatives, the Minors, tapped into the growth of this sport and spent a great deal of time and money propelling themselves to the forefront of this movement.⁶⁹

The Minor and Kenner families, along with a host of other prominent Louisiana sugar-planting Americans became recognized for their knowledge of horseflesh, culminating in the ownership of some extraordinary animals, especially Minor's Leviathan and Thomas Jefferson Wells's Lecomte, two horses that achieved a significant amount of recognition during the period.⁷⁰ Illustrating the money that one could easily tie up into the sport, William J. Minor wrote to Thomas Jefferson Wells of Alexandria, Louisiana that "you can get \$10,000 for Lecomte you ought sell. It is too much money to have in one horse, unless he is well insured. I feel satisfied too, if the war continues racing must go down at least for a time." Earlier in the same letter, Minor spread a bit of gossip that he had acquired from the horse racing circuit, a fairly close-knit group, telling Wells that "there is an editorial in the last *Spirit* that I don't exactly understand. P. must have been drunk when he wrote it. I am glad you like my reply to 'Sir Solomon.'"⁷¹

⁶⁹ John H. Davis, *The American Turf* (New York: John Polhemus Printing Company, 1907) provides an excellent, if a bit dry, overview of the early history of horse racing that gives a superb account of the rise of the sport in the United States, mentioning William Minor, Duncan Kenner, and several other prominent Louisiana planters who helped the sport grow in its earliest years.

⁷⁰ Thomas Jefferson Wells owned Dentley Plantation, a sugar plantation in Rapides Parish where he used his personal wealth to gain notoriety on the horse racing circuit and venture into politics, become a representative on the Louisiana Legislature 1841-1843, and led the ticket for "The Opposition" party in the 1859 gubernatorial election. He helped to lead the breeding program for supreme racing thoroughbreds in Louisiana in the years leading up to the Civil War. Lecomte helped Wells gain fame with the extraordinary success he achieved while stabled at Dentley Plantation, including his victory in a sweepstakes at the Metairie Race Course that carried a \$3,000 purse. For an account of this rivalry, see the following article by noted thoroughbred writer and historian: Claire Novak, "Lecomte and an Epic Antebellum Rivalry," *Fair Grounds Race Course*, <http://www.fairgroundsracecourse.com/news/archives/feature-story-lecomte-and-epic-antebellum-rivalry> (accessed July 18, 2012).

⁷¹ William J. Minor to T. J. Wells, June 6, 1854, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU. Minor's reference to *Spirit* refers to the publication, *Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature, and the Stage*, a weekly publication from New York City that most assuredly appealed to the Americans' idea of entertainment in these related areas. The response to "Sir Solomon" that Minor refers relates to a letter

Always the consummate businessman, William J. Minor wrote to one fellow horse enthusiast about one of Minor's horses, stating that "Berry can be [bought] for one thousand dollars (\$1,000). He is 15 ½ hands in height. Very large a[nd] strong hips and well calculated for your style of racing. He is kind in every respect and perfectly sound. I will be at the New Orleans races, which will commence on the 4th of next month, when Berry will start unless sold before that time."⁷² Minor and Kenner dominated the New Orleans races from an early point, playing an integral part in the development of the Metairie Race Course and building it into one of the premier horseracing venues during the nineteenth century. The Metairie course witnessed one of the premier races of the nineteenth century and one that exhibited the growing sectional crisis between North and South. Growing out of a personal rivalry between T. J. Wells and Richard Ten Broeck of New York, their animosity and competitiveness spewed onto the race track in a series of races between their horses, Lecomte and Lexington (they were half-brothers out of the same broodmare) respectively. When the 1854 Great Post Stakes, which required a \$5,000 entry fee and attracted horses from several states, came around nearly 20,000 in attendance gathered at the Metairie Race Course to watch the race. Lexington bested Lecomte that day, but they would race several times again over the next several years trading victories and fueling the rivalry between the two before Wells finally sold Lecomte to Ten Broeck for \$10,000.⁷³

that he wrote to the editors of *Spirit of the Times* on May 12, 1854, appearing in the June 3, 1854 issue in which Minor disputes a report that an English horse, Sir Solomon, held the record time in a race he ran in 1801 instead of the time reported by Lecomte at the Metairie Race Course. Minor's defensive diatribe upholds the strength of American race horses against the suggestion that Sir Solomon had fifty years earlier run a faster race than Lecomte.

⁷² William J. Minor to M. Lafauoise, March 6, 1853, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁷³ In William J. Minor to T. J. Wells, June 5, 1854, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU Minor discusses the rivalry between Lexington and Lecomte. Several articles from the *Times Picayune* speak about the

Of course, on occasion, controversy sprang up in the horse racing community and even the wealthiest and most famous of planters could not escape the scrutiny of their fellow hobbyists. Following a meeting at the Metairie course to discuss the season's events and the group's agenda going forward, suggestions were made that Kenner's horse, Lecomte, had been dosed and William J. Minor spoke about the rarity of such an accusation, stating that he and Kenner had "been racing for 15 or 20 years and we never had had a horse dosed."⁷⁴ Minor vowed to ascertain everything he could about the incident and the events leading up to the race including "a little sketch of Lecomte's training at home, the work he took the quantity he [ate], the date of his arrival...the state of the course, when he got there, what work he took and whether it was lessened on account of the hardness of the course, the extent of the work he took in the mud, and the day he took it." As noted, the rivalry between Lexington and Lecomte became very heated over the course of several years, and every attention to detail could mean the difference. Thus, Minor vowed that he would determine the "effect [of dosing] upon him which if ever, before the famous Monday he entirely refused, his feed, what day [Washington] Graves worked at him and what he said about him."⁷⁵

Minor, Kenner, and others put tremendous effort forth into their racing hobby, including, not only the investment in the race horse itself, but the accompanying expenses such as a

famous Great Post Stakes including "Great Four Mile Day: The Fastest Time on Record!," *Times Picayune*, April 9, 1854; "The 'Fastest Time on Record:' North Vs. South," *Times Picayune*, April 30, 1854.

⁷⁴ William J. Minor to T. J. Wells, May 12, 1855, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU. The term "dosed" probably refers to the dosage index which measures a racing horse's ability or inability to navigate a pre-determined distance on a race course. It guides the breeder and the betters participating in the event in order to help to quantify the horse and, in this instance, likely referred to an index rating with which the involved parties disagreed because they would have resulted in unfavorable purses and betting action.

⁷⁵ Ibid. George Washington Graves held the difficult responsibility of serving as Duncan Kenner's primary horse trainer. He managed Kenner's thoroughbred racing stable and oversaw the management of the track on Kenner's Ashland Plantation. A thorough description of George Washington Graves appears in an article written by Kenner's daughter, Rosella Kenner Brent in the Hermitage Foundation Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

comfortable stable for the horses, a trainer or jockey for their horses, and a race track on the actual plantation so that they could practice. Historical maps of Duncan Kenner's Ashland plantation show a large race along the river track southeast of the main house where his horses trained and reached peak performance levels.⁷⁶ Even on the frontier of American society, in St. Martin Parish, Alexander Porter maintained a racing stable on his Oaklawn Plantation. He invested heavily in an enslaved trainer in the 1840s, Charles Stewart, whom he bought in Kentucky from Colonel William R. Johnson for an astounding \$3,500. Stewart, born in Virginia and always around horse racing, became disenchanted with his current lot after the death of his wife. Johnson offered to sell Stewart if he could find a suitable buyer for him. Coincidentally, Porter had just arrived in Kentucky on vacation. Porter's personality and candor appealed to Stewart and the former made a deal after he offered a position as horse trainer in Louisiana. Stewart recalled his arrival in Louisiana, noting "I felt kind o' skeered an' lonesome de fust week. But it didn't take me long to get ober day feelin' when I seed de race-course, de stables, an' de horses what was waitin' fur me on de Teche."⁷⁷ Porter had established a racing set-up that rivaled anything in the country, even in Kentucky. Stewart dedicated himself to training Porter's twelve race horses, enjoying the comforts of his own house and access to the overseer's house as well. The Anglo-American community clearly dedicated themselves to horse racing at a high level and achieved good results, helping make their hobby one of the nation's favorite pastimes.

⁷⁶ Several historical maps that show the race track to the southeast of the Big House on Ashland Plantation appear in David W. Babson, *Pillars on the Levee: Archaeological Investigations at Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation, Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana* (Normal, IL: Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, 1989). Babson reports that family tradition, as recounted to him, told that Kenner could stand on his second-floor balcony and watch his horses train on the track.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Wendell Holmes Stephenson, *Alexander Porter, Whig Planter of Old Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1934), 131-132.

One of the premier social clubs that developed in New Orleans during the nineteenth century, the Boston Club, served as an entertainment forum for the most prominent of American Louisianans.⁷⁸ Stuart D. Landry, a member of the Boston Club himself, wrote a history of the group in New Orleans and additionally a broad overview of the concept of men's club. Suggesting that the idea of a "club" developed out of an English model, Landry asserted that "wherever Englishmen or Americans go to live you will soon find a club."⁷⁹ The Boston Club of New Orleans, the third oldest in the nation, was founded as early as 1841 and many members held dual-membership with the New York Union Club, including Judah P. Benjamin, Stephen Duncan, Bradish Johnson, Evan Jones McCall, and other prominent members of Louisiana's antebellum sugarcane society. Other clubs rose to prominence during this period as well including the Pelican Club, visited by Henry Clay and General Winfield Scott when they came to New Orleans, and the Orleans Club with a reputation as a very "horsey" group because many of its members held positions in the horse racing fraternity as well. The Pelican Club survived the Civil War while the Orleans club fell apart during "Know-Nothing times."⁸⁰ The club played a vital role for the social and business elites of the antebellum period as sugar planters mingled with sugar and cotton factors, entrepreneurs, and businessmen over a game of Boston, billiards, or a fantastic supper. Unfortunately, aside from the *Times Picayune's* acknowledgement of certain Boston Club events and Landry's history, not much remains in the historical record from

⁷⁸ While some members on the membership roll did have Creole names, the most prominent and significant majority of members were most certainly Anglo-Americans. The name of the Boston Club derives from a game of cards popular among Anglo-Americans, especially the elite. During a game of Boston, thousands of dollars would change hands on occasion as it served as a high-stakes game as well as a social function. According to Stuart Landry, via "hearsay from Mr. W. B. Spencer" and Boston Club lore, Duncan Kenner, a prominent member of the Boston Club, once lost \$20,000 at one sitting.

⁷⁹ Stuart D. Landry, *History of the Boston Club* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1938), 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

the members' perspective; however, membership clearly meant distinction for those operating within this society.

The focus of social functions, parties, dinners, etc. often turned to discussion of politics, helping to incorporate both Creoles and Anglo-Americans into the discussion of party, political policy, and decisions, both on the national and state level, that would affect the planter class, specifically south Louisiana's sugar planters. Planters of both ethnic groups took great interest in politics as it pertained to them; however, it appears that the Anglo planters more readily engaged in national politics while the Creoles concerned themselves with how politics influenced them locally. While many planters concerned themselves almost entirely with the day-to-day functions of the plantation and the necessities of plantation management, the records do indicate a growing awareness of national politics, especially the mounting sectional crisis on the eve of the Civil War. Certainly a brief analysis of the politics unique to Louisiana helps to illustrate the odd obstacles that Louisianans had to overcome to create a (somewhat) unified planter class as the Deep South moved closer to secession from the United States.⁸¹

After becoming governor following the Louisiana Purchase, William Charles Cole Claiborne struggled to implement the American system of government in a land dominated by

⁸¹ John M. Sacher, *A Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana, 1824-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003) remains the best source for an analysis of Louisiana politics during the course of my study. Generally, I fall within his excellent interpretation and I appreciate the fact that he addressed the Creole/Anglo-American schism as it related to party politics in the state. Other studies that remain useful for this topic include George Dargo, *Jefferson's Louisiana: Politics and the Clash of Legal Traditions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Perry H. Howard, *Political Tendencies in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971); Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., *Pistols and Politics: The Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810-1899* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1996); Robert E. May, *The Southern Tradition: Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery and After, 1840-1875* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968); Joseph G. Tregle, "Louisiana and the Tariff, 1816-1846," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 25 (January 1942): 3-94; Tregle, *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities* 1954 Reprint (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999).

ethnically European inhabitants. Over time, he gradually gained the trust of Louisianans who had found him foreign and stubborn when he first arrived in the territory. Claiborne remained sensitive to Creoles' interests and attempted to govern effectively through moderation, explaining to his superiors in Washington, D.C., on several occasions, that they needed to practice patience in overturning the long-standing traditions of the French and Spanish systems of government. He understood the absolute importance of a plan that would transition the society over time to a fuller observance of the American political and legal tradition, hoping to keep from spooking the "ancient" inhabitants who resisted sudden changes. Claiborne, like Duncan Kenner, worked to insert himself into Louisiana's society. When he took over the leadership role, he did not speak French, making him entirely unappealing to the Creole Louisianans but, by 1806 he had married into the Creole social circle when he wed Clarisse Duralde.⁸² Additionally, Claiborne earned the respect and trust of Creoles when he fought to allow refugees from the Haitian Revolution to enter Louisiana in 1809. By rights the prohibition of the slave trade, effective in 1808, prevented slaves from entering into American territory from any foreign source and so these refugees could not bring their slaves with them. But Claiborne argued on behalf of the French immigrants, emphasizing the necessity of their numbers-including the slaves-to the benefit of Louisiana's burgeoning economy. More immediately, Claiborne continued to ascend in the eyes of local Creoles when he successfully defended the territory from slave rebellion in 1811 and prevented the British soldiers from capturing the state during the battle of New Orleans in 1815. By that point, Claiborne had earned significant

⁸² Unfortunately, this marriage only lasted for two years before Duralde succumbed to yellow fever.

political capital and trust from the Creoles, but still the political schism and the gap between the two factions would not closed effectively until the Civil War and emancipation.⁸³

Alexis de Tocqueville, on his storied tour of the United States, spent a mere twenty-four hours in the city of New Orleans but made some insightful observations about the people who inhabited the city, noting very carefully the ethnic divisions. Possessing a keen eye for indications of political and social differences and moments of equality, he spent his time in the city with the French consul to New Orleans, J. N. François Guillemin, carefully making notes of his conversation with the French representative. Guillemin informed Tocqueville that, even at that moment in 1832, many people in Louisiana were “more concerned with French affairs than their own,” but suggested that this preference for French mannerisms and an eye toward European affairs had “opened one of the great American doors” to France.⁸⁴ Likewise, the French consul assured Tocqueville “how important it was to France for French *moeurs* (manners), customs, and habits to continue their sway in Louisiana.”⁸⁵ Guillemin went on to discuss the tremendous growth and prosperity that he had witnessed during the fifteen years he had held his position in New Orleans, and Tocqueville reminded him “you more than anyone else have been the witness, Monsieur, [that wealth] commenced with the union of Louisiana with

⁸³ For a more detailed discussion of the challenges that Governor Claiborne faced and a more in-depth analysis of the man, himself, see Fossier, *New Orleans*; Charles Gayarré, *History of Louisiana*, 4th ed. 4 vols. 1854 Reprint (New Orleans: F. F. Hansell and Brothers, 1903); Joseph T. Hatfield, *William Claiborne: Jeffersonian Centurion in the American Southwest* (Lafayette.: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1976); Pierre Clement de Laussat, *Memoirs of My Life*, trans. Agnes-Josephine Pastwa (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans*.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Christina Vella, *Intimate Enemies: The Two Worlds of the Baroness Pontalba* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 144.

⁸⁵ George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* Reprint. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 623.

the United States.”⁸⁶ Then the conversation devolved into a brief debate over the value of republicanism and the practical (or in some cases, Guillemin argued, impractical) implementation of that concept to the development and progress of New Orleans itself in the form of improvement of quality of life for the average inhabitant. Tocqueville concluded the discussion of his time in New Orleans with the transcript from an interview that he conducted with Consul Guillemin during which they delved deeper into a discussion of ethnic differences in Louisiana. According to one historian who discusses this interview in great detail, Guillemin “pointed out that almost all the land in Louisiana still belonged to the Creoles [in 1832], although big business had been seized by the Americans.” The Creoles simply could not match the Americans as entrepreneurs in his eyes because they failed to take financial risks and considered bankruptcy a personal dishonor. On the other hand, Americans arriving from other parts of the nation ““were eaten up with longing for wealth,”” did not have a reputation to risk, and had no qualms about debt or risking bankruptcy.⁸⁷ These divergent theories of business and personal wealth would distinguish the two groups for the better part of the nineteenth century, carrying out into the politics employed by both groups.

Historian John Sacher has convincingly suggested that, for much of the antebellum period, “political loyalty centered on a candidate’s ethnicity, not on partisan allegiance.”⁸⁸ A great deal of political activity during the transitional years of the antebellum era in Louisiana politics hinged upon a shift toward party politics and away from the ethnic divisions so crippling during Louisiana’s early formative years under the American government and Governor

⁸⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 624.

⁸⁷ Vella, 144.

⁸⁸ Sacher, 11.

Claiborne. By the election of Abraham Lincoln and the ensuing secession convention, Creoles and Anglo-Americans' tendency to work together as a unified *white* planter class brought their respective interests in line with one another and allowed secession to take place, despite sugar planters' concerns over the feasibility of sugarcane production under an independent Confederate government. Many planters, both Creole and Anglo, feared that the sugar industry would not receive the same protection from the southern government that it did from the United States government in the form of a tariff. Federal tariff protection had helped to protect sugarcane interests, allowing it compete with foreign sugar, most notably Cuban which grew more easily in the fully tropical climate where the chances of any frosts, not to mention an unusually early one, did not exist. The greatest perceived threat came from the Republican Party who many slaveholders across the region believed wanted to end the institution of slavery. Faced with this adversity, the two ethnic communities in Louisiana's sugar region began to put their differences aside, focusing instead on what bound them together in order to preserve the future. Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans understood the magnitude of the task ahead and the enormity of their failure should they fail to uphold the ideals of their slaveholding brethren.

Historically Americans have sought a way to protect the rights and institutions that they hold dear while preventing the government, either state or national, from overstepping its boundaries and they have usually done this by adopting a constitution that lays out the powers and rights of all parties involved. Louisiana's transition through several constitutions during the course of the nineteenth century helps to illustrate the evolving nature of how its inhabitants saw political participation and rights while also hinting at the decreasing necessity to think of the political realm in terms of ethnicity. The initial constitution that accompanied statehood in 1812 pacified long-time Louisianans (Creoles) by adhering to the old aristocratic traditions. This

ultra-conservative standard included a very limited suffrage based on state residency; all gubernatorial candidates had to establish six years of residency in Louisiana to qualify for that office and own \$5,000 in landed property. Contrasting this document with the one that a new constitutional convention drew in 1852, indicates a significant evolution from the earlier regulations. The 1852 constitution marked a shift toward an expanding white democracy, which of course benefitted, those Anglo-Americans who had poured into Louisiana in search of opportunity. As Sacher points out, this new constitution supported the belief that the government should take more responsibility for the people to ensure their liberty including “state aid to businesses and internal improvement enterprises, more liberal banking laws, and increased expenditures on public education.”⁸⁹ This decision effectively curbed the power that Creoles had enjoyed under the preceding constitutions, including those drawn in 1812 and 1845 and from this point onward, the old population had to work within the broader system of the American government and create bi-partisan alliances with their American counterparts to bring about any policies that they favored. It also fulfilled the promise that Louisiana would continue to join itself to the broader American nation, adhering more closely to the national agenda and a strong centralized government.

The 1852 constitution passed almost concurrently with a decision to reunify New Orleans which had been split into three municipalities following an 1836 decision by the state assembly. The official division resulted after the ethnic exclusivity had grown to the extent that it broke the city up into three distinct ethnic districts who eyed one another suspiciously. Illustrating the inability of the differing ethnic groups to work together, one historian argued that “in the city council, the Americans were infuriated by the Creoles’ conservatism, inertia, and self-preserving

⁸⁹ Sacher, 168.

leadership.’’⁹⁰ Fearing that they could not work together at the local level to govern New Orleans, they chose, instead, to break apart so that each individual municipality could draw its own taxes and make decisions based on the good of the population present in that section; essentially, they segregated the entire city based on ethnicity. The First Municipality, consisted of the original city or *Vieux Carré* (Old Quarter); this suburb contained the Creole population of the city. Americans dominated the Second Municipality, located in the portion of the city just across Canal Street, upriver from the *Vieux Carré*, while the Third Municipality, known as the epicenter for the immigrant population, stood downriver from the First Municipality in what later became the Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Wards. The American-or Second-municipality recovered from the Panic of 1837 much quicker than the rest of the city, indicating more sound business practices and a willingness to rebound from losses accrued during the banking crisis.⁹¹ On the other hand, the Creoles struggled to make ends meet and, despite welcoming the division initially, they soon realized their conservatism and shrewdness with money had starved their section from success and they clamored for reunification.⁹² Finally, in 1852, as the constitutional convention decided upon the new constitution, New Orleans became whole again after their

⁹⁰ Vella, 263. Vella is sensitive to the ethnic differences during the period and does an adequate job of explaining the breakup of the city into the three municipalities.

⁹¹ The banking crisis and the respective ethnic response to these challenges will be the focus of the next chapter when I turn attention to the business practices of Creoles and Anglo-Americans. For a further look at the history of banking and economics in the state, see Stephen A. Caldwell, *A Banking History of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1935); John Clark, *New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1982); George D. Green, *Finance and Economic Development in the Old South: Louisiana Banking, 1804-1861* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972); Richard Holcombe Kilbourne, Jr., *Debt, Investment, and Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1865* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

⁹² The Third Municipality, void of many powerful inhabitants like that of the First and Second Municipalities, did not factor very much into the power struggle in the city. Essentially home to the large laboring class and immigrant population, both Creoles and Anglo-Americans sought to disassociate from this section as much as possible. Christine Vella goes so far as to refer to this section as the “third-world Third Municipality.” Vella, 271.

failed experiment with the segregation of the ethnic communities. At no point in Louisiana's history could both groups remain entirely exclusive; they would always experience contact with one another and how they dealt with their neighbors and navigated these tense social interactions often dictated the level of their success in Louisiana's sugarcane society.

Despite many attempts by Creoles and Anglo-Americans to remain separate from one another, the nature of Louisiana society and the production of sugarcane necessitated interaction. Raising sugarcane successfully typically trumped many social differences and planters often had to interact with their ethnic counterparts, sometimes even work together, to generate the revenue that they wanted. The plantations along the Mississippi River essentially followed an ethnic pattern with plantations closer to New Orleans owned by Creoles while those sugarcane plantations near Baton Rouge often fell under the ownership of American planters. Due to the nature of settlement along the outlying bayous, including Bayous Lafourche and Teche, those communities became much more interspersed ethnically than those along the big river which, despite some exceptions, remained largely segregated. No matter the settlement patterns and tradition, however, both Creoles and Anglo-Americans interacted with one another constantly, and the records show how often they visited each other or voiced their opinions of the "ethnic other."

The Americans, especially, had to carefully negotiate the social environment that existed when they moved into the state, pouring down the bayous into the southwestern reaches of the nascent sugar empire. Colonel William Whitmell Pugh recounted the earliest years in the region known as the Attakapas, when his family migrated there around 1805 so that his father could work for Governor Claiborne. Becoming civil commandant and later judge of the Parish of Attakapas, W. W. Pugh recalled the welcome that his family received when they first arrived,

describing the parish as almost entirely French. Of the small minority of Anglos in the area, Pugh remembered “the few Americans we occasionally met with were of the lower orders, with whom, we could have little or no communication.”⁹³ Pugh remembered striving “to cultivate the [C]reole families from whom we received every possible kindness and attention,” but due to the Pughs’s inadequate knowledge of French and because “the English language [was] unknown to the creoles our interaction was subject to many...mistakes. Still as they were on their part evidently anxious to please and we not disposed to reject their proposed intimacy, we soon became reconciled to our lot and our continued residence among them, not only supportable but pleasant. We attended all their Saturday night balls.”⁹⁴ The Pughs clearly made the best of their situation and rose to dominate the region economically and politically as the family spread along the length of Bayou Lafourche by the time that Louisiana seceded.

Even living on the periphery of the French settlements above Baton Rouge, the Lewis Stirling family based near St. Francisville ensured that they possessed, at the very least, a working knowledge of the French language. In the back of their account book, listing their business and personal expenses for the year, appears a section for English to French translations for key phrases, words, etc., illustrating that they grasped the utility of understanding the language to communicate effectively in their business transactions and certain social interactions. In fact, most American families, even if they resisted Creole culture or limited their mingling with that ethnic community, understood the importance of learning to converse with their new neighbors. Eliza Taylor Breeden, wife of an Assumption Parish sugar planter and New York native, Miles Taylor, wrote about her desire to practice with the language so that she did not

⁹³ Record Book, 1837-1866, Col. W. W. Pugh and Family Papers, LSU.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

forget what she had learned earlier in her life. Writing to her sister, Mary, in Thibodaux, Louisiana she proposed: “we shall correspond hereafter in French, it will be a means of improvement for both of us, for I am getting badly out of the habit of either writing or speaking the French;” the letter continues for several sentences in French.⁹⁵ For most of the nineteenth century, official legislative statements, advertisements in papers, and many other kinds of communication or laws appeared in both French and English so that no ethnic community could claim ignorance of a message delivered in any medium, but this bilingualism stopped there. If neighbors, businessmen, and planters wanted to correspond successfully with one another they would have to become bi-lingual on their own; the most successful ones often did so.

Alexander Porter, a prominent politician that rose, like many white southerners, through the ranks of the planting class to achieve the status among the political elite. Arriving from Ireland with his brother, James, and their uncle at age sixteen, he settled near Nashville initially, before moving to Louisiana in 1809 on the suggestion of Andrew Jackson.⁹⁶ Porter worked very hard to integrate himself with the people around whom he settled in Louisiana where he finally established himself at Oaklawn Plantation in St. Mary’s Parish, an area that consisted almost entirely of French Creoles at the time that he moved there with his family. As his primary biographer remarked, the success with which he inserted himself into the existing society “is

⁹⁵ Eliza Taylor Breeden to Mary Breeden, November 15, 1840, Taylor (Miles and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁹⁶ One might argue that Andrew Jackson did more for the American cause in Louisiana than any other single person (perhaps outside of Governor Claiborne). Aside from a minor setback following the battle of New Orleans when Creoles New Orleanians took offense to Jackson’s militaristic rule and wartime governance, Jackson encouraged many white southern planters to move from Tennessee to Louisiana, including Alexander Porter, Joseph Erwin and others. Additionally, Jackson maintained closed friendships with influential Creole families, including the Bringiers and, when it came to the banking issue during his presidency, the Creoles supported him tremendously, also despising the American banking system and its perceived riskiness. This point led to their whole-hearted support of renaming the Place d’Armes in tribute to President Andrew Jackson, calling this sacred ground Jackson Square. For further discussion of how Creoles viewed Andrew Jackson and their support of him on the banking issue, see Sacher, 265.

remarkable when one considers that the banks of the Teche were populated with French whose habits of life, manners, and customs were much different from those to which he was accustomed. When he arrived in Louisiana he spoke scarcely a word of their language,” and, initially, Porter found his neighbors “distrustful, inhospitable, and hating the Americans, to whose domination they had been so recently transferred.”⁹⁷ But, like other early American settlers, he helped to pave their way through “the energy of his character, and the charm of his manners and conversation.”⁹⁸ Porter succeeded because he appealed to the Creoles with his grace and respect for the way of life, exhibiting Creole-like mannerisms. He used this trust and patience to become a U.S. senator and benefited from his neighbors’ support as he continued his career in politics, becoming a dominant figure.

And so the two differing ethnic communities stared at one another tensely across the chasm of cultural difference, needing to create a sugarcane society together but unable to bridge, completely, the gap that separated them. Their cultural personalities, including education, religion, entertainment, and politics informed their decisions constantly and influenced the ways in which they interacted with each other and also with the institution of slavery and plantation management. At the root of this society were white Louisianans attempting to make a fortune in the hot sugarcane fields of the southern parishes of Louisiana. How they would achieve that often depended on how they viewed the process of wealth accumulation and the product of their success, or failure. Once one understands the cultural dissimilarities that split them apart, it becomes clearer how their financial decisions diverged. Then their personal business practices come more into focus.

⁹⁷ Stephenson, *Alexander Porter*, 13.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Stephenson, 13.

CHAPTER 3

“HAVE YOU INDUSTRY AND ENERGY TO MANAGE A SUGAR BUSINESS?": BUSINESS AND LOUISIANA SUGARCANE PRODUCTION INTERSECT

Despite the challenging environment, the completely new agricultural challenges in sugarcane production, and an occasionally uninviting complex society, Anglo-American planters streamed into Louisiana in hopes of attaining their fortune in sugar while spreading the paternalistic form of slavery that white southerners had begun to perfect along the eastern coast in states like Virginia and South Carolina.¹ The promise of a sugarcane dynasty for those who learned to adapt to the harsh climate and displayed the ability to acclimate to such a unique form of agriculture, while integrating smoothly into Louisiana society, beckoned both southern slaveholders and northern businessmen to try their hand in Louisiana.² The business acumen that

¹ For a sampling of works that detail the formation of slave society along the eastern seaboard and the creation of an paternalistic antebellum white southern society united under the banner of slavery within a slave society, see Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco & Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Matthew Mason, *Slavery & Politics in the Early American Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); Anthony S. Parent, Jr., *Foul Means: The Formation of a Slave Society in Virginia, 1660-1740* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003); Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

² According to Fletcher Green who conducted an analysis of the northerners' role in southern development during the nineteenth century, the New Orleans population in 1850 contained 40,000 American-born whites, of whom 9,461 claimed a northern birth, primarily Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. He went on to state that the vast majority of these northerners had grown up on small farms before moving to larger cities in their area before migrating to New Orleans to immerse themselves in commercial interests. Green discovered that northerners played an absolutely vital role in New Orleans commerce and business developments; for

Louisiana sugar planters exhibited during this period serves as a testament to both the Creoles and Anglo-Americans who faced the challenges head-on to establish themselves as sugarcane barons, but the two different ethnic communities often made decisions that distinguished one from the other group. Both Creoles and Americans sought their fortune in the cane fields, but they did so through diverse methods and strove for dissimilar motivations that pushed them to extract the utmost profit out of their factory-like plantations along the bayous and rivers of southern Louisiana.

Examining William Scarborough's analysis of "elite" slaveholders, shows some interesting trends for those who owned sugar plantations in Louisiana.³ In 1850, Scarborough could categorize 22 sugar planters as elite; fifteen lived in Louisiana and seven lived out-of-state. Of the fifteen that maintained residence in Louisiana, only five could report their birth home as Louisiana. Of the remainder, seven had come from other slaveholding states, two from France, and one from St. Domingue. This count contrasts sharply from the results in 1860 which indicate the tremendous ten-year growth of the sugar industry, the increasing stability of Louisiana society, and the continuing flood of migrants from other parts of the world who wanted to enter sugarcane agriculture. Of thirty-nine slaveholders, owning 500 or more slaves and raising sugarcane, only five now lived out-of-state and thirty-four inhabited Louisiana itself. Of the thirty-four that lived in Louisiana, astoundingly, only nine had lived in Louisiana all of their lives, while fifteen hailed from other southern slaveholding states, six from foreign

example, northerners held the presidencies of all three state banks, and the *Picayune* (in addition to other newspapers) had northern-born owners. Fletcher M. Green, *The Role of the Yankee in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 130-131.

³ For the purpose of his analysis, in William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite Slaveholders of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), Scarborough limits his study to what many would consider the "ultra elite," those planters who owned more than 500 slaves. He discovered 339 such families who inhabited the American South during the census years of 1850 or 1860.

countries, and four came to Louisiana from northern states.⁴ Truly striking, these figures illustrate the numerical dominance of Anglo-American slaveholders at the upper echelons of Louisiana's sugarcane society. While they may not have dominated the social circles at all times, their capital and expansion certainly overcoming any shortcomings that they suffered in other areas.

The incoming Anglo-Americans worked quickly to establish plantations on the best land available to them; those who arrived before 1815 certainly possessed the upper hand and often integrated into Creole society much more easily. The American immigrants who finally made their way to the state after this period had to settle farther upriver toward Baton Rouge or down the smaller bayous of Lafourche, Teche, etc. These areas proved fertile sugarcane territory and produced excellent results for the planters who wrested new plantations from the swampy parishes of Louisiana's interior, but the planters who settled along these waterways faced other challenges in the form of transportation and supply. Partially isolated from the heart of Louisiana sugar society, they often faced struggles if the bayous became too low for larger supply ships to traverse; even in the best of years, it simply took longer for the boats to reach the market in New Orleans and beyond because they had to travel farther to do so. Planters who settled along the smaller bayous off the Mississippi River had to clear the forests and drain the swamps to give themselves land to farm. Newly settled, these areas required a greater investment in both time and capital in order to push the frontier of settlement westward, opening up new, fertile lands to the wave of sugarcane production.

The Creoles, many of whose families had arrived before the mid-eighteenth century, owned the most desirable plantations because they had long ago snaked slowly upriver and

⁴ Scarborough, 427-484.

downriver from New Orleans, claiming the best possible lands upon which to establish their plantations. Some of the earliest plantations upriver as far as Ascension Parish resulted from Spanish land grants during the period of Spanish control after the Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1763⁵. One of the most recognizable plantations in all of the American South, Houmas Plantation, which passed from Wade Hampton to his daughter and son-in-law, before finally becoming the property of John Burnside in 1857, resulted from several Spanish land grants. The land grants from the Spanish period, and earlier French ones, challenged inhabitants after the Louisiana Purchase by providing one of the flashpoints for ethnic tension when the American government began to implement its principles in its new territory, under the authority of Governor W. C. C. Claiborne. Long-time residents of Louisiana who had acquired their family's holdings during the French or Spanish periods often found their claims challenged by the new system of American government and, to them, foreign conceptions of legal ownership.

A concept as basic as the relationship between ownership and marriage caused dissent between the two groups who interpreted their legal customs differently based upon opposing long-time traditional practices. According to one legal historian, lands acquired during the French and Spanish periods were property of the "community" in a marriage; the husband and wife each owned half in this partnership agreement. However, under American law, predicated on the British legal system, common law classified marriage as a merger where the wife becomes subordinate to the husband. Additionally, under common law, children born out of wedlock lacked the ability to become legitimized while those "bastard" sons born under civil law still possessed certain inheritance rights. This conflict, between common law and civil law, or between American and Creole legal customs, challenged early officials who wanted to bring

⁵ The Treaty of Fontainebleau, which ended the Seven Years' War, placed Louisiana under Spanish control for their support of the Great Britain against France.

Louisiana under American customs and laws.⁶ The very language of ownership threatened dissent and discord between the two ethnic factions and planters almost certainly held no cause dearer to their hearts than the ownership of property, both land and slaves. The inherent ability to ensure one's livelihood through chattel and the total freedom and independence via ownership of land and slaves guaranteed by the idea of republicanism, no matter how one defined it, led both groups to fight bitterly for their cause, eventually forcing a mutual understanding under which Creoles and Anglo-Americans could coexist.

Under American control following the Louisiana Purchase, Creoles had to adapt to certain customs that felt foreign to them. For example, the public notary, a major public officer "whose duties and functions required substantial legal training and experience," under civil law, essentially became little more than official witnesses to property transfers and other affidavits.⁷ The very foundation of how Creoles viewed property ownership and the ability to enjoy the safety of that ownership, through notaries, for example, changed as the purpose of notaries and other civil offices adapted to suit the new government because Thomas Jefferson believed, correctly, that universal legal customs led to a stronger union. Claiborne understood the impossibility of implementing this new system immediately and endeavored to work slowly to avoid alarming the long-time inhabitants of Louisiana. It took several years of growing pains

⁶ George Dargo, *Jefferson's Louisiana: Politics and the Clash of Legal Traditions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 12-13. For an excellent collection of essays pertinent to this topic, see Judith Kelleher Schafer and Warren M. Billings, eds., *An Uncommon Experience: Law and Judicial Institutions in Louisiana, 1803-2003*, vol. 13 of *The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1997).

⁷ Dargo, 15.

under the new mode of government and the passing of time for the *ancienne population* to begin to trust the American interlopers.⁸

Land and slaves, the lifeblood of any successful member of a slave society, remained a constant focus of slaveholders no matter their ethnicity in Louisiana's sugarcane community, attracting the utmost attention of Creole and Anglo-American alike. They often differed in how to implement plantation management but they could not have agreed more on the vital necessity of possessing the best of both (land and slaves) in order to ensure financial viability and increase their family's prominence. Unfortunately, for older residents of the area, the ownership of property under the French and Spanish governments did not necessarily translate seamlessly to ownership under the American government. Communication often broke down when American officials required Creoles to register their land with the local land office or face the possibility of losing possession of their property. A basic attempt to standardize property and inventory the lands available to sell to incoming American planters, this regulation flew in the face of all that the Creoles held dear to them; many interpreted it negatively as if Americans had come into their territory and attempted to usurp the best property which they already possessed. Many Creoles balked and faced the consequences, often resorting to legal action while others gave in, considering the ruling a small price to pay to maintain ownership of their rightful land and ensure the success and continuation of the family dynasty in Louisiana.

While the lands along the Mississippi River in the parishes immediately above and below New Orleans, became fully functional and fertile plantations in the eighteenth century, other parishes closer to Baton Rouge like Iberville Parish acted as a haven for smaller farmers up until

⁸ The *ancienne population* is a term that historians of Louisiana, and some contemporaries themselves, have used to describe the Creole population of French and Spanish descent present in Louisiana since before the Louisiana Purchase as opposed to the new Anglo-Americans who settled the territory after 1803.

the first decade of the nineteenth century when the trickle of immigration became a torrent, flooding Louisiana from eastern and northern states. Finally, when Joseph Erwin, and others who followed his example, moved to the area and “after the introduction of the sugar industry many small “one-horse” farmers along the river gave way gradually.”⁹ Raising a crop fronting the river directly demanded a larger investment “in levees, sugar mills, cotton gins, together with the purchase of slaves necessary for the cultivation of many acres, than small farmers could afford.”¹⁰ For this reason, many of the smaller families who had lived in the area for decades sold out and moved to the cheaper prairie lands west of the Atchafalaya basin or the higher lands in the north where they could continue to farm without the large capital investment. The boom in sugarcane, coupled with the influx of Anglo-Americans drove land prices throughout southern Louisiana out of reach for many small-holding families, changing the social make-up of the region and ensuring that it consisted almost solely of sugarcane planters. The ethnic breakdown, in turn, became increasingly Anglicized in certain parts of the state because the newer settlers possessed the capital and population numbers with which to throw themselves at the production of sugarcane.

Erwin purchased his riverfront property for \$10 per arpent in June 1807 and, before long, built his holdings to consist of five miles of frontage along the busiest waterway of nineteenth-century America. When a friend of John H. Randolph sought land along the river in the same parish as the Erwin property in 1845, he offered \$40,000 for only 300 acres of land (\$133/arpent), including “inferior improvements,” several miles below Bayou Goula. Due to a newly-founded high demand resulting from the recent successes in sugarcane agriculture at the

⁹ Alice Pemble White, “The Plantation Experience of Joseph and Lavinia Erwin, 1807-1836,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 27 (1944), 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

time, Randolph received his friend's advice that this "was the only place he found that was offered for sale and several persons were applying to purchase."¹¹ This exponential maturation in the land value in a single parish between 1807 and 1845 indicates the growing prosperity of sugarcane planters in the region and required the highest business acumen on the part of planters in order to navigate these rising land values successfully while still continuing to realize a profit.

The 1852 succession papers of Thomas Pugh detail the extraordinary holdings that he accumulated after moving to Louisiana with his family in 1818. Settling on Bayou Lafourche near Napoleonville, Louisiana in 1820, he established himself, and the rest of his family, as one of the foremost sugar planters in all of Louisiana, eventually possessing massive holdings. They marked a stark contrast with Creole families who often owned one plantation per family; many American families possessed multiple holdings in Louisiana and, on occasion, other states. The 1852 document that laid out Thomas Pugh's property showed the success that he enjoyed and indicated how the values of property differed along the smaller bayous away from the Mississippi River. Pugh's main plantation home, one of the premier homes in all of southern Louisiana, Madewood Plantation, remains standing to this day. The house stood on his primary tract of land that, in 1852, sat on a piece of property with 16 arpents of frontage along Bayou Lafourche, running back into the swamp for 40 arpents. Also a part of this tract, Pugh had, over the years, purchased and attached, a double-concession of 1,300 arpents.¹² With the land and all

¹¹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, June 15, 1845, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹² The term "concession," in Louisiana landholding dated back to the French and Spanish period and denoted a tract of land equal to 40 arpents depth running away from the river. A double-concession, then, would mean 80 arpents if that amount of land existed. Most assuredly the back portion of the property would be swamp and slaveholders would have to drain the land to bring it into cultivation if they wished to expand their available cultivable land. Additionally, these depths carried significant value because the woods that covered them provided planters with fuel for the steam engines that processed the sugarcane during harvest; they required a tremendous amount of wood to fuel their harvest activities until newer technology became popular in the years prior to the Civil War that allowed planters to rely less on wood for fuel.

improvements, including the dwelling house, sugar house, saw mill, and other improvements for sugarcane production, the value amounted to \$125,000. Especially helpful in illustrating the vastly different land valuation along the Lafourche versus the Mississippi, the second portion of Pugh's property, as shown in the 1852 succession, included the section known as Edward Pugh's "Pothier Plantation."¹³ This tract, bordered by lands owned by Etienne Landry and François Rarilleaux, contained seven arpents of frontage along Bayou Lafourche and 80 arpents of depth held a value of only \$23,000 in 1852.

E. G. W. Butler, in the market to expand his holdings to compliment his home place, Dunboyne Plantation in Iberville Parish in 1836, described his options in a letter to his father, Thomas Butler. "There is another plantation, belonging to old Mr. Thomas Hebert," the younger Butler explained, "which fronts four miles above me, and cuts me off in the rear, which is very valuable and can be bought greatly below its value." With nine arpents of front along the Mississippi River, Butler believed that he could obtain this property for \$22,000, paid in three annual installments. He went on to discuss another option that he had explored, "Dr. Prouan's plantation, three miles below Plaquemines, [which] will be sold, at public sale on the 16th of next month... it will be sold as it stands, negroes (48), stock, etc. etc. and has been appraised at \$48,000, I am informed." He believed that he could make the purchase successfully for "but little beyond the valuation." With 13 arpents front and a depth of 80 arpents for most of the property, Butler believed this option would "be a great bargain." He recommended swift action to his father, suggesting "if you wish to purchase, you had better look at these plantations; as I

¹³ Edward Foley Pugh was the eldest son of Thomas Pugh and Eliza Catherine Foley, whom Pugh married after moving to the area. The Foley family, along with the Pughs, was some of the earliest and most successful Anglo-American settlers in the area of Napoleonville, Louisiana.

am inclined to the belief that the pending crop will double their value.”¹⁴ He hoped his father would enter more fully into sugarcane production, venturing southward from St. Francisville to capitalize on the booming sugar market that planters had enjoyed during the 1830s.

Records indicate that, to a large degree, Creole and American sugar planters differed in their plantation ownership patterns, illustrating opposing motivations for their agricultural ventures. Many times over the course of the nineteenth century, Creoles exhibited behavior that suggested they concerned themselves primarily with holding the family dynasty together and maintaining the clan’s reputation in the face of the American influx. Creole patriarchs ensured that their children had a fair chance in purchasing their own plantation in order to continue the family’s tradition in Louisiana, even if it meant splitting up the dynastic holdings. Americans, on the other hand, distinguished themselves with the ravishing entrepreneurial behavior that stereotyped these immigrants as they poured over land, grabbing it up and working it with an increasingly large slave force. Studies have indicated that land ownership, and especially slave ownership, grew exponentially after 1815 when the Anglo-American population began asserting itself.¹⁵ Americans often gathered several holdings together, increasing the size of their plantation or even possessing several holdings far apart from one another. American planters often owned plantations across parish lines and had to travel back and forth between their

¹⁴ E. G. W. Butler to Thomas Butler, January 30, 1836, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁵ For an invaluable dissertation study, see Joseph Karl Menn’s, “The Large Slaveholders of the Deep South, 1860” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 1964). This work provides the most detailed of snapshots for Louisiana’s planters on the eve of the Civil War. Through his census calculations, Menn discovered certain differentiating characteristics between cotton and sugar planters, but also between Creoles and Anglo-Americans with the sugar planter class; In Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields*, the author does an excellent job of looking outside the cotton South to examine how different plantation regimes (tobacco Virginia, rice South Carolina, and sugar Louisiana) influenced the concept and practice of slavery in those locales. Pargas provides some excellent source-work and the study is certainly informative but he misses the mark by choosing one specific parish or county to represent the whole, exactly what he argues in the introduction that he hopes to avoid by conducting this study in the first place.

holdings to apprise themselves of plantation happenings, communicating with a hopefully trusted overseer in order to accomplish the necessary tasks that the intensive agriculture required.

The Bringier family, for example provides an excellent example of Creole land ownership patterns. Maison Blanche (White Hall) owned by the patriarch, Marius Pons Bringier; L'Hermitage, Union, and Bocage, owned by his children, Michel Doradou (and wife Elizabeth Aglae DuBourgh), Elizabeth (and husband Augustin Tureaud), Francoise (and husband Christophe Colomb), respectively, while Augustin, son of Elizabeth and Augustin Tureaud owned Bagatelle. The children of Michel Doradou and Aglae Bringier owned seven plantations and increased the holdings connected to the Bringier name, making them the most successful in spreading the Creole family along the Mississippi River. Marius St. Colomb and his wife, Augustine Tureaud (Houmas); Nanine and her husband, Duncan F. Kenner (Ashland); Myrthe and her husband, Richard Taylor (Fashion); Marie Elizabeth and her husband, Benjamin Tureaud (Tezcuco); Amadee and his wife, Stella Trudeau (Hermitage); Rosella and her husband, Hore Browse Trist (Bowden); Octavie and her husband, Allen Thomas (New Dalton) all stood as visible tributes to the fortitude and business savvy of the Creole planter.¹⁶ For decades, Louisiana legend has stated that Marius Pons Bringier, and his son, Michel Doradou, *gave* these plantations to their children as wedding presents and, while they most assuredly assisted their sons and daughters in establishing themselves, it seems more likely that these “gifts” only acted like favorable loans until their offspring could repay their debt after achieving financial

¹⁶ La Maison Blanche (White Hall), was shelled during the Civil War, was razed shortly after the conflict. L'Hermitage, Bocage, Tezcuco, and Ashland all survived into the twentieth century, however, Tezcuco burned down in 2002. The rest were lost through the years due to the challenges of time and it should be noted that the Houmas tract, owned by the Bringiers, was not the land where Houmas House currently stands. This tract refers to a piece of property just downriver from L'Hermitage and originated from a huge land grant that had once been the domain of the native Houmas peoples.

stability.¹⁷ A microcosm of Louisiana's sugarcane society, these plantations all remained connected to the upper echelons of Creole society while some of Michel and Aglae Doradou's children married (proven) American men. All of the Anglo men who married into the Bringier family had proven themselves worthy prior to their engagement by exhibiting a refined, cultured nature that Creoles sought. Some of the tendencies included speaking French, proper skill in dance, and an affinity for French wine in addition to other important displays of "proper" culture. Over time the Bringiers melded with the most trusted of Anglo society but they always remembered their Creole heritage and upbringing. The Bringier women who married American men continued to embody the grace and elegance through hospitality, fairness, and an observance of the arts that Creoles found desirable throughout the period, always staying true to their heritage, even while entering more devotedly into American society through their marriages.

Many other Creole families spread in a similar fashion when the younger generation assumed independent control over their own plantations, and the Aime family also owned multiple holdings within the family. Upon his marriage to Josephine Roman, the twenty-two-year-old Valcour Aime possessed half of his family's holdings in St. Charles Parish where his parents had lived at the time of his birth in 1797. Both parents died when Aime was a young boy, and he and his older brother, Michel, lived with his maternal grandfather, Michel Fortier II, in New Orleans until after the battle of New Orleans. After living briefly with his mother-in-law, Aime and his wife purchased an adjoining tract along the Mississippi River in 1820. In addition to their favored son, Gabriel, Aime and his wife raised four daughters who all married and settled

¹⁷ In a discussion with Dr. and Mrs. Robert Judice, current owners of L'Hermitage they opposed adamantly the story of the gifts, stating instead that the children simply received loans from the parents that they had to pay back over time.

on their own plantations. According to an Aime historian, he helped his daughters and new sons-in-law establish themselves on plantations with the gift of a home and use of his own holdings. The eldest, Edwige, married cousin Florent Louis Fortier of Home Place Plantation in St. Charles Parish and they took over Richbend Plantation in St. James Parish. Illustrating the Creole propensity for marrying cousins to ensure stable family alliances and keep power within the Creole social circle, the third daughter Felicité Emma, married Florent Louis's brother, Alex Septime Fortier and they moved just upriver to Felicity Plantation. Josephine, the middle daughter, married Alexis Ferry from across the river and they settled on St. Joseph Plantation which still exists between the former lands of Aime's Le Petit Versailles and Bon Sejour (Oak Alley). The final daughter, Felicie Aime married a first cousin on her maternal side, Alfred Roman, son of Bon Sejour's Governor André Bienvenu Roman and they lived on one of Roman's plantations Cabanocey, upriver. The Roman family maintained a similar pattern of land ownership among children to fortify their holdings in St. James Parish.¹⁸

Anglo-American sugar planters, on the other hand, often possessed several plantations under the same umbrella of ownership. Several important Anglo families in Louisiana purchased and maintained multiple sugar estates, though not necessarily in the same neighborhood or even the same parish. The Turnbull family of East Feliciana Parish, and the Minor family of Natchez, Mississippi owned multiple holdings over the course of the nineteenth century. Joseph Erwin's multiple holdings and the expenditures involved in outfitting and ensuring the success of several tracts led to his overextension and his self-inflicted death over the insurmountable debt that he had accrued. But several American planters made it work and became some of the largest land and slaveholders in the American South by extending their holdings over several plantations.

¹⁸ Roulhac B. Toledano, "Louisiana's Golden Age: Valcour Aime in St. James Parish," *Louisiana History* 10 (Summer 1969), 211-224: 219-220.

Over time, the Minor family expanded their holdings in Louisiana to include several properties in Ascension and Terrebonne Parishes. From their base in Natchez, the Minors entered initially into Louisiana's sugar planting society when Philip Minor, the brother of prominent Natchez planter, Major Stephen Minor, purchased Linwood Plantation in Ascension Parish located "adjoining Mont houmas about 27 leagues from N. Orleans and on the same side of the river." He described himself as "highly pleased with the purchase," describing the property as one of "a fine High dry soil, out of reach of the [river] in the high times, I find popler Lynn upland dogwood hickory, plumbrushes and oaks, this tract of land will give more fine high soil than we ever make use of for sugar cotton and corn."¹⁹ The interior decorations that the Minor family chose for Linwood Plantation became legendary for their uniqueness and extravagance. Eliza Ripley recalled an 1849 visit to the plantation, reminiscing that the entrance "hall was broad and long, adorned with real jungle scenes from India." Ripley applauded Mrs. Minor's exquisite taste, quoting her: "'The old man put it there; it shall stay; he liked it, so do I.'"²⁰ One architectural historian described the home, designed by James Gallier, Sr., giving a full portrayal of the center hall that Ripley spoke of as "papered with African jungle scenes depicting tigers, boa constrictors, birds, peacocks, monkeys, and natives; painted exotic trees rose to ceiling height and lions stood guard near the curving mahogany stair."²¹ The Minors built Linwood to symbolize their successes in Louisiana's sugarcane industry and others would follow them. In addition to Philip Minor's holdings along the Mississippi River, other members of the Minor family carved out their own tracts.

¹⁹ Philip Minor to Major John Minor, May 26, 1816, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁰ Eliza Ripley, *Social Life in Old New Orleans: Being Recollections of My Girlhood* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912).

²¹ Fred Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860* (Lafayette, : Center for Louisiana Studies, 2006), 272-157.

Enjoying early success, his nephew, William J. Minor followed the same path, eventually becoming the preeminent member of the Minor family in Louisiana. In 1832, following his uncle Philip Minor's death, William J. Minor purchased Waterloo Plantation, a property that the elder Minor had established a couple of miles upriver from Linwood. William J. Minor, the son of the family patriarch, Major Stephen Minor, continued to live primarily at the home estate of Concord in Natchez, Mississippi but he visited his Louisiana base of operations frequently. Under his tutelage, this estate would serve as the base of the Minor family's Louisiana operations and this would be the site of his primary interests in horse racing. From there, William J. Minor expanded his holdings by purchasing Hollywood and Southdown Plantations near Houma in Terrebonne Parish.²² On the eve of the Civil War, Minor would began construction on the big house at Southdown, named after the breed of sheep, one of the most extraordinary and architecturally distinctive plantation houses in all of the American South. Fred Daspit describes the house's enormous foundation as "six feet at the base, then rose twelve feet in graduate steps to form an eighteen-inch chain wall above ground level on which the walls of the first story were built," while the walls themselves "varied in thickness from twenty to twelve inches. Ceilings were fourteen feet high, and doors were eleven feet in height." The house remained incomplete when the South seceded and "a roof was quickly set over the structure, and a gallery was constructed between the two towers to protect an exterior staircase to the second level," while residents, including slaves and managers turned their attention to surviving the conflict.²³

²² According to Fred Daspit, the property of Southdown once belonged to Jim Bowie for a brief period of time.

²³ Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 272-275. Southdown survived the war and William J. Minor's son, Henry Minor, remodeled the home into a grand twenty-one room mansion with a second floor during the Reconstruction period. The house stands today and is open to the public for tours.

Daniel Turnbull, with his wife Martha Hilliard Barrow, a member of the prominent Barrow family who also possessed multiple holdings and became one of the wealthiest families in Louisiana sugarcane, built the renowned Rosedown Plantation near St. Francisville in East Feliciana Parish. While Rosedown itself produced cotton, Turnbull purchased other plantations nearby for sugarcane production. Over time, he purchased four plantations: Rosedown, Inheritance, Desoto, and Styopa. In the 1850s he raised sugarcane on Desoto and Styopa, both located on an island in the middle of the Mississippi River. Turnbull worked diligently to manage all four plantations, two raising sugarcane and the other two growing cotton, exhibiting a serious business regimen and desire to diversify his income sources. The area of West Feliciana made this task much easier because the parish contained the climate and the soil necessary to accommodate production in both crops. The river bottom near Bayou Sara outside of the town of St. Francisville allowed for sugarcane with its low-lying, wet soil while the elevated and drier highlands north and east of the town supported successful cotton production. While he purchased plantations within close proximity to one another, Turnbull still faced logistical challenges and practiced careful relationships with his overseers on the various plantations to ensure that they had the necessary supplies. In fact, his eldest son, William assumed control of Desoto Plantation in 1853, but only briefly, for he died in 1857.

The perfect example of the grey area between Anglo-Americans and Creoles, and linkage to both groups by marriage, the Kenner family provides a viable sampling of both tendencies.²⁴

In the early nineteenth century, even before the Louisiana Purchase, the Kenner family, under the

²⁴ William Kenner married Mary Minor, the daughter of Major Stephen Minor, the founder of the Minor dynasty in Natchez, and his wife Martha Ellis, descendent of another prominent early family in the area. Thus the Minor and Kenner families united and remained tied throughout the nineteenth century. Additionally, William and Mary Minor Kenner's son, Duncan Farrar Kenner, married Anne Guillelmine Nanine Bringier and united those two prominent families. In this way, Duncan Kenner's pedigree elevates him as a prime example of those who lived between the two groups, defined by neither, yet exhibiting characteristics of both.

guidance of patriarch, William Kenner, began gathering several plantations directly fronting the Mississippi River, accumulating estates in several parishes. Under Kenner's savvy business practice and leadership, the family expanded its holdings to include Oakland, Belle Grove, and Pasture Plantations in Jefferson Parish, the core of Kenner's leap into sugarcane production and early partnership with Benjamin Morgan. Despite his mercantile prowess, Kenner needed a partner who could help to bear the responsibility and defray the costs of entering such an expensive industry. Kenner's agricultural ventures took off almost immediately and he wrote to his father-in-law that "we are all well and now have hopes of retiring soon to Oakland, where things really look charming," telling Minor that they had "the finest crop of corn in Louisiana and about 90 acres of prime cane."²⁵ Kenner's wife, Mary Minor, died of a fever on 5 October 1814 at Oakland Plantation, leaving six children, including Duncan (then 18 months old). Personal grief aside, William Kenner experienced a great deal of success with his early ventures into sugarcane and began exploring additional the possibilities of expansion in 1816 and 1824. He purchased the tract with one of his late wife's uncles, Philip Minor. Together they invested in the property that became the aforementioned Linwood Plantation farther upriver in Ascension Parish with Minor owning one-fourth of the plantation while Kenner possessed the other three-quarters; Minor lived on the plantation.²⁶

When William Kenner died in 1824 and his property passed to his children, the plantations broke up evenly among four of his sons while the two surviving girls sold their interest in Oakland and Linwood to their four brothers. Because the oldest was only sixteen at

²⁵ William Kenner to Major Stephen Minor, May 10, 1813, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁶ Philip Chadwick Foster Smith & G. Gouverneur Meredith S. Smith, *Cane, Cotton, & Crevasses: Some Antebellum Louisiana and Mississippi Plantations of the Minor, Kenner, Hooke, and Shepherd Families* (Bath, ME: The Renfrew Group, 1992), 36.

the time of his father's passing (and Duncan, the youngest, stood at eleven), the court appointed a "curator and tutor" (guardian), their brother-in-law, John B. Humphreys who had married their sister Martha. He oversaw the property until they came of age when they could assume control themselves after they had completed their schooling. Stephen Minor and William Butler, Kenner's eldest sons took possession of their father's holdings in Jefferson Parish. William Butler established himself on Oakland Plantation while his brother took charge of Belle Grove and Pasture Plantations. He would later survey part of his two holdings for the town of Kennerville, the predecessor to the modern New Orleans suburb, Kenner.²⁷ The youngest sons, George Rappele and Duncan Farrar inherited their father's share of the property at Linwood Plantation upriver.²⁸ Once they came of age in the 1830s, they set out to begin their lives as sugar planters, striving to elevate themselves to a position among the most elite of Louisiana's antebellum society. Duncan gradually asserted himself enough through business on the plantation to purchase his brother's share of their inheritance when George Rappele migrated to Texas to attempt planting cane in the West.²⁹ Duncan Farrar Kenner stayed in Louisiana at Ashland Plantation, named after Henry Clay's Kentucky estate, and established himself among

²⁷ For reference, Louis Armstrong International Airport was built on the grounds of Oakland Plantation. Old Kennerville is located to the south and east of the airport directly fronting the Mississippi River.

²⁸ At the time of William Kenner's passing, Philip Minor still possessed his one-quarter of Linwood; he continued to possess one-quarter to one-half of the property until he cut ties with the Kenners in 1837. Minor took the upriver portion of the property and eight-four slaves while Duncan took the lower portion plus eighty-four slaves. This would become the site of Duncan Kenner's Ashland Plantation. Philip Minor would die immediately after the division and, Theophilus P. Minor inherited Linwood Plantation. For an in-depth discussion of the division of Linwood Plantation, see Smith and Smith, *Cane, Cotton, & Crevasses*, 36-37.

²⁹ George Rappele Kenner moved with his wife, Charlotte Jones, sister to his brother, Butler Kenner's wife, Ruhamah Riske, to Matagorda County, Texas but died before he could realize any recognizable success. The final crop that he oversaw produced fifty-five hogsheads of sugar; a hogshead, the standard measure weight and volume for shipping sugarcane to market, weighed about 1,000 pounds. After George Kenner's death, Duncan purchased the slaves from his estate and moved them to his property at Ashland; the slaves became known as the "Texas slaves."

the preeminent families in Louisiana sugar, bridging the gap between Anglo-Americans and Creoles through his strong Kenner heritage and a marriage into the Bringier family. He continued to reap the benefits of excellent business decisions, an inquisitive agricultural mind, and his societal connections to become successful in both business and politics prior to the Civil War.

While the Turnbulls, Kenners, Aimes, Bringiers, etc. all lived on or near their plantations, practicing what Eugene Genovese called “local absenteeism,” several planters managed their estates from a much greater distance.³⁰ Ironically, the most prominent of these all hailed from the state of South Carolina. Records indicate that no Creole planters practiced absentee ownership, always preferring to live on the plantation with their family or designating some direct branch of their family as manager and/or owner of each individual tract. In 1811, while serving in the United States military in the Louisiana Territory, Wade Hampton, a well-known South Carolina planter, invested in land from the giant Houmas plat in Ascension Parish, purchasing 4,000 arpents from Daniel Clark in February of that year.³¹ One of the tracts that Hampton acquired rested on the west bank of the Mississippi River on a sliver of land known as Pointe Houmas. According to one Hampton family historian, Wade Hampton wanted to add to

³⁰ Genovese describes “local absenteeism” as a system where “a number of slaveholders who owned several plantations within riding distance of each other preferred to live in Natchez, Vicksburg, or New Orleans,” and suggests that “away from the river in either direction...local absenteeism faded.” Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, 12.

³¹ Land Sale from Daniel Clark to Wade Hampton, February 25, 1811, Houmas Plantations and William Porcher Miles Materials Collections, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Hampton made many other smaller purchases throughout the 1810s-1820s to complement his initial purchase and they are located in the same manuscript collection along with the record for cited purchase. Wade Hampton, the first in a line of three members of the South Carolina family with the same name, came to Louisiana with the military, helping to suppress the 1811 slave rebellion at the head of U.S. soldiers. The most famous Hampton, Wade Hampton III rose to prominence in the years leading up to the Civil War, when he raised his own Confederate unit and ascended through the ranks of the Confederate military becoming governor of South Carolina during Reconstruction.

his South Carolina cotton production, purchasing the Louisiana estate “where a few years later he was manufacturing 1,600 hogsheads of sugar with a net value of more than \$100,000.”³² His decision to invest in Louisiana sugar led to great success as he cultivated his tract through absentee ownership, expanding it to become one of the elite sugar estates in southern Louisiana before his heirs sold the property to John Burnside for an astounding \$1,000,000 dollars in 1858.³³

Immediately upon purchasing his Louisiana lands, Hampton employed managers to allow for his absence when he returned home to South Carolina; Hampton never oversaw his Louisiana sugar plantations directly. In order to permit him to control his business practices at home and negotiate military affairs as well, Hampton hired David Oliver, Samuel McCutcheon, and Wade Hampton II to manage his Houmas properties in Louisiana. After some time, the senior Hampton settled upon Oliver as his factor while giving John Hughes, Hampton’s son-in-law, power of attorney to rule his estates as the primary caretaker.³⁴ Hampton simply wanted to possess the property, with as little stress and responsibility as possible, to serve as another source of income for himself and his family. He instructed Hughes to “[e]xercise the same control over the sales, the application of the proceeds, and the collection and settlement of all debts due to or

³² Charles Edward Cauthen, *The Family Letters of Three Wade Hamptons, 1782-1901* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), xiii.

³³ Sale of Houmas Plantation from Mrs. Caroline M. Preston to John Burnside, April 15, 1858, Houmas Plantations and William Porcher Miles Materials Collection, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

³⁴ Factors, which will be discussed in greater detail toward the end of the current chapter, acted as representatives in the marketplace for cotton and sugar planters. They oversaw the sales of the plantation owners while ensuring that the plantations themselves remained supplied adequately. Oftentimes, factors also served as creditors, allowing the planters to pay on their credit line at the end of the year once harvest profits had been realized.

by me, that I would or could have a right to exercise were I personally present.”³⁵ Hampton owned and operated the Houmas properties as an absentee owner until granting them to his descendents. In 1825 he deeded the assets to his daughter Caroline and her husband, John Smith Preston. Under their tutelage, the property flourished and three years after assuming control of the estate they began construction of the iconic house that currently stands on the property.³⁶ Another well-known Hampton son-in-law, John Lawrence Manning, who married Susan Frances Hampton, took possession of Riverton Plantation, just upriver from the large Houmas tract, taking control of Point Houmas when his wife died during childbirth in 1845.³⁷

The Houmas house that John Preston and his wife, Caroline, built in 1828 replaced the much smaller residence that had sat on the property since before Hampton purchased it in 1812. The design that they chose for their home reflected the Anglo-American style with “a broad central hall dividing major chambers on both levels,” and Doric columns fronting three of the exterior sides of the house.³⁸ Atop the home, stood a square belvedere from which William Russell recounted his observations as “one of the most striking of its kind in the world...six thousand acres of the finest land in one field, unbroken by hedge or boundary, and covered with the most magnificent crops of tasseling Indian corn and sprouting sugar-cane,” when he stopped at Houmas while on his tour across southern Louisiana’s sugar estates on the eve of the Civil

³⁵ Ronald E. Bridwell, “The South’s Wealthiest Planter: Wade Hampton I of South Carolina, 1754-1835” (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 1980), 402-403.

³⁶ John S. Preston, born into a prominent aristocratic South Carolina family, rose to his own fame through his legal practice, plantation management in both Louisiana and South Carolina, his ardent secessionist stance, and service to the Confederate government.

³⁷ John Lawrence Manning, another prominent absentee owner of a Louisiana sugar plantation from a prominent South Carolina family, served as South Carolina governor prior to the Civil War. William Scarborough suggests that both Preston and Manning averaged an annual sugar production of over 1,500 hogsheads, a figure that put them in the upper echelons of antebellum success with their Louisiana ventures. Scarborough, 137.

³⁸ Daspit, *Louisiana Architecture, 1840-1860*, 165-170.

War.³⁹ Surrounding the home, and borrowing from Louisiana Creole design mechanisms, stood two *garconnieres*, which flanked a formal garden and balanced its appearance from the long tree-lined avenue that ran traversed the front yard from the Mississippi River to the home. These brick octagonal structures “two stories in height under beautifully curved and shingled roofs,” offer the perfect balance with the Greek Revival style of the main house in a region characterized by a tenuous balance between Anglo-American and Creole ideals.⁴⁰

Any good absentee landlord, whether living within the same state as his or her sugar plantation or without, needed a good manager or overseer to ensure that everything on the plantation received careful attention and delicate care. The harsh climate and difficult growing season that sugarcane required necessitated a careful hand in management and, like other regions of the South, planters often turned to an overseer to watch over the plantation, either when the master lacked a deep agricultural knowledge, or when he or she could not remain on the plantation due to business or pleasure. One of the finest historians of slavery and the American South suggested that “both masters and slaves in effect used the overseers to detach themselves from the harsher side of the regime.”⁴¹ Overseers worked to manage the plantation in lieu of direct governance by the slaveholder but also created a barrier between the slaves on the plantation and the slaveholder.

The use of overseers also marks one of the starkest contrasts in plantation management strategies between Anglo-American and Creole masters. Creoles hired sugar makers and skilled

³⁹ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* 2 vols. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863) 1: 388.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 165-170.

⁴¹ William Kauffman Scarborough, *The Overseer: Plantation Management in the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1984), xi quoting Eugene Genovese. Another fine article on the subject includes J. Carlyle Sitterson, “Hired Labor on Sugar Plantations of the Ante-Bellum South,” *Journal of Southern History* 14 (May 1948): 192-205.

professionals for their sugarcane production on a seasonal basis but the records indicate that, with a few admittedly prominent exceptions, they rarely employed overseers; the master likely saw to many those duties by his or herself. Likely due, in part, to the ownership patterns (multiple holdings and absentee ownership) but, additionally, as a result of the more structured capitalist system where plantations required a foreman for efficient factory-like patterns of production, Americans more often required the duties of an overseer on their plantations. Scarborough has stated, correctly, that “no figure occupied a position of greater importance in the managerial hierarchy of the southern plantation system,” than the overseer; this makes for an interesting observation in southern Louisiana which contained effectively two different plantation practices based upon similar systems.⁴² Additionally, when Anglo-Americans hired overseers, they seemed to display a preference for those of Creole lineage. This tendency most likely resulted from the dispossession of smaller Creole farmers or planters who had lost the preferable agricultural lands to the American influx during the century but it also, perhaps, indicated a desire for American planters to hire someone with connections to the Creole society around them. Finally, many of the slaves likely spoke fluent French having lived in Louisiana since the colonial period. A Creole overseer could more easily integrate the estate into the society around him with old familial connections, an understanding of the land and environment, and perhaps most importantly a fluid understanding of the Creole language and customs.

While, as Scarborough notes, the use of overseers became a more common occurrence in the sugar parishes of Louisiana than almost any other region in the American South due to the larger size of the plantation units, records from Creole planters that indicate the employment or payment of overseers rarely occur. All of the planters that Scarborough mentions to illustrate the

⁴² Scarborough, *The Overseer*, xix.

practice of overseers on Louisiana sugar plantations, Effingham Lawrence, Maunsel White, the Barrow family, etc. come from the Anglo-American community. The Bringiers and Aimes, who possessed very large holdings proved exceptions to the rule, hiring overseers to look over their grand estates and help to ensure a smooth and efficient agricultural community and household, but most Creoles' account books and letters lack any significant discussion of overseers for most of this period.

The demanding sugarcane and the challenging environment of southern Louisiana meant that slaveholders had a lot at stake in order to realize adequate profits from their agricultural ventures but, if managed correctly, they could reap extraordinary revenues from the production of sugarcane. The overseer set the tone for the success or failure of many operations. Scarborough discovered that trial runs for overseers, where planters would test the limits and abilities of an overseer who sought employment, remained a prevalent practice unique to the sugar parishes of Louisiana. Maunsel White, a native of Ireland, used them with one of his hopeful applicants, Raymond Loussade. He hired Loussade in mid-December of 1860 but dismissed him at the end of the month, citing "inability," and paid him \$50.⁴³ White most assuredly felt that the necessity of an overseer warranted the difficulties of employing one because he remarked in 1860 that "from what I can see no man nowadays should own a plantation without living on it all the time."⁴⁴ He understood the absolute importance for agricultural oversight and slave control of having someone trustworthy present on the plantation at all times. Trial periods occasionally worked in the favor of overseers seeking employment; Andrew McCollom, a native of New York, granted Robert B. Daley, a trained carpenter, a period

⁴³ Quoted in Scarborough, *The Overseer*, 42.

⁴⁴ Maunsel White to Maunsel White II, August 24, 1860, Maunsel White Papers, 1802-1912, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

of time overseeing his Assumption parish estate. After a successful stint, McCollom hired Carpenter permanently to watch over his large sugar plantation's activities.⁴⁵

Overseers acted as the eyes and ears when masters could not attend to duties directly but sometimes the overseers caused just as many problems as the slaveholder hired him to eliminate. When a planter left someone else on the plantation to care for the land, slaves, and equipment, he trusted that they would act in the best interest of the plantation owner but that did not always come true; overseers challenged planters constantly. Judge Thomas Butler, writing to his wife, Anna, decried that his "overseer takes his bitters too strong when I am not here and to this may be attributed his neglect of duty."⁴⁶ Maintaining sobriety often remained the utmost responsibility for overseers with the lives and livelihood of so many charges in his hands. When overseers and their families inhabited the plantation it also helped to ensure that the slaveholder maintained a white presence in the neighborhood.

Given the rather large disproportionate black to white population, this disparity always remained at the forefront of white southerners' concerns, especially in the sugar parishes of southern Louisiana and led, on more than one occasion, to local legislation to guarantee that whites maintained a visibility on the plantation.⁴⁷ Because of these conditions, James Palfrey,

⁴⁵ E. E. McCollam Diary and Plantation Record, December 16, 1846 and January 11, 1847, Andrew McCollam Papers, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

⁴⁶ Thomas Butler to Anna Butler, July 2, 1846, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

⁴⁷ In 1860 the rural sugar parishes (excluding Orleans Parish) contained a total population, including those who planted sugar and/or cotton and smaller, yeoman farmers, of 280,124. The slave population for those parishes amounted to 190,577, or approximately sixty-eight percent of the total population. Of twenty-three sugar parishes, only five parishes contained a majority white population with the highest percentage of white residents living in Vermillion Parish with 70.6 of the parish reporting white status. On the other hand, of the remaining eighteen parishes with a majority enslaved population, West Feliciana, with eighty-two percent contained the highest percent of slaves out of the total population and eight parishes reported a population over seventy percent slave. Historical Census Browser. <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/php/county.php> (accessed 1 October 2012).

informed his son, Henry that “from my situation on the planting having as I observed no overseer, it is impossible for me to ride about the country.”⁴⁸ Several years later, Palfrey again could not leave his plantation, exclaiming that “unless a confidential overseer can be procured I cannot possibly accompany the sugar to New Orleans...write you your opinion what will be best to do in that case.”⁴⁹ In this instance, Palfrey had hired an overseer by May. Andrew Hynes received a disconcerting letter from his overseer, Nicholas Phipps who spoke of potential threats to the safety of the plantation’s white inhabitants but assured him that they had everything under control. Some of the slaves, Phipps wrote, “was talking...strong a bout not having white men enough on the plantation but I have three coopers and have made a bargain with them to assist me when called on so I don’t think there is any danger now.” “There is a sufficient number of white men on the plantation though,” Phipps reported but urged Hynes to return soon because “I would be better satisfied if you was here I am annoyed sometimes by white persons on the plantation.”⁵⁰

At times, the overseers caused such distress that planters found them a nuisance. Moses Liddell informed a close relative that his “Irish overseer quit me on Sunday and I am without an overseer. I have so little to do that I believe I am better off without one.”⁵¹ The stress and uncertainty of hiring a new one simply did not appeal to Liddell, considering the work that he needed done on the plantation. Occasionally, the master simply chose to act as the overseer himself. Not ten years after William Kenner entered into sugar planting society, he wrote to

⁴⁸ James Palfrey to Henry Palfrey, April 1, 1818, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁴⁹ James Palfrey to William Palfrey, March 16, 1832, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁵⁰ Nicholas Phipps to Andrew Hynes, June 1846, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵¹ Moses Liddell to St. John R. Liddell, July 21, 1841, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

William Minor in Natchez that he would “go up on the Boat to Oakland to take my stand there for a few days as Overseer to deliver molasses sugar, etc.”⁵² He preferred to watch over these careful arrangements himself instead of trusting the welfare of that year’s crop to someone outside of the family.

Some slaveholders garnered greater respect among overseers as favorable employers just like a number of planters who turned their goodwill and efficient management into political capital. Louisiana’s sugar masters exerted themselves to earn a reputation that would put one in good standing with the community around him or her. Certain plantations became coveted positions as opportunities for overseers, and masters gained reputations over time as favored employers. John Thornton urged the heirs of Joseph Erwin to seek his employment, writing to Andrew Hynes and John Craighead that he could remain in his current position if he chose but he declined his current employer’s attempts to re-employ him as overseer “in consequence of his plantation being very imperfectly drained...should a vacancy take place with you as overseer and sugar maker next year, I should prefer living with you to any other, and I have no doubt would be able to give you general satisfaction.”⁵³ Four years later, the same John Thornton attempted, again, to obtain the position as overseer on Andrew Hynes’s plantation. He wanted to work as overseer and sugar maker for Hynes, mentioning that he had planned to move to Texas “prior to this; but things has turned out with me that I cannot conveniently go until after the Rowling season if I can get any thing of a good situation,” and telling Hynes “If the situation with you is full, you will oblige by endeavoring to procure me a situation that you think would suit me.”⁵⁴

⁵² William Kenner to William Minor, January 24, 1817, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵³ John Thornton to Hynes and Craighead, December 9, 1844, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁴ John Thornton to Andrew Hynes, May 27, 1848, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

The decision of whom to hire as overseer often vexed masters greatly. Several letters highlight the tendency for planters to seek references from well-respected slaveholders in the neighborhood and validate the importance of the role of the overseer to the success of any plantation. Slaveholders faced very difficult decisions when seeking the correct manager and Edward Gay faced a host of applicants. Colonel Stewart of Iberville Parish recommended Mr. D. Freeman to Gay because he had “known Mr. F. for several years (his family lived near by me) and it is from a knowledge of his character as a man and his ability to take charge of a plantation as an overseer that I recommend him to you.”⁵⁵ Shortly after that letter, Gay received additional word concerning D. Freeman’s qualifications from William A. Avery: “I can only say that when I have been on my place, he has rigidly obeyed instructing – he understands the management of negroes very well (perhaps too lenient) and I think makes a good overseer – not being able to be on my place all the time, have not felt desirous to trust him as a manager.”⁵⁶ Perhaps Gay could not trust Freeman to manage the entirety of operations at St. Louis Plantation when he returned to St. Louis, Missouri to attend to his mercantile business, but Avery seemed to believe he could not do better if he desired to hire someone to serve solely as overseer of his plantation. Edward Gay attracted seemingly countless suitors who hoped to gain his favor and earn a position as overseer on his St. Louis Plantation downriver from Baton Rouge when word spread that his previous overseer had left in 1859. N. J. Pierce, the overseer at Magnolia Plantation in St. James Parish, sought the new position at St. Louis Plantation. “I have been informed that you want to employ an experienced overseer if so I would like to get your business,” Pierce wrote, informing Gay that he could provide good references and that he “was raised in Miss on a

⁵⁵ Colonel Stewart to Edward Gay, December 8, 1851, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁶ William A. Avery to Edward Gay, December 13, 1851, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

cotton plantation have been off and a sugar place for 15 years. I will go up to see you if you wish it.”⁵⁷ An enquiry by C. H. Myhand, whom one planter regarded as one of the “best managers, and one of the most reliable men in his business,” explored the possibility of employment on Gay’s plantation due to his growing family.⁵⁸ Happily situated on his current plantation, Myhand asked “What wages will you pay for a good man that is capable of attending to your business and take care of your property. The right kind of a man is worth a fortune to a large planter. I have been at the business long enough to no the value of a good overseer to a rich man this is confidential.”⁵⁹ Myhand carried a hefty price tag, however, and he informed Gay that he wanted \$3,500 and “a good woman to cook and wait on my family a boy to attend my horse and allow me the youse of any thing that grows on the Plantation for my bording.”⁶⁰ As the new decade dawned, Gay still sought an overseer for St. Louis Plantation.

At the same time, Mr. Brooks, the overseer who had left his position on Gay’s plantation, sought to work in the same capacity at F. D. Conrad’s Cottages Plantation on the east bank of the Mississippi River just below Baton Rouge and Conrad questioned Gay about his qualifications for the position. Conrad solicited Gay’s knowledge of Brooks’s “style of management of negroes...whether he has a proper regard for their comfort and health and whether he is duly attentive to them in sickness so as to have given you satisfaction.” Additionally, Conrad wanted to know a laundry list of Brooks’s qualifications regarding the care of “horses, mules, and other

⁵⁷ N. J. Pierce to Edward Gay, October 18, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁸ William S. Pike to Edward Gay, December 19, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁹ C. H. Myhand to Edward Gay, November 12, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁶⁰ C. H. Myhand to Edward Gay, December 11, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

stock...supplies of the plantation, such as carts, ploughs, and all other tools and utensils,” and his ability to govern in the master’s absence.”⁶¹

If everything went according to plan and the planter and his or her overseer raised a crop of sugarcane successfully, they then had to direct their focus to marketing the crop in order to obtain maximum profits. The threat of early frost, difficult Louisiana geography, and an infinitesimal margin for error meant that planters had to squeeze the most profit out of the raw cane and molasses that they sold to the market as humanly possible. The majority of planters worked through factors to market their crops and, in return, to purchase the goods that they required on the plantation. Factors, used by both cotton and sugar planters across the American South, represented planters’ interests in the cities and towns across the region, granting them credit and providing purchase power. They would buy the provisions and tools that planters and their overseers required and, when harvest time arrived, they would sell the planters’ products to relieve their debts to themselves and the merchants that they had purchased from them in the springtime. Factors extended credit lines to planters so that they could stretch themselves in an agricultural industry that needed such a large amount of capital to achieve successful returns that they could not have done so without the help of financial backers. They also served as the eyes and ears for sugar planters who could not tune themselves in to the constantly fluctuating trends of the market as closely as their factors in the cities.

Factors’ correspondence with sugar planters across southern Louisiana provides excellent insight into the business side of sugarcane production and marketing. Certain trends that differentiate the Creole planters from the Anglo-American planters arise after careful analysis of the business decisions and actions taken by planters and the factors representing them and acting

⁶¹ F. D. Conrad to Edward Gay, November 26, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

on their behalf. More often than not, factors or market agents actually wrote their correspondence on the blank pages of one of several New Orleans's daily commercial publications that reported the market prices for countless goods including rum and sugarcane. Planters' records are littered with reports from merchants in the city regarding the prices of sugar in varying degrees of quality and the supply for the season's crops in the city and other markets around the nation. Kelly and Conyngham of New Orleans, the city agent for Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins, reported that "it is out of the power of [the factors] to ship the sugar at present, and we have sold them, that we supposed you would have no objection to let it remain in your warehouse a short time at their visit. Please send us the weight, that we may settle the amount."⁶² Oftentimes, as noted, the factors and agents advised planters on the best course of action to take when considering market options for their crops.⁶³

John Randolph's longtime commission agents, Burbridge and Adams, wrote to him incessantly to keep him abreast of the comings and goings of the New Orleans markets. In July, 1861, during the first months of the Civil War, during planters' continued attempts to conduct business as usual, Burbridge and Adams wrote to Randolph with a report of their recent activity on his behalf. Stating that his recent shipment of "30 Hhds sugar ship to St. Louis is still outstanding. The 10 hhds sugar taken by J. Morgan Hall weighted gross: 12325; ton 1233 (total 11073) at 5 cents is \$554.65," and continued by informing Randolph that "the 10 Hhds on the levee [in New Orleans] are still unsold. We expect every day to find a purchaser for it (so

⁶² Kelly and Conyngham to Wilkins, March 2, 1852, Bruce, Seddon, Wilkins, LSU.

⁶³ For further discussion of investment, credit systems, and the complex financial networks that cotton and sugar planters entered into, see Richard Holcombe Kilbourne, Jr., *Debt, Investment, Slaves: Credit Relations in East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, 1825-1865* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995); Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and his Retainers: Financing and Marketing the Cotton Crop, 1800-1925* (Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 2000).

Geddis says) No business doing. Banks not counting any thing. Money of course is extremely scarce,” citing the tightening of commerce as a result of the mounting war efforts.”⁶⁴ Despite planters’ efforts to continue planting sugarcane and marketing their crops as usual during the war, they began experiencing significant challenges as the blockade restricted commerce and came to a halt following the fall of New Orleans in April 1862.

Another prominent factor, W. and D. Urquhart, wrote to James Bowman concerning his recent shipments of sugarcane for the 1855-1856 crop. Notifying Bowman that “under here you will find sales for 60 barrels molasses for Opelousas which we hope you will find satisfactory, and informing him that “the last shipment is very poor and we do not know what we will obtain for it. Sugars are active and good qualities very scarce.”⁶⁵ Commission agents and factors possessed a responsibility to keep their planters informed of both the quality of the cane that they produced so that they could make adjustments to their processing procedures or alter their agricultural strategies and the supplies reaching the city so that they could predict the market prices based almost directly on supply and demand given that year’s crop.

All planters, whether Anglo-American or Creole, struggled to combat the environment, their slave forces, and one another in order to ascend to the top of sugarcane society and achieve profits to sustain their family’s sustenance and elite status. But examining their business practices and the ways in which they achieved that ascendancy and conducted themselves in the broader commercial circles start to show some dissimilarities between the two ethnic

⁶⁴ Burbridge and Adams to John H. Randolph, July 3, 1861, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁶⁵ Urquhart to James Bowman, April 10, 1856, Bowman Papers, LSU. W. and D. Urquhart served as commission merchants for both cotton and sugar planters across Louisiana and had connections to the prominent Urquhart family that maintained political prominence early in Louisiana’s history. A street in the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans celebrates the family’s importance in the early political and business elite of New Orleans.

communities. Anglo-American planters exhibited a greater sense of capitalism that drove planters across the American South who strove to practice their form of paternalism in order to reap the highest profits possible in order to invest in more land and slaves. In turn, increasing their holdings in these two properties would help them to attain the highest order or republicanism and advance their political capital. On the other hand, Creoles, more often than not, preferred to focus their efforts on maintaining their family dynasty and local power within Louisiana itself. The business practices that both groups exhibited showed marked distinctions between the two communities but the differences did not stop there. While the sugarcane industry required them to share many similarities, other defining characteristics distinguished Creoles from Anglo-Americans and became evident-though not always obvious-in their culture, including plantation management, their approach to new sugarcane technology, and their interactions with slaves and the institution of slavery.

CHAPTER 4
“I THINK IT CAN BE DONE BY PERSEVERANCE AND GOOD MANAGEMENT”:
SLAVE MANAGEMENT ON LOUISIANA’S SUGAR ESTATES

The society, culture, and environmental demands surrounding sugarcane production in southern Louisiana dictated how Creoles and Anglo-Americans interacted with one another, and the business decisions that planters made often helped to determine the success or failure of their plantation enterprises. But the heart and soul of any plantation estate during the antebellum period remained the chattel that lived on the estate in the rows of slave cabins, tucked away behind the big house. The slave force and the slaves’ relationship with the overseer or slaveholder helped to determine directly the possibilities of a sugarcane estate. Examining the plantation activity at the ground level on a sugarcane plantation can also help to illustrate some of the potential differences between Anglo-American slaveholders and their Creole counterparts, while highlighting some of the similarities that began to bring the two divergent groups together as the nineteenth century progressed. Both communities viewed slavery differently, just as they understood their role within slave society in an often contradictory fashion, defining it by standards unique to their individual ethnic community. But all slaveholders needed to maintain an efficient work force, keep their laborers happy, and purchase supplies wisely in order to help achieve fiscal success. Thus, planters of both ethnicities often necessarily displayed similar behavior in these areas, especially as time passed leading up to sectional crisis and civil war. The great southern historian, C. Vann Woodward, stated poignantly that “black and white southerners have shaped each other’s destiny, determined each other’s isolation, shared and molded a common culture, it is, in fact, impossible to imagine the one without the other and quite futile to try.”¹ Woodward’s absolute grasp on the complexity of southern society, both before

¹ C. Vann Woodward, *American Counterpoint: Slavery and Racism in the North and South* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971), 5-6.

and after the Civil War, shows how truly unique Louisiana's sugarcane society was because Louisianans thought, not only in terms of black and white and the relationship between the two, but they experienced an even more intricate society where whites and blacks themselves became split between Creoles and Anglo-Americans on the one hand and slaves and free people of color on the other.

I will explore the intersection between white and black and what that co-dependent space meant for the relationship between Creole and American sugar planters. Understanding how planters practiced slavery and how they thought about plantation management will help to provide a clearer picture of the two groups and how the cultural characteristics resulted in their viewpoints of the "peculiar institution." By examining the role of slaves on the plantation, how their owners and overseers cared for (or failed to care for) them, and how plantation management regulated slavery will give a clearer indication of how Creoles and Americans viewed their own position in Louisiana's complex sugarcane society. It will also hint at the beginning of a shift in focus from two disparate communities and the dissimilarities between them toward a more unified stance on slavery and whiteness in the face of increasing sectional conflict. Over time, the peculiarities of both groups faded in favor of similar management practices in several respects. The methods of plantation management and the treatment of slaves by the two groups had long served as a counterpoint between the two communities, but investigating the plantation records shows that these two groups-who remained largely split socially and culturally-often necessarily exhibited similar management choices though some distinct variations did exist. Exploring where the two groups came together in order to achieve success within the overarching plantation regime while understanding the dissimilarities will help to illustrate if one

group favored a harsher hand or if they both carried similar perceptions of the role of slavery on the plantation and their efforts to attain a profit and attain elite status.

Raising the tropical sugarcane crop and pushing the limits of the growing season in southern Louisiana required year-round attention and effort by slaves and slave owners. Here the ethnic distinctions blurred in favor of necessity because the environment demanded similar displays of seasonal agricultural practices. Almost immediately after harvest in the fall and winter, planting season demanded the attention of the plantation management. One of the most delicate and time-consuming crops in the entire American South, sugarcane required an extraordinary amount of labor and the close, well-informed attention of overseer and slaveholder alike in order to ensure a successful crop. One slip into indiscretion meant that they could lose the entire crop to flood, frost, or a host of other environmental challenges.

Planting usually began immediately after the New Year celebrations. Across southern Louisiana, slaves spent January and February working to prepare the ground and plant sugarcane for the next crop, using plows for tillage and planting the cane by hand. To plant sugarcane, one typically used segments cut from the crops of previous year in a process called “stem cutting.” The planter held back a portion of his crop from one year to the next, storing it for a new crop and processing the rest to make raw sugar during the harvest season. Initially, planters in Louisiana, and parts of the Caribbean where the crop thrived, chose the poorest cane for the next crop, processing the best part that had yielded the most sugar to help maximize their profits. Over time, planters and agronomists began experimenting with better agricultural practices and journal articles in popular publications including *De Bow's Review* and *Southern Cultivator* helped to encourage planters to alter their methods of production, but the concept of choosing the

strongest cane to carry over to the next crop did not gain widespread popularity until after the Civil War and yields dropped steadily during the nineteenth century.²

Slaves did most of the tillage and plantation work with mules or horses and plows; planters invested heavily in various styles of plows and records indicate that they made frequent purchases of these implements, often maintaining a large inventory on hand to prepare the soil for planting the cane. During the nineteenth century, as tillage methods and plows improved, planters increased the row spacing by moving away from a 2.5- or 4-foot row during the 1820s to a 6-foot row by the 1850s in order to accommodate two-mule plows which worked the soil more effectively.³ The plantation manager used plows to break up and aerate the soil much like farmers have done for many generations, and they also occasionally plowed under the stubble from the previous crops to incorporate additional organic material into the earth. Many planters practiced a three-year rotation between cane, stubble, and corn or peas to replenish the nutrients in the soil and raise provisions for the plantation itself. This practice helped to increase the soil quality and keep the yields as high as possible since sugarcane depleted the ph levels and quality of the tilth significantly. Manure application remained uncommon until the 1850s, a time when planters across the American South began to breathe new life into their planting practices as a sign of optimism about the future of their endeavors whether they planted cane, cotton, or

² Glen R. Conrad, *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1960), 32. This title does an excellent job of discussing the sugarcane industry in Louisiana from the early years of de Boré, Mendez Morin, and Solis through the end of slavery during the Civil War to the mechanization and cooperatives that developed during the twentieth century. Other works that discuss the history of sugarcane, from both an agricultural and an industrial standpoint, include A. C. Barnes, *The Sugar Cane* (New York: Interscience Publishers, 1964); and Frank Blackburn, *Sugar-Cane* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1984); Glen R. Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1795-1995* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); John Alfred Heitmann, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1830-1910* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Michael G. Wade, *Sugar Dynasty: M. A. Patout & Son, Ltd., 1791-1993* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995).

³ Conrad, *Green Fields*, 32.

tobacco.⁴ Records indicate that planters often hauled manure from their plantation's livestock into the fields, and occasionally purchased fertilizer from certain dealers, including guano, a product of countries in Latin America, primarily Peru, that rose in popularity due to several articles touting its effectiveness.

As the 1850s progressed and the threat of secession and civil war loomed closer, planters made a greater commitment to their investment in the soil itself by expanding the use of fertilizer, often incorporating guano into their agricultural regimen. The records for several planters show that they made purchases of guano through their commissioners in New Orleans or from the suppliers directly. The partnership of William Webb Wilkins, James Cole Bruce, and James Alexander Seddon paid \$192.03 for 51 bags of "premium guano," including the drayage from J. C. Wilson and Co. in Baltimore, Maryland.⁵ Planters occasionally had to purchase from distant cities because the guano typically came from abroad. Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins then "sewed" the guano, mixing it into the soil throughout the month of April as they moved across the cane fields with plows and hoes to battle the weeds while they applied the fertilizer. The account books between Lewis Stirling and his New Orleans firm, W. and D. Urquhart, show that Stirling spent a great deal of money on the purchase of guano for his fields in the Felicianas. During 1855-1856, Stirling paid \$1,500 for guano that Urquhart purchased for him from Castillo

⁴ For decades scholars argued that the westward expansion and new agricultural practices, including fertilizers indicated waning yields and a fear of crisis but more recent scholarship beginning with William J. Cooper, Jr., "The Cotton Crisis in the Antebellum South: Another Look," *Agricultural History* 49 (April 1975), 381-391 counters the notion that crisis existed. The new methods, rather, signaled the hope for a bright future and the health of plantation agriculture under slavery. For examples of early scholarship, see Eugene D. Genovese, *The political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965); Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1918); Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 16 (September 1929): 151-171.

⁵ Bill for Goods, January 10, 1852, Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins Papers, LSU.

and Harisfre in New Orleans.⁶ Andrew Hynes's account of expenses for the 1854 crop reflect the extraordinary capital that he had to expend for a single year and included the purchase of guano. He spent \$14,820 for various improvements, repairs, and new ditches on the plantation; the purchase of corn, cow peas, and oxen; cooperage fees and the purchase of hoops poles to make hogsheads; fire insurance; and over \$1,000 on the purchase of guano. His astonishing expenses and careful attention to the 1854 crop yielded 732 hogsheads of sugar, 40 barrels of molasses, 928 half-barrels of molasses, 2,500 kegs of molasses and netted Hynes and his children a profit of \$55,129.83.⁷ Interestingly, Americans comprised the vast bulk of the sugar planters who incorporated guano into their agricultural regimen. With the exception of the ever-innovative Valcour Aime, it seems that the Creoles did not invest heavily in the product but the reasons remain unclear. Perhaps Aime's willingness to partake in these conversations and implement these new techniques helped him to weather the storm of Americanization, succumbing only to his personal grief at the death of his beloved son and wife before the Civil War. One might infer that the Americans participated in the scientific agriculture debates that raged across the American South more eagerly and the Creoles may not have subscribed to as many publications that touted the new methods for fertilizer application that tied southern planters together.

The Minor family records indicate that they used manure from their stock to work into the soil with hoes after hauling it from the main plantation. The large herds that the Minors maintained, most assuredly contributed a significant amount of the animal by-product and, with

⁶ Account Current between Lewis Stirling and W. and D. Urquhart, 1855-1856, Turnbull-Allain Family Papers, LSU.

⁷ Account of Expenses for Andrew Hynes's 1854 sugar crop, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU. Bagasse refers to the by-product of sugarcane processing at harvest time which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

the advances in scientific agriculture, they considered it a useful method for disposing the animal waste. They possessed an extraordinarily detailed account of each individual field or field grouping at Waterloo Plantation in order to measure the investment, work, and production for each plot. They indicated specific treatments and recorded the results for that year's efforts in order to improve upon their actions during the next season. For their 1848 endeavors in "Thorn Tree Field," an 18-acre plot of land in which they had sowed a "good crop" of corn and peas in 1847, they reported that they planted corn from "red cob seed" in April, pumpkins in May, and peas in June. Going deeper into detail, they noted that "this ground was manured heavily in places with old bagass[e] which turned the young corn yellow when about a foot high excepted its grout; This corn...was a pretty good crop; Heavy crop of peas."⁸ Thus, they could decipher, at least through their observations, how the heavy application of manure would affect the yields of that year's crop. John Ransdell also employed the use of his plantation's manure on his Rapides Parish estate, mentioning that "we planted but slow in consequence of having manure to strew over the ground," but he continued to feel that this practice gave them the best chance for higher yields and increased efficiency because they could work the manure into the soil as they progressed across the field during the planting process, working it in by hand and hoe.⁹ Completing these activities simultaneously prevented having the slaves move over all the fields another time simply for the application of the manure.

Depending on the weather during the first months of the year when rain and cold temperatures often made fieldwork miserable at best and impossible at worst, planting sugarcane usually lasted between one and two months. After the slaves completed that task, they turned

⁸ Volume, 25: Plantation Diary, 1842-1856, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁹ Plantation Journal, 1855-1863, John H. Ransdell Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

their attention to maintaining the crop and conducting other myriad plantation tasks that the overseer or slaveholder directed them to complete. The wet, tropical climate that made sugarcane viable in southern Louisiana also ensured that the slave forces on plantations fought a constant battle with the weeds that grew just as aggressively as the cane itself. Slaves often had to pass over the fields as many as six or seven times between February and July with the hoe and/or the plow to clear the fields and give the grassy sugarcane the best chance to grow and thrive without the encroachment of competing weeds. Valcour Aime, in his detailed log of daily events on his plantation, kept a close eye on the amount of time that his force spent clearing the weeds in the fields. Every year he made careful note of the days that his slaves began and finished each successive round of weeding in his plant (new) and stubble (re-growth) cane respectively. Aime's slaves worked tirelessly; as soon as they finished one pass across all of the fields, they began anew.¹⁰ The constant attention of the slaves and plantation manager helped to make sure that they kept a close eye on the crop growth or any potential problems that the crops faced that year. Usually, they only "laid-by" the cane when the plants themselves had grown large enough that they kept the weeds down on their own by shading the rows between them and crowding out any new ones from coming up in the future.

At that point, slaves turned their attention to other tasks around the plantation, including weeding any pastures that they maintained for livestock, chopping wood, maintenance, clearing or digging ditches, and a host of other activities that helped to make sure the plantation ran efficiently and productively. One of the most important tasks on any Louisiana sugar plantation, cutting wood, served two vital purposes. First, it allowed the slaves to eliminate the forests and

¹⁰ Valcour Aime *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime, Formerly Proprietor of the Plantation Known as St. James Sugary Refinery, Situated in the Parish of St. James, and Now Owned by Mr. John Burnside* (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1878). Aime's diary is littered with annual examples of his slaves weeding the crops; typically each successive pass across the fields required about a week of work.

swamps, usually in the back of the property away from the front of the plantation along the river or bayou where the planter lived. Clearing the timber opened up more land for development so that the slaveholder could bring more acres under cultivation and maximize his or her yields without having to purchase new property. Clearing the land also helped to increase drainage. Many planters constructed complex networks of ditches that improved water flow by directing water where the management wanted it and helping the plantation to weather the storms and seasonal rains that challenged Louisiana planters annually. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, cutting down the forests and swamps gave the planter an absolutely vital source of wood that he or she could use to fuel the processing of the sugarcane during harvest. As sugar boomed during the nineteenth century, steam power became increasingly popular among sugar planters who needed to extract the juice from the cane in order to make the crystallized raw sugar and molasses. The popularity of steam power, the subject of the next chapter, required a vast amount of wood to fuel the steam engines that drove this process. Slaves worked tirelessly in the lower, back portions of the plantations after the season's crop had been laid by in order to stock the plantation with an adequate amount of wood. Additionally, many planters used the wood on the plantation itself to construct the hogsheads used for shipping the sugarcane and barrels for molasses.¹¹ Some slaveholders actually employed coopers on their plantations to build these wooden instruments of commerce, and those who did had to supply them with the necessary items with which to make their products on the plantation.

With all of these activities in play during the year, and some of these tasks taking place on any given day, the plantation remained a constant flurry of activity. Planters needed a way to record and catalog all of the happenings on the plantation and therefore littered their journals and

¹¹ A hogshead, the standard measurement for sugarcane and method for shipment of the product weighed, on average, about 1,000 pounds.

daily logs with the reports of slaves' accomplishments. A sign of a capitalist labor complex on Louisiana's sugar plantations, slaveholders and overseers measured every single movement of their slaves and made note of their daily tasks as a way of measuring success and progress (or lack thereof). Perhaps coincidentally or perhaps indicative of less capitalist-driven motivations, the Creoles' journals and manuscripts do not provide the deep sense of the daily workings on their plantations nor do they exhibit regularly any minute measurement of their laborers' tasks. The Anglo-American slaveholders have provided this kind of evidence to indicate the utmost details of their operations all throughout their records, giving us a greater understanding of the management on American plantations than their Creole counterparts.¹² The manager for Wilkins, Bruce, and Seddon, proprietors of cotton and sugar plantations, a sawmill, and a cooper's shop in St. Carroll (in northern Louisiana) and St. James Parishes noted that he had "6 men in swamp getting bolts for hhd. Got 60 cords up to date 2 weeks," the manager recorded as the duties that he had completed on Saturday 6 March, 1853, and by the 18th of the same month, he noted, with pleasure, that he had made "5,800 staves sufficient for 1,000 hhds a reasonable collection." His force had taken the cords of wood and the materials for making hogsheads by "cutting wood in new grown for corn...and ratoon land."¹³ All things considered, the number of

¹² For example, with a few exceptions, the vast majority of the examples covered in both Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005) and John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) focus on Anglo-American examples to illustrate the ways in which capitalism permeated the sugar industry. The lack of Creole sources seems difficult to explain since they permeated society in such a resounding way. Creoles often kept careful inventories of their plantations but they tended to provide much less careful analysis and fewer calculations in their records.

¹³ Plantation Diary, 1853, Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins Papers, LSU. The ratoon land refers to the newly-planted field of sugarcane in which the planter used "ratoons" or stem cuttings from the previous crop to produce the current year's cane crop.

cords and staves that Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins's plantation had required paled in comparison to other, much larger operations across southern Louisiana.

The Butlers' extensive operation, owned by Pierce Butler required a very large stockpile of wood to fuel the steam-powered machinery during harvest. Pierce Butler wrote to his father, Thomas, updating him on the wood that they had stockpiled; his overseer "says he has 700 cords of wood cut. I suppose about 500 will be nearer the mark and perhaps not that...I fear he will be behind hand with his wood of which we ought to have 1500 cords." Butler fretted that he had "no confidence in the representations of Mr. Martin and would eventually discharge him if I could find a substitute for him."¹⁴ Another planter calculated that it would "require about 3 ½ cords or more to reduce each Hhd or 1000 [pounds] to sugar, for 150 Hhds, 525 cords of wood," and to purchase the required cords would cost an estimated \$2.00 for each cord, resulting in a final bill of \$1,050.¹⁵ The ambition and trustworthiness of the overseer could determine directly the success or failure of a plantation, and he had to perform constantly to the best of their abilities to satisfy the slaveholder. Not having the 1,500 cords of wood that the plantation needed to get through the harvest season could have catastrophic results if the boilers had to be stopped during the season to cut more wood, risking the loss of the crop as the frost grew more likely later in the season. Moses Liddell wrote on behalf of his overseer, F. D. Richardson, "that his heaviest job is hauling in his wood 800 cords, he was hauling in corn, gathering hay etc preparatory to commence grinding and saving the sugar crop."¹⁶ Everything needed to happen quickly in order for the operation to prepare itself to process the cane at the last possible moment

¹⁴ Pierce Butler to Thomas Butler, June 28, 1846, Butler Family Papers.

¹⁵ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 17, 1848, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁶ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, October 17, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

to ensure full maturity while preventing it from dying of frost. A year later, Liddell discussed the logistics of cutting the cords of wood, informing John Liddell that they had “yet to get about 500 cords,” and suggested that they could “get about 30 cord a day, we are obliged to cut the wood at a length of 3 feet to split. The magnolia and gum is too hard to split at 4 feet length, therefore it is more tedious to get out than the gum would be in the rear of your lands.”¹⁷ A tedious process, the necessity of having enough wood cut for the annual harvest made it one of the primary tasks on a plantation after the cultivation of the crop itself.

While some planters chose to manufacture the barrels and hogsheads on the plantation, purchasing pre-made hogsheads through a factor in New Orleans, provided another, viable option and one local planter decided that it “would do to try at 4 cents or \$40 the Hhd, 150 Hhd \$6,000, so that the profits from “molasses would pay the sugar boiler, for the Hhds and molasses barrels.”¹⁸ Instead of having to cut enough wood to make barrels for molasses and hogsheads for sugar, purchasing them from the city, carried a high price tag for the plantation but sometimes proved worth the expense. Moses Liddell considered the logistics of getting barrels from the city for his crop, decrying that “we have to depend on getting molasses barrels from N.O. They cost about 10 cents a barrel to bring them over, or if we give the return freight to the same boat we some times get them brought over without charge.”¹⁹ Poor management aside, planters did occasionally have to purchase pre-manufactured barrels from vendors in a nearby town, due to surplus crops or other unforeseen difficulties in constructing the barrels and hogsheads themselves. Messrs. Bowman and Co. purchased 400 empty molasses barrels for

¹⁷ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, July 1, 1847, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁸ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 17, 1848, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, July 19, 1848, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

their crop from James Ennis in Plaquemines for \$4.60 per barrel, while Daniel Turnbull's overseer, D. Freeman, asked his employer for additional barrels, writing "in my last letter to you I sent for 50 barrels for molasses but you will now be pleased to send me one hundred instead of fifty," for Desoto Plantation.²⁰ The supply and demand of barrels and hogsheads occasionally altered the price market prices directly for the goods that they contained. Maunsel White, a planter and merchant in New Orleans, wrote to one of his representatives in Richmond who sold his crop each year, reporting the prices of goods in New Orleans. White informed Dunlop, Moncure, and Co. that "molasses was also advanced and I understood that all on the levee was bought at 17 cents, the want of Barrels has kept down this article which some folks think will run up to 20 cents." Reportedly, barrels had decreased in price when White wrote this letter "selling at 1 dollar each. They were as high as 2 to 2 ¼ dollars."²¹ Samuel Fagot of Constancia Plantation purchased 250 empty molasses barrels from E. Rolling, a cooperage firm in New Orleans, for \$312.50 on the eve of the Civil War.²² When plantation management needed to sell several hundred barrels of molasses, that sort of drop would influence his net profits significantly, and perhaps encourage him or her to try harder to make arrangements for manufacturing them on the plantation. Here, again, the distinctions between Creole and Anglo planters blur because of necessity

Hynes and Craighead, the partnership that maintained Joseph Erwin's plantation after his death, purchased their barrels from a firm in Cincinnati, Ohio. Along with an invoice for 750 barrels of pork (at \$937.50), 50 kegs of lard (at \$200), and 500 molasses barrels (at \$625), plus

²⁰ James Ennis to Messrs. Bowman and Co., March, 1856, Bowman Family Papers, LSU; D. Freeman to Daniel Turnbull, March 8, 1858, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

²¹ Maunsel White to Dunlop, Moncure, and Co., February 6, 1846, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

²² Invoice for Molasses Barrels, November 26, 1860, Uncle Sam Papers, LSU.

the cost for drayage and commission (\$83), that cost a total of \$1,845.50, the firm, Everett and Buchanan included a personal note. It informed Hynes and Craighead that they “could have bought barrels out of warehouses at less price, say \$1.00 each but we had no warrant that they were a good article, and preferred paying a Cooper 25 cents more for an article,” that they felt would prove more satisfactory.²³ Shortly thereafter, Hynes and Craighead paid on an invoice for many different agricultural and woodworking tools for the plantation that included draw knives, lathing hatchets, bright augers, broad hatchets, coopers hollowing knives, coopers adze, coopers grinder, and coopers compasses, all tools that the slaves or trained coopers could use to make the barrels and/or hogsheads for an annual sugar crop on the plantation so that they would not have to purchase barrels in the future.²⁴ In fact, the expense booklet for 1843 shows the hire of Lemuel Crundell as cooper for \$675.38; typically the planter paid a cooper per barrel or hogshead to complete a pre-arranged number of each product.²⁵ Erwin’s descendents on Home Plantation had corresponded previously with Crundell when he had stopped in Louisville, Kentucky to seek supplies for Andrew Hynes. Crundell notified Hynes that he knew “of no possible chance of buying timber for barrels of the size you speak of here or at Louisville,” but offered that he could “purchase hoop poles here provided I can get them taken down. I have already made a contract for several thousand,” but warned Hynes that those he had acquired “would not make barrels larger than 30 to 32 gallons.” He offered an alternative source for the materials that Hynes required, suggesting that “Mr. Emanuel Landry who lives about five miles

²³ Invoice from Everett and Buchanan of Cincinnati, November 23, 1840, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁴ Invoice for items purchased by Hynes and Craighead from Whiting and Slark, February 14, 1842, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁵ Expense Booklet for the 1843 Sugar Crop, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

above your farm, two years ago, got out timber for about 30 barrels with an expectation of getting it made up. When I examined the timber I found it too thin for barrels and it has lain on his hands ever since...this I believe could be had on good terms and it would be very suitable for half barrels.” No matter the source of the supplies for the manufacture of the barrels, Crundell offered his services at a fair price, informing Hynes that he would “make the half barrels in consideration of your kindness at the reduced price proposed, but my dear sir, I assure you that no man can afford to make 40 gallon barrels for 75 cents.”²⁶

Hired coopers often completed the task along with a family member or hired help, but occasionally, he would watch over and instruct the slaves on the plantation to complete the task for the slaveholder. Some planters even built and maintained a cooper’s shed or building where the plantation’s coopers could work with all of the tools at their disposal. Records indicate that several planters, both Anglo-Americans and Creoles, along the Mississippi River hired coopers to help manufacture barrels and hogsheads on the plantation so that they did not have to purchase them in the city for shipment of their harvest. John Randolph, proprietor of Nottoway Plantation, hired a cooper on several occasions. On 18 October 1848, he recorded that he had paid William Roberts \$330 for spending seven months and two days coopering on his plantation. One year prior, he had employed Roberts in the same capacity for \$300.²⁷

It seems that Randolph employed some of his slaves as coopers or instructed some of his work force to assist the coopers that he hired because an entry in his book of “account[s] with the negroes for 1851,” he notes that “Cooper William” had purchased a pair of boots from the

²⁶ Lemuel Crundell to Andrew Hynes, November 5, 1840, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁷ Expense Book, 1847-1853, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

plantation for \$2.00.²⁸ He later recorded expense accounts with several slaves whom he designated as coopers. To Cooper Henry, he paid \$19.50 for 26 barrels and 14 hogsheads; to Cooper William he paid \$16.00 for 22 barrels and 10 hogsheads; and finally, to Cooper Jack he paid \$8.00 for 10 barrels and 6 hogsheads.²⁹ He later noted that he had paid his coopers \$30.00 for extra work completed on the plantation.³⁰ The planters often recorded when their slaves possessed specific skills in coopering by listing them with “cooper” behind their name in the plantation records or naming them, for example, “Cooper Jim” and “Cooper George.”³¹ The records indicate that the Creole sugar planters also liked to keep slaves who they could use as coopers on the plantation. The Tureaud family, Bringier, Aime, and Landry families all indicate that slaves skilled in coopering lived in their quarters so that they would not have to rely solely on the marketplace when they needed barrels or hogsheads.³²

Andrew Hynes’s overseer, Nicholas Phipps, notified him that “our black coopers are getting a long well making hogheads and Mr. Haris is also getting a long making barrels.”³³ Finally, Hynes received a letter from W. Shears in Plaquemines on behalf of “the bearer Antoine Perrel,” who “is desirous of making a bargain with you to work at the coopering business on your plantation, for one year certain, provided you will be willing to allow him for making

²⁸ Account with the negroes for 1851, January, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

²⁹ Expense Book, 1853-1863, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

³⁰ Expense Book, 1853-1863, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

³¹ Cashbook and Day Book, 1848-1849, Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins Papers, LSU lists supplies and workers at their saw mill and coopers shop in St. James Parish.

³² Slaves with the name or skill “cooper” can be found in several Creole manuscript collections, including Valcour Aime *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime*; Louis A. Bringier Family Papers; Hermitage Foundation Papers; Robert Judice Collection; and Elu Landry Estate Book.

³³ N. Phipps to Andrew Hynes, August 28, 1844, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

molasses barrels, five bitts each, and for sugar hogsheads six bitts each, he to find himself in Board, all he wants is a small place a room to lie in on the plantation, to save him paying rent at Plaque[mine] as he has a wife and one child to maintain.” He spoke positively of Shears’s character and advised that Hynes could not do better if he wanted someone skilled in coopering before closing his letter by stating that the “reason of my writing you on this matter is, that he cannot explain himself to you as he would wish, in our language.”³⁴

The Turnbull family of West Feliciana Parish also hired a cooper and John Spear wrote Daniel Turnbull at Rosedown to acquire the funds to do so: “I have got to pay my cooper off to day and have no money to do it with. I sent you 200 barrels some time ago,” Spears wrote, alluding that Turnbull would “greatly oblige me if you can send me the amt due for the barrels (say three hundred dollars) as this is my only chance to pay my cooper.”³⁵ Shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, as planters faced a constricted and increasingly threatening economy, Mrs. Martha Turnbull received some unfortunate news from the family’s factor, Norman Jackson in New Orleans, who informed her that “I am sorry to say the cooper from whom I contracted for 500 barrels at \$2.20 has acted dishonestly and thrown up the contract after furnishing 125.” Jackson attempted to calm her, assuring her that he would “try and get some good second hand ones. For the price of new ones is now fearful \$2.50. A cooper is such an irresponsible person that I could bring no action against him.”³⁶ The war altered the lives of planters, their families, and their slaves across the American South, but especially so for those living in sugarcane country of southern Louisiana and the ethnicity of the planter did not matter when it came to

³⁴ W. Shears to Andrew Hynes, January 16, 1845, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

³⁵ John U. Spear to Daniel Turnbull, December 22, 1860, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

³⁶ Norman Jackson to Martha Turnbull, December 5, 1861, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

wartime changes. It required all of them to adapt constantly their already-complex plantation practices and evolve in order to answer the exigencies of war.

The care of the animals on the plantation often proved just as vital and challenging as minding the crops and the inhabitants of the estate. Many of Louisiana's sugar planters maintained herds of cattle, sheep, and/or hogs, including both Creoles and Anglo-Americans. Louisiana slaveholders spent significant time and capital growing food for the plantation's sustenance.³⁷ True enough, the records indicate countless purchases of barrels of pork for the plantation slaves' diets, but those same sources indicate a great investment of time in production of corn, pumpkins, peas, and other crops that would help to feed the slaves of the plantation, the slaveholding family, and the animals that helped to work the estate. The Keller Family Plantation records indicate that, on Homestead Plantation, owned by Reine S. Welham in St. James Parish, the 1860 inventory could account for 50 "good" mules, 6 "old" mules, 6 yoke oxen, 17 sheep, 17 cows (10 milch cows and 7 dry cows), 11 yearling cows, 10 calves, and 60 head of hogs. Additionally, the family maintained 10 horses, including a pair of horses for the "family coach," that carried a value of \$700.³⁸ Milk, or "milch" cows often appeared in the plantation inventories, advertisements, records of sale, and tax valuations. The Minor family's Southdown Plantation in Terrebonne Parish, according to a January 1849 inventory, maintained a herd of 10 milch cows, in addition to 21 oxen, 14 calves, 20 cows in calf, 41 two- and three-year cows, 1 bull, and 54 sheep.³⁹ Of course, these numbers for Southdown stand in addition to the

³⁷ Several scholars have insinuated that southern slaveholders, specifically those in Louisiana did not grow large amounts of foodstuffs, focusing instead solely on the production of cash crops. Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972) credits the beef and sheep growers of southern Louisiana but underplays the attempts of sugar planters to grow other foods as well to provide nutritional value and variety.

³⁸ Inventory for Homestead Plantation, 1860, Keller Family Plantation Records, LSU.

³⁹ Plantation Diary, 1849, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

large herd of race horses that the family maintained at other plantations along the Mississippi River and at their Natchez home. The cattle, sheep, and hogs helped to provide supplemental protein for the diets of those on the plantation, and helped to ensure that the slave forces on those estates maintained sufficient nutrition to work efficiently and fight sickness; the slaves often ate a diet similar to the poorer, yeoman white class of the American South.

The 1850 census schedules, compiled by Colonel W. W. Pugh, indicate a great deal about the planters who owned and operated estates in Assumption Parish. Of the 58 entries who possessed real estate (including land, improvements, livestock, and farming implements) totaling more than \$10,000, 56 owned a total of 508 horses, 56 owned 380 milch cows, 53 owned 393 working oxen, 52 owned 536 “other cattle,” 49 owned 816 asses and mules, 42 owned 993 hogs, and 24 of the entries owned 567 head of sheep.⁴⁰ Looking at these numbers, one cannot discern any dissimilarity between livestock ownership between Creoles and Anglo-Americans in Assumption Parish. In fact, one of the most prominent Creole families, the Romans who constructed Bon Sejour along the Mississippi River, built a reputation early in the nineteenth century for their cattle breeding and prominent cattle herds south and west of the eventual location of their well-known plantation. Clearly, planters in the area, more often than not, had a substantial investment in livestock, both working stock including horses, oxen, and mules or asses, in addition to those livestock that provided food and other products for the family like sheep, hogs, and milch cows. Most assuredly, it required a great deal of attention from the slave forces and their overseers, drivers, and owners to maintain such large herds of animals on the sugar estates.

⁴⁰ Schedule 4, Productions of Agriculture for 1850, Pugh (Col. W. W. Pugh) Papers, LSU. The inventories often divided entries for cattle by “milch cows,” “working oxen,” and “other” or “horned cattle.”

In order to complete all of those invaluable tasks throughout the year on the estate, the master and plantation overseer had to ensure that they cared for the slave force so that it would remain healthy and obedient to the plantation system in order to work as comfortably and efficiently as possible. Slaveholders occasionally implemented reward systems or encouraged the laborers to pursue commercial interests. These useful observations will better illustrate valuable points in future chapters, but the fact that these avenues helped to promote health and efficiency on the plantations should inform the current topic. If the slaves on a plantation believed that they would reap a reward from their endeavors, they worked much more quickly to achieve their tasks. From the slaveholder's point of view, maintaining wellbeing and effectiveness by providing certain elements of care and consideration, including an adequate diet and doctors' visits, and encouraging a positive mood among the slave force by granting holidays or other bonuses to reward individuals in the slave force for their diligent service throughout the year remained integral to the overall health of the plantation estate. Slaveholders from both ethnicities understood that they possessed the smallest margin for error between a successful crop and complete failure, and they needed the cooperation of the slave force in order to achieve prosperity while avoiding ruin. Some historians have spoken to the concept of paternalism and what it meant for the slave-master relationship.⁴¹ No matter the motivations of the slaveholders,

⁴¹ For some examples of literature that discusses the paternalism that permeated almost every single facet of southern society see Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional & Intellectual Life* (New York: The Universal Library, 1959); Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998); James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990); Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Steven M. Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); James L. Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977); J. Mills Thornton, III, *Politics and Power*

they most assuredly made certain services available on the plantation and governed their slave force in a very calculated and well-planned manner, measuring every detail of their operation and leaving very helpful records regarding these elements of slave care.

Records indicate that slaveholders called upon local doctors regularly in order to attend their slaves' health requirements, and planters invested a great deal of money in annual doctors' bills. Thomas O. Moore, the Civil War governor of Louisiana hired a doctor to tend to his slaves and family in addition to several visits with the local dentist. Several entries of his daily plantation journal reference house calls that doctors and dentists made to the plantation in addition to occasions where he took his slaves to the practitioner instead of requesting a visit.⁴² James Palfrey notified his son, Henry, in New Orleans of his hesitancy to invite the latter's slaves because "the expense and trouble of sending them would far exceed any benefit I could possible derive from their services," and, in return, a "long Doctor's bill would be the consequences."⁴³ Palfrey did not oppose seeking the assistance of a doctor when necessary. After his overseer, Mr. Vinson, had beaten one of Palfrey's slaves, Anderson, severely, Palfrey contacted help right away. "In order to ascertain the extent of the injury I sent immediately for Doctor Thomas," Palfrey wrote and "he was of the opinion that no bones were broken but that he would probably be confined a week or more." Since this event occurred during the sugar harvest, Palfrey likely struggled to make up for the labor that his overseer had cost him with the incident: "Mr. Vinson left here the same day before dinner, no longer in my employ. Mr. V is a

in a Slave Society, Alabama, 1800-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

⁴² Thomas O. Moore records several entries for doctor and dentist services in Volume 1, Moore (Thomas O.) Papers, LSU.

⁴³ James Palfrey to Henry Palfrey, June 24, 1819, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

man of violent and unmanageable temper and of a jealous, suspecting and vindictive disposition.”⁴⁴

The descendents of Joseph Erwin maintained continuous physician care and paid thousands of dollars over the course of the nineteenth century, hiring doctors to make house calls and tend to their slaves on Home and St. Louis Plantations. Joseph Erwin, himself, paid \$250 for doctor’s bills for 1814, a considerable amount for that time.⁴⁵ Dr. Charles Clement, a prominent doctor in the Plaquemines area for much of the nineteenth century, visited the Erwin’s plantation frequently, earning \$315.94 from Erwin’s widow for his services on the plantation in 1835.⁴⁶ Erwin’s descendents hired Dr. Byrendeidt to treat several problems on the plantation, including “advise for the disease of the eyes for negro woman, Frances, and examining a negro with fistula and one with wounded foot...visit to the back part of the plantation and advice for six slaves sick...treatment of a slave for gleet or inveterate gonorrhoea,” and several other visits as well. Each time the doctor inspected the patient, prescribed medicines, and administered what treatment he could, charging a total of \$117.75.⁴⁷

Additionally, both Creole and Anglo estates often kept a great deal of medicines and simple remedies for various treatments on hand.⁴⁸ When it came to practical treatment on the plantation, both ethnic groups displayed a similar hope that they could self-treat the various

⁴⁴ James Palfrey to William Palfrey, November 30, 1833, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁴⁵ Bill for Doctor’s Care, March 1, 1814, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁴⁶ Promissory note for Dr. Clement’s services to Levinia Erwin, undated, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁴⁷ Bill for Dr. Byrendeidt for services during 1841, March 1844, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁴⁸ Manuscript collections for both Creoles and Anglos show a desire to keep certain medical supplies, including quinine, ipecac, syringes, powders, etc. For examples of invoices for pharmaceutical supplies, usually from suppliers in New Orleans, see Louis A. Bringier Papers; Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers; Randolph (John H.) Papers; Uncle Sam Papers.

ailments and Creoles and Anglo-American slaveholders generally did what they could in order to maintain the well-being of their laborers. Occasionally, plantation managers tended to the sick and wounded on their own. During the nineteenth century, those in isolated communities throughout the United States often had to take certain treatments into their own hands, and plantations usually had to weigh the risks of treating problems locally instead of paying a significant amount of money for a house call from a physician; they made the same consideration for ill white family members. F. D. Richardson, overseer for Moses Liddell diagnosed some slaves with a common sickness throughout the nineteenth century, tuberculosis: “I refer you to Bethia for information in relation to the sick. There is no physician attending them as I consider it entirely unnecessary,” wrote Richardson. “If it is consumption, and their continued cough strongly denotes it. A doctor can be of no service, and if not, they will recover by their close attention and good nursing they get the rest if the hands keep healthy.”⁴⁹ Both whites and slaves suffered from consumption so often in the hot, dampness of Louisiana that Richardson believed that he could care for the sick without hiring a doctor to visit their Iberville Parish plantation. Planters had to weigh their options between self-treatment and calling on a doctor in order to get their slaves back to work as quickly as possible to minimize loss of production and investment.⁵⁰

Second only to open rebellion, the darkest cloud that threatened slaveholders in Louisiana’s sugar parishes throughout the antebellum period remained the fear of sickness,

⁴⁹ F. D. Richardson to Moses Liddell, May 21, 1845, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU. Tuberculosis, or consumption as contemporaries called it, remained a major problem in Louisiana, especially in New Orleans where statistical calculation becomes much easier with the hospitals who reported numbers of patients based on the treatment that they received. According to the *Annual Reports of the Board of Health of the City of New Orleans* for 1849, 1855, 1857, 1858, and 1859, the city suffered 592, 652, 661, 779, and 869 deaths respectively each year.

⁵⁰ For further study on the intersection of medicine and slavery in antebellum society, see the excellent Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

disease, and fever. Both white and black suffered from periods of great sickness because Louisiana's climate bred several air-borne diseases. Yellow fever, malaria, measles, cholera, and a host of other known challenges endangered the success and health of any plantation along the rivers and bayous of the coastal parishes which helped to spread and breed the sickness as it ran its course. "We have had much sickness amongst the negros say 35 down at once," John B. Craighead's son, J. E. Craighead, wrote to him about the mounting sickness on the plantation, and the overseer had succumbed to the sickness as well so that the younger Craighead "had to act as Doctorer, overseer, and everything for awhile."⁵¹ William Minor's Southdown Plantation kept a detailed record of the slave deaths that occurred annually during the 1850s. In July 1853, the slaves named Becky Turner and Titus Jenkins, Jr. and Becky and Pratley Williams died of typhus and scarlet fever respectively.⁵² More commonly, other deaths throughout the 1850s resulted from dysentery, consumption, or accidents. On the other hand, while Southdown largely escaped from widespread fevers during this period, Waterloo Plantation on the Mississippi River suffered tremendously. Of over 200 slaves inhabiting the plantation in 1852, plantation records indicate that only about *thirty* slaves escaped a yellow fever epidemic that ravished the surrounding countryside.⁵³ In May of 1854, Valcour Aime's daily journal mentioned "cholera on the Lapice Plantation, twenty-six fatal cases."⁵⁴ Planters had to maintain close communication with their friends and neighbors to watch for cases like this so that they would not spread across plantation grounds adjoining each other along the river. When news of an

⁵¹ J. E. Craighead to J. B. Craighead, September 11, 1847, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵² Volume 17, List of Negroes, 1848-1852, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Aime, 170.

outbreak on one estate reached others, planters and overseers in the surrounding neighborhood sounded the alarm to take all proper and necessary precautions.

Yellow fever dominated the minds of planters and overseers throughout the sugar parishes and affected everyone from the most humble of slaves all the way to the most high-profile white families. Whites especially feared the appearance of yellow fever. Eliza Wilson decided to postpone her trip to Louisiana, writing to Andrew Hynes that she had received word that a “number of Persons that have been cut at Plaquemin with the yellow fever which has graitley thined the population of that small plase and ends with charging me not to venture down with my girls before,” October or November at the earliest.⁵⁵ Most assumed that the fever only thrived in the summer months and sought to remain out of state until the cooler winter months approached.⁵⁶

The most effective overseers and sugar planters strove to fight fever proactively amongst his slave population on the plantation in order to prevent outbreak from happening at all; keeping the slaves healthy and productive remained priority number one. Moses Liddell lamented to one of his relatives that “perhaps what you may think strange we are here without sugar and molasses that is fit to give to the negroes. This is the kind of negligence and inattention to our business that we follow and I begin to think that our sickness may in some measure be caused from using [bad] molasses and sugar.”⁵⁷ Management often did anything it could to find and curb the

⁵⁵ Eliza Wilson to Andrew Hynes, September 30, 1828, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁶ According to John Duffy, ed. *The Rudolph Matas History of Medicine in Louisiana* 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 126 yellow fever was much more prevalent, but not limited to, the late summer months. The worst outbreak, in 1853, began in May, illustrating that Louisianans could never escape the threat of fevers entirely. For additional discussion of yellow fever in Louisiana, see Jo Ann Carrigan, “Impact of Epidemic Yellow Fever on Life in Louisiana,” *Louisiana History* 4 (Winter 1963): 5-34; Henry M. McKiven, Jr., “The Political Construction of a Natural Disaster: The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853,” *The Journal of American History* 94 (December 2007): 734-742.

⁵⁷ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, July 19, 1848, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

catalysts of fever, hoping to prevent future and further outbreaks. Once the sickness did happen, however, overseers and slave owners turned their attention to treating the malady no matter the solution. Perhaps a bit unorthodox, A. J. Leftwich believed that he could take slaves threatened by fevers to the hot springs in Arkansas to heal them with the water vapors that they believed possessed special medicinal powers. Writing to Craighead, for whom he had taken a group of slaves north to Arkansas, Leftwich informed him that “they did not receive much benefit from the trip.” One of his subjects had improved during a four- or five-month period but suffered, again, from chills and a fever while two others had fevers and failed to benefit from the Springs. Leftwich remonstrated that “there is so much company here, and so few vapour baths, that I could not get a vapour bath for them...I would have kept them here longer but they were not in good health and were anxious to get home.” Leftwich informed Craighead that the cost of the entirety of the trip, including transportation had amounted to about \$115.⁵⁸

Leftwich and Craighead offered their slaves the rare opportunity of mobility in hopes of providing better health care and a more favorable chance of avoiding the seasonal fevers, but the vast majority of slaves across the sugar parishes had to remain on the plantation at all times, often using a period of lockdown or quarantine to isolate them from slaves on other plantations where sickness existed or holding the infected slaves in a sick room, away from those who remained healthy. The white slaveholding family possessed the ability to opt out of staying on the plantation throughout the unhealthy summer months when dangerous toxins reached their height and many often did. Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans often owned townhomes in the city of New Orleans, but Creoles typically only used them for entertaining or business trips, not for escaping the diseases of the summer months. The American population periodically left the

⁵⁸ A. J. Leftwich to Mr. Craighead, July 11, 1841, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

plantation during the summer months, thus increasing their necessity of employing an overseer to watch over their plantation while the white family ventured to New Orleans or closer to the coast to take advantage of the cooler breezes off the Gulf of Mexico.⁵⁹

One of the most high-profile cases of yellow fever struck the Aime family during the epidemic of 1854. When Valcour's Aime's only, and much-adored, son, Gabriel, known as Gabie to family members, came home from his time in Paris, he stopped in New Orleans and spent some time before venturing upriver on a riverboat to Little Versailles.⁶⁰ Already sick when he arrived, Gabriel did not last through the night, succumbing to fever. His father found himself so struck with grief that Gabriel Aime's death marks the high-water mark for the Aime family as his father essentially shut down and closed himself in for the remainder of his life. Immediately after his son's death, Valcour Aime noted in his diary "Let him who wishes continue. My time is finished."⁶¹ Only two years later his wife, Josephine died as well, and Florent Fortier assumed all responsibility for plantation management. Aime's plantation journal, after Gabriel's passing

⁵⁹ Last Island Resort provided a population getaway for Anglo-American planters and socialites who sought to get away from the low-lying swampy areas during the hottest months of the year. On August 9, 1856, Last Island was the site of a terrible hurricane that destroyed every structure, including a prominent luxury hotel. The storm killed over 200 people, most of them members of the Anglo planting class, including several of the Weeks children from Bayou Teche. For accounts of the hurricane, including a story by some survivors, see Bill Dixon, *Last Days of Last Island: The Hurricane of 1856, Louisiana's First Great Storm* (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2009); Pugh (George W.) Collection.

⁶⁰ Eliza Ripley discusses the strong connection between Gabriel Aime and his family, so strong, that when he ventured to Europe for a period of time and Ripley stayed in his room, she noted that her host and Gabriel's brother, Félicie, informed her "'Mamma won't have a thing changed; she wants him to find his gun and boots and cap just where he left them.'" Eliza Ripley, *Social Life in Old New Orleans: Being Recollections of My Girlhood* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1912), 187.

⁶¹ Roulhac B. Toledano, "Louisiana's Golden Age: Valcour Aime in St. James Parish," *Louisiana History* 10 (Summer 1969), 211-224: 222.

becomes much less scientific and organized, even after Fortier assumed total control and the entries begin again in February 1855 after a four-month hiatus.⁶²

Overseers, in addition to their typical daily duties and responsibilities in running every aspect of the plantation, had to possess some medical knowledge and see to the health and sanitation needs of the slave force on the estate. When Edward Gay received extensive solicitations from all across south Louisiana for his vacant overseer position, and when the letters of recommendation began to arrive, several spoke of the prospective overseers' qualifications including medical intuition. "He is altogether the best man I ever had," one letter read. Elihu White "has a very quiet good negro woman for a wife and if that is an objection in your eyes it is the only one you can possible have to him...[h]e is a good Doctor for negroes and very attentive to sick people and his woman is of great help on giving medicine, watching the sick, etc."⁶³ Certainly the couple's medical knowledge and experience in dealing with the sick would have benefitted Gay in the eyes of the letter's author because he believed it an asset worth recounting. Like Gay, the Liddells, also maintained a supply to combat the most basic of illnesses and complaints of discomfort. Liddell reported to administering "mostly to salts and tartar emetic in broken doses with pepper and bone set tea used freely as a substitute for quinine," because his "stock of that article being exhausted and in fact my supply of medicines are pretty well exhausted."⁶⁴ On the other hand, some planters failed to grasp the knowledge that helped them to treat their slaves adequately. John Palfrey suggested, incorrectly, after observing the good

⁶² Florent Fortier finished recording the daily activities at Little Versailles after he took control of the plantation for Valcour Aime. Additionally, Fortier, a close relative of Aime, assumed responsibility for orchestrating the publication of the journal in the years after Aime's death following the Civil War.

⁶³ J. A. Dougherty to Edward Gay, December 19, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁶⁴ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, November 1, 1847, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

health that his slaves had enjoyed for some time, that the vapors “from boiling sugar kettles which has always been considered healthy [that] may operate as an antidote to the prevailing sickness.”⁶⁵ The heat may have killed some of the germs but the humid steam likely did not help to prevent sickness during the damp, cold winter months that sugar harvest took place.

One overseer deplored the recent sickness and excess rains that had flooded parts of his plantation, connecting it directly to his inability to accomplish the tasks that required speed and efficiency. “Twelve hands have been sick and some of them are not well yet,” wrote John North, “if you do not send the hands you will be bound to lose all the cane that has had water or will not make any thing unless worked immediately...I need all hands.”⁶⁶ The warmer, moist summer months marked a period of increased danger for slaves and slaveholders who inhabited the subtropical climate of Louisiana. Typically, the sicknesses that threatened the region became increasingly dangerous during the period between June and September. Moses Liddell believed that cooler weather would return his hands to health, writing “I have had a great deal of sickness lately among the negroes, but no very bad cases; I hope this cool weather will put a stop to it.”⁶⁷ Disease remained such a prevalent concern that some planters considered, correctly, that the land itself might help to promote or dissuade the spread of disease depending on its layout, topography, and location.

When recommending local plantations that his father might consider purchasing, E. G. W. Butler described one potential tract and informed his father that “the plantation of Landry backs upon that of Narcisse Landry, and, therefore, has no public lands, in the rear; and that the

⁶⁵ John Palfrey to William Palfrey, November 7, 1832, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁶⁶ John North to Eliza Bowman Lyons, June 30, 1850, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

⁶⁷ Moses Liddell to John Randolph, September 27, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

front is considered a great recommendation to the property, in as much as it affords an abundance of first and wild fowl and has never been thought to produce sickness.”⁶⁸ Elevated, well-drained lands that contained limited standing water and received the benefit of regular breezes helped to improve that potential health on a Louisiana sugar plantation, and potential investors had to consider the plantation’s potential for health just as seriously as the possible yields and production of that land. Butler extrapolated on the specificity of environment and geography to the health of both the white and black family on the plantation. “I hope, however, that you have been more healthy upon the highlands than we have been upon the Coast,” Butler wrote to his father, “indeed, I have never witnessed so much sickness, or suffered so much, since I have been a resident of Louisiana.”⁶⁹

Some planters and their overseers blamed the wet weather while others understood the role that parasites played in spreading diseases across the swampy terrain of the southern Louisiana sugar parishes. Writing to a relative, Moses Liddell related that “I have had a crowd of sickness for the last week or so past and if this wet weather continues it may increase the sickness, from 10-15 daily though as yet no severe cases and mostly working hands that are complaining.” Liddell continued by expressing his concern that “in fact the negroes here have not a full half chance for good health. They are too much crowded in the cabins and mosquitoes are violent... however I think these villainous insects are rather decreasing to what they have been a month or so back.”⁷⁰ Liddell exhibited a deep comprehension of the role that mosquitoes

⁶⁸ E. G. W. Butler to Thomas Butler, January 30, 1836, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

⁶⁹ E. G. W. Butler to Thomas Butler, September 27, 1837, Butler Family Papers, LSU. The “Coast” refers to the lands along the Mississippi River and the “highlands” reference the hilly terrain in and around St. Francisville where his family maintained their home.

⁷⁰ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 30, 1847, Liddell, Moses St. John R. and Family Papers, LSU.

played in addition to the conditions of the slave quarters, understanding the necessity for clean, dry cabins where the working families could spread themselves out to avoid overcrowding.

The medical history of Louisiana provides a useful tool for examining the tenuous relationship between Anglo-Americans and Creoles, though it becomes difficult when one attempts to place those values exhibited by both onto the plantation system because many of the strong opinions and views regarded whites first and foremost. One of the premier Louisiana medical historians, Rudolph Matas, illustrated the primary characteristics that differentiated the two competing ethnic communities, beginning in the territorial period. Generally, Matas argued, the Americans exhibited a tendency toward more proactive medicine and depended less on nature than their French and Spanish Creole counterparts.⁷¹ He went so far to illustrate his point that he suggested that “the men of action among the American physicians had nothing but contempt for the timidity of their French colleagues.”⁷² Many Creoles and Anglo-American Louisianans preferred the treatment of their own respective ethnic communities, choosing their care over the other, but the rural plantation inhabitants often did not have that luxury of choice at their disposal.

⁷¹ John Duffy, ed. *The Rudolph Matas History of Medicine in Louisiana*. Rudolph Matas, born in 1860 just upriver from New Orleans, was a child of Spanish ancestry so it is interesting to note that he essentially paints the Anglo-American physicians of the nineteenth century in a more favorable light than their Spanish and French counterparts. His two-volume study of the entirety of Louisiana’s medical history, though a bit out-dated in its approach and historiography, remains one of the finest studies of Louisiana medicine to date. Unfortunately, likely due to the generation of its publication, the text focuses most of its attention on the white elite, leaving out any serious discussion of the treatment of slaves or advances made in the treatment of slave forces on Louisiana’s slave plantations. For a better (and more geographically expansive) focus on slave medicine, see the excellent following studies: Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* and Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, and Company, 1994). Both studies take seriously the study of medicine, women, and the role of their bodies in the antebellum South plantation complex.

⁷² Duffy, 1:271.

That said, the tendency for American physicians to push the limits of their knowledge, experiment with their trade, and seek advances in the medical field mirrored the forward-thinking tendency toward capitalism exhibited by American planters in Louisiana. They often sought ways to improve their profession and push the community forward as a whole despite a *perceived* backwardness that many Anglo-Americans saw in the Creoles around them.

“Granting the relative backwardness of American surgeons, their empiricism and boldness placed them well ahead of the conservative French,” Matas asserted, and “while the boldness and initiative which was beginning to characterize surgery was largely the work of Anglo-American surgeons, there was one area which the French and Creole surgeons were still strong:” obstetrics.⁷³ These differences certainly played out on the plantation in the ways that planters and overseers treated childbirth on the plantation among their slave population; chapter 6 will carry this discussion much further by focusing on the medical treatment that the slaves experienced from their own perspective.

An adequate diet, sufficient quarters, and healthcare all linked the realized success of any plantation to its economic potential and the overseers and slaveholders had to do the best that they could to ensure all of these requirements in order to put themselves on a solid foundation for success. Later pages will seek to illustrate the slaves’ perspective of slavery in this environment and how it related to Creole and Anglo-American management but, for the sake of examining the contribution of the management to the health and well-being of the slaves on sugar estates closely, one must consider the adequacy of housing and the governance of the slaves when examining the management on any given plantation. Providing shelter against the sub-tropical elements that both white black faced on any given plantation proved of utmost importance.

⁷³ Duffy, 1:290,293.

While the big house provided the symbolic gesture of white power and the visual representation of the slaveocracy, the slave quarters served as the heartbeat of the antebellum South, making every other visual symbol of white power possible while contributing significantly to the overall culture forged by white and black together.

Most often located behind the big house and on the periphery of the main yard, the slave cabins embodied the relationship between white and black. Their placement allowed a degree of freedom and independence within the home while their nearness to the big house guaranteed the slaves' continued subservience to the white power structure. Within the quarters, slaves of African heritage continued to evoke characteristics of their own culture, void of the constant watch of the white plantation management. The buildings themselves, became a part of the plantation culture and complex that marked the contrast between white and black power but white management always remained cognizant that it had to provide adequate and healthy living conditions for their slaves. John Michael Vlach, landscape and architectural historian, noted the ways in which black people on the plantation transformed the landscape of slavery on their own; they took ownership where they could, usually over these spaces created within the plantation quarter. The culture often remained theirs while the slaveholder maintained control and provided them with the access to this space. As Vlach notes, correctly, "slaveowners set up the contexts of servitude, but they did not control those contexts absolutely."⁷⁴

Vlach notes, when examining certain slave cabins, the tendency toward French influences in architecture and construction. Many of the houses built for slaves in the French-settled region

⁷⁴ John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1. Most of the primary examples that Vlach uses throughout his excellent study of plantation space come from the more "traditional" regions of the antebellum South: Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia, but the crux of his argument about black and white space and co-existence (or co-dependence) ring true for the Louisiana sugar plantations. He does discuss, in great detail the French antecedents that appear in many of southern Louisiana's barns, for example.

of southern Louisiana had visual characteristics distinguishing them from their counterparts in other regions of the South. For example at “the Barbarra plantation in St. Charles Parish, a sugar estate established in 1820 just upriver from New Orleans, a surviving slave house followed French precedents in both its form and its construction,” Vlach writes. The slave’s house looked



10. Creole-style Slave Cabin at Barbarra Plantation (*Courtesy of HABS*)

like a much smaller version of their larger white-inhabited cousins that Creoles favored so much with “a one-story structure two rooms wide and two rooms deep, with a central chimney between two front rooms.” The construction of the cabin itself, unique to the French-influenced buildings across Louisiana, featured a “*poteaux sur sole* (post on sill) construction, and its *bousillage* (mud) plaster.”⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Vlach, 162.

Most of the slave cabins that remain in existence today feature many similarities. The one- or two-room cabins all stood on stone pillars above ground and featured a chimney and stone hearth that dominated the structure around which the slave family often focused their home activities. Placing the cabins on pillars benefitted the slave force and the master two-fold. It

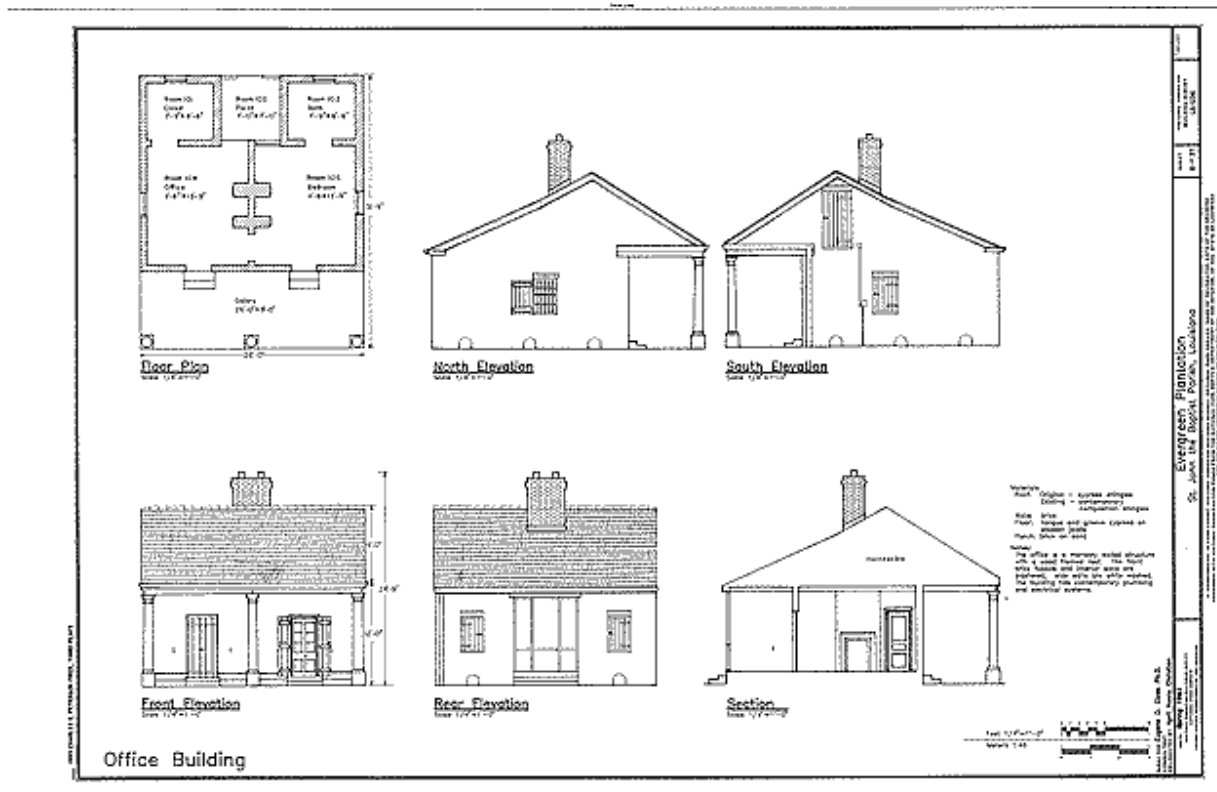


Figure 11. Anglo-style Slave Cabin at Evergreen Plantation (*Courtesy of HABS*)

allowed for cool breezes to sweep under the house, a similar reason that Creoles built their West Indies-inspired homes on tall brick pillars with the living quarters upstairs while the downstairs featured municipal rooms for storage or food preparation. Cool breezes would sweep under the slave cabin to help combat the stifling heat of the summer months and helped to air out the building and prevent sickness. The crawl space also prevented water from seeping into the floor or rising high enough to get into the house except for the most extraordinary episodes of rain (which did happen periodically). The master often built the slave cabins behind the big house,

which they had located on the highest point of the plantation directly fronting the river and, with the lands sloping away from the river toward the back swamplands, the cabins suffered from some threat of floodwater during seasonal rains that would almost annually flood the plantations for a period of a couple of days.

The cabins themselves required a great deal of investment both in labor and capital for the planter. J. E. Craighead “paid \$34 each for 5 double cabins 32X16; \$170 for 13 single cabins framed lumber and all put up at 20 each \$260 and 7,800 feet of lumber suitable for cabins for \$170 making the whole cost \$1,500.” The family had attempted to erect a saw mill to help process wood on the plantation and produce the lumber themselves, but J. E. Craighead decried “our saw mill is a complete failure and broke again,” because “the master wheel is broken it is a complete horse killer and negro crippler.” Due to these unfortunate circumstances, the cabins remained behind schedule and they had not yet succeeded in framing six of the double and fourteen of the single cabins.”⁷⁶ Sugar estates utilized both single and double cabins with great success. Single cabins typically featured a hearth and chimney on one end of the cabin and housed one family or a group of single slaves. On the other hand, double cabins contained a central chimney that included a double-sided hearth opening up to both wings (separate compartments) and usually masters used these cabins to shelter two families under one roof. One can see examples of double cabins at Laura Plantation near Vacherie, Louisiana, one of the pre-eminent Creole plantations remaining in existence, or at Evergreen Plantation, near Edgard, Louisiana, the most intact plantation complex remaining in the South.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ J. E. Craighead to John Craighead, September 11, 1847, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁷⁷ For an excellent history of the family that inhabited Laura Plantation, including reminiscences of the last days of slavery, see Laura Locoul Gore, *Memories of the Old Plantation Home: A Creole Album* (Vacherie, LA: The Zoe Company, 2000).

While most sugar planters and overseers in Louisiana housed their slave forces in wooden structures, some estates featured brick or stone construction. In 1852, while on his Texas adventure, attempting to spread sugar plantation agriculture westward to the Caney River in Matagorda County, Texas, George Kenner died childless. His brother, Duncan, purchased the slaves from his estate and relocated them to his Ashland Plantation in Ascension Parish.⁷⁸ To accommodate these slaves, Kenner erected a new settlement of brick slave cabins, downriver from his main holdings. He named these buildings the “Texas Quarters” and called the slaves purchased through this transaction his “Texas Slaves.” Most assuredly, Kenner, who had made significant profits in sugarcane prior to this arrangement, believed he could afford stronger accommodations for his new charges. Brick slave cabins provided a tougher building material that could withstand the storms and hurricanes that struck the area and, if located in the shade of trees, provided cooler, more comfortable accommodations. For the remainder of the antebellum period, Kenner continued to distinguish between the two holdings in his records by categorizing the two groups separately in his inventory. In Ashland’s Plantation journal, the record keeper noted the names of all of the slaves present in the spring of 1858 and 1859. Listing all of the slaves on the plantation alphabetically, six men and two women possess the last name of “Texas.” At the height of Kenner’s success, he possessed three parcels which he designated Ashland, Texas, and Bowden, the farthest of his holdings downriver from Ashland.

⁷⁸ Philip Chadwick Foster Smith & G. Gouverneur Meredith S. Smith, *Cane, Cotton, & Crevasses: Some Antebellum Louisiana and Mississippi Plantations of the Minor, Kenner, Hooke, and Shepherd Families* (Bath, ME: The Renfrew Group, 1992), 39. This serves as one of the best histories of the Kenner families and the peripheral branches to the main tree. Though completed by the family, and privately published, this is a valuable source of information conducted in a professional and well-researched manner. Craig Bauer, *A Leader Among Peers: The Life and Times of Duncan Farrar Kenner* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993) provides a serviceable account of Duncan Kenner but does not give a sense of the entire family as well as the aforementioned manuscript and Bauer struggles in his analysis and presentation of research.

The Cottage, a prominent sugar plantation, owned by Frederick Daniel Conrad just south of Baton Rouge also featured brick slave cabins.⁷⁹ This plantation featured brick cabins for the large slave force, a large sugar mill, and a cotton mill though none of these buildings survive. Two brick slave cabins that have survived the passage of time sit on the former grounds of the Evan Hall plantation on the west bank of the Mississippi River nearly a mile from the riverfront. Two brick structures, dating to around 1840, show the type of brick cabin that planters would build to house their slaves.



A prominent plantation, Figure 12 Brick Slave Cabin at Evan Hall (*Courtesy of Harper Levy*) Evan Hall became the project of the partners Evan Jones and Henry McCall. The home, built by McCall, assumed the name Evan Hall in honor of his partner who had formerly lived in a Creole-style house on the property.⁸⁰ Evan Jones had come to Louisiana as early as any American, arriving in 1778 and purchased a Spanish land grant. Jones immersed himself in the culture of those around him and soon achieved fluency in both Spanish and French which placed him in

⁷⁹ Visitors to the site of this plantation can still see the brick pillars that surrounded the house from its 1825 construction along River Road immediately south of Baton Rouge inside a point of the Mississippi River. The home remained a prominent plantation house that survived the Civil War before falling victim to a lightning strike and the ensuing fire in 1960.

⁸⁰ For a general overview of the property's history and a short synopsis of the McCall family, see Mary Ann Sternberg, *Along the River Road: Past and Present on Louisiana's Historic Byway* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001). This excellent survey of countless properties that fronted the Mississippi River provides an invaluable source for a brief history of the region and highlights plantation remains where they exist. The remaining record for Evan Hall can be found here: Henry McCall's *Evan Hall Plantation Book, 1773-1835*, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

good stead with his neighbors. He continued to accumulate additional holdings and, when he died, Henry McCall took control over the entire operations, continuing the growth and forming one of the earliest great sugarcane production alliances of the nineteenth century that soon dominated the region after the Civil War.

Of course, the plantation management faced its greatest challenges from the slaves themselves who, when discontent often resisted the white superiority, perhaps through violence, but more likely through passive resistance by working slowly or running away. Because slaves essentially acted as mobile property, planters and overseers always ran the risk that their large capital investment could flee the plantation if not treated properly through respect and provision. Here the unique characteristics in plantation management between Creoles and Anglo-Americans come to light. The dissimilarities in how both viewed the black population often resulted in a cultural divide whereby one blamed the other for treating their slaves poorly. Likely, this resulted primarily from one ethnic community painting the other broadly, but some occasions arose to give an indication that Anglo-American planters thought of the slaves more in terms of factory parts in their capitalist system of the plantation complex.

An analysis of plantation management seems to indicate a shift toward unity, resulting from the necessities of slaveholding. All planters needed to ensure that they owned healthy, efficient slaves in order to have the best chance of success possible. The environmental challenges of southern Louisiana, where slaveholders negotiated constantly changing patterns and extreme weather conditions between intense heat and frosty sugarcane fields, forced planters and their overseers to practice similar methods of sugarcane production and management. They remained culturally distinct and the two ethnicities maintained strong ties to their heritage but they displayed similar practices when it came to the administration of slavery with increasing

regularity. Several distinctions continued to exist, however, in terms of business practices and the treatment of slaves. In the pages that follow, we will explore these characteristics that continued to distinguish Creoles from their Anglo-American neighbors but a gradual shift toward unification between the two communities became steadier as the nation moved toward sectional conflict and civil war.

CHAPTER 5
“WE OWE...TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE CAROLINAS AND VIRGINIA...THE
GREAT IMPROVEMENTS WE HAVE SO FAR MADE IN AGRICULTURE”:
TECHNOLOGY AND SUGAR PLANTING

Creole and Anglo-American sugar planters created two divergent societies, but they operated within an industry that demanded a small degree of cooperation, necessarily adopting some of the same methods for sugarcane production. The differences between Creole planters and their Anglo counterparts often remained negligible because both groups worked within the same agricultural circle to produce sugar and achieve as much profit as they could but several key characteristics continued to split them apart. Motivated by differing goals and inspired by unique cultural backgrounds, each group sought to continue its ascent up the social ladder and achieve greatness in its own way. Creoles, for example, remained true to their Louisiana and Caribbean roots, preferring to preserve more local connections when they purchased goods or manufacturing equipment while their Anglo neighbors readily tapped into a national network that they accessed via their connections across the region and nation. The American planters who resided in Louisiana often maintained family connections to their ancestral homes along the eastern seaboard. They understood their mission in a national framework while the Creoles saw the world from a Franco-centric view, often failing (or choosing not to) grasp their position within the United States more fully. American planters believed they possessed a duty to push American slavery westward, achieving great profit along the way, as part of a national destiny to obtain control over the entire continent, but the Creoles in Louisiana exhibited no desire to leave the state in the interest of profit and expansion.⁸¹ They preferred to remain in Louisiana where

⁸¹ Several scholars have explained the westward migration of American slaveholders including James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998); Adam Rothman, *Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Brian Schoen, *The Fragile Fabric of Union: Cotton, Federal Politics, and the Global Origins of*

their families had lived for generations and use their position within sugarcane society to maintain their familial dynasties that had developed since the colonial period. This chapter seeks to show that, while they did not always differ extremely in terms of slaveholding and sugarcane strategy and management, Creoles and Anglo-Americans displayed vastly different motivations for their choices and adopted some unique characteristics that made their experiences with sugarcane production different from one another. Both ethnic communities, no matter how much they cooperated or practiced slavery in a similar fashion, almost always maintained their cultural identity and exhibited a propensity for their own culture. Discernible qualities developed over time as the two ethnic communities that often opposed one another politically, socially, and economically, believed in conflicting interpretations of paternalism and republicanism.

Cotton plantations dominated the imaginations of those who had never lived in or travelled to the American South, becoming a symbol for the American slaveholder. The public persona of the southern planter evoked images fields of white fiber in the minds of those unfamiliar with the region but the Lower Mississippi Valley, where sugarcane held reign, truly embodied the ideal of what it meant to be a slaveholder in the United States. The sugar parishes of southern Louisiana epitomized the concept of paternalism and republicanism as planters worked their slaves in large numbers to wrest control of the swamp land, produced sugarcane for the market, and reaped significant financial reward if they completed the task correctly. Some of the most lucrative plantations across the whole American South evolved during the nineteenth century along the rivers and bayous of Louisiana, and they stretched the limits of human potential, intertwining agriculture and industrialism in an increasingly perfect harmony and developing one of the most mature slave societies of the period. Even the appearance of the

the Civil War (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Andrew Torget, "Cotton Empire: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands, 1820-1837" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2009).

sugar parishes remained rife with complexity because the methods and strategies employed by the slaveholders of southern Louisiana often differed between Creoles and Anglo-American planters.

To understand the enormity of the industrial capacity that had developed in the sugarcane parishes by the time the Civil War erupted, one must understand the foundation of the sugar industry in Louisiana and its Caribbean antecedents. For centuries, as the plantation complex matured in the New World, almost every aspect of sugarcane production had relied on manual labor, from planting to processing.⁸² Across the sugar islands of the Caribbean, slaves broke the ground, planted the cane, battled weeds, cut the mature sugarcane, extracted the juice, and boiled the juice to acquire the raw sugar almost entirely by hand. Only during one small, yet important step - extraction of the cane juice - would slaves employ the aid of animal or wind power beginning in the sixteenth century, a process that remained popular into the nineteenth century. When possible, planters in the Caribbean employed the help of wind power by installing windmills, similar to the power generators Europeans had built prior to ventures in the New World. Barbados, especially, became known for its use of windmills to assist in sugarcane

⁸² For studies of the earliest antecedents of the plantation complex with a special focus on sugarcane production, see Hilary McD Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Nathalie Dessens, *Myths of the Plantation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2004); Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Sydney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Frank Moya Pons, *History of the Caribbean* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007); Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Schwartz, *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

processing at harvest time.⁸³ In fact, in 1709, “windmills became so common in Barbados that 409 out of 485 of the sugar mills operating” used wind power to save the backs of animals and slaves alike.⁸⁴ Outside of the English island colony, however, windmills did not enjoy as much use because the hilly topography made them unreliable.

More typically, sugar planters installed mills that they could power with oxen, mules, or horses so that they did not have to rely on often unpredictable weather patterns. In fact, several of those who built windmills also ensured that they had a secondary animal-driven mill to process the cane if they experienced no wind for extended period of time. Most commonly, planters employed a wheel-driven mill where they could harness their stock to a beam or set of beams that ran to the center of the mill. A slave or manager would drive the animals in a circle which would rotate the mill at the center to squeeze the cane juice out the bottom where the slaves would collect it and proceed to the next step in the process. The very basic, animal-powered mill, the same technology that also ground wheat to make flour or corn to make meal, served magnificently, and Louisiana’s first sugar planters used this mechanism for their harvest and processing as well. The system worked to help those who invested in sugarcane at the end of the eighteenth century through the first couple of decades of the nineteenth century, but eventually, updates in sugarcane hybrids necessitated the development of more innovative ways of extracting the cane juice from the stalks.

Both in the Caribbean and, for many years, in Louisiana, once the slave force extracted the juice, it had to go through a process of boiling to eliminate any water and as many impurities as possible, resulting in the pure raw, unrefined crystals of sugar. When Louisianans, led by

⁸³ Russell Menard details the development of plantation society in *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados*.

⁸⁴ Moya Pons, 72.

Etienne de Boré, Antoine Morin, Antonio Méndez, and Josef Solis began producing sugarcane at the end of the eighteenth century, they installed the open-kettle system, known as the Jamaica Train. Developed in the Caribbean toward the end of the seventeenth century, the Jamaica Train consisted of a set of kettles set up in a row on “a train of furnaces designed with an innovative variable heat firing system.”⁸⁵ Following extraction in the roller, the juice began the process in the largest pot on one end of the train which they heated over a fire to bring the liquid to its boiling point. When the slave or sugar-maker in charge of this process felt that they had achieved the correct temperature, he dumped the first kettle into the next one down the line, and repeated the process again and passed the remaining juice to a smaller kettle. Each time that the sugar-maker heated the liquid, he heated the kettle to a higher temperature to boil the product, until he had removed as many impurities and as much water as possible, leaving them with the secondary product, molasses. The final step called for the decanting and crystallization of the molasses so that only the sugar itself remained while the molasses drained out.

During the eighteenth century, the Jamaica Train served as the most efficient way of producing cane throughout the West Indies. This process also permitted the standardization of sugar-making for an extended period of time which allows today’s historians to conduct comparative analyses across plantations and colonies. A more uniform product meant that the development of the sugarcane industry in Louisiana during the late colonial period mirrored very closely the plantation complex that developed in the Caribbean, permitting a trans-national investigation of the earliest years of Louisiana’s industry, while simultaneously displaying an elevated importance for the Creoles who possessed the closest ties to the West Indies. They dominated sugar production in Louisiana until after the War of 1812 when Anglo-Americans

⁸⁵ Moya Pons, 109.

flooded Louisiana and implemented their more industrial-minded concept of plantation agriculture.

While the Jamaica Train certainly improved upon earlier methods for sugarcane processing, it challenged planters and slaves in a myriad of ways. First and foremost, the transference of boiling liquid from one kettle to another posed a frightening and unpredictable threat to those who handled the cane juice. The boiling hot liquid threatened those who handled it with maiming and excruciating pain, making the process one of the most dangerous tasks that slaves had to complete on the plantation and contributed to the low survival rates for slaves in the West Indies. Additionally, from a business perspective, the Jamaica Train processing system lacked the desired level of efficiency due to the open kettles which allowed the water to evaporate but also some of the sugar and, inevitably, producers lost some of their precious commodity in the process. Additionally, it often proved difficult to regulate the heat when the juice passed from one kettle to the next because the sugar-makers had to maintain the fires separately to ensure that the temperature rose with each transfer. This meant that it became difficult to monitor and regulate as closely as desirable the heat levels of the fires burning under the kettles. Burning the sugar became a real problem and required the most delicate and knowledgeable of agricultural hands. Finally, the slaveholders used wood to stoke their fires under the kettles of the train which, over time, required an extraordinary amount of wood in order to prepare for the harvest season. While St. Domingue and Cuba, for example, possessed vast amounts of timber and extensive land from which to acquire wood for processing the cane, many of the smaller Caribbean islands which relied on sugarcane production lacked the timber lands necessary to complete the process for more than a few decades. Nonetheless, the early Louisianans, when they invested in sugar, imported this system because the earliest founders of

Louisiana's sugar industry had come from St. Domingue and used the processes with which they had familiarized themselves while working sugarcane farms there.⁸⁶

The majority of planters had these operations installed on their plantations until the advent of more modern and higher efficiency technologies became more readily available. The climate of Louisiana became a catalyst for modernization and increased the willingness of people to adapt to the unique environment in southern Louisiana. Sugar planters began to take characteristics of the old and incorporate newer components that utilized the technological components that had spread across the United States as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The water-logged region and the shorter growing season demanded that they seek newer ways of improving the efficiency of the crop to increase production and maximize profits in an environment that provided a great deal of uncertainty. With the annual threat of frost, planters knew that they possessed the smallest margin for error, and they had to do everything in their power to succeed in this daunting climate; over time, they did so with extraordinary success.

The shortness of the growing season forced Louisianans to explore other hybrid options and they did so successfully, increasingly raising a new kind of sugarcane with excellent results. The shorter growing season with the threat of an unpredictable frost which could wipe out the entire year's crop necessitated a shift toward newer, hardier hybrids of cane in order to provide a better safety net, even though it led away from the highest-yielding canes of the West Indies. Planters began using ribbon cane instead of the traditional varieties; its thicker and tougher stalk protected it from the onset of frost and provided a wider window during which Louisiana

⁸⁶ For a review of the connections between the sugarcane industry in Louisiana and the Caribbean, see Carl A. Brasseaux, *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1992); Glen R. Conrad, *Green Fields: Two Hundred Years of Louisiana Sugar* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1960); Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1795-1995* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1995); J. Carlyle Sitterson, *Sugar Industry: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953).

planters and their overseers could react in order to save the crop from destruction and ruin. Early agriculturalists imported Malabar, or Creole cane, first in an attempt to jumpstart the sugarcane industry in Louisiana before switching to a more common variety, Otaheite, at the end of the eighteenth century during the experiments and successes of de Boré, Morin, Méndez, and Solis.

Finally, according to a contemporary historian and expert on sugarcane production in Louisiana, the “third species was the Ribbon cane, [introduced] in 1817; it was first introduced from Georgia, by a Mr. Coiron; it came, originally, from the East Indies.” It quickly became the favorite, adopted by most sugar planters across southern Louisiana, “owing to its earlier maturity, and its resisting better an early winter—two very important qualities in this climate.”⁸⁷ In the first decades of the nineteenth century, agriculturalists considered that the previous “cause of failure must be attributed to the culture of creole cane, the only quality then used, and which is very sensible to cold,” but reported hopefully that “since the introduction of the ribbon cane and the abandonment of the old method of working with the hoe only, and adopting, with advantage, the plow and win-rowing the cane as soon as it is touched with the first frost, the crop is generally considered certain.” Ignoring, or perhaps not taking note of any Creole contributions to the advancement of the sugarcane industry, the author proclaimed that “we owe, in a great measure, to the inhabitants of the Carolinas and Virginia, who have settled among us, the great improvements we have so far made in agriculture.”⁸⁸ The influx of Anglo-Americans possessed the capabilities and forward-thinking cultivation to push the industry forward into the future.

⁸⁷ Edmund J. Forstall, “Louisiana Sugar,” *De Bow’s Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 1 (January 1846): 53.

⁸⁸ M. Le Blanc, “Historical and Statistical Collections of Louisiana,” *De Bow’s Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 9 (September 1850): 290.

Richard Follett has provided a masterful account of the advent of technological advances in Louisiana's sugarcane complex and the contribution to an increasingly capitalist slave regime.⁸⁹ But Follett does not focus his attention on the ethnographic differences between the two competing communities: Creole and Anglo-American. Both sought to maximize profits and succeed in the sugarcane industry but they exhibited unique characteristics that set them apart from each other and influenced the nature of their business practices. The fact that Americans maintained their national ties as part of their continuing migration across the American South while Creoles lacked or preferred to ignore any potential connections to the greater nation, manifested itself in a myriad of ways. For example, Anglo planters often marketed their goods directly to merchants and factors in major cities across the country including Richmond, New York, and St. Louis. In turn, their connections in these commercial centers helped them to purchase goods that they required on the plantation from a greater distance.⁹⁰ Conversely, the Creoles, with a few exceptions, typically sold to merchants in New Orleans who supplied them with goods from their connections there. If Creole sugarcane ended up in ports around the United States, the merchants of New Orleans sold it there as a go-between.⁹¹ American planters occasionally made purchasing trips to the east coast where they ventured to buy slaves to increase their labor force while their Creole counterparts almost always bought their men,

⁸⁹ Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005). For additional studies that detail the increasing technology of Louisiana's industrial sugar plantation complex, see Conrad, *Green Fields*; Conrad and Lucas, *White Gold*; Heitmann, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry*; Sitterson, *Sugar Industry*.

⁹⁰ For examples of Anglo planters marketing their goods across the South and in northern commercial centers, see Butler Family Papers, LSU; Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU; White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

⁹¹ Inspecting the following collections will give an indication of Creole marketing patterns: Landry, Elu Estate Record Book, LSU; Landry-Pedesclaux Family Papers, LSU; Tureaud Family Papers, LSU. The Bringier and Fagot planters, however, as two of the most prominent sugar planting Creole families marketed their sugar, on occasion, to faraway ports, including New York, Baltimore, and Liverpool: Louis A. Bringier and Family Papers, LSU; Uncle Sam Plantation Papers, LSU.

women, and children from neighbors or the slave pens of New Orleans. American planters also maintained purchased entirely from other local planters or the slave pens of New Orleans. Generally speaking, the Creoles preferred to conduct their business locally where they felt comfortable and with people with whom they had done business for many years. The more mobile Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, tapped more readily into a national network because they felt comfortable working at a distance since they lived in Louisiana largely as a stepping stone, pushing the frontier of slavery westward.

The Jamaica Train thrived during Louisiana's colonial period and into the early years of statehood; but when the Anglo-Americans began to assert their presence in sugarcane agriculture, they employed advancements that shared characteristics with developments across the nation. American planters successfully tapped into a growing trend of American industry when they employed steam power in their agricultural practices in Louisiana. They filled a need that had developed by the time they arrived in the state in growing numbers, and both American and Creole planters benefitted from the migrants' connections to other regions of the United States because it gave them access to the new advanced knowledge that would eventually replace the traditional modes of production that the Creoles had brought with them from the Caribbean. While the sub-tropical environment of southern Louisiana's sugar parishes required a shift toward a hardier cane that could withstand the onset of early, unpredictable frosts, the actual change to ribbon cane dictated that planters would have to upgrade their machinery. The tougher, thicker stalks posed significant challenges to the traditional animal-powered mills that planters had used for centuries. The stalk withstood frost much more easily but it also resisted the rollers during the juice extracting process, requiring planters and overseers to use additional animals because the few that they had used could no longer work the machine effectively. The

need for more modern methods of extracting the cane juice coincided with the development and spread of steam power across the United States.

When Robert Fulton became the first engineer to succeed commercially by installing a steam engine on boats to help traverse the waterways of the American interior, his ingenuity helped bring disparate regions of the country together and inspired others to push the boundaries of steam power. Americans viewed the seemingly endless possibilities of the steam engine with wonderment, and J. D. B. De Bow, the editor of one of the finest antebellum journals that became a font for information regarding the intersection of industry, agriculture, and technology, noted “the seven wonders were works of art. The steam engine of modern days is, however, an infinitely greater wonder than them all.”⁹² Entrepreneurs and agriculturalists alike began examining the new ways in which they could harness steam power for their own benefit, increased efficiency, and eventual profits. “In 1822, steam power was introduced [to sugarcane planters],” writes E. J. Forstall, “the first engines and mills cost about \$12,000, and were chiefly imported by Gordon and Forstall.”⁹³ Not until local manufacturers slowly began to develop as the nineteenth century progressed could planters buy the steam engines and mills locally would prices drop to a much more affordable range, averaging \$5,000-\$6,000. The city’s manufacturing sector benefitted greatly from the contributions of immigrants who arrived in the city from other parts of the United States.

According to one economic historian, an astounding 59 percent of businessmen, which would have included manufacturers, in New Orleans in 1812 had begun their practice since the Louisiana Purchase, a testament to how significantly the increasing Americanization in the city

⁹² J. D. B. De Bow, “American Legislation, Science, Art, and Agriculture,” *De Bow’s Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 2 (September 1846): 100.

⁹³ Forstall, 55.

altered the focus of the city.⁹⁴ This trend continued throughout the rest of the nineteenth century as Anglo-American settlers arrived in Louisiana, causing one local planter to “wish that more of our Northern farmers and mechanics could be induced to settle among us. They would add sobriety, thrift, and better methods of agriculture to the community.”⁹⁵ Fletcher Green, whose careful analysis of northern-born migrants to the South spans the entire region, focused heavily on Louisiana. Green discovered that nearly ten percent of the 40,000 American-born whites who inhabited New Orleans in 1850 “were Yankees by birth. Most of them had been born on farms in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania and...most of them became merchants, bankers, brokers, agents of Northern business houses, or journalists,” and Green discovered that these people “were also leaders in the economic and cultural life of New Orleans.”⁹⁶ This American dominance most assuredly influenced the purchasing practices of Louisiana’s sugar planters who, at first, tended to buy equipment from northern factories initially. Furthermore, this northern-born population growth guaranteed that Anglo leadership maintained a firm grasp on the controlling mechanisms of many of the banks, investment firms, and early municipal (railroad and canal) companies from a very early stage, in addition to the contributing vastly to the sugar planting elite including Andrew McCollom, John Quitman, John Burnside.

When industrialists applied the new steam-powered concepts to sugar mills and agricultural production, they improved the production and output potential exponentially. These innovations led to extremely complicated and advanced equipment unseen in almost any other

⁹⁴ John Garretson Clark, *New Orleans, 1718-1812: An Economic History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970).

⁹⁵ Eli Cappell quoted in Fletcher M. Green, *The Role of the Yankee in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972), 4.

⁹⁶ Green, 130-131.

area of American agriculture during the nineteenth century. Shell Chemical Company, the owners of Duncan Kenner's Ashland Plantation property, recently committed to an in-depth archaeological study when it sought to expand its footprint.⁹⁷ They hired a team to investigate the grounds including the areas believed to contain the remains of the slave quarters and the sugar house. Their findings provided an extraordinary boon to historians' understanding of the complex mechanization of sugarcane harvesting once the steam-powered mills ascended to dominance across southern Louisiana.

Kenner's sugar house, typical for most antebellum steam-powered sugar mills, originally measured 140 feet from east/west by 45 feet north/south but Kenner lengthened it to 200 feet long to accommodate a new mill around 1846. The cane stalks went in one end of the building, moving westward along a carrier across the building as it passed through rollers that squeezed the cane juice out. With the steam power, these three-roller mills extracted the juice from the cane more efficiently than the animal-driven mills of the eighteenth-century Caribbean. The power originated from boilers that generated steam to drive the equipment; the archaeological investigations at Ashland uncovered three sets of boilers, turning up the original boiler shells during their dig. The juice extracted from the rollers ran out the bottom of the mill and into a tank where clarification began. This procedure, which replaced the Jamaica Train, removed the impurities and the liquid thickened through a process of evaporation and purification. Sugar-makers added lime during this process which attracted the impurities, and then the mixture was strained leaving behind only the pure raw sugar. Finally the boiled sugar passed into the purgery, where workers cooled the crystallized sugar and separated it from any remaining molasses. Once they had packed the cool sugar into hogsheads, they sealed one end of the barrel

⁹⁷ Jill-Karen Yakubik and Rosalinda Méndez, *Beyond the Great House: Archaeology at Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation* (Baton Rouge, LA: Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, 1995).

with a stalk of sugarcane which allowed any final molasses to drain from the container while it sat awaiting shipment.⁹⁸

The new steam-powered mills helped to crush the cane effectively and more efficiently, keeping the animals fresh so that the plantation management could use them for other duties, including fieldwork, or hauling cane in from the fields. Although steam engines never tired, they required an extraordinary amount of wood to function and required constant attention. They also posed significant health challenges for those who did not understand the operation of the complex machinery. If an unsuspecting operator raised the pressure to a breaking point the boiler might explode, causing catastrophic injury and damage to the sugar house that sheltered the machinery. In addition to the obvious loss of life that this threat posed, a disaster with a steam engine could shut down the harvest season until the slaveholder could install a new machine and build a new structure to protect the system. Because of this delicate care and operation of a steam-powered mill, planters often hired engineers to work the mill and engines during the harvest season.

During the period of initial industrialization of sugarcane production, especially with the newer, less well-known foundries, the companies understood the necessity of providing a fully functional piece of equipment and ensuring that it operated to the best of its ability or that manufacturer would find itself out of business very quickly. Occasionally, the company that built the machinery on the plantation sent their own trained engineers to the plantation in order to oversee installation and to teach whomever the planter chose to run the processing operation about managing the complex parts and modern design.

⁹⁸ For this excellent overview of Ashland Plantation's sugar house which includes photographs of the artifacts found during the excavation, see Yakubik and Méndez, 11-17.

With their reputation on the line, these engineers served as the link between manufacturer and consumer as they worked to increase their customers' satisfaction while educating them properly in the process. One planter had to furnish the manufacturer \$200.00 for the service of an engineering expert to accompany the mill to the plantation and install the equipment there.⁹⁹ F. D. Richardson informed his partner, Moses Liddell of the progress on their sugar house project, informing him that "the engineer had not arrived to put up the engine," but that he "had the foundation of his furnace for the sugar kettles and was waiting their arrival they were to be shipped and to leave N.O. on the 22nd alt by way of Atchafalaya."¹⁰⁰ By the 17th of August the engineer had arrived and "was at work putting up the engine and mill just commenced"¹⁰¹ Finally, by mid-October, the project neared completion, and the plantation readied itself for the fall's harvest season. Reflecting on the success of the renovations and the new equipment that they had purchased, Moses Liddell recounted his partner's satisfaction that "whether the engineer says he never before put up so complete a piece of machinery as our engine is, FDR says as far as he is a judge he thinks it comes near perfection."¹⁰² Samuel McCutcheon, the manager of Ormond Plantation also reported an engineer at work on his plantation in the installation process when he chose to upgrade his equipment at the St. Charles estate along the Mississippi River, writing in his daily log of plantation activities for May 6: "engineers at work on the boiler, masons on the upper set of kettles and raising the mill walls."¹⁰³ The process of upgrading one's whole system required several skilled laborers, including engineers, masons,

⁹⁹ Andrew Hynes to John Craighead, June 2, 1833, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁰ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 8, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁰¹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 17, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁰² Moses Liddell to John Liddell, October 17, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and Family Papers, LSU.

¹⁰³ Plantation Journal, Samuel McCutcheon Papers, LSU.

bricklayers, carpenters, etc. Lewis Stirling hired a man he referred to as Mr. Harry to work as engineer in putting up a bagasse carrier for his sugar mill and for overseeing the 1850 harvest. For the engineering and sugar making, Stirling paid \$125 per month, resulting in a \$358.00 bill for the work that Harry had accomplished.¹⁰⁴ The advancements in sugarcane production and expansion of profits also meant the exponential growth in wages, capital, and experience necessary to achieve such heightened profits. Lewis Stirling spent \$25,453.15 in the 1840s to enter into sugarcane production, including materials, the expertise of skilled laborers, and equipment that he had to purchase to take the sugarcane from seed to raw sugar.¹⁰⁵

A decade earlier while acting as Mrs. Joseph Erwin's attorney and estate overseer, John Craighead, noted that the "engineer that we employed has arrived this night bringing with him a boiler and more casting than we want," but another advisor had "prevailed on Mrs. Erwin to give her orders to a Louisville factory for the articles [Mr. William] Lees has brought."

Unfortunately, Craighead understood that Mrs. Erwin would have to pay extra for the extended cost of the new materials so he wrote another manufacturer to desist from making the items he had ordered until Erwin and Craighead could acquire further capital.¹⁰⁶ The next February, Craighead and Erwin granted Erwin's son-in-law, Andrew Hynes power of attorney and Craighead implored Hynes to "purchase a mill and engine for the new sugar establishment on this plantation you will also find a particular description of both the mill and the engine."

Craighead informed him that the aforementioned William Lees would soon travel to Louisville and Craighead believed that he would "be of great service to you in seeing the mill and engine is

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum Book, Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁵ List of expenses of entering sugarcane production in Memorandum Book, Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁶ John B. Craighead to John Linton, October 20, 1832, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

made agreeable to contract he is will acquainted with running engines here and puts them up for sugar planters.” He stressed the importance of erecting a new mill immediately “as I believe it will be the means of getting the mammoth estate as Col. Nichols calls it out of its difficulty.”¹⁰⁷ He understood the utmost importance of implementing the newest technology in sugarcane production in order to achieve higher profits, no matter how far they had to travel to find a manufacturer that suited their needs.

Occasionally, the engineers quarreled with their employers over their desires for design or the capacity of the equipment that they came to install. Edward Gay’s overseer wrote from St. Louis Plantation on the eve of the Civil War to inform him that he had had a disagreement with the engineer with whom they had arranged to install new equipment on the plantation. A. Brooks wrote to Gay that “since I wrote you Mr. King and another engineer came and are getting along very well with the machinery.” Unfortunately, when he informed Mr. King of Gay’s desired changed to the equipment, he told Brooks “that he is going to put up the machinery as it was mad to go and if you want any change maid you can have it done your self.”¹⁰⁸ The new technology often challenged the planters and their overseers who wanted to obtain the best fit for their plantation at a time when the new systems lacked the complexity and flexibility to offer the desired customization. The manufacturers often stressed that they needed to install the engines and mills as they had designed them and strove to offer a range of options for those engines and mills.

After inspecting several options for the Erwin estate, Craighead chose to “have hired an engineer of this country to put up the mill and engine some experience in setting up sugar mills

¹⁰⁷ John Craighead to Andrew Hynes, February 4, 1833, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰⁸ A. Brooks to Edward Gay, August 14, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

and attaching engines to them is important,” suggesting that he would “also send [the engineer] to Louisville for the mill and engine.” He immediately started making plans to construct the new sugar house, noting that he had 600,000 bricks and 637 barrels of sand on-hand to begin construction. “With the number of hands we shall have at work I expect to get the house up in two months,” Craighead stated, giving them plenty of time to prepare for the fall harvest.¹⁰⁹ Even after the slaveholder had installed the equipment on the plantation, an engineer had to visit periodically to ensure that the operation continued to run smoothly as the years passed. John Craighead alerted his business partner and family member Andrew Hynes, at home in Nashville, that their engineer would arrive shortly at an expense of \$75.00 per month “to repair and clean the Engines. He is well recommended.”¹¹⁰

Like many new technologies, it required time for manufacturers to provide cost-effective models for consumers, and it took several years for the price of the newer sugar mills to drop to the point where more planters could feasibly invest in the industrial mechanisms. To access sugar mills at a favorable cost, planters initially had to purchase their equipment outside of Louisiana from factories in New York, Richmond, or Cincinnati, making it easier for Anglo-Americans to purchase this new technology due to their business connections along the East Coast or in the North but, increasingly, sugar planters in Louisiana turned their attention to Leeds and Company, a foundry in New Orleans that had begun to dedicate increasing efforts in the manufacturing of modern sugarcane processing technology.¹¹¹ Soon, the price of the new steam-

¹⁰⁹ John Craighead to Andrew Hynes, May 7, 1833, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹¹⁰ John Craighead to Andrew Hynes, October 2, 1842, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹¹¹ The following collections contain bills of sale, invoices, and correspondence for out-of-state purchases of sugarcane processing equipment: Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU; White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU; Maunsel White Papers, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

powered mills and engines had dropped enough that their implementation spread almost as quickly as the frontier of sugarcane rolled southwestward across the state. By the outbreak of civil war, over 80 percent of sugar estates across southern Louisiana possessed steam-powered technology for use in harvesting and processing their sugarcane crop.¹¹² The shift from animal-driven mills to steam-powered ones allowed for increased efficiency, production, and speed that helped to raise the profits exponentially, effectively paying for the equipment in several years' time.

Purchasing their equipment locally helped to ensure that sugar planters maintained a closer relationship with the manufacturer that made the mill. This allowed both parties to solve any problems if they arose once they had received their purchases on the plantation. Such an investment on the part of planters meant that they expected the greatest efficiency from their equipment. They could not afford to spend months, or even weeks, finalizing the plans and acquiring the machinery because they had a very small window before the next harvest arrived and plenty of other tasks on the plantation demanded their full attention. Maunsel White, for example, struggled mightily, as the harvest season loomed before him, to reach a solution when he purchased a new steam-powered mill for his Deer Range Plantation below New Orleans in 1844. Awaiting only the final parts that he required for full operation, he wrote the manufacturer, Stelliman, Allen, and Co., in New York City. "You may easily imagine how much I am disappointed not receiving in this the clarifiers that you promised to send me in the early part of this month," White wrote. "I have every thing ready to commence rolling...the want of them at this moment is most annoying and it may cause me great loss," he exclaimed

¹¹² P. A. Champomier, *Statement of the Sugar Crop Made in Louisiana, 1860-1861*. In these annual publications, Champomier provided a statistical record for sugarcane agriculture, including production numbers, methods for processing, and acres in cultivation.

before offering an ultimatum: “I cannot under any circumstance wait over six days more for them.”¹¹³ The situation remained unresolved and an unsatisfied White requested that the New York manufacturer return his money for the work remaining uncompleted. The following year, White argued vehemently that he had suffered great loss from the negligence of Stelliman, Allen, and Co. because the initial agreement had allowed White to start tearing down his old mill to make room for the new one “but the want of the clarifiers until they were of no service to me...has induced me to stop short until further advised. I lost last year nearly 200 [hogsheads] by delays the cost of the clarifiers would be nothing in comparison to what I may lose by any detention, this season,” warning them that “all my works in sugar house must remain suspended and put me to losses and expense,” until they could reach a resolution.¹¹⁴

Distance continued to compound White’s problems the following year. In August, White fired off another letter to New York City informing the company that “I begin to feel extremely uneasy as regards my not hearing from you on the subject of the shipment of the mill and engine,” and that he would “be on a Bed of Thorns until I do.” White referenced a fire that had begun in an oil processing business on July 19th but continued to hold Stelliman, Allen, and Co., accountable for his order because the fire had “not extended to your quarter of the city most fortunately for those who are depending upon your industry and exertions.”¹¹⁵ White feared that if he did not receive the new mill and engine by September 10th, he would re-install the old equipment just to get through that year’s harvest season, a significant obstacle when timeliness remained the most important factor in a successful crop. He paid the price for his endeavors to

¹¹³ Maunsel White to Stelliman, Allen, and Co., October 21, 1844, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

¹¹⁴ Maunsel White to Stelliman, Allen, and Co., June 23, 1845, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

¹¹⁵ Maunsel White to Stelliman, Allen, and Co., August 4, 1845, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

obtain the most modern technologies during the period and suffered from his long-distance relationship with the foundry responsible for his order. If he would have made an order from New Orleans, where he also maintained a mercantile business, White may have had the opportunity to keep a keener eye on the progress and ensure that it would arrive at Deer Range with plenty of time to spare in preparation for harvest. Finally, after many tribulations, White reported on November 17th that, as of the night before, “they are up” and the engine worked “beautifully well,” while “the large and small mill gave infinite trouble and I regret to say that the small one won’t answer.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, White cited that he should have had 250 hogsheads completed by that time and the manufacturer’s delays had cost him considerable time and capital. The final reference to this tenuous relationship refers, in December 1847, to legal actions taken between the two parties regarding the failure of the new system to operate as agreed upon.¹¹⁷ Maunsel White, one of those sugar planters and merchants at the forefront of the American population, having migrated to Louisiana from his birthplace in Ireland after a brief stop in Kentucky, sought the most high-tech equipment that money could buy. He used his connections as a merchant and those he had gained during this journeys across the interior of the country to expand his business scope geographically but he did so at a price. When something went amiss and he remained unsatisfied with his purchase, he had to wait much longer to resolve the problem than he would have had he sought a source closer to his home plantation.

¹¹⁶ Maunsel White to Stelliman, Allen, and Co., November 17, 1845, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

¹¹⁷ Maunsel White to Stelliman, Allen, and Co., December 22, 1847, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU. In this letter, White expresses his dissatisfaction that his mill does not work as well as a neighbor’s (Mr. Lapice) mill which he had purchased from the same manufacturers. White references the fact that Alfred Stelliman had travelled to Louisiana to investigate the problems he had experienced but suggests that he (White) had already reached an agreement with Mr. Allan to put the three-year dispute to rest.

Moses Liddell and his partner, F. D. Richardson also took a chance when they purchased equipment for their sugarcane operation from Stelliman, Allen, and Co. in 1845. In a contract signed by Alfred Stelliman and Richardson and Liddell, Stelliman's manufacturing company agreed to provide a steam engine and sugar mill with very detailed specifications. They would provide an engine with a 12-inch diameter cylinder with a three-foot stroke, including all bodies, pumps and pipes. The mill would measure four feet long by twenty-four feet, five inches diameter made with shafts of American wrought-iron, including all of the fixtures necessary for the cane and bagasse carriers. The contract guaranteed all "Iron Foundation plates, connecting wheels and shafts, complete, all of them good style and workmanship and all to be done in a most substantial manner similar to the one furnished James Porter Esqr of Franklin Louisiana...to be put upon plantation ready for use on or before the first day of October next (1845)," at a cost of \$6,000, payable in three annual installments with a traditional seven percent interest.¹¹⁸ Correspondence from May 1846 indicates that the Liddells had finally received their mill and engine on the plantation, over one year after the original date agreed upon by both parties.¹¹⁹

In 1850, Lewis Stirling transferred 220 shares of the Atchafalaya Rail Road and Banking Company to James Goodloe of Cincinnati in order to help purchase a steam engine. Stirling received a form letter from Goodloe with the desired dimensions filled in for his engine which Stirling would receive on or before 15 April 1850. Stirling's sugar mill and engine contained rollers 28 inches in diameter, and four feet, six inches long. His engine contained a 13-inch cylinder with a four-foot, six-inch stroke. The operation used a boiler six feet long and 42 inches

¹¹⁸ Contract between Stelliman, Allen, and Co., and F. D. Richardson and Moses Liddell, January 25, 1845, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

¹¹⁹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, May 24, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

in diameter with a double flue. Goodloe used wrought iron shafts and the cost of contract included “all the necessary pipes and pumps, to make the work complete.” The set-up in its entirety cost Stirling \$6,000, a reasonable sum because the technology had achieved a point by mid-century when the investment had become much more cost efficient, especially considering that he had ordered a custom mill and engine from Cincinnati.¹²⁰

White, Liddell, and Stirling could have chosen to conduct their business with Leeds Foundry, founded in New Orleans by Jedediah Leeds who had begun manufacturing in 1825. One historian of the modernization of the sugarcane industry noted that “the decade of the 1850s marked the rise of the local foundry and the widespread adoption of its products.”¹²¹ The influx of Anglo settlers and planters who arrived from the east coast and New England boosted the local economy, prompting extended industrial efforts by injecting capital into local ventures while the population increase augmented the demand for new products to help it to bring increasing acres of Louisiana’s swamps under cultivation.

Several planters across southern Louisiana ordered parts or systems from the New Orleans foundry and often had a much easier time than White when something went amiss. Leeds had less difficulty getting an engineer or other expert with the company out to inspect the problem on a plantation than a firm in New York City or Cincinnati. Duncan Kenner, for example wrote to William Minor, outlining his plans for an engine that he wished to order.

¹²⁰ Transfer of Shares from Lewis Stirling to James Goodloe of Cincinnati with accompanying contract for mill and engine, December 6, 1848, Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹²¹ Heitmann, 47. For a brief history of Leeds Foundry, including their contributions to the Confederacy, and a broader discussion of New Orleans industry, see Henry Rightor, *Standard History of New Orleans, Louisiana, Giving a Description of the Natural Advantages, Natural History in Regard to the Flora and Birds, settlement, Indians, Creoles, Municipal and Military History, Mercantile and Commercial Interests, Banking, Transportation, Struggles against High Water, the Press, Educational, Literature and Art, the Churches, Old Burying Grounds, Bench and Bar, Medical, Public and Charitable Institutions, the Carnival, Amusements, Clubs, Societies, Associations, Etc.* (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1900), 524-525. Jedediah Leeds managed the foundry until his death in 1844 and the company passed to his heirs and partner John Leeds.

Illustrating a technologically savvy eye for what he needed to complete the task at Ashland Plantation, Kenner stated “the engine for which I have contracted is of the following dimensions. 14 inches cylinder... 3 boilers made of ¼ inch (wire). 30 feet in length and 36 inches in diameter. The mill 5 feet long and 28 inches in diameter... The cost is to be \$7,500,” which he would pay in three annual installments . Kenner urged Minor to look into buying similar equipment for his own plantations in Louisiana. “I do not know for which one of your places you wish an engine,” Kenner wondered, “but my opinion is that of all the work I have seen done for the planters, Leeds Mills and engines are the best particularly his mills and housing.”¹²² Kenner claimed that Leeds manufactured machinery that contained much more iron, making it heavier and more substantial, justifying the higher price. These sorts of endorsements benefitted the manufacturers tremendously, especially those local factories who sought to expand their business and reputation across the lower portion of the state.

A geographically tight-knit group, the sugar planters of southern Louisiana often passed word to one another within the neighborhood about the success or failure of a new piece of equipment, and sometimes a planter would even host his fellows to his estate to see the new equipment at work. The Bringier family decided to upgrade their machinery around the same time after seeing Kenner’s in operation. “Bringier, when he saw [my] contract and talked with Mr. (Anndrory) wishes him to make one precisely like it for him,” wrote Kenner but the contractor did not want to undertake the new agreement because he wanted to minimize his commitments only one year into his manufacturing so that he couple accomplish them all with

¹²² Duncan Kenner to William J. Minor, January 22, 1846, Kenner, Duncan F. Papers, LSU. For an in-depth investigation of the archaeological remains of the Ashland Plantation sugarhouse, including a detailed description of the machinery, mechanization, and the footprint of Kenner’s sugar processing equipment, see David W. Babson, *Pillars on the Levee: Archaeological Investigations of Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation, Geismar, Ascension Parish, Louisiana* (Normal, IL: Midwestern Archaeological Research Center, 1989).

success.¹²³ The Bringier family, one of the few Creole families who maintained their status along the Mississippi River following the American influx, invested heavily in new equipment. 1860 Census figures show that the Houmas Plantation owned by the family and the Hermitage possessed \$75,000 and \$25,000 worth of farming implements and sugar-making machinery respectively. Only John Burnside, who owned Houmas Plantation upriver, exceeded Bringier's holdings in value for Ascension Parish.¹²⁴

Other opportunities sprang up in Baton Rouge to help serve those who settled near the city and upriver in the Felicianas as the nineteenth century progressed. Several planters left business records for transactions with small, local manufacturers who could, at least, help to fix or produce parts for their mills and engines so that they would not have to rely on cities like New York City, Cincinnati, or even New Orleans. James Bowman took advantage of Hill and Markham of Baton Rouge in October 1857, spending \$25 for a plunger in his force pump which helped to aid him as the sugar harvest approached rapidly.¹²⁵ If he would have ordered these parts from a city farther away it likely would have meant a greater delay in the preparations for his harvest and a potential crop loss.

Slowly, Louisiana's sugar planters, both Creole and Anglo-American began seeking the new steam-powered mills and experimented with the new technology to extend their holdings and sugarcane production. The difference between the two ethnic communities often emerged in

¹²³ Duncan Kenner to William Minor, January 22, 1846, Kenner, Duncan F. Papers, LSU.

¹²⁴ For an adequate discussion of Bringier's advancements in sugarcane production on their holdings, see Craig A. Bauer, *Creole Genesis: The Bringier Family and Antebellum Plantation Life in Louisiana* (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011), 63-67. For an excellent in-depth analysis of Louisiana's sugar planters via a study of census records, see Joseph Karl Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana-1860* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Co., 1998).

¹²⁵ Invoice for services rendered by Hill and Markham to James Bowman, October 24, 1857, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

their willingness to adopt newer methods and their differentiation between the various sources of those technological advances. Creole Louisianans made conscious decisions selectively to adopt French scientific ideas, receiving them with greater enthusiasm. Only the French-speaking Americans along the Mississippi River and Bayou Lafourche matched their interest in these advancements as a sign that they had begun to cooperate more closely with their Creole neighbors.¹²⁶ The American sugar planters who failed to learn French, as noted in a previous chapter, struggled to assimilate into the local society and the language barrier highlighted the cultural barricade between the two communities. But the Creoles and French-speaking Americans who could access the new scientific information that disseminated from France and more easily adapted their operations to incorporate the techniques that became available through research in Europe. Judah Benjamin, himself discussed the contributions of French chemists “who have of late years devoted all the resources of science to the improvement and perfection of [sugar manufacturing], that we are indebted for the vast strides which it has recently made.”¹²⁷ Norbert Rillieux embodied this transference of knowledge between France and some Louisianans when he encountered the excitement and willingness of Creoles to adopt the vacuum-pan technology that he had developed during his scientific, mechanical, and industrial studies in France to explore newer industrial methods that he could apply to Louisiana’s sugar industry.

Norbert Rillieux had perhaps the greatest impact on the antebellum sugarcane industry in Louisiana, solidified the industry, strengthening it for life after slavery by increasing the ease,

¹²⁶ Heitmann discusses the interest in French scientific research and discoveries by Creoles and their French-speaking American counterparts on page 15.

¹²⁷ Judah P. Benjamin, “Louisiana Sugar,” *De Bow’s Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 2 (November 1846): 331.

profit, and efficiency of production exponentially. Rillieux, the son of a white plantation owner in New Orleans, Vincent Rillieux, and his placée, Constance Vivant, possessed a unique perspective on white and black, as well as Creole and Anglo-American.¹²⁸ His unique background benefitted Rillieux by providing him with a perspective that taught him how to cut through those murky yet strict differentiating characteristics between disparate populations in order to work with both groups to achieve successful advances for the general welfare of the region. Because of the unique racial space that he inhabited, Rillieux obtained an excellent New Orleans education by attending private Catholic institutions before crossing the Atlantic Ocean to attend a Parisian engineering school at the start of the 1820s. While in school at École Centrale, Rillieux studied physics, mechanics, and engineering, all disciplines that would help to establish within him a deep understanding of steam engines and the mechanics that helped them to operate. After completing his education, he became, at age twenty-four, the youngest teacher to hold a position at his alma mater, and he immediately began research on better techniques for sugarcane production and refining. As Rillieux began his research in France, one of his seven siblings at home in Louisiana, Edmond, and their cousin, Norbert Soulie, collaborated with Edmund Forstall to build a new Louisiana sugar refinery.¹²⁹ Most planters across Louisiana produced unrefined sugarcane in the sugar mills on their plantations. They would later pass the

¹²⁸ The term placée derives from plaçage, a extra-legal system found in the New World whereby a man, typically of French or Spanish descent, would enter into a common-law marriage with a woman of African or Native American heritage. This tradition continued in Louisiana, even to some extent, following the Louisiana Purchase, contributing to the uniqueness of the cultural environment in the region and challenging the Americans who found the tradition unusual or taboo. For a discussion of this system and its relation to Louisiana, see Virginia Meacham Gould, *Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black, and Female, in the Old South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998); Sybil Kein, *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); and Ned Sublette, *The World that Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008).

¹²⁹ For much of the nineteenth century, slaveholders produced raw, unrefined sugar but as the century progressed planters began forming partnerships to build refineries so that they could refine their neighbors' sugarcane and they could obtain a better price in the marketplace.

sugar on to a refinery or else the merchant who purchased their raw sugarcane would complete that process themselves. Slowly, during the nineteenth century, sugar refineries began sprouting up across southern Louisiana because they helped the planters to attain a better market price for their goods. In addition, the technological innovations during the century made these refineries more accessible to the average planter.¹³⁰

Forstall offered Norbert Rillieux the position as head engineer at the Louisiana Sugar Refinery. Rillieux accepted and returned from France to alter Louisiana's sugar industry for the remainder of the antebellum period. Unfortunately, Forstall never completed the refinery and the resulting disagreement between the two parties left a rift that lingered for the rest of the period between the Forstall and Rillieux families. However, the job offer had enticed Rillieux to return to his home state, and he endeavored to contribute to the sugar industry despite the falling out between his family and the Forstalls. Norbert Rillieux threw himself at his work between 1834 and 1843, the year that he finally patented his innovation. He effectively revolutionized Louisiana's sugar industry by coming up with the vacuum-pan method using a multiple-effect evaporation system. This way of producing raw sugar from the cane juice replaced the traditional Jamaica Train system by lowering the boiling point of the juice during the milling process at harvest. A series of several containers stacked on top of one another allowed heat to transfer from one pan to the next to continue the boiling process in each pan. This replaced the

¹³⁰ Unfortunately, while Norbert Rillieux would provide a magnificent subject for a book-length biography, we do not yet benefit from such a work though I failed to find such a manuscript collection that would make this study possible at this time. For brief synopses of his life and the contributions that he made to science, see Christopher Benfrey, *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable* (New York: Knopf, 1997); James M. Brodie, *Created Equal: The Lives and Ideas of Black American Innovators* (New York: W. Morrow, 1993); Carl W. Pursell, *A Hammer in Their Hands: A Documentary History of Technology and the African-American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

inefficient open kettle system where the heat would escape between stations and individual fires heated the kettles, challenging planters and their sugar-makers a great deal.

Rillieux's innovative method of producing sugar benefitted both slaves and slaveholders because it made the production of sugarcane more efficient and profitable while it helped to make the processing itself a safer activity for slaves. Previously, the Jamaica Train method had often burned slaves who handled the boiling liquid and provided a constant threat to the safety of the slaves who worked during harvest. Unfortunately, the slaves who worked with the new mills and engines on the technologically advanced Louisiana sugar plantations continued to face many dangers. Slaves no longer had to handle boiling-hot liquid constantly like they did when they used the open-kettle system but, despite the progress that planters enjoyed technologically, new problems arose for slaves working with the modern mechanical mechanisms. Workers in the sugar mills that employed steam power faced similar difficulties to men, women, and children toiling in New England's textile mills as they faced dangerous gears and cylinders that provided constant motion which threatened severe maiming or dismemberment if slaves found themselves caught by the machinery. The new equipment allowed for a more hands-off approach and a competent sugar-maker who understood how to run the complex apparatuses.

Theodore Packwood became the first Louisiana sugar planter to install Rillieux's processing system on his Myrtle Grove Plantation downriver from New Orleans. Soon thereafter, his business partner, Judah P. Benjamin decided to install the vacuum-pan equipment on his Belle Chasse Plantation on the west bank of the Mississippi River directly below New Orleans. Gradually, Rillieux installed his processing machinery on thirteen Louisiana sugar plantations and, by 1849, a Philadelphia manufacturer, Merrick and Towne, had begun to offer multiple-effect evaporators along with its other traditional equipment for sugar planters. Planters

could purchase three different sizes of mills and engines that would feature Rillieux's designs depending on the volume of their processing. The smallest could produce 6,000 pounds of sugar per day; the middle option, 12,000; and the largest could successfully process 18,000 pounds of sugar daily, a large enough amount that planters could pay off the rather large investment of the new equipment very quickly with the additional yields and increased efficiency offered by Rillieux's vacuum-pan system.¹³¹

To counter their mounting investment in technology, slaveholders harvested a larger crop because they could work more quickly to complete the cane harvest with the new machinery which allowed them time to put more acres into cultivation. Rillieux's new vacuum-pan system also helped to produce a better quality of sugar that fetched a higher market price. Sugarcane production grew exponentially throughout the antebellum period from 70,000 hogsheads in 1832 to 459,410 hogsheads in 1861, according to Richard Follett's calculations and the number of estates raising sugar reached a peak of 1,536 at midcentury before declining due to consolidation.¹³² Despite this massive growth the inner-circle of those connected to sugarcane remained small and word of mouth often influenced how merchants and factors treated producers and vice versa. To operate within this system, and because of the new technological developments which allowed for a higher quality of sugarcane, planters had to raise their standards and pay careful attention to the class of sugar that they sent to the marketplace because their reputations often depended on the quality of their product. The most successful planters

¹³¹ In addition to his revolutionizing of the sugar industry, the years preceding the Civil War saw Norbert Rillieux proposing to combat a particularly violent outbreak of yellow fever in New Orleans by making improvements to the city's sewer system and draining the swamplands surrounding the city on all sides. Rillieux assumed, correctly, that the hot, humid climate helped to spread the disease and, when Edmund Forstall became a state legislator, he suggested a similar plan to combat the fever based upon Rillieux's assertions and propositions.

¹³² Follett, 23.

demonstrated an awareness about what they sent to the marketplace and strove to ensure that their estates' symbols burned onto each individual hogshead indicated that the product inside would deservedly fetch the highest market price possible.

Similar to when earlier technological advancements occurred, planters and their overseers had to implement certain adjustments to accommodate those new breakthroughs. As steam power became much more popular across southern Louisiana, estates began to realize their seemingly endless supply of wood in the timber lands and swamps behind their plantations actually did have a limit. The forests began to shrink as the slaves had to cut even larger amounts of wood that the new steam machinery required to obtain constant heat in the boiler pans to process the cane. While some planters owned massive holdings with extensive timber lands (and even these eventually grew thin), many estates in Louisiana contained fewer timber acres and planters had to purchase the wood from external sources or come up with another option to replace the use of wood. J. D. B. De Bow recognized the mounting challenges that planters faced to fuel their new machinery that demanded increasing amounts of fuel in order to function, cautioning his readers that “wood is daily becoming more scarce, and, in many cases on plantations fronting the Mississippi river, and other streams of Louisiana, not a cord is to be obtained.”¹³³ De Bow went on to detail the realization of many planters that they could take advantage of one of the previously wasted by-products of sugarcane processing during harvest time: the cane stalks. Once the rollers had extracted the juice from the stalks, most planters simply set them aside in enormous piles but, with the spread of steam power across the sugar parishes, some planters began to wonder what would happen if they burned the stalks in place of wood. Thus, they began to see that the cane stalks held much more value, calling them bagasse,

¹³³ J. D. B. De Bow, “Bagasse for Fuel, in the Manufacture of Sugar,” *De Bow’s Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources* 8 (April 1850): 401-402.

and using the substance for fuel in their equipment. Soon, mills and engines contained specific pieces of equipment to carry, pile, store, and feed the bagasse back into the steam engine in order to decrease their requirement for cords of wood that the slaves had to cut or the planter had to purchase.

Once the planters had implemented a shift toward the innovative technology and installed the advanced machinery on their plantations, they turned their attention to other glaring problems that they had to consider. They needed to make sure that someone on the plantation possessed the knowledge to run the equipment and work the complicated machines, or they might hire a professional engineer or sugar-maker to oversee the harvest period. In addition to new skilled laborers that they had to hire, they had to make sure that they had access to parts and replacement pieces for the machinery, and they had to build new structures to accommodate the new, larger mills and engines. They had to construct a sugar house to contain the equipment in a safe environment and those with large enough engines and mills often dug a sugar house pond in order to provide a constant and reliable source of water for the steam engine.¹³⁴ Planters had to manufacture or purchase thousands of bricks for the construction of the sugar house. This required a great deal of time spent by the slave force accumulating a stock pile of bricks in the time leading up to the installation of the equipment itself by the manufacturer. When planters attempted to incorporate cutting edge technology into their agricultural complex they also had to make sure that they laid the foundation to make that investment successful and they achieved this by surrounding that equipment with a strong base. They sought knowledgeable sugar-makers and professional engineers who built structures to help keep the equipment safe.

¹³⁴ A drawing in the possession of Dr. Robert Judice shows the sugar mill on the Hermitage Plantation, owned by Michel Doradou Bringier to be located near the Mississippi River, just upriver from the big house to accommodate access to both the fields and the river. Near the large sugar house, Bringier's slaves dug a mill pond that appears on the drawing to give the context of proximity to the rest of the plantation's structures.

Only the most elite of Louisiana's Creole planters invested in the expensive new equipment. The Creole sugar planters who weathered the Anglo-American influx and emerged as part of the slaveholding elite invested more heavily in the new technologies because they could afford to do so.¹³⁵ Their smaller colleagues fell by the wayside, selling their land to take advantage of advancing land values and giving way to the Anglo-Americans and the few Creoles who could make such grand financial commitments. Three premier Creole families, Bringiers, Aimes, and Romans, illustrated the ways in which this vital Creole minority evolved throughout the antebellum period to embrace the technological advancements available to them and push them even further when possible. The Bringier family turned their social capital into great business success and invested heavily in the most current of sugarcane processing technology. Through vital relationships with and strategic marriages to many influential people along the Mississippi River, not the least of whom, Duncan Kenner, helped them integrate into the increasingly American population, they worked to modernize their sugar-making process.¹³⁶

The Valcour Aime family, led by the patriarch who embraced education and strove to entertain new ideas that would help him to become even more prosperous, helped to lead the charge toward modernity among the minority of Creoles who dominated sugarcane society in southern Louisiana. The energy that he displayed prior to his son's death shows through many of his observations, and his daily journal reflects his desire to make constructive observations as he sought to increase his knowledge about horticulture and industrial agriculture. "A pepper

¹³⁵ Of the many Creole inhabitants of the Lower Mississippi River Valley throughout this period, only those who held onto their land and produced sugarcane at the highest level could invest in the new equipment, including the Bringiers, Romans, Fagots, Destrehans/Rosts.

¹³⁶ This tradition of Bringier technological investments branched out into the world of patenting in the decades following the Civil War and Louis A. Bringier, N. B. Trist, and Marius S. Bringier accumulated sixteen patents to help aid production between 1859-1884. For a list of patents including title and Patent Number see "Appendix B," in Bauer, 175-176.

plant of last year, exposed all winter, is now bearing, the cold having lasted long, but not having been great,” wrote Aime in May of 1836, and he later worried about the effect their fieldwork had on a sugarcane field when he reported “plant cane, in cocoland, having a sickly appearance; probably they have been too often troubled by the plow and hoe, during the drought.”¹³⁷ He clearly understood that a direct correlation between environment and the consequences of his actions on the plantation existed and could influence the outcome of his enterprise. He littered his journal with these sorts of observations as well as reporting constantly on the height of his cane in various fields, soil types, and weather patterns as they related to his neighbors in like conditions. One of the most spectacular agricultural and horticulture developments of the nineteenth century occurred at Bon Sejour, under the guidance of Jacques Telesphore Roman in 1846. In the early 1840s Dr. A. E. Colomb hoped to employ grafting to perpetuate a Centennial hybrid pecan tree that stood on the Anita Plantation, owned by Amant Bourgeois in St. James Parish. Colomb failed initially but decided to take the scions that he had cut from the original tree to the nearby Bon Sejour Plantation to a slave named Antoine who worked in the Roman family garden. Antoine achieved tremendous success with Colomb’s clipping by grafting 16 trees near the big house and quarters behind it. Shortly thereafter, Roman had him graft 110 additional trees “in the large pasture which was forty arpents from the river,” so that by the end of the Civil War and by the time Antoine achieved freedom, he had grafted 126 Centennial pecan trees that bore nuts for the plantation.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Valcour Aime, *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime, Formerly Proprietor of the Plantation Known as St. James Sugary Refinery, Situated in the Parish of St. James, and Now Owned by Mr. John Burnside* (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1878), 44, 50.

¹³⁸ The story of this first successful grafting, including the quotation derives from United States Department of Agriculture, *The Yearbook of Agriculture*, 1904 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 407.

Both Anglo-American and Creole planters who installed the new sugar technologies typically hired engineers or sugar-makers to supervise the processing operation during the harvest, or “rolling” season. With the spread of the modern complex machinery, they needed someone who understood the mechanical aspects of the industrial operations and possessed a firm grasp of processing the cane using this massive equipment. In addition to the annual wages that planters paid their overseers, the records abound with annual installments given to sugar-makers and engineers who ensured that they possessed up-to-date equipment and the knowledge to get the most out of the operation. One planter lamented the hidden costs of investing in sugarcane production when he wrote “the sugar planter has annually enormous expenses to meet in repairs of his mill, engines, sugar bodies, and makers to pay many expenses that we cannot think of.”¹³⁹ Richard Schofield of Indiana wanted to work for the Erwin estate so badly that he wrote them a letter pleading his position. “Having acted as engineer for you, in taking off your sugar crop last year, and having given you satisfaction in that capacity, and having concluded to come down this fall to take off a crop, and being much pleased with your treatment, being also acquainted with your machinery, hands and rules of doing business,” Schofield wrote that he wished to work for Erwin again. He asked for \$100.00 per month in wages but assured Craighead that “I would prefer your situation and I will say that I will tender to you my services this season again”¹⁴⁰ Hynes and Craighead hesitated, instead offering Schofield \$75.00 per month for “taking off” the 1844 crop of sugarcane.¹⁴¹ As late as 1850, records indicate that

¹³⁹ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 25, 1845, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

¹⁴⁰ Richard Schofield to John Craighead, June 14, 1844, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU. One should note that no record exists for the per-month wage that Craighead paid Schofield for the previous year but they paid him, in total, \$146.80.

¹⁴¹ Richard Schofield to John Craighead, September 3, 1844, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

Hynes and Craighead still employed Richard Schofield to make sugar on the plantation at \$75.00 per month, paying him a total of \$220.00 for three-months of service in that capacity 3 July 1850.¹⁴²

For any steam-powered piece of industrial equipment to function properly, it needed a constant source of water. The new engines required water in order to function but the hot machinery also heightened the threat of fires that could threaten to burn the entire operation to the ground so workers needed water to prevent these dangerous fires from becoming catastrophic.¹⁴³ Once the slaveholder had purchased and erected the sugar mill and engine their first order of business to ensure its success became the procurement of a reliable source of water for the machinery. Most sugar planters who had a large mill dug man-made ponds that they would use to catch rainwater or, more often, fill by transporting water from the nearest river. Pushing the limits of his slave force and with harvest season setting in quickly, Elu Landry “set all hands men with spades and shovels digging out the pond furnishing water to the engine.”¹⁴⁴ Their sugar house pond furnished the boilers during harvest and provided a ready supply that powered the machinery. Additionally, in the event of a fire which continually threatened the entire operation, the water in the pond could help to combat the flames quickly.

When the Liddells installed their processing equipment “the reservoir for water was dug out and [waited] for rain to fill it.”¹⁴⁵ Unfortunately, they did not get enough water into the reservoir in order to process the entire crop, and Moses Liddell lamented that “we fired up again

¹⁴² Bill for Services of Richard Schofield, July 3, 1850, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁴³ Despite the increased reliability of the brick used during the erection of most sugar houses, fires continued to provide a constant threat and proved worrisome for most slaveholders and their overseers due to the wooden structures all across the plantation grounds.

¹⁴⁴ Record Book, October 6, 1849, Landry, Elu Estate Record Book, LSU.

¹⁴⁵ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, October 17, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

with but little water in the boilers and succeed to get a very good movement, and exhaust all the water and stopped the engine.”¹⁴⁶ They had much better luck with their water supply when they had sufficient time to prepare for the next year’s harvest. “We have got our Reservoir for engine water so far completed, Liddell wrote, “that we are catching the water as it falls and have it about 4 feet or nearly so filled and can or may have it about six feet deep.” Declaring himself pleased, he noted that “it requires a good deal of labor yet to dress off the banks and put them in proper shape, but it will now answer as it is all the purposes for which it was constructed and it has now numerous fish in it.”¹⁴⁷ Always at the mercy of the climate, planters often relied on the water to prevent drought as well as provide them with enough water to run their equipment. During an unusually dry fall, one planter worried that he and his neighbors would suffer extended difficulties. “The planters are nearly out of water here,” he wrote, and their neighbor, “Mr. Louis Leburgeois[,] has to pump water from the river.”¹⁴⁸ A necessary inconvenience due to the technological advances that they had employed, sugar planters began to face new obstacles while implementing the changes that they viewed necessary and worthwhile.

The use of technological advances in agricultural production, specifically the sugarcane industry, mirrored a larger shift toward additional innovations in a myriad of other sectors across the United States. Principally, the increased use of steam power for steamboats and steam locomotives propelled the nation into commercial, market, and transportation revolutions just as the sugarcane industry in the lower parishes of Louisiana began to blossom.¹⁴⁹ Sugar planters

¹⁴⁶ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, October 30, 1846, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

¹⁴⁷ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, August 23, 1847, Liddell, Moses St. John, R. and family Papers, LSU.

¹⁴⁸ Francis Pierce to Rebecca Minor, November 22, 1855, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁴⁹ For two excellent overviews of the ways in which the United States changed and grew during this period, including a discussion of the various revolutions (commercial, market, and transportation), see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University

tapped into these new national trends using the new boats to their benefit, and some even began to take advantage of locomotives, though railroads remained scarce in Louisiana for most of the antebellum period.¹⁵⁰ The industrial revolution that took place in the sugar parishes of Louisiana resulted, in large part, from the influx of Anglo-American settlers who brought their progressive methods of plantation agriculture and tapped into the network of industry that the northern and eastern cities had put in place through the Industrial Revolution. Louisiana's planters took some of these advances and incorporated them into their sugar planting in order to produce more sugar by increasing output and the land that they put into cultivation.¹⁵¹

Rain remained a constant worry in south Louisiana, and as a result the roads suffered. Flooded roads and muck that suctioned the wheels on wagons and carts, the primary method for shifting resources around the plantation property, threatened the ability of planters to even get their crops into the sugar house at times and endangered entire crops. In preparation for the annual harvest season, planters considered road maintenance of utmost importance so that they could position themselves to tackle the harvest season head-on with all of their labor force void of distractions or stoppage of the processing of cane. Some, like Valcour Aime, dedicated a great deal of time and attention to preparing the roads by grading them to ensure drainage and

Press, 2007); and Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York: Rinehart, 1951).

¹⁵⁰ For an excellent local history of railroads and the sugarcane industry, see W. E. Butler, *Down Among the Sugar Cane: The Story of Louisiana Sugar Plantations and their Railroads* (Baton Rouge, LA: Moran Publishing Corporation, 1980). The vast majority of Butler's study focuses on the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century use of railroads in the sugarcane industrial complex when sugar plantations embraced the corporation model following emancipation.

¹⁵¹ Richard Follett has shown masterfully that nineteenth-century sugar planters embraced industrialization and thirsted for modernization, arguing that "where [cotton and wheat] farmers invested \$1.60 and \$1.46 respectively on farm implements for each cultivated acre, the late antebellum sugar masters spent approximately \$20 on machinery per improved acre." Follett, 31.

making sure that they remained packed tight to accommodate the countless wagon-loads of cane, the animals that pulled them, and the teamsters that drove them. Occasionally, even the best of preparations failed to prevent stoppage and additional maintenance efforts. During the 1844 harvest season, Aime had to stop grinding for over 23 hours in December to repair the roads before they could re-fire the mill again and continue harvest.¹⁵² They had to do the same several other times throughout Aime's time and he noted consistently in his journal the days that he lost for such stoppage when he listed the daily progress of cane cut and ground annually. Many planters sought new methods of transportation that might prove more reliable and less susceptible to the inconsistent weather patterns of southern Louisiana.

As early as the mid-1840s the Erwin descendents contemplated building a rail line to assist in getting their crops in from the fields. Once planters had installed rail lines to help combat the muck and mud that collected on roadways during the rainy seasons, animals could more easily pull wagons along the rail lines and, eventually (and with increasing frequency after emancipation) they could invest in a small-scale steam locomotive to replace the animals entirely in order to move the cut cane from the field to the sugar house for processing. Hynes and Craighead sought advice from a colleague who informed them that a "Rail Road might be constructed at a small expense leading to the sugar house...the road should be about 18 inches to two feet higher at the end in the swamp than at the sugar house. As the cars would be loaded always to and never from the sugar house, thus it would require less force to propel the cane." William Huntstock continued with his detailed plan to install a railroad for cane processing, advising Hynes and Craighead that they would need a leveler to ensure the perfect flatness of the road and that the "earth should be packed hard under the sleepers to prevent their sinking or

¹⁵² Aime, 100.

giving.” He suggested that they could use wooden rails and utilize their saw mill if the rails that they made could “be planed off very smooth. Thin slabs of some hard wood might be put upon them in place of iron. Great care should be taken to have the rails laid perfectly level as on the complete straightness, on top, of the rails depends the goodness of the road, and the ease of propelling the cars.” Finally, he suggested that they could use wood for the wheels of the cars themselves, reminding them that “a large wheel runs easier than a smaller one.” Huntstock completed his ideas by including a drawing of his concept of what the rail lines would look like. In addition to the installation of a rail line, Huntstock suggested a plan to install a wheel in the river that would help to provide water power by using the current for grinding corn on the plantation.¹⁵³ No records indicate whether Hynes and Craighead invested immediately in the rail line but, by 1859 Edward Gay had needed replacement rail road wheels from Leeds and Co. in New Orleans, and his St. Louis Plantation had indeed installed a rail line to move cut cane by the eve of the Civil War.¹⁵⁴ Certainly William Huntstock benefitted from an innovative and mechanical mind his concepts with increasing rapidity became the norm throughout the region. These sorts of concepts became more common across the southern parishes as more planters began to invest in more creative ways of moving the products of their plantations including those who utilized the new rail lines that investors worked to build.

While limited, canals provided another opportunity for Louisianans to invest in a venture that would help them to shave time off of their travel and provide a more reliable method to send goods to the marketplace. Though waterways litter Louisiana’s southern half, the vast majority of these flow in a generally southward direction, preventing east-west travels. Investors who saw

¹⁵³ William Huntstock to Andrew Hynes and John Craighead, February 25, 1846, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁵⁴ Bill for Manufactured Items from Leeds, and Co., July 28, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

the immediate success of the Erie Canal looked to canals as the potential connections between the rivers which would allow them to travel directly east or west to reach New Orleans and/or their plantations in the hinterlands. While railroad companies struggled to achieve the funding that would pay for them to traverse the soft, marshy territory of southern Louisiana, canals essentially embraced this geography and remained popular throughout the antebellum period, especially among Anglo-Americans who viewed these sorts of improvements as a way to form a national trade network. One of the greater successes in canal building resulted from the efforts of Robert Ruffin Barrow, a prominent Whig and an elite planter whose family held vast sugar holdings across Louisiana from the Felicianas to Terrebonne Parish and westward into Texas. Barrow led efforts to construct Barataria and Lafourche Canal which would connect the Mississippi River with the Attakapas region. He successfully used his influence in the Whig Party to gain support from the state after previously petitioning the federal government for the necessary funds. Only after achieving state aid under Governor Robert Wickliffe in 1857 did Barrow and his fellow investors complete the canal. It remained largely in the Barrow family until after the Civil War.¹⁵⁵

Aside from the direct technological advances that benefitted the processing of the cane, new technologies including the railroad benefitted many planters exponentially. In addition to getting their cut cane from the field to the sugar house, they sought to get their sugar and molasses to the market more quickly and more efficiently by shipping them to New Orleans by rail instead of counting on the often-unreliable waterways of south Louisiana. The most successful and widespread antebellum foray into the building of a rail line, the Illinois Central

¹⁵⁵ Thomas A. Becnel, *The Barrow Family and the Barataria and Lafourche Canal: the Transportation Revolution in Louisiana, 1829-1925* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989) does a superb job of detailing many elements of this story, including Barrow family history, the transportation revolution as a whole as it applied to Louisiana, and the history of the Barataria and Lafourche Canal itself.

Railroad, which left New Orleans and bisected the heart of the United States on its way to Chicago, did little to help the Louisiana sugar planters.¹⁵⁶ On the contrary, the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad, chartered in 1852 helped to link New Orleans to the southwestern reaches of the plantation frontier. The rail line stretched from Algiers, across the Mississippi River from New Orleans proper, westward across the marshy parishes of southern Louisiana before reaching its antebellum terminus at Brashear, current-day Morgan City. This rail line proved integral to moving people, store-bought goods, and plantation produce between the city and the outer edges of plantation society, though many of the Creole inhabitants of the state did not support it. Sir Charles Lyell, a well-known British lawyer and geologist travelled through the region and learned that Creoles opposed the Opelousas rail line because “they feared it would ‘let the Yankees in upon them.’”¹⁵⁷ It helped to cut shipping times and proved a more reliable method for travel because planters no longer had to ascend Bayou Lafourche before venturing down the Mississippi River; they could now cut straight across to New Orleans in the east. Robert Butler, for example, sent 80 shipments of sugar and molasses from his plantation to market via this rail line between 1857 and 1861. He made an additional five shipments in 1862 but, but this time, the Civil War had torn this region apart and the rail line itself became the center of attention for Union soldiers who wanted to plunge deeper into the state’s interior and Confederate soldiers who had grandiose notions of recapturing New Orleans.

¹⁵⁶ For an early but still very useful account of Louisiana railroad history that details New Orleans’s experience with railroads and the smaller-scale efforts in the rural parishes, see Merl E. Reed, *New Orleans and the Railroads: The Struggle for Commercial Empire, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1966). Reed actually suggests that many of the rail-building efforts in and around New Orleans resulted from the efforts to bypass the Creoles in the French Quarter section of the city, thus they built the terminus for the Illinois Central Railroad in the Marigny District, arguing that “business groups in the newer sectors began plotting to take the lake and coastal trade for themselves,” on page 34.

¹⁵⁷ Sir Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America* 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1855), 2:158.

Anglo-American investors helped to fund some localized experiments that helped sugar planters in the region, including the West Feliciana Rail Road that connected Bayou Sara with Woodville, Mississippi, a distance of under thirty miles. This rail line effectively connected two important antebellum commercial outposts and allowed slaveholders to travel across the land without having to rely on water travel or horseback to traverse the short distance. Frequently, planters across southern Louisiana purchased goods from manufacturers in Woodville, including a shoe factory and textile mill, and this railroad benefitted them greatly by decreasing the time it took the orders to arrive on the plantations.¹⁵⁸ This rail line served planters in the area until after the Civil War and eventually came under the control the Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company in 1889. Anglo-Americans dominated all of these examples of railroad investments, charters, and usage, exhibiting an increased likelihood that they would position themselves on the side of internal improvements and industry. It also indicates that they needed these improvements while many Creoles did not because the Creoles lived directly on the main transportation artery, the Mississippi River. In addition to these efforts to build inter-parish and interstate rail lines to assist sugar planters, other innovators went so far as to install railroads on the plantation property to bring the cut cane from the vast expanses of surrounding fields across a great distance to the sugar house. The American population largely dominated efforts to construct railroads and canals to shorten the distance between plantation and marketplace just as they strove to decrease the space between the field and the sugar house.

Louisiana's sugar planters, like the rest of the nation, enjoyed a period of tremendous growth and technological advancement but the complex society meant that the ways in which the state's inhabitants implemented those changes differed a great deal between Creoles and Anglo-

¹⁵⁸ For a background of the earliest plans for this early rail venture, see Elisabeth Kilbourne Dart, "Working on the Railroad: The West Feliciana, 1828-1842," *Journal of Louisiana History* 25 (Winter 1984): 29-56.

Americans. Creoles modernized their operations but struggled to do so at times. They faced an ever-increasing population of Anglo-American settlers who sought to make a fortune in Louisiana's sugarcane fields. As the population grew throughout the nineteenth century, land prices increased and only the wealthiest of Creoles could position themselves to withstand these changes over time. The largest and wealthiest families like the Aimes, Bringiers, and Romans successfully updated their operations and competed effectively with the Americans around them, maintaining their dynastic holdings along the Mississippi River. Their smaller neighbors, the *petits habitants*, especially those who owned small slave forces or little plots of land farther up the Mississippi River and down the Bayous Tech and Lafourche could not withstand the increasing value of land nor did they possess the capital necessary to invest in the modern modes of sugarcane production.¹⁵⁹ Sir Charles Lyell learned that the Creoles had dominated the region when the Americans first arrived but now "when they get into debt, and sell a farm on the highest land next to the levee, they do not migrate to a new region farther west, but fall back somewhere into the low grounds near the swamp."¹⁶⁰ Except for the handful of families who proudly maintained their Creole heritage while tapping into the wider agricultural society where they implanted themselves staunchly into Louisiana's sugar society by the Civil War, many of the smaller Creole farmers failed to acquire the connections to a national network of manufacturers, creditors, and markets that Americans had available to them.

Those Creoles who plunged into the age of modern industrial plantation production could do so because they succeeded in becoming the small minority of powerful slaveholders who

¹⁵⁹ For a clearer understanding of this process of consolidation, and a more thorough analysis of ownership patterns, see John B. Rehder, *Delta Sugar: Louisiana's Vanishing Landscape* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 45-51; Perry H. Howard, *Political Tendencies in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1971), 44; Sitterson, 25.

¹⁶⁰ Lyell, 2:157.

weathered the demographic shift toward an Americanized population and emerged as a powerful elite. While they continued to maintain their own cultural affinity and a tendency toward homogeneity, they participated more freely in the modernization of the sugarcane industry but the Anglo-Americans led Louisiana through the shift toward increasing technological advances. In order to compete effectively with their American counterparts, Creoles had to adopt the advancements that helped to increase efficiency and when it came to one-on-one interaction with the slave force and the implementation of slavery on each individual plantation, Creoles and Americans often showed similar patterns as well, with a few exceptional differences.

The Anglo-Americans maintained their national ties and pushed the boundaries of American slavery westward incorporating American values of slaveholding and agricultural innovation into their experience in Louisiana and always remained a part of the national fabric. Often portions of the family remained behind in states farther east or in New England creating a literal connection between Louisiana's American settlers and a more national network of trade and relationships. Conversely, their Creole counterparts preferred a more local, conservative approach to slaveholding based more closely on their ties in New Orleans and their cultural antecedents there instead of merely viewing Louisiana as a stepping stone to the West. Instead of looking to the nation, Creoles felt a strong ancestral tie to the state and exhibited very little desire to emigrate from it.

CHAPTER 6
“SO JUST SET IT DOWN WHEN YOU HEAR OF BRUTAL TREATMENT...IT WAS
FOREIGNERS”: SLAVE BIRTH, DEATH, AND THE SPACE BETWEEN

During the antebellum period, the institution of slavery bolstered itself against northern anti-slavery proponents and abolitionists. As a symbol that the Creoles and Anglo-Americans had begun to seek solidarity and indicating an evolving trust as the nineteenth century progressed, two of the most powerful families from the opposing ethnicities came together when Duncan F. Kenner married into the Bringier family in 1839. Two of the premier families from the Anglo-American and Creole communities respectively joined together in order to strengthen the whole, but Kenner’s wife Nanine continued to speak and write French for the remainder of her life. Because Kenner’s family had lived in Louisiana since before the Louisiana Purchase, it had cultivated the trust of the Bringier family, and Kenner had worked tirelessly to cultivate an understanding and appreciation for Creole society when he mastered traditional French dances and learned to read and write French clearly. He epitomized the graying of the split between the two dichotomous groups and provided a beacon for the coming together of both sides that led Louisiana’s sugarcane society into the Reconstruction period.¹

Furthermore, Louisiana’s sugar planters began to shift their focus from ethnic consciousness to an increasing integration into a collective sugarcane society based on universal methods of slaveholding. Though they continued to exhibit an ethnic awareness, displaying an affinity for their own culture and social circles, the line between Creoles and Anglo-Americans blurred in terms of their practice of slavery. Both communities seemed to coalesce in the grander interest of strengthening slavery, especially for those who engaged in the sugarcane

¹ Virginia R. Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986) provides an exceptional analysis of where this story will lead into the Reconstruction period and beyond as the two communities largely put aside their ethnic differences and focus on their similarity of race.

industry. The ethnic schism began to weaken as the onslaught of Americans overwhelmed the Creole population with their numbers and those Creole planters who remained to face the Americanization of the region necessarily began to engage with their neighbors. As the Anglo-American population asserted its numerical dominance and in the face of rising land prices, Creoles understood that they would have to negotiate this new environment as best they could if they wanted to continue to be a part of it. The alternative to engaging with the Americans would have meant giving up and exiting sugarcane society altogether. By adapting on their own terms, Creoles could maintain their cultural identity while continuing to practice plantation agriculture at a highly successful level. Though the ethnic split began to diminish toward the middle of the nineteenth century, it did not disappear altogether, and the schism remained a stage for criticism and conflict until after the abolition of slavery.

Anglo-Americans and Creoles continued to maintain strong distinctive cultural values that reflected their heritage but necessarily adopted similar strains of management and slavery in order to help bolster the slaveholding regime. Occasionally the ever-present cultural pride and discomfort with the opposing ethnic community led to critiques of that group's slaveholding practice but these forays into dissent often stood on a soft foundation. The treatment of slaves and the ways in which management and overseers practiced slavery continued to demand the attention of ethnic critics who hoped to tear down their counterparts by highlighting the differences that split them apart. For the most part, however, both groups sought to place themselves in a position of strength from which they could dictate the terms of slavery on their individual plantations while asserting the dominance of the white community as a whole.

The treatment of slaves became a flash point for the two ethnic communities as one accused the other of harsh handling of slaves, accusations that likely resulted from a calculated

push for social uplift where one community held themselves up as the primary example of a “good” slave master at a time when slavery experienced increasing pressure from external abolition and anti-slavery forces. Frederick Law Olmsted engaged his buggy driver in conversation between plantations as he toured several sugar estates outside of New Orleans.² The slave, who belonged to an Anglo slaveholder, informed him that “If he had to be sold, he would like best to have an American master buy him...the French masters were very severe and ‘dey whip dar niggers most to deff – dey whip de flesh off of ‘em.’”³ Whether these accusations were more perception or reality might not even matter because the allegations by themselves say much about this tense relationship. Even if allegations prove cloaked falsely in ethnic tension, this indicates a very strong dissonance between the two groups.

Attempting to explore masters’ treatment of their slaves based on the ethnicity of the slaveholder could provide excellent clues about the outlook of the slaveholding class. If no differences separated the two, the idea that the conversation took place between planters of both groups would help to illustrate the complexity of the slaveholding South as a whole while providing clues about how Louisiana sugar planters viewed themselves and their social environment. Both groups sought to become slaveholders and grow their large slave force but the means to that end and the motivations behind their desires provide a rich discourse that muddies the picture of American slavery, further indicating that southern slaveholders often served and acted upon individual motivations rather than the communal uplift of their class as a whole. Not until emancipation and the downfall of slavery did the differences become murkier

² Olmsted, best-known for helping to design Central Park in New York City, also provided a useful narrative of his travels through the American South before the Civil War.

³ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States With Remarks on their Economy* (New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), 680.

as elite whites, no matter their agricultural output, region, or ethnic background united under the banner of white supremacy to oppress and govern the African-American other.

Plantation management provided the leadership and strategy that governed the plantation while the slaveholders' capital drove the success or failure of the operation but the slaves themselves provided the beating heart and influenced the full potential or limitation of any sugar plantation during the antebellum period. Slaves' willingness to work, health, and skill, altered plantation life almost as much as any other factor and their delicate navigation of the slave-master relationship affected the make-up of plantation society directly. Slaves played just as large a role in shaping the decisions and culture of the slaveholding elite as their masters did in effecting cultural change on them in return. The relationship between slaveholders and their slave forces in the sugar parishes of southern Louisiana provides one of the most unique avenues for an investigation of the conflicting relationship between Creoles and their Anglo-American counterparts.

While sugar planters often bought slaves in the markets of New Orleans or Natchez or made purchasing trips to Baltimore, Charleston, or Richmond, a great many of the slaves who inhabited the sugar parishes had come into life locally avoiding the coffles and pens of the antebellum slave market.⁴ According to my own inspection of the records, it appears that Creoles, more often than not, chose to transact business for the purchase of slaves with neighbors or in the slave markets of New Orleans. No records exist that indicate Creoles made trips to Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, or other states to the north and east of Louisiana, but several

⁴ For the best discussions to date on the antebellum slave trade, especially in New Orleans, see Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Wendell Holmes Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1938); Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slavers: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

American planters possessed contacts in older parts of the nation through whom they could augment their slave force. Certainly Americans visited the slave markets of New Orleans regularly, but this remained the primary avenue through which Creoles purchased the slaves that they required.⁵ On the other hand, the Anglo-Americans, who also engaged in these purchases, dealt with slave traders in the East and occasionally made trips personally to buy new slaves to complement their force on the plantation.⁶

The slave markets did not provide the only avenue through which slaveholders could acquire additional labor; the plantation remained a vibrant scene for the circle of life and the American South benefitted from a slave population that largely renewed itself through natural reproduction. Records abound of slave births and deaths on the plantation as management strove to track their slave force with factory-like precision, always making sure to keep an account of labor availability and potential. Slaves on Louisiana's sugar plantations often benefitted from some semblance of family structure though not always the idealistic norm. It may not have always looked like the traditional American nuclear family, but many slaves lived in typical family units and sometimes benefitted from weddings, enjoying marriages blessed by the slaveholder. Unfortunately, the state's legal code failed to recognize and protect the marriage between two African-American slaves (or a slave and anyone else) but the plantation's owner usually chose to do so under the guise of paternalism.⁷

⁵ For instances of Creole purchasing practices, see Hermitage Foundation Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection; Robert Judice Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection; Slavery in Louisiana Collection, Historic New Orleans Collection; Uncle Same Papers, LSU.

⁶ Examples of these transactions for slaves can be found in Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU; Randolph (John H.) Papers; Butler Family Papers, LSU.

⁷ For the best studies of Louisiana legal history as it pertained to slaveholding and slave laws and codes, see Paul Finkelman, *Slavery and the Law* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862* (Baton Rouge:

Additionally, as the antebellum period progressed and American slaveholders came under increasing scrutiny from northern anti-slavery and abolitionist forces, planters used the institution of marriage as an indicator of a more benign form of enslavement and their implementation of paternalism.⁸ But marriage provided a complex dynamic and a complicated arrangement for slaves. Sometimes the slaves themselves chose their partners while in other instances the master placed two of their slaves together in an arrangement that would benefit him or her through either a strong, tight-knit family or for the purposes of hardy, healthy, and diligent offspring.⁹ No matter the slaveholders' inspiration, slave units existed on many of the sugar plantations throughout southern Louisiana and, due to the large plantation units, many slaves lived in small family groupings on the plantations and they capitalized greatly to take advantage of these relationships. The existence of this potential for marriage and the presence of a nuclear family shows the continued triumph of family values in the face of an institution that existed

Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Schafer, *Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994).

⁸ The best discussions of paternalism to date, remain Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Jeffrey Robert Young, *Domesticating Slavery: The Master Class in Georgia and South Carolina, 1670-1837* (Chapel, Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). These books all provide an excellent overview of paternalism and the ways in which slaveholders evolved during the nineteenth century, helping to solidify the institution by the eve of the Civil War.

⁹ For examples of ex-slaves who gave oral accounts of their lives and the experiences of their families in slavery, see Ronnie W. Clayton, *Mother Wit: The Ex-Slave Narratives of the Louisiana Writers' Project* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990). This collection of narratives, published from the original interviews and transcriptions held by Hill Memorial Library at LSU, provides the only published version of the Works' Progress Administration's multi-volume slave narratives that pertain directly to Louisiana. George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* 12 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979) does not include a volume for Louisiana's ex-slave narratives. While the origins of the specific family units remembered in these accounts remain unknown, one can corroborate that the types of nuclear family groups that ex-slaves spoke of did exist by examining many of the manuscript collections. Some of the most useful evidence of nuclear family units appear in Volume 9, Memorandum Book, 1853-1858, Butler Family Papers, LSU; Volume 1, Record Book, 1817-1852, Kleinpeter, Joseph and Family Papers, LSU; Hermitage Foundation Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection; Inventory of Hermitage Plantation, January 23, 1858, Louis A. Bringier Papers, LSU; Volume 17, List of Negroes, 1848-1852, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

primarily to control the movements and actions of an entire population. Despite these obstacles to their freedom, slaves succeeded in using the system itself and the mounting paternalism inherent in southern slavery to ensure that the African-American family endured and thrived when possible.¹⁰

Usually, slave families inhabited one entire cabin by themselves but some planters chose to build double-cabins on their estates where two families lived in the cabin with one on each side of a (usually) central chimney. They shared a porch and many of their activities took place in the common areas that fronted the rows of cabins along the road that most often bisected the slave quarters. In the space behind the cabins, families often maintained a garden space where they raised their own vegetables and cared for chickens, ducks, and/or geese. These supplemental foodstuffs might complement the provisions that the slaveholder provided or they could sell them to the slaveholder and his or her family for them to eat in the big house. Once slaves completed the work on the plantation, they used the rest of their days' remaining hours to work in their own garden or manufacture clothes for themselves in their cabins. Additionally, most slaveholders granted Sundays and portions of most Saturdays to the slaves for them to work independently as they wanted. During harvest season, however, this free time disappeared almost entirely because slaveholders needed every worker in his or her force to complete the harvest as the frost approached.¹¹

¹⁰ For analyses of slave family life, including some studies that give some context for the entire American South, see Jennifer Fleischner, *Mastering Slaver: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Lynn Kennedy, *Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the Old South* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); Damian Alan Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields: Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010); Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Antebellum South* (New York: Norton, 1985).

¹¹ For analyses of year-round activities on Louisiana's sugar plantations, see Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Alton V. Moody, *Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations* (1924; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1976).

Examining the family life of enslaved laborers on Louisiana's sugar plantations provides a unique lens for the examination of how Creoles and Anglo-Americans viewed the world of sugarcane slavery and their position within it because their slaveholding practices. The study of slave families benefits from slaveholders who carefully noted births on their plantation in journals and daily logs. The Homestead Plantation, owned by Reine S. Welham, the widow of William Welham, recorded an inventory of its slaves in December 1860.¹² The recorder listed 127 slaves by name, age, specific job (field hand, cooper, hostler, blacksmith, sugar maker, gardener), and value. After listing all men, women, boys, and girls, the list delineated the 26 family groups on the plantation by listing husband and wife and their children when applicable. All of the family groups lived together on the Welham plantation with the exception of Clemence and Eliza, whose husbands lived at the Caillouet plantation nearby; Phine, whose husband lived at Louis LeBourgeois's nearby Belmont Plantation; and Zoe who had married a free carpenter, named Jean. Clemence, Zoe, and Eliza had four, six, and one child(ren) respectively, all of whom lived with their mothers on the Welham estate. Of the 127 total slaves on the Homestead Plantation, 89 of them occupied some sort of family grouping.¹³ As exhibited by the Welham slaves whose husbands lived on nearby plantations, marriage across neighboring plantation lines commonly answered the needs of both the slaves and their masters.¹⁴

¹² William Welham, born in New York, moved with his family to the Louisiana Territory in 1804 and in 1824 he married Reine Seraphine Theriot, the daughter of a distinguished St. James Creole family. This family helped to symbolize the blending of American and Creole traditions that occurred when a family who had moved to the area during the colonial or territorial period married into a Creole family and together began to exhibit characteristics of both.

¹³ Record of slaves, stock, utensils, etc, found on Homestead Plantation of W. P. Welham, December, 1860, Keller Family Plantation Records, LSU.

¹⁴ For a closer inspection of marriage on plantations, see Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*; Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Dylan C. Penningroth, *The Claims of Kinfolk: African American Property and Community in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

When owners of all parties involved agreed on such an arrangement, these cross-plantation marriages took place with surprising commonality allowing for greater harmony and neighborhood cohesion between plantations. One extraordinary case exhibits one of these unique relationships between slaveholders on behalf of their slaves. In answer to an inquiry sent him about the potential purchase of one of his slaves, Maunsel White replied that he “would do it willingly if I had not made myself a solemn promise never to sell a negro. It is a traffic I have never done, I would rather give them their liberty than sell them.” Apparently, W. H. Scott had requested to purchase one of White’s slaves and her children because Scott owned her husband. White went against his general rule, citing that “I should not like to deprive your Hector of his wife if they love each other...I would let you have her at whatever she was considered to be worth by any two disinterested persons.”¹⁵ These kinds of relationships also highlight the closeness between the narrow-front plantations along the waterways in Louisiana which contained very small frontages, sometimes as narrow as a couple of hundred yards, and the big houses themselves often remained in eyesight of one another. Even though Creoles and Anglo-American planters did not always agree socially, they often had to work together to enforce control due to their geographic proximity to one another

The Joseph Kleinpeter Plantation, near Baton Rouge, logged all births on the plantation, including mother’s name, child’s name, and date of birth. Between 1824 and 1852 Kleinpeter’s slaves gave birth to 90 children, including five sets of twins for an average of 3.1 children born on their estate annually. The journal mentions that several of the children were still-born, one mother died in childbirth along with her baby, and several of the children died hours, days, or months after their birth. Two children died in 1845 and 1846 when their mothers, Rachel and

¹⁵ Maunsel White to H. W. Scott, January 3, 1849, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

Marcier, smothered them weeks after birth.¹⁶ The plantation owned by A. Ledoux, Miltenberger, and Co., recorded all births that occurred on their property as well. The overseer logged 59 slaves on the plantation for the 1856 inventory and four of the fourteen women of child-rearing age gave birth to five children.¹⁷

Waterloo Plantation, the Louisiana capital of the William J. Minor empire, enjoyed 235 births in its slave population during the 25-year period 1834-1858, averaging 9.4 births annually. Waterloo's management also made sure to document the parents' names, children's names, and birthdates for their records. On the other hand, during the same period, Waterloo's slave population suffered 131 deaths - 39 alone during the cholera epidemic of 1851-for an average of 5.24 deaths annually. These numbers resulted in an annual growth of the Waterloo slave population with a 4.16 slaves per year gain through natural reproduction.¹⁸ By contrast, on the Minors' Southdown Plantation in Terrebonne Parish, the slave population experienced a net growth of only 2.84 for the years 1846-1864. The slave population enjoyed 194 births, averaging an addition of 10.2 annually to the slave force but suffered from an average loss higher than Waterloo Plantation with 7.36 deaths each year. The records do not indicate if the plantation suffered specific additional tribulations during the years of the Civil War but the numbers indicate a higher rate of sickness during wartime. Southdown Plantation suffered an average death rate of 12.25 during the four years of the war, compared to 9.66 in the years

¹⁶ While records indicate that some mothers occasionally smothered their children on purpose to prevent them from growing up in bondage, studies indicate that smothering and other causes of death (suffocating or overlaying) actually resulted from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. For an in-depth study of this question, consult Todd Lee Savitt, *Medicine and Slavery: The Diseases and Health Care of Blacks in Antebellum Virginia* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

¹⁷ Overseer's record of births and deaths for 1856, A. Ledoux and Company Record Book, 1856-1857, Ledoux (A. and Company) Record Book, LSU.

¹⁸ Volume 17, Lists of Negroes, 1848-1852, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

preceding the war, a much lower rate which compares more favorably to that of Waterloo Plantation along the Mississippi River.¹⁹ Most certainly the slaves suffered along with their white counterparts as transportation became less reliable and money became scarcer, making it difficult to procure the necessary provisions, including foodstuffs and medicines that the population, both white and black, required during the course of the war.²⁰

While the Minors and Kleinpeters noted the births in a list format, usually at the back of their plantation record books, others like Alexander Pugh and Elu Landry mentioned the births daily as they occurred in their very detailed and personal plantation logs. Pugh recorded once that “Ellen gave birth to a female child, between 11 and 12 M. It weight 9 lbs clear of clothing. It is fat and Strong – Mother doing well,” and on another occasion “Madiste gave birth to a male child today.”²¹ Likewise, Landry made a note one morning that he had a new “female child born of the girl Nancy.”²² Clearly the births of new slave children meant a return on the investment for the slaveholder and the further continuation of a thriving, reproductive labor force, but one should not discount completely that some planters probably felt some semblance of compassion and, even though they denied their charges the freedom of movement and many of their daily choices, they also frequently exhibited a counter-intuitive understanding of their humanity. In one of the vital historical ironies of American slavery, the success of the southern institution relied largely on a simultaneous recognition of a slave’s humanity in order for slaveholders to prohibit and/or control the labor of the individual by denying the very freedom that they

¹⁹ Volume 18, List of Births and Deaths, 1846-1865, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

²⁰ The Creole records make it difficult to compare directly the birth and death rates with Anglo-American estates due to the style of record-keeping. Most Creole records appear in list form with name, age, and value, and are not completed annually.

²¹ Pugh Plantation Diary, 1859-1865 (vol. 2), September 5, 1859 and September 30, 1860, Pugh (A. Franklin) Papers, LSU.

²² Landry, Elu. Estate Record Book, LSU.

recognized. For paternalism to function properly, a white slaveholder needed to understand that his or her labor force possessed and exhibited the same human emotions that they themselves sought. To reward a slave by allowing marriage, a family, or holiday time, the slaveholder must have understood the desires inherent in their slave forces. The records largely reflect that complicated relationship between master and slave on the sugar plantations of southern Louisiana. The records also provide a possible distinction between Creoles and Anglo-Americans. Examining the manuscript collections shows a wealth of information regarding the births and deaths on Anglo-American plantations while the Creoles typically mention these events only in passing, if at all. The Anglo planters seem to have exhibited a greater tendency to measure their slave force in order to maintain a constant awareness of their slave families' developments. The Creoles, on the other hand, included the information regarding births and deaths into their journals but did not formulate official inventories or lists of their force as often as their Anglo neighbors did.²³

“I had an addition to my black family on the evening of the day your child was born, Polly being delivered of a son,” John Palfrey wrote his son, William.²⁴ Slaveholders commonly referred to their slave force as the “black family” or “family,” serving to justify the institution both in their own minds and to the mounting anti-slavery forces around them while illustrating the complexity of the slave system and exhibiting a sense of their grasp on the slaves' humanity. Four years prior to the news of the birth in his “black family,” Palfrey had written to his son that he had received word of a bout of sickness nearby during which one of his neighbors “lost two

²³ To see examples of Creoles' list-style of inventory, consult Louis A. Bringier Papers, LSU; De Clouet (Alexandre E.) and Family Papers, LSU; Hermitage Foundation Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection; Landry, Elu Estate Record Book, LSU; Uncle Sam Plantation Papers, LSU.

²⁴ John Palfrey to William Palfrey, September 4, 1837, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

more of his family whither black or white, young or old I could not learn.”²⁵ Thomas Butler made sure to differentiate between his white and black families when he paid \$105 in medical expenses to Whitman Wilcox for tending to his “white family.”²⁶ In celebration of New Year’s Day, often the largest celebration on the plantation, Duncan Kenner’s wife “distribut[ed] new Years gifts to the servants, people have holiday.”²⁷ Planters frequently allowed their laborers to celebrate this holiday season with dancing, music, and gifts in recognition of the end of rolling season. Samuel Leigh, the overseer for Ledoux, Miltenberger, and Co., also celebrated the new year in similar fashion when the overseer gave “the hands holiday killed a beef and prepared for a feast on the first of January which day the hands have. Gave them three drams through the day,” and they invited Mr. Ledoux to the festivities the next day.²⁸

For many Louisiana’s New Year’s Day remained a special time of the year. One traveler remarked sadly that he “made inquiries after the Christmas dances and festivities of the negro slaves, of which I heard so much, but the sugar-harvest was late last year, and the sugar-grinding was not over till after New-year’s day.”²⁹ He would have found himself hard-pressed to find any grand Christmas festivities on a Creole plantation because New Year’s Day remained the most important and favored celebration of the holiday season, especially among the Creole population who preferred a more reserved, respectful observance of Christmas to the outpouring of excitement and hospitality that they displayed on New Year’s. Eliza Ripley remembered fondly

²⁵ John Palfrey to William Palfrey, July 16, 1833, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

²⁶ Doctor Bill for the Services of Whitman Wilcox for the year 1857, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

²⁷ Roseland Plantation Diary for 1856, Kenner, Duncan F. Papers, LSU.

²⁸ A. Ledoux and Company Record Book, 1856-1857, Ledoux (A. and Company) Record Book, LSU.

²⁹ Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World: Impressions of America* 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), 2:249.

how New Year's Day festivities had played such an integral part in the social scene for Louisiana's Creoles when "everybody who was anybody was out of town, at country mansions to flourish with the rich, or to the old homesteads to see their folks."³⁰ Lamenting that the Reconstruction period looked so different from her antebellum experiences, she recalled that "in the forties and for years thereafter, New Year's Day was the visiting day for men, and the receiving day for the ladies." There were no flower decorations because they did not grow during that time of year, but Ripley described the "little *cornets* of bon-bons and *dragées* [that] were carelessly scattered about. Those cornucopias, very slim and pointed, containing only a spoonful of French confections, were made of stiff, shiny paper, gaudily colored miniatures of impossible French damsels ornamenting them."³¹ After the war, New Year's Day festivities fell by the wayside, as Ripley indicates, a symbol that the cultural traditions that split Creoles and Anglo-Americans apart became increasingly muddled as all white Louisianans turned their attention away from ethnicity and focused squarely on race.

Despite the fact that slaveholders and overseers occasionally treated their slaves with careful attention, respect, and consideration, the overarching inhumanity of slavery and the prohibition of basic personal freedoms encouraged slaves to resist the institution both on the plantation and off of it. Slaves often made conscious decisions, claiming their own independence and freedom of choice (even if only temporarily), as was often the case for slaves on Louisiana's sugar plantations, by resisting their overseer's tasks, breaking tools, working slowly, running away from the plantation, or through a myriad of other methods. A slave's ability to make these choices to resist despite the overwhelming obstacles that befell him or her

³⁰ Ripley, 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 51-52. *Dragées* refer to any confectionary creation with a hard outer shell coating, including modern-day M&M's.

as a result of the hardening of white southern society indicated a vaunted assertion of self-awareness in the face of calculated oppression. “The paternalistic model offers an apt theory of plantation management,” writes Stephanie Camp, but this viewpoint offers “an incomplete perspective on plantation, and particularly black, life.”³² The paternalistic model, as introduced by Eugene Genovese, highlights a complicated relationship between master and slave wherein both parties formed a largely co-dependent relationship.³³ The planters’ records show that they felt they had to present themselves as a paternal figure to their slave force but this created significant space for the slaves to manipulate the relationship while carving out their own world on the plantation. Camp, rightfully, wants to explore the assertion of rights by the enslaved community on the plantation and the ways in which men, women, and children formulated their own culture under the supervision-and sometimes beyond-of their masters. By examining the underlying characteristics of resistance in Louisiana’s sugar parishes, one might gain a clearer understanding of why they chose to resist while exploring some discernible differences in the experiences of slaves owned by Creoles versus their American counterparts. This approach helps to provide proof that white sugar planters sometimes possessed conflicting viewpoints of the slave regime and the best methods for slave management even while they continued to engage in the sugarcane industry in the same geographic region.

Maroon camps, one of the most unique characteristics that helped Louisiana’s experience with slavery to stand out, helped to provide slaves with a method for escaping and surviving in

³² Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women & Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5.

³³ See Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 3-7 where the author lays out his characterization of paternalism that he will detail throughout his work.

the harsh uninhabited swamps of the state's southern parishes.³⁴ These underground camps gave slaves respite from the daily toils of the plantation and sheltered runaway slaves in a communal environment but this arrangement typically served only as a temporary forum for resistance.³⁵ Oftentimes, slaves fled the plantations to remove themselves from the work force, thus claiming control over their own bodies but, after a period of time spent away from the plantation, they returned to face their designated punishment or the welcome of the masters who simply wanted them to return so that they could benefit from their contribution. Very few pockets where slaves could make these choices and where maroon camps could thrive outside of the day-to-day direct influence of white society existed in the American South. Maroon camps helped to make slavery in Louisiana's sugar country truly unique and traced, in large part, to the islands of the West Indies where these settlements in places like Jamaica and St. Domingue grew so large that they possessed political power and negotiated treaties with the white minority.³⁶ Louisiana's maroon camps typically formed in the swampy, isolated areas behind the plantations, away from the main rivers but some evidence of camps along the shores of Lake Ponchartrain exist. While never achieving the numbers or levels of success of their Caribbean counterparts, Louisiana's

³⁴ Maroon camps, which ascended to special prominence in the Caribbean, only developed in the swamps of eastern North Carolina and southern Georgia in addition to the southern portion of Louisiana and largely died out as the antebellum period progressed.

³⁵ For several examples of maroon and clandestine runaway activity, see the discussion of this topic pertaining to Louisiana, see John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 88-94. Unfortunately, they do not go into greater detail about the location, size, or long-term histories of these camps; they merely reference them in relation to their vignettes.

³⁶ For useful studies of maroon communities see Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration, and Betrayal* (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988); Silvia W. de Groot, Catherine A. Christen, and Franklin W. Knight, "Maroon Communities in the Circum-Caribbean," in *The Slave Societies of the Caribbean*, ed. Franklin W. Knight (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1997); Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973); Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2006).

maroon communities still contributed significantly to the culture of resistance in Louisiana and allowed for an underground network that slaves and runaway slaves used to their advantage.

From the early territorial period, maroons in Louisiana challenged Governor William Charles Claiborne's ability to govern the region and progress quickly toward statehood. With few soldiers at their disposal, local American officials often relied on impromptu patrols or militia excursions to weaken the maroon camps. Claiborne never possessed the strength and opportunity to concentrate his military to mount a formidable assault on the maroon camps and the bulk of his correspondence focuses on other matters, not generally addressing the maroons directly in his policies.³⁷ The diverse challenges facing the governor prevented him from concentrating the military power he possessed against one point for too long. Richard Price, recounted a story that appeared in the New York *Evening Post* in "November 1827 [concerning] a Negro woman [who] returned to her master in New Orleans after an absence of sixteen years. She told of a maroon settlement some eight miles north of the city containing about sixty people."³⁸ Coincidentally this woman had been absent from her master since 1811, the year of the rebellion in St. John the Baptist Parish. Octave Johnson, a former slave who eventually joined the 99th U.S. Colored Troops in 1863 gave an account of his experiences as a runaway. Trained as a cooper, Johnson worked on a plantation owned by a Mr. Contrelle in St. James Parish and "one morning the bell was rung for me to go to work so early that I could not see, and I lay still, because I was working by task."³⁹ The overseer chose to have him whipped for his

³⁷ Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801-1816* 4 vols. (Jackson: Mississippi State Department of Archives and History).

³⁸ Richard Price references this newspaper article in Richard Price, *Maroon Societies*, 151.

³⁹ The Contrelle family owned Cabahancoe Plantation, which they established when Jacques Contrelle moved to St. James Parish from outside of Natchez, Mississippi following his wife's death in the 1729 Natchez Uprising at Fort Rosalie. Jacques Contrelle and his son, Michel, both served as commandants of the region during the period of Spanish control.

disobedience “and I ran away to the woods, where I remained for a year and a half, I had to steal my food, took turkeys, and pigs; before I left our number had increased to thirty, of whom ten were women; we were four miles in the rear of the plantation house.” He successfully evaded Eugene Jardean, the master of hounds, who gave up after three months and Johnson survived in the wilderness for a length of time, joining the group of runaways. They stayed hidden because they traded with local slaves who knew their whereabouts; the maroons supplied them with beef and other finer foods in exchange for matches, corn meal and-most importantly-silence.⁴⁰

The daughter of prominent planter, John H. Randolph, gave an account of a runaway camp nearby their Nottoway Plantation below Baton Rouge. When a party of slave catchers, led by the local sheriff and their French guide ventured into the swamps, she writes that “there came into view a long, low shack composed of poles resting in the forks of stakes driven in the ground, covered and walled with reeds cut from the small open space about the shack.” When the party entered the clearing they observed “a powerful black and two smaller negroes,” who upon seeing the group “went crashing through the canebrake,” with the family’s dog, Queen, chasing after them. They did not escape far before their captors and the dog helped to commandeer them, tying them up. Upon further investigation of the site, they found skillets, pots, foodstuffs, and a cache of watches and jewelry before they set fire to the site so that future runaways would not have access. The large slave that they found fit the description of one of Randolph’s runaways and they soon returned him to Nottoway Plantation. The slave, whose name was Juda stood accused of robbery and burning a nearby sugar house during his absence, however, and

⁴⁰ John W. Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 394-395.

Randolph consented to his transfer to the state to await trial. Before his trial the Union army liberated the prison in Baton Rouge and freed Juda who promptly joined the army.⁴¹

For decades, historians of slavery often under-represented the role of running away or other forms of passive resistance for slaves who sought to oppose the white-dominated slave regime.⁴² Many scholars initially believed that open rebellions like those led by Nat Turner and Charles Deslondes provided the only modes of resistance for an otherwise-happy slave population in the American South and their negligible numbers after 1830 indicated a general acceptance of slavery. The small sample of open rebellion, even when stretched to encompass those slaves who struck, murdered, or fought back against their owner, does very little truly to explain the role of power and resistance within a slave society. Recently, however, scholarship has moderated this discussion, exploring other forms of resistance that previous scholars dismissed or overlooked.⁴³ Without over-stating the existence of slave agency in the sugar region of Louisiana, one can still take more seriously the concept of passive forms of resistance and the contribution that they played in shaping the interactions between white and black.

Discounting passive resistance discredits the lengths to which slaves strove to achieve even the

⁴¹ M. R. Ailenroc, *The White Castle of Louisiana* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton & Company, 1903), 44. The full story is the subject of Chapter Six: "The Runaway Camp."

⁴² For the first study to take a deep, serious look at slave resistance, see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1963). This study countered some of the earliest foundation-building scholarship that propped up the despondent slave as either happy with his or her situation or duped into believe that they lived in a benign relationship with the slaveholder, possessing no ability to make free choices whatsoever. To understand this early school of thought, consult Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (New York: The Universal Library, 1959); Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966); Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956).

⁴³ To consult some of the best recent scholarship about diverse forms of resistance to plantation management, consult Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and the Making of America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

smallest inkling of freedom in such an oppressive labor system and also ignores the historical record which slaveholders have left for scholars to examine in order to explore their almost constant fears of runaways, disgruntled slaves, or even the less harmful forms of resistance such as stealing provisions, speaking against the master, or working slowly.

Truthfully, slaveholders, both Creole and Anglo-American, battled incessantly with the concern that their slaves would flee the plantation and each individual slaveholder, along with their overseers, had to devise the most effective form of control on their own plantations. Additionally, slaveholders worked to understand the desires and motivations of their slaves in order to combat these worries. "I do not think they would at any time answer as laborers to depend on to make a crop, several of them have been brought to Attakapas within a month or two past," wrote James Palfrey about a recent shipment of slaves to the Anglo-American-dominated Attakapas region. "They are very apt to run away, besides being natives of a northern climate they would not be able to stand the heat of a vertical sun and I should from motives of humanity be unwilling to expose them to it."⁴⁴ The concern over slaves running away became so important for slaveholders that Creoles and Anglo-American Louisianans together implemented a policy when buying and selling slaves whereby the seller had to guarantee that the slave traded in the transaction had no history of running away.⁴⁵ Buyers wanted to make absolutely sure that they had made a sound investment and would not have to worry about the behavior of their charges. The practice of verification became especially important because many slaveholders decided to sell their slaves for that exact reason, hoping they could achieve a rapid return on their investment before the slave absconded again.

⁴⁴ James Palfrey to unspecified son, April 1, 1818, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

⁴⁵ Franklin and Schweningen, 151.

Often the slaves in Louisiana who resisted by running away from the plantation only sought to claim control over their own bodies, asserting themselves through the symbolic independence of their absence from the plantation. By removing himself or herself from the plantation complex, a slave took control over his or her own actions even if only for a brief period of time. The manager of the plantation owned and operated by Ledoux, Miltenberger, and Co., reported that Maria had fled “because I give her a light flogging just enough to make her mad.”⁴⁶ Running away offered slaves the opportunity to protest the treatment on the plantation, even if only briefly. The runaway habits of slaves on local estates highlighted one of the harshest elements of Louisiana plantation slavery, specifically in the sugar parishes. The geography of the region challenged slaves because it prohibited them from travelling long distances without extreme exertion, and the distance that runaways had to travel in order to attain freedom in the North usually exceeded the willingness of slaves, preventing them from attempting this journey.⁴⁷

Most slaves who ran away from sugar plantations in Louisiana fled to the woods or swamps near the plantation, often in the back of the estates in the heavily timbered areas away from the Mississippi River. In this case, the geography of Louisiana aided those slaves who wished to claim a brief respite from the difficult tasks on the plantation. The swampy hinterlands of the southern parishes provided adequate cover for runaway slaves who either felt that their master had treated them harshly or sought the brief respite of independence from the

⁴⁶ November 14, 1856, A. Ledoux and Company Record Book, 1856-1857, Ledoux (A. and Company) Record Book, LSU.

⁴⁷ For examples of runaway stories, not limited to Louisiana, see Devon Carbado and Donald Weise, *The Long Walk to Freedom: Runaway Slave Narratives* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2012); William Dusinger, *Slavemaster President: The Double Career of James Polk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Hope Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*; Steven Lubet, *Fugitive Justice: Runaways, Rescuers, and Slavery on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Sydney Nathans, *To Free a Family: The Journey of Mary Walker* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

daily tribulations of the grueling plantation cycle. Many instances litter the plantation records of slaveholders or their managers who mentioned slaves that ran away only to return several days later. Oftentimes, slaves left a plantation and spent several days (or even weeks) on their own or with a group of slaves in the wilderness before returning to the plantation to face the potential punishment that awaited them there.

On January 4, 1850, the “boy Samuel absent supposed to have run away,” wrote Elu Landry in his plantation journal and he remained missing until “the boy Sam run away on the night of the 4th inst had returned on Monday morning,” ten days later.⁴⁸ One of Duncan Kenner’s slaves left the plantation for an exceptionally long time. The diary entry for August 25, 1848, reported that Dorten had returned after having remained away from the plantation since April 3, a period of four months and 23 days.⁴⁹ More typically, runaways who intended to return to the plantation left for no more than a week’s time. While in the midst of the coming civil war, Alexander Pugh reported that his slave, Jerry, “came in about dark,” returning after having left the plantation the previous day. Shortly thereafter, Pugh expressed privately his interest in a vigilance committee that would serve Assumption Parish. He felt this group would have a “very happy effect on the Negro population of the neighborhood,” because David Pugh expressed his belief that “the Negroes have got it into their heads they are going to be free on the 4th of March. I proposed a patrol for a month or so and I think we will have one.”⁵⁰ Alexander Pugh hoped that they could achieve something quickly because several slaves had absconded from his plantations. On another occasion, during the Civil War, Pugh wrote “Negro man Henry ran

⁴⁸ Landry, Elu Estate Record Book, LSU.

⁴⁹ Diary, 1848, Kenner, Duncan F. Papers, LSU.

⁵⁰ Pugh Plantation Diary, 1859-1865 (vol. 2), Pugh (A. Franklin) Papers, LSU.

away today from the Boatner Plantation. [But] I think he will come in.”⁵¹ Once the war began, the intricacy and the unknown outcome of the war led Louisiana’s slaveholders into an indefinite future but it also meant that slaves had new avenues for challenging the slave system if they chose to do so. Slaves often feared the unknown just as much as their masters, uncertain of what lay ahead and having to interpret this difficult time as best they could before making their choices. While one might assume that the Civil War increased the likelihood that a slave would flee, it often had the exact opposite effect, as noted by Charles Joyner and Stephanie McCurry who both argued that slaves had to negotiate their course carefully, not knowing if they could trust the Union armies marching through their area any more than they could their slave masters.⁵² Further discussion of these complicated details will help to inform our discussion of Louisiana’s sugar planters and the Civil War in the next chapter.

Slaves who chose to run away faced extensive obstacles as they sought to survive in the wilderness of southern Louisiana. Slave catchers, the efforts of their masters, and the harsh climate all threatened their survival if they could not tap into a support network, like a maroon community, which became increasingly rare as the antebellum period progressed and the white regime solidified to help enforce the bonds of slavery. “Anderson ran away yesterday morning in consequence of some insolence to Mr. Vinson for which he expected a whipping and the search has been and is now making for him he is not yet found,” wrote John Palfrey in July 1833, who worried about Anderson’s health during this absence. Palfrey continued, “he may eat green

⁵¹ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), July 9, 1861, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU. Alexander Pugh owned or managed several plantations in his neighborhood including Boatner Plantation which he mentions here.

⁵² Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) both talk about the complexity of the Civil War years when slaves had to determine where their best interests lay; at times, the idea of freedom created a bigger threat than remaining enslaved on the plantation until the war’s end.

corn, melons, etc whenever they may find them, which will be sure to make him sick and if not taken in time may operate fatally,” a fear especially threatening due to Anderson’s sickness in June when Palfrey called a local physician to tend to him barely one month prior to his flight. “As this letter will not be sent until tomorrow, I hope before I close it to be able to announce his return,” Palfrey hoped. His estimation, and the earlier fears that he had expressed about Anderson’s diet, came to fruition when Anderson returned the next day. “Anderson was brought in a little after dark last night by Sam, [but] he had been eating green corn as I expected and also a quantity of peaches.” Palfrey administered “a small whipping; he richly deserved a severe one but I did not like to do it in these times.” He also gave the returning slave a large dose of oil which he hoped would cleanse Anderson’s digestive tract and reported happily the next day that “he appears to be quite well this morning and willing to go to work.”⁵³ As previously indicated, this same Anderson became the center of discussion surrounding Palfrey’s overseer Mr. Vinson during the winter months of 1833 when Palfrey dismissed him for excessive punishment after he had beaten Anderson severely. The records do not indicate if the dismissal of Mr. Vinson altered Anderson’s behavior definitively but no specific mention of him one way or another occurs after this episode.

Why would any slave make the choice to run away only to return to the plantation complex and the white regime of total control? Louisiana’s geography limited the options available to slaves who sought to flee northward toward a chance for freedom. Slaveholders in the Upper South, in states like Virginia, Kentucky, or Missouri faced greater difficulties because runaways from these states had a higher hope of actually achieving freedom once they had crossed over into the northern states. In the heart of the Deep South, Louisiana’s slaves lacked

⁵³ John Palfrey to William Palfrey, July 16-17, 1833, Palfrey Family Papers, LSU.

this hope and it often deflated their chances of obtaining freedom for those who sought it. Also, the paternalist nature of slavery by which slaveholders often granted their labor force the freedom to marry one another and raise a family contributed two-fold to slave control. It helped to increase the potential for happiness and satisfaction of a slave force who desired a traditional nuclear family while simultaneously binding them to the plantation. As children faced even greater difficulties when attempting to run away, they typically remained behind out of necessity and made it difficult for their parents to make the choice to chance freedom when they knew they had to leave their children behind to face the plantation regime alone or succumb to punishment for their parents' choice to take flight. This clever system that slaveholders implemented often kept parents from fleeing the plantation altogether and aided in limiting the number of permanent runaways.

In the previous example, John Palfrey chose to whip Anderson lightly given the circumstances of his health, considering his violently upset stomach adequate punishment and a lingering reminder of the obstacles to flight. Individual slaveholders doled out their own judgment as they sought fit for behavior that they deemed inappropriate on the plantation. No matter what motives the runaway slaves possessed, if they failed in their attempt to flee slavery or returned on their own accord, they had to face the wrath (and on the rarest of occasions, the welcome) of their owner upon their return. Thomas Butler expressed that one of his slaves, Ned, "is usually a quiet well disposed negro and may possible have been put forward by some of the others. As he had escaped punishment for running away when I discharged the late overseer I thought it best to punish him which I did pretty severely." He informed his slaves "that the overseer would require nothing unreasonable from them and that they must submit to his authority." He remained uncertain over the effectiveness of the new overseer and considered it

best to encourage his son, Pierce, “to ride down occasionally until Mr. Cowgill is fairly established in authority.”⁵⁴ Butler considered the management and punishment of the slave force to be of utmost importance to the success of his venture and his endeavors to achieve a delicate balance between whipping his charges for their uncertainty and apparent malfeasance and persuading his slaves that they would receive good care under the new overseer illustrate the challenges of slave ownership.

While slaves removed themselves from the plantation complex, denying their master his or her labor for a brief period of time, the slaveholder often accrued expenses for the recovery of the runaway. Usually any slave that local authorities found off of a plantation who did not have the proper identification or papers explaining their presence in the neighborhood or the reason they that travelled unaccompanied by a white person faced the threat of jail time. While they spent time behind bars, the local parish sheriff attempted to track down the slave’s owner so that they could return him or her and they charged the slaveholder for the time and expenses garnered by the jail sentence while the authorities sought the true owner. While the rest of the state entered into a heated debate about secession and civil war, James Bowman faced a bill of \$3.25 for 1 day’s time that his slave spent in jail and the delivery of said slave to the plantation.⁵⁵ Likewise, W. W. Wilkins paid P. M. Caffrey \$40 for the delivery of a runaway slave boy named Gobe, including \$7.00 for the jail fees that he had paid on his behalf.⁵⁶ The Butler family paid \$9.40 for the arrest of a runaway slave while John Randolph paid \$21.45, including arresting, justice fees, constable fee, turnkey fee, mileage, and the 22-day period spent in achieving the

⁵⁴ Thomas Butler to Anna Butler, July 22, 1842, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

⁵⁵ Bill for Jail Fees to James Bowman, January 20, 1860, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

⁵⁶ Receipt for fees paid to P. M. Caffrey by W. W. Wilkins, April 6, 1849, Bruce, Seddon, and Wilkins Papers, LSU.

return of his slave, Amy.⁵⁷ Masters spent a great deal of money for the return of their slaves when they did not return immediately but this expense fell far short of the money and investment they would lose if their slave failed to return at all. In this sense, runaways and the expenses to reclaim them challenged both Creoles and Anglo-Americans equally, forcing them to work together to strengthen the institution.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of slavery, especially in the sugar parishes of Louisiana, displayed itself in differing forms of economic networks, both public and underground in which the slaves partook. Across the American South, slaveholders employed a degree of economic autonomy that helped to strengthen the relationship between the labor force and plantation management, creating an elevated level of independence. They then adapted this form of economics during the Reconstruction period to attach emancipated African Americans to the plantation complex in a form of enslavement despite their recent freedom and the prohibition of slavery.⁵⁸ This economic model that whites put in place after the Civil War evolved out of a schematic that they practiced during the antebellum period. Additionally, this form of dependence that slaveholders used to tie their slaves to the plantation encouraged an increased work ethic and self-importance under the paternalist model. When masters allowed (sometimes forced) slaves to operate independently to produce goods on the plantation they gave their laborers a sense of accomplishment, goals, and encouraged them to work quickly on the tasks that the master or overseer required of them so that they could spend any remaining free time

⁵⁷ Undated Receipt for fees accrued in recovering a slave boy, Butler Family Papers, LSU; Bill for Sheriff Fees, July 11, 1860, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁵⁸ For an further studies of freed men and women following emancipation, see Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*; Michael Perman, *Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2003); *Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

seeing to their own personal production. Finally, when the slaves worked to produce their own foodstuffs to help supplement what the slaveholder provided them, it relieved some of the responsibility that the slave owner had to his or her slave force in terms of providing them with an adequate level of food in order to ensure their health and happiness. This system looked especially unique in the sugar parishes because it countered the labor intensive sugarcane, and the geography of Louisiana meant that slaves could use the waterways to access additional markets. The slave economies that developed in the sugar region and the ways that slaveholders supplied their force with clothing, food, or other goods did not differ between Creoles and Anglo-Americans. No ethnic distinctions distinguished the two groups from one another because they all had to function within the same institution and provide their slaves with the basic goods that they needed as they saw fit. While some characteristics of slavery differentiated the two communities (use of overseers, purchasing patterns, marketing of goods, and implementation of internal improvements for plantation efficiency), many of the institutional elements remained the same whether one lived on a Creole plantation or an Anglo-American plantation. Necessity drove the similarities in these instances because all slaves required food, shelter, and clothing in order to work efficiently and maintain their wellbeing. But to understand better the differences when they did exist and the society in which both groups participated, one must possess an understanding of some of these elements even where no dissimilarities existed.

Many slaveholders made trade networks and production of certain commodities open to their slave force on the plantation.⁵⁹ When slaves manufactured their own clothing from fabrics

⁵⁹ The absolute best study of slave commerce and its relationship to the planting class remains Roderick A. McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). McDonald has mined the manuscript collections of several archives to uncover both the slaves' ability to wrest control commercial network from their masters and the slaveholders' reciprocal willingness to accommodate their slaves in this networks by give them the time and providing the tools that they required to complete their extra chores for production.

that the management purchased from mills or grew and hunted for many of the foods that they needed, the masters' investments diminished greatly.⁶⁰ For this reason, the records indicate that the slaveholders often purchased the materials and fabrics that their slaves would require to make many of the clothing items on the plantation directly. Joseph Erwin and his descendents often purchased bales of raw cotton or linsey for their slaves' use on the plantation that eventually became St. Louis Plantation.⁶¹ The Bringier family spent \$1,350 on supplies that they needed to manufacture some of the clothing items that they needed late in 1852 but, like other planters, they purchased some of the more complex clothing items including "flannel shirts for men and boys, pants, oil hats, and jackets for men and boys."⁶² Likewise, John Randolph sent several payments to clothing stores and manufacturers, but occasionally bought the raw materials with which his slaves could make their own clothing. In January 1850 he paid \$47.90 for "1 bale of negro cotton," and two more bales in 1853 for \$109.50.⁶³ Lewis Stirling made numerous purchases of Woodville Factory in Woodville, Mississippi for his cotton and sugar plantations across the Felicianas. In 1854 he purchased 1,086 yards of Lowells; 199 yards of other fabrics

⁶⁰ Archaeological evidence has indicated that sugar planters encouraged their slaves to supplement their diets by hunting and fishing nearby. The examination of findings at Ashland Plantation's archaeological dig turned up the bones of many wild animals, including raccoon, possum, rabbit, wild birds, and several different kinds of fish like drum, gar, catfish, mackerel, and sunfish. Those conducting the dig found evidence of these remains in the two cabins that they inspected. For an in-depth analysis of the findings, see Jill-Karen Yakubik, *Beyond the Great House: Archaeology at Ashland-Belle Helene Plantation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism, 1992), 22.

⁶¹ Many instances of raw material purchase occur throughout Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU. Linsey refers to a coarse-woven twill and planters often purchased this material due to its durability for clothing on the plantation.

⁶² Martin Gordon to Benjamin Tureaud, December 30, 1852, Tureaud Family Papers, LSU.

⁶³ Expense Book, 1847-1853, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

and sewing supplies for \$134.98.⁶⁴ The Stirlings continued to deal business with this manufacturer because two years later the proprietor wrote from Woodville that “owing to the high price of cotton together with the present upward tendency of the market we are compelled to sell higher than we did last year,” and requested that Stirling make a payment on his current account which stood at \$280.97. He also informed him that they “have now on hand a very ample supply of Asnaburgs jeans and Linsey and would be pleased to furnish yourself...with your supply for this year.”⁶⁵

Often due to time constraints and in order to enable maximum efficiency on the plantation, many sugar planters simply chose to purchase pre-manufactured clothing items for their slaves which they typically distributed twice a year, in the spring and fall. The estate of Samuel Fagot, which accrued large expenses on items of clothing for both the black and white residents, chose pre-manufactured items when they ordered three dozen flannel shirts from a clothier in New Orleans for \$49.50. This smaller purchase came on the heels of a much larger one at the end of October, likely when Samuel Fagot’s descendents who operated his Constancia Plantation put in their order for winter clothing. They spent \$481.47 for pants, coats, and shirts.⁶⁶ The next winter, Fagot’s estate purchased 75 “log cabin pants” for \$87.00 from Hebrard and Co., a steam-powered clothing manufacturer on Canal Street. John Randolph conducted business with the same manufacturer, paying a total of \$1,321.03 for five annual orders 1857-

⁶⁴ Invoice for goods purchased by Lewis Stirling from Woodville Factory, December 30, 1854, Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU. The term “lowells” often referred to several kinds of clothing, including cotton and linsey.

⁶⁵ From Woodville Factory to Lewis Stirling, January 6, 1856, Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁶⁶ Invoice for items purchased by Estate of Samuel Fagot from F. Malard, November 11, 1858, Uncle Sam Papers, LSU; Invoice for items purchased by Estate of Samuel Fagot from F. Malard, October 28, 1858, Uncle Sam Papers, LSU.

1861.⁶⁷ When it came to shoes, however, the slaves almost always purchased factory-made goods from various cobblers or shoe manufactories across the South. Purchases for shoes, especially those that contemporaries called “russet brogans” litter the records, and often comprised the greatest percentage of total expenses for any sugar planter who understood the importance of sound foot protection for their work forces.⁶⁸

Perhaps one of the greatest of the slaves’ contributions to the overall success and health of the plantation took place behind the slave quarters where slaves possessed plots of land on which they raised vegetables, chickens, ducks, and/or geese. These small spaces, almost the complete responsibility of the individual slaves, provided significant sustenance to help supplement the items that slaveholders provided. Slave men and women, with the help of their children, raised the same crops that white yeoman farmers grew on their farms across the American South, including pumpkins, beans, potatoes, and many other important vegetables that helped to provide a great deal of nutritional value.⁶⁹ When slaves grew their own crops or raised fowl, they could use their produce to achieve a more favorable diet that would help to add diversity while making them healthier and hardier in the process. Likewise, the slaveholders needed assistance in supplementing the diet of the masters’ families. While they purchased

⁶⁷ Expense Book, 1853-1863, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁶⁸ Numerous purchase invoices for shoes appear in the following but are not limited to: Louis A. Bringier and Family Papers, LSU; Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU; Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU; Stirling (Lewis and Family) Papers, LSU; Uncle Sam Plantation Papers, LSU.

⁶⁹ Researchers can access many references of slaves’ activity that relates to the production of additional foodstuffs, including pumpkins and corn for personal consumption. For some examples of these, see Valcour Aime, *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime, Formerly Proprietor of the Plantation Known as St. James Sugary Refinery, Situated in the Parish of St. James, and Now Owned by Mr. John Burnside* (New Orleans: Clark and Hofeline, 1878); Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers; Minor (William J. and Family) Papers; Randolph (John H.) Papers. All of these collections contain references to purchases that the planters made to provide their slaves with the necessary seed or indicate that the plantation management gave their laborers time with which to work their garden plots.

many luxury items like cigars, wine, brandy etc. for the higher standard of living that they boasted, the white slaveholding element of society still demanded some of the basic necessities like vegetables or additional proteins.⁷⁰ Oftentimes, the slaveholders purchased goods from the slaves who produced them. Slave production bound laborers to the land of the plantation and encouraged production; outside of the harvest season, when the laborers completed their tasks for management early, they could typically use the remainder of their day to tend to their own business. The money that they earned from these products often passed right back to plantation management when slaves purchased “luxury” items. Governor Roman’s slaves on Bon Sejour, for example, raised “domestic birds of all kinds, and sell eggs and poultry to their masters. The money is spent in purchasing tobacco, molasses, clothes, and flour.”⁷¹ In the rarest of occasions, slaves could accrue funds over a length of time to purchase their freedom or that of their family members on other plantations in the neighborhood if both parties could agree to such terms.⁷²

Roderick McDonald has conducted a masterful comparative study that illustrates the internal plantation economics centered around the slaves on sugar plantations in Louisiana and Jamaica. He explored the archives tirelessly, uncovering several indicators of these open economies in which slaves participated, selling the goods that they produced in their personal garden plots. McDonald helped to illustrate the prominence of these slave economies on the plantations and the ways in which enslaved laborers displayed the business acumen necessary to achieve success in this economic relationship despite the overarching racism of the plantation

⁷⁰ The manuscript collections indicate the expenditures that slaveholders spent to purchase luxury goods and some specialty food items, like pasta or citrus fruits, but purchases of basic vegetables and proteins remain absent, indicating that the slaves often grew or raised these on the plantations.

⁷¹ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* 2 vols. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863), 1:373.

⁷² For an excellent discussion of slave purchase and manumission, see Judith Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free*.

complex and the limits of their freedom. Valcour Aime indicated the periods during which his slave force worked on their own ventures to provide for their personal sustenance. In October 1851, while some of his hands hauled sand into his English Park during its construction, others spent time on the second day of the month gathering the “hand’s corn.”⁷³ Exhibiting a strict allegiance to structure and routine while illustrating a bit of agricultural luck, on the exact same day one year later, Aime’s slaves worked to pick the “plantation hand’s corn,” spending five days to accomplish the task.⁷⁴ Typically, Aime’s slaves produced between 500 and 2,000 barrels of corn personal use and the consumption of the plantation’s general populace. Additionally, they also raised a great deal of potatoes to supplement their dietary requirements.

Any excess items that the men and women on the plantation grew usually ended up in the stores of the master and the slaveholder often paid their servants for the contribution to help create this unique economy. Big Mathilda, a slave on the Tezcuco Plantation, owned by Benjamin Tureaud, an extended member of the Bringier family, sold seven hundred pumpkins to the plantation, receiving ten dollars in return for 1858.⁷⁵ Pumpkins also factored prominently in the plantation economy on Edward Gay’s St. Louis Plantation. Several invoices show that the Erwin descendants’ plantations purchased pumpkin and turnip seeds in addition to other items.⁷⁶ Edward Gay’s brother, John, wrote Andrew Hynes about the potential supplies for that year, indicating that “I send you the turnip seed, the pumpkin seed they say I can not get in town. The Carolina peas I will get P[rice] and Frost to get for you and they shall be shipped as soon as

⁷³ Valcour Aime, *Plantation Diary of the Late Valcour Aime*, 148.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁷⁵ Cited in McDonald, 53.

⁷⁶ For examples of invoices and correspondence regarding the prices for items on the plantation that included seed, see Edward Gay to John Craighead, May 16, 1849; Invoice for items shipped by Price, Frost, and Co., June 8, 1854 both found in Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

bought.”⁷⁷ McDonald discovered that the slaves on these plantations “raised potatoes, and their hay crops found a ready market on the plantation,” as well and by 1844, “the proportion of the Gay plantation slaves selling hay to the estate was about the same as that [of] selling pumpkins.”⁷⁸

Slaves typically sold the corn that they produced to their masters on Louisiana’s sugar plantations. This ensured that the slaves maintained a close connection to the success of crop production and rewarded them for loyal service in growing corn while it helped management to limit the corn that they had to purchase at the marketplace. Some planters purchased barrels of corn from markets across the South and Midwest to help feed their slaves and animals but most large sugar plantations grew a great deal of corn on the plantations themselves. Corn production clearly featured in the slave economies across the sugar parishes of southern Louisiana. In 1859 the slaves on the Ventress plantation along Bayou Goula sold 1,011 barrels of corn to their neighbor, John Randolph, on Nottoway Plantation for 75 cents per barrel, totaling \$758.⁷⁹ This may have indicated some shortage of corn produced on the Nottoway Plantation for the year because, five years previous to this transaction, Randolph’s journal listed corn that *his* plantation had sold to *other* neighbors. Through May and June, 1854 Randolph sold between three and 600 barrels to his neighbors, many of whom had Creole names, indicating that both communities interacted with one another in the marketplace when necessity dictated that they do so. During a total of twelve transactions, Randolph sold 2,167 barrels of corn for \$1,321, averaging about 61

⁷⁷ John Gay to Andrew Hynes, May 4, 1847, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

⁷⁸ McDonald, 53. McDonald incorrectly refers to this plantation as the “Gay Plantation” but, at the time, Gay only served as the factor and merchant representative in St. Louis, Missouri. The plantation has often been known as the St. Louis Plantation and has led to some confusion but, until Edward Gay assumed control by 1857, Andrew Hynes and John Craighead shared responsibility for plantation management and filled in the gap between Joseph Erwin and Gay’s eventual ownership on the eve of the Civil War.

⁷⁹ Expense Book, 1853-1863 in the John Randolph Papers at LSU.

cent/barrel.⁸⁰ On Christmas day of the same year, Randolph's account book reports a payment of \$500 to "negroes for corn and extra money." In the spring of 1857, Randolph again paid his slaves for 282 barrels at 50 cents on the barrel.⁸¹ Though the records do not give a reliable indication as to what happened for the corn crop year of 1859 on Nottoway, something must have forced Randolph to pay such an extraordinary amount to Ventriss's slaves when he had succeeded in achieving a high level of corn production prior to that year.

Through his extensive research, McDonald discovered that the price of corn ranged between 37.5 cents and 75 cents per barrel. On the highest end stood George Lanaux's Bellevue Plantation along Bayou Lafourche which paid its slaves 75 cents for each barrel of corn that they produced in 1851 and 1852. William Palfrey, on his Ricohoc Plantation along Bayou Teche, paid twenty of his slaves the same amount for their produce but typically slaves received less than market prices as evidenced by the aforementioned Randolph transactions.⁸² The prices in New Orleans fluctuated during the period from 45 cents to \$1.40 per barrel, but one would have to factor in the additional expenses including shipping, handling, and the commission charges paid to the merchants who oversaw the sales.

Occasionally slaves sold their goods to other plantations in the neighborhood or took their produce to a nearby marketplace if a town or commercial center existed nearby. Slave men and women were often limited to Sundays when they had any semblance of unobserved time to themselves during which they could conduct commerce. This tradition of conducting trade on the Sabbath often drew the ire of critics and helped to establish a dividing line between Catholic

⁸⁰ Expense Book, 1853-1863, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² McDonald, 54-55.

Creoles and their Protestant Anglo-American neighbors.⁸³ Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, Americans expressed their frustration with the Catholic Creoles' seeming lack of respect for Sunday observation. Harriet Martineau described Sundays as "the busiest day of the week to the stranger in New Orleans," due to "the negro market to be seen at five o'clock," in the city as goods came from all around, including the surrounding countryside.⁸⁴ Martineau scrutinized "whatever may be thought of the duty or expediency of a strict observance of the Sunday, no one can contend that in this city the observance is strict. "In the market there is traffic in meat and vegetables, and the groups of foreigners make a Babel of the place with their loud talk in many tongues." Even beyond the marketplace, Martineau saw reason to criticize the signs of Creole excess despite the Sabbath: "the men are smoking outside their houses; the girls, with broad coloured ribbons streaming from the ends of their long braids of hair, are walking or flirting; while veiled ladies are stealing through the streets."⁸⁵ An article that appeared in the *Gazette* on Christmas Eve 1825 quoted an earlier description of the market traditions in Louisiana that appeared in the *Chillicothe Times*, an Ohio newspaper. The author stated that Among the French population which, at that time, still outnumbered the Americans, "Sunday is the greatest day of the week, the morning being devoted to business and the evenings to pleasure...you see the markets much better." He noted that "every branch of business is moving on a greater degree of spirit; all the uniform companies of the city elegantly equipped and on parade morning and

⁸³ For a discussion of the tension between Protestant Anglo-Americans and the Catholic Creoles during which Anglo-Americans criticized Creoles' penchant for conducting business and pleasure on Sundays, see Liliane Crété, *Daily Life in Louisiana, 1815-1830* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); A. E. Fossier, *New Orleans: The Glamour Period, 1800-1840: A History of the Conflicts of Nationalities, Languages, Religions, Morals, Cultures, Laws, Politics, and Economics during the Formative Period of New Orleans* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing, 1957); and Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel* 3 Vols. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1838).

⁸⁴ Martineau, 128-130.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

evening, every species of gaming that human invention has discovered: congo dances; and the French theater crowded to overflowing.”⁸⁶ Sundays remained vibrant during the antebellum period and eventually defined New Orleans because Americans gradually but surely embraced the commercial promise and excited spirit of the day as the community came out to browse the wares available to them.

The Creole population embraced these Sunday traditions while the more reserved Americans exhibited sincere reservations, especially among the Protestant ministers. The minister serving the slaves of St. Louis Plantation wrote, with great alarm, to Edward Gay, pleading that he halt the Sunday trade immediately. He understood the necessity of this activity for the servants on the plantation but deplored that Gay, who had just recently joined the planter ranks, explore a system that would allow their observance of the holy day of rest. “Has the master gone, or is he going to the house of God today,” asked P. M. Goodwyn, wondering “how, will he, how ought he to free, as the thought came up while he is attempting to worship.” He exhibited great concern about the direction of the slaveholders, not just in this neighborhood but across the region more generally, begging Gay: “my Lord, help the masters of the South to learn what is their duty and interest concerning their Servants.”⁸⁷ Goodwyn hoped to influence Gay by instructing him to halt the vital Sunday commercial activities and prohibit his slaves from moving about the neighborhood but he understood that his request involved an evolution in Gay’s slaveholding practices. If he followed Goodwyn’s advice, Gay would have to find an alternative time for his slaves to sell and trade their produce.

⁸⁶ *Louisiana Gazette*, December 24, 1825.

⁸⁷ P. M. Goodwyn to Edward Gay, August 27, 1860, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

The unique commercial networks that slaves developed and the creative ways that slave men and women resisted the institution influenced the experience of slavery for black and white southerners alike.⁸⁸ But the heart of slavery as a labor system, at its root, relied on the mechanisms for violence and control. “I never got a whippin’, because I was good and did my work and never talked back,” recalled Mary Harris, but “my ma told me she was brutally beaten, and she was bitter all her life.” Harris poignantly recognized the complexity of the slave regime as both slaves and slaveholders experienced it. “We admitted that slavery was a most unfortunate thing, but that all masters were not cruel. Old slaves still tell of their love for ‘old Miss’ and ‘old Marse,’ and the loyalty and love existing between them could never have been created in rancorous hearts.” Harris provides fascinating clues about the treatment of slaves and hints at an extraordinary dichotomy between the two ethnic communities that divided sugar planters. She lived on a plantation owned by a Mr. Gaudet and she had “heard-tell that Frenchmen were the hardest people and almost squeezed blood out of their slaves. With Americans it was different. So just set it down when you hear of brutal treatment, that it was foreigners.”⁸⁹ To take her at her word, which may provide the actual and complete truth, does not necessarily consider fully the pitfalls of ex-slave narratives. The subjects had to consider their relationship to whites around them and their role within the white supremacist society of

⁸⁸ For an exciting study of the underground trade networks that free and enslaved African Americans forged using the waterways of Louisiana, see Thomas Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Buchanan contends that Louisiana’s unique geography and the state’s experience with steamboats allowed African Americans to construct a trade network predicated on black market commerce and often operated this system unbeknownst to the slaveholders in the area.

⁸⁹ Clayton, 94-95. Harris’s account also serves as a fine example of the pitfalls of these problematic interviews. They are often the best source that we have for the slaves’ experiences but other sources should collaborate to give a balanced picture. Most of the interviews took place long after slavery and white workers conducted them, making the accounts provided by the ex-slaves less reliable but still hold significant historical value. For further analysis of the slave narratives and the study of slavery through the words and remembrances of the ex-slaves themselves, see Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony*.

Jim Crow America when they sat for these interviews. The accounts that the ex-slaves provided go a long way to explaining the experiences of slaves on the plantations across the American South but additional evidence must help to confirm or contribute to the images depicted by former slaves and the recollections of their descendents. In order to discern the harshness of Creole or Anglo-American sugar planters, one must look more deeply at the plantation regime as white masters and their overseers implemented it.

To judge the harshness of the slave regime on any one particular plantation often opens the researcher up to the problem of over-simplification but this does not imply that an analysis of slave treatment on individual plantations remains a fruitless labor nor does it mean that historians should stick to institutional generalizations.⁹⁰ No matter the degree to which slaveholders handled their slaves with respect or guaranteed their health, safety, and happiness on any given plantation, the master still ascribed to the ideals of a labor system that depended entirely on prohibiting a large portion of the populace from realizing natural inalienable rights. As William Russell remarked that at Bon Sejour “there were abundant evidences that they were well treated; they had good clothing of its kind, food, and a master who wittingly could to them no injustice,” yet everywhere he looked he “examined the expression of the faces of the slaves,” and noted the prevailing “deep dejection.”⁹¹ A constant respect for that basic tenet will yield bountiful results when exploring the nature of slavery on a single plantation or those of an ethnic group because no other state in the American South provides more insight into the tendencies of slaveholders

⁹⁰ In Pargas, *The Quarters and the Fields*, the author has provided an excellent study that will have a long-term impact on the way that we view slavery and slave families but he purports that historians of slavery have often generalized too freely by layering the image of the cotton South across the entirety of the region. He combats this problem by creating a generalization of his own when he uses one individual county or parish to illustrate the diversity of slavery in the wheat, rice, and sugar regions of Virginia, South Carolina, and Louisiana respectively.

⁹¹ Russell, 1:373.

based on their culture and ethnicity than Louisiana. If unique characteristics differentiated Creole and Anglo slaveholders from one another, Louisiana would have offered the perfect lens through which historians could examine these glaring differences if and when they existed.

Perhaps one of the most heart-wrenching oral accounts of slave treatment took place in St. John the Baptist Parish on San Francisco Plantation, owned by Valsin Marmillion from a prominent Creole family.⁹² The day after Marmillion returned from Europe in 1856, he found out that his father, Edmond, had died only a year after completing the extravagant showplace and the younger Marmillion had to assume control of the plantation as an obligation to his deceased father. Perhaps from youthful exuberance, resentment over having to take over the plantation before he wished to do so, or because of an inherent harsh nature, Marmillion maintained a heavy hand and became the focus of hateful whispers and vitriol in his neighborhood. One of his favorite punishments for disobedient slaves was to place him or her “standing, in a box, in which there were nails placed in such a manner that the poor creature was unable to move,” remembered a Mrs. Webb, “he was powerless even to chase the flies or sometimes, ants crawling on some parts of his body.”

Webb continued her account of Marmillion, discussing his affinity for “handsome slaves.” When a neighbor died and his descendents settled his estate, they put a young slave on the auction block who had grown up with the children of his previous master and had “been very much spoiled and...accustomed to all the good things on the plantation.” Due to the slave’s alleged handsomeness, Marmillion purchased that slave on the auction and planned to put him to work plowing the following day, but he had not grown accustomed to doing heavy manual labor

⁹² Before becoming Anglicized like many plantations along the Mississippi River (Bon Sejour-Oak Alley), locals knew this plantation as Sans Fruscins, French for “without a penny in my pocket.” This land, originally belonging to the Rillieux family, relatives of Norbert Rillieux of vacuum-pan fame, passed to the Marmillion family in the 1820s.

on his previous plantation where he had spent much of his time with the master's own children. "The one giving the order [to plow] said, 'Were I in your place I would try it, for you have no idea how mean is your master,'" remembered Webb, lamenting that "the young man would not relent and refused to do such hard work. Mr. M[a]rillion, hearing of this, went to the slave and told him, 'I give you until tomorrow. If [by] then you still refuse, you will dig your grave.'" Sadly, the young man refused to back down and "he was then made to dig an immense hole in which they made him stand; and, bandaging his eyes, he was shot, falling in[to] the hole he had dug."⁹³ If true, stories like this most assuredly reached the ears of neighbors along the Mississippi River, both white and black, and this sort of horrendous tale likely fueled any fire that the Americans already had stoked about the harsh treatment of slaves by their Creole counterparts. The existence of this story contributes to the discussion of ethnicity because it shows an awareness of an ethnic schism and an understanding that the planting class remained split between the two groups. If this sad story did in fact occur, it would likely stand as one of the most extreme accounts and does not indicate a universal standard for slaveholding in Louisiana's sugar country or the whole of the American South. Both extremities-cruel and benign-likely defined several of the more than 400,000 slaveholders that existed in the South at the start of the American Civil War and, while unsatisfying, the fact that no consensus likely existed should not dissuade this conversation entirely.

Edward De Buiew, one of the last slaves born in Louisiana before emancipation, spoke of the horrors of the institution for his parents, especially his mother on their Bayou Lafourche plantation under a Creole slaveholder. De Bueiw told the story of his birth and how his mother had died three hours later. His father "always said they made my ma work too hard. I was born

⁹³ Clayton, 209. No contemporary sources could corroborate this story but the discussion of ethnicity within this story still remains useful.

in de fields. He said ma was hoein'. She told de old driver she was sick; he told her to just hoe right-on." After De Bueiw's birth in the fields, his mother died shortly after they brought her to the house. Speaking with great wrath, De Buiew described his mother's punishments during pregnancy, "dey even dug holes and put her in dem to whip her before I was born," according to his father who attempted to run away but "dey caught him in de woods and almost beat him to death."⁹⁴ His story tells the multiple challenges for slaves under the harsh institution of slavery on the sugar plantations of Louisiana and hints at a perception of harsher punishment by Creole masters. On many occasions expectant mothers worked until the last possible moment during pregnancy and oftentimes did not receive the pre-natal care and concern that helped them and their baby to remain healthy. To answer this indiscretion, De Buiew's father chose to attempt to flee the plantation despite the birth of his new son and the other children he left behind on the estate. De Bueiw's account also illustrates the challenges that the drivers faced when placed within the difficult space between slaves and overseers or masters. The drivers, often African Americans themselves, had to obey even the most harsh tasks put forth by the overseer and master or else face punishments of their own.

A former slave, Albert Patterson, born on Lasco Plantation in Plaquemines Parish reminisced about the masters that he had worked under during slavery. He remembered working with Maunsel White, whom he called "Colonel White," and how he had built a Baptist church for the slaves and he remembered fondly that "White wouldn't allow [whipping]: He was a good man." On the contrary, Patterson suggested that "de Frenchmen and de Dutchmen were mean...I seen de blood cut out of niggers day keep, seen it wid my own eyes. But not Colonel White, he

⁹⁴ Clayton, 48-49. When a slaveholder, overseer, or driver punished a pregnant woman, they would often dig a hole for her to lay her belly in so that they would protect the unborn baby during the whipping. For a very useful discussion of this practice, see Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birth of a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

not cruel. He wouldn't whip, he'd punish." Instead of whipping, Patterson remembered that White had an iron band that he riveted around the slave's neck that would cut the skin if he or she did not stand still. Additionally, White "never kept no nigger-dogs. He had a great big woods in de back where de niggers would hide when they run away," but when rolling season came around "they'd come out of the woods, walk up to Colonel White, and say, 'I'll take de crops off if you'll let me.'"⁹⁵ Examining White's correspondence with his overseers and business associates, however, quickly illustrates the complexity of the environment that the slaves lived within. Writing to his overseer, White congratulated him on getting some of the troubled slaves to work "I notice what you say of the Negroes and I am indeed glad that you have got them 'straightened up.' Ironing and whipping a little, has made a great change in Talus."⁹⁶ While the note confirms his use of "ironing," as he calls it, it also mentions the employment of whipping as punishment which goes against what Patterson had remembered.

Like some of the interviewees, Gracie Stafford entered into the world after slavery in 1865 but she remembered her family's stories of life on the American-owned plantation of Myrtle Grove Plantation in St. James Parish. She remarked how "the old folks used to say that the master was hard on slaves, and had 'em whipped until the blood sometimes stained the ground. My parents said they never was treated cruel like," but the master did put her aunt in the stocks to punish her.⁹⁷ Cecil George, another slave who lived below New Orleans but in St. Bernard Parish recalled the harsh regime in which he lived and compared it to South Carolina where he had grown up prior to his sale to a Louisiana slaveholder. George exclaimed "God

⁹⁵ Clayton, 178-180.

⁹⁶ Maunsel White to D. N. Bracewell, October 11, 1847, White (Maunsel) Letterbook, LSU.

⁹⁷ Clayton, 197-198.

help us: We come to de most wicked country dat our God's Son ever died for." Aside from a brief respite when his laborers held a dance on Saturday evenings, their master, Dick Proctor, made George and his fellow slaves work almost continuously, "and if you say, 'Lawd a-mercy,' de overseer whip you. De old people, dey just set down and cry." Comparing it to his birthplace of South Carolina, George remembered "in de old country you never have a scratch: Dey never whips deir slaves—lock dem up, yes, but don't whip dem. Down here dey strip you down naked, and two men hold you down and whip you till de blood come. Cruel! O Lawd."⁹⁸ Here, again, one must remember that George's problematic remembrance of South Carolina slavery likely suffered either from the passage of time and a waning memory or indicated that he had grown up with a benign master before he moved to Louisiana. South Carolina's slaveholders most assuredly punished their slaves by whipping and through other means because slave masters did so wherever the institution existed in order to maintain control of their work force but George would have the interviewer believe he escaped this sort of punishment.

Plenty of examples from Louisiana's Anglo-American sugar plantations indicate that their slaves also suffered extraordinary hardship and punishment but that these slaveholders preferred a more calculated, methodical way of doling out punishment. "If we was bad, dey would whip us and put is in stocks, but we never had no trouble on our plantation," recalled Catherine Cornelius, a slave on a plantation near Bayou Sara.⁹⁹ Edward Gay received a recommendation letter from a neighbor in West Baton Rouge Parish that illustrated the Anglo image of an ideal overseer, describing his impression of this potential applicant as one who "I think very highly of...as a young overseer an think that he will make a good manager after a

⁹⁸ Clayton, 83-87.

⁹⁹ Clayton, 45-47.

little more experience. His worst fault was that I saw he wanted too much don and caused him to do two much whipping.”¹⁰⁰ Likewise, John Andrews of Belle Grove Plantation described another overseer seeking employment with Gay as one who “did not show any disposition to be severe or to use the whip too freely while with me. Indeed, I think he never carried a whip himself, and as far as I know, he treated my negroes well.”¹⁰¹ Certainly instances of cruel punishment existed among the Anglo-American population but the apparent harshness exhibited by Creoles throughout the accounts seems to indicate that the Americans more likely preferred consistent, less harmful forms of punishment to correct behavior that they deemed inappropriate. This does not excuse one method for managing slaves but, rather, it illustrates how the two ethnic communities sought the same ends of achieving maximum efficiency for sugarcane production through differing means of management. A popular publication among members of the sugar planting community, Thomas Affleck’s *Sugar Plantation Record and Account Book*, advised masters to “be firm and at the same time gentle in your control...never display yourself before them in a passion, and even if inflicting severe punishment, do so in a mild, cool manner, and it will produce a tenfold effect.” His advice continued by suggesting that “indiscriminate, constant, and excessive use of the whip is altogether unnecessary and inexcusable...the stocks offer a means of punishment greatly to be preferred.”¹⁰² It would seem that several of the American sugar planters followed this advice by whipping only occasionally and displaying a preference for the stocks and other less direct methods of violence while the Creoles believed that a steady and constant whip achieved maximum control.

¹⁰⁰ C. H. Myhard to Edward Gay, November 5, 1859, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰¹ John Andrews to Edward Gay, March 12, 1860, Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁰² Thomas Affleck, *The Sugar Plantation Record and Account Book No. 2, Suitable for a Force of 120 Hands or Under*. 4th ed. (New Orleans, 1854).

Examining the ex-slave narratives seems to indicate a general trend toward harshness among the Creole population. Almost all of the examples of extreme punishment or harsh treatment took place on plantations which the interviewees identify specifically as Creole or at the hands of a master who had a Creole surname. As stated, these accounts do challenge historical analysis but, because the interviewees conducted them over a wide geographic expanse and the subjects had no way of knowing one another, they do seem to indicate some useful trends. Of course, some benign Creole masters certainly operated sugar plantations just as some cruel Anglo-American raised sugarcane but it does appear that slave treatment did evince more than just an avenue for ethnic criticism between the two groups.

Taking a step away from an ethnic analysis of the treatment of slaves, Hunton Love discussed his experiences on his Bayou Lafourche plantation, owned by John Viguerie where he made a fascinating distinction. When Viguerie went to fight in the Civil War, it seems, he left Love in charge as overseer of the plantation during his absence. “When old marse went to war, he left me overseer of the plantation,” Love recollected, continuing “Yes’m, I did: Some of the slaves would’t mind, and I had to whip ‘em,...besides, I had to show ‘em I was boss or the plantation would be wrecked.’” Contrasting his brief experiences as overseer during the war, Love spoke ominously of his interactions with earlier overseers during the antebellum period, grieving that “sometimes I cried after I went to bed,” due to the whippings that other slaves suffered, “of course, it was necessary sometimes, but these overseers—gruesome men from the North—was brutal.”¹⁰³ Instead of looking at Creoles or Anglo-Americans critically, he aims directly at the northern-born overseer and his testimony gives some indication that those who came from outside of the slave regime failed to understand the complexity of the institution and

¹⁰³ Clayton 161-164.

the paternalist nature that successful slaveholders had to exhibit to ensure that their slave force would work willingly and remain healthy despite their lack of freedom.

William Howard Russell's travel account of the sugarcane country seems to dovetail nicely with Hunton Love's account of northern-born overseers. While spending time at Bon Sejour, he conversed with the Roman family about slavery on their plantation but also at their neighbors' estates. Russell reported that they told him "our Friends were all Creoles – that is natives of Louisiana – of French or Spanish descent. They are kinder and better masters, according to universal repute, than native Americans or Scotch; but the New England Yankee is reputed to be the severest of all slave owners."¹⁰⁴ Sitting in the parlor of Bon Sejour, a prominent Creole home, Russell should not have elicited surprise that his hosts would uphold the Creole image and place the harshest blame on the Americans, specifically New England-born masters and overseers.¹⁰⁵ Of course, both Anglo-Americans and Creoles gained something by purporting themselves to treat their slaves with greater kindness than their ethnic counterparts. Furthermore it seems that some believed that they should break down the Anglo-American population into multiple sub-groups and both Creoles and Anglos seemed to share the view that northern-born slaveholders and overseers practiced excessive cruelty toward slaves. Commenting that the "New England Yankee" exhibited the severest characteristics minimized their own treatment while indicating that those who originated in New England, a region dominated by factories and industrial production, maintained stricter ideals when it came to slavery, viewing the institution as an industrial capitalist operation where the slave force became the proletariat who bent to their will and worked tirelessly for the profit of the factory owner.

¹⁰⁴ Russell, 1:375-376.

¹⁰⁵ I did not find any specific references to elevated cruelty by men and women from New England; this story likely results from ethnic pride and the desire to exhibit a universal rationality among the Creole population.

Russell made other interesting observations on the intersection of slavery and the slaveholding class's ethnicity on many of the plantations that he visited. On the topic of religion, which played an integral part in slaveholders' lives, one's particular denomination often influenced a planter's outlook on slavery and plantation management across the sugar region. "The American planters who are not Catholics, although they do not make the slaves work on Sunday except there is something to do, rarely grant them the indulgence of a dance," related Russell who reported that "a few permit them some hours of relaxation on each Saturday afternoon."¹⁰⁶ While several American planters gave their slaves access to religion, the Creoles, who remained staunchly Roman Catholic during the antebellum period showed a tendency toward allowing (and even encouraging) their slaves to practice religion, often making religious services available to them on a regular basis.¹⁰⁷ Lillie Johnson remembered the plantation pastor, Baptiste Smith, and recalled how "de niggers from de other plantations, and de ones who live on de road—dat is, de ones who didn't live on de place dat de persons dey work for—would all come to his church." She reminisced how "every Sunday we used to go to church at nine o'clock, and de pastor used to preach for one and a half hours." Johnson even reported the assistance that their owner gave them in order to ensure that they made it to church, recalling that "de white boss used to let us have two horses and a big wagon to go dere 'cause de church was about a mile and a half down de road."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Russell, 1: 370.

¹⁰⁷ I could not locate any official records with the New Orleans Diocese concerning slavery and the role of religion to sugar planters' slave force, but succeeded in observing trends in travel accounts and the records left by slaveholders in the manuscript collections.

¹⁰⁸ Clayton, 130-133.

On the other hand, the slaves who lived on Anglo-American plantations stressed the role of religion less, though ethnicity likely did not necessarily distinguish whether or not slaveholders allowed their laborers to practice religion. Even with their rigid Protestant ideals, studies have illustrated how slaves along the East Coast endured the challenges of slavery through religion.¹⁰⁹ Henrietta Butler, a slave on a Lafourche Bayou plantation, reminisced about the lack of religion on her plantation, pointing out that “we never went to church or no place—didn’t know it was such a thing.” Butler clearly understood the motivations behind this strict decision to prohibit slaves from accessing religion on the plantation because she decried “you know, none of the white folks didn’t want the niggers to get out: They was afraid they would learn somethin’.” Dick Proctor’s slave, Cecil George, who spoke so harshly about Louisiana’s sugar region, referring to it as “heathern part of de country,” remembered that the slaves’ options remained limited during the antebellum period. He remembered that they had “No school, no church,” and “you couldn’t sing.”¹¹⁰

Catherine Cornelius’s master went against the grain by encouraging his slaves to attend the local Episcopal church in town.¹¹¹ “We had Saturday and Sunday off, but we had to go to church,” recalled Cornelius, “all of de slaves was christened in de church. We never had no river

¹⁰⁹ Daniel L. Fountain, *Slavery, Civil War, and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010). Not all Protestants clung to the same ideals but, with a few exceptions, the records do not indicate which Protestant religion the specific families ascribed to during this period. A staunchly Catholic area at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the American population worked to overturn the Roman Catholic dominance by building Protestant churches of varying denominations, most commonly Episcopalian. Oftentimes, families attended whatever Protestant church that they had available to them; Alexander Pugh, for example, attended several local services, including the Catholic Mass, and recorded his analysis on each one in his diary: Pugh Plantation Diary, 1859-1865 (vol. 2), September 5, 1859 and September 30, 1860, Pugh (A. Franklin) Papers, LSU.

¹¹⁰ Clayton, 83-87.

¹¹¹ This “Episcopal church” likely refers to Grace Episcopal Church in St. Francisville, the epicenter for Episcopalians in the region and the site of worship for many prominent slaveholders during the period. It still stands today and continues to serve the community.

baptism on our place. De church in town dat we went to was called de Episcopalian church,” but any marriages that took place between slaves occurred on the plantation under the guidance of Doctor Lyles, the son-in-law of a nearby slaveholder near Bayou Sara.¹¹² Mammie Jackson stated that her Anglo-American owner displayed an unusual propensity for allowing his slaves to enjoy significant freedoms. Jackson hinted that this unusual decision probably drew the ire of his neighbors who viewed his liberal choices as a threat to plantation control. “Church and ‘sociation, we had dat all the time, and big dinners at the church [and] lights along the road to show the path,” Jackson recalled. “He never had overseers over his niggers along the path either. On account of dat, we was called Mr. Cook’s ‘free’ niggers.”¹¹³

As the sectional crisis worsened and civil war loomed, sugar planters in Louisiana questioned their stability. The institution that they had fought so hard to develop and grow into the bedrock of their society came under increasing attack. The worldview of all Louisianans looked very different as the election of Abraham Lincoln grew increasingly likely and sugar planters, both Creole and Anglo-American, turned their attention to their similar future. Since the Louisiana Purchase and the War of 1812, the focus had begun to shift from a society based on ethnic tension and conflict to one of sectional discontent. While the heritage of both Creoles and their Anglo-American counterparts remained vital to those individuals, it soon became clear that greater challenges threatened the future of all slaveholders. After all, sugarcane slavery in practice had begun to look very similar on all plantations in the region no matter who owned the estate. White slaveholders in Louisiana’s sugar parishes understood that they would have to put

¹¹² Clayton, 45-47.

¹¹³ Clayton, 125.

their cultural differences aside, causing these distinctions to become less relevant, to face the unknown future that would result from secession or the uncertainty of slavery's fate.

CHAPTER 7
“TIMES ARE VERY GLOOMY, AND THE FUTURE PROMISES TO BE WORSE”:
THE CIVIL WAR AND THE END FOR ALL

“Politics run higher here than at any time since 1844,” wrote Thomas J. Wells of Alexandria, Louisiana in 1856. Reporting the political pulse of Louisiana’s contentious parties, Wells perceived that “there is perhaps as much enthusiasm among the Whigs and Americans as then...I think [the Whigs] shall carry Louisiana and there is some little hope for this state. We are doing all that can be done.”¹ Politics became increasingly personal and important for those who practiced slavery across the American South during the two decades leading up to the Civil War. The sectional divide tore Americans asunder as northerners and southerners slowly retreated to opposing ends of the political spectrum based, almost entirely by 1860, on the support of or resistance to the expansion of slavery into the western territories.² Unable to reconcile the differences between North and South, the nation split apart and dove into a war during which nearly 750,000 Americans lost their lives and slavery.³ Most importantly, slavery died during the war when President Abraham Lincoln shifted his focus to creating a stronger *nation* by eliminating the greatest cause of sectional tension that the country had experienced.

¹ T. J. Wells to William J. Minor, October 13, 1856, Minor, William J. Papers, LSU. Interestingly, the Whig Party had effectively ceased to exist by 1856 and Wells likely refers to an alliance in the works between former Whigs and members of the Know-Nothing Party.

² For a deeper understanding of the sectional crisis and the debate of slavery’s expansion into the western territories, see Christopher Childers, *The Failure of Popular Sovereignty: Slavery, Manifest Destiny, and the Radicalization of Southern Politics* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012); William J. Cooper, Jr., *Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000); William J. Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* Ed. and Comp. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

³ J. David Hacker has recently written a persuasive article that raises the previously-accepted number of 600,000 dead Americans to an even more terrible 750,000. J. David Hacker, “A Census-Based Count of the Civil War Dead,” *Civil War History* 57 (December 2011): 306-347.

Black and white southerners emerged from the war to forge a new bi-racial society and, in this context, we begin to understand that *race* had helped to create the ethnic tension in Louisiana prior to the war. Slavery, an institution predicated on tight racial control defined clearly the separation between white and black, allowing white Louisianans to divide over cultural differences. Astonishingly, when slavery became endangered, Creoles and Anglo-Americans realized quickly that their shared aspirations, status, and belief in white supremacy, trumped any perceptible differences. As noted in the previous three chapters, though they exhibited some differences in plantation management, their behavior in dealing with slaves often remained quite similar. Finally, when the federal government abolished slavery, these two communities came together almost completely because Creoles and Anglo-Americans realized that they were not very different after all.

The political environment in antebellum Louisiana serves as a practical tool for the examination of potential ethnic differences within the state. Creoles and Anglo-American Louisianans practiced politics in their own way with both communities exhibiting differing visions of their role in the larger American nation. Creoles, for example, never displayed the urgency to move westward and spread the institution of slavery like their American counterparts. Primarily, Creoles wanted to bolster the slave-based sugarcane industry within the state so that they could maintain their social standing and protect their families' dynasties. Americans, on the other hand, largely settled in Louisiana but planned to continue the spread of American slavery by making a fortune in sugar, before resettling further west. As illustrated by James Oakes, American planters thirsted constantly for the "next best thing," moving steadily westward, while the "Creole slaveholders were uncommonly stable; they participated only negligibly in the

westward expansion of the slave economy.”⁴ Thus, Creoles often remained most interested in how their political decisions and choices influenced local events while their American counterparts saw a bigger picture and entertained a relationship with national politics.

Louisiana’s Creoles hoped to remain focused locally on their sugarcane operations, resisting any process of Americanization as best they could.⁵ The sectional divide and the growing threat to slavery challenged them to think differently, however, despite their localized, introverted preferences because national politics quickly closed in on the very way of life. No matter how hard they tried to resist nationwide politics, America came to them and forced them to grapple with national questions. Their fellow Anglo-Americans focused their attention on this danger and urged the Creole population to join with them in opposition to what appeared as an increasingly dark pall on the horizon: the northern aggressor.

John Sacher tackled the idea of ethnocentrism, featuring the concept in his book on the transformation of antebellum politics in Louisiana. Politicians had to maneuver deftly in order to navigate the ethnic tension, often using it to the advantage of one party or the other. Sacher illustrates effectively that “Louisiana’s Creole and Catholic populations, its substantial foreign and northern immigration...and its immense sugarcane crop combined to make it possibly the most unsouthern of the southern states.”⁶ The two divergent ethnic communities in Louisiana

⁴ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 44.

⁵ For further reading on the Americanization process, see Lucius Ellsworth, ed. *The Americanization of the Gulf Coast, 1803-1850* (Pensacola, FL: Historic Pensacola Preservation Board, 1971); Albert A. Fossier, *New Orleans: The Glamour Period, 1800-1840* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1957); Robert C. Reinders, *End of an Era: New Orleans, 1850-1860* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1964).

⁶ John Sacher, *A Perfect War of Politics: Parties, Politicians, and Democracy in Louisiana, 1824-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 1. Additionally, Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999) also provides a useful tool for analysis of the intersection between ethnicity and politics in antebellum Louisiana.

challenged politicians who strove to extend the national trend of increasingly sectional politics. No matter how hard politicians and their close supporters tried, Creoles often voted for Creole office-seekers no matter their stances on important issues.

While travelling through Louisiana from his home in North Carolina, Congressman, Henry Connor, described the diverse population of New Orleans to John C. Calhoun when he wrote that “the population is one half Northern agents another one quarter or one third are Foreigners. The remnant are creoles who cannot comprehend their dangers until the negroes are being taken out of the fields.” Thus, Connor believed, “Louisiana will be the last if at all to strike for the defense of the South,” and secessionists would have to work diligently to carry their ethnic counterparts out of the Union.⁷ Perry Howard quantified the split that Sacher highlighted, helping to illustrate the complexity of antebellum Louisiana.⁸ His calculation that 70.4 percent of the population in southern Louisiana possessed French ancestry in 1840 indicates that a significant portion of the population in the sugar producing region likely classified themselves as “non-Americans.”⁹ Many planters practiced similar plantation management because that is what it required to get the job done, but the ethnic split often prevented fruitful discussion and political exchanges. As Sacher pointed out, especially during the 1830s, “many

⁷ Henry W. Connor to John C. Calhoun, January 12, 1849, in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., “Correspondence of John C. Calhoun,” *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1899, Volume II* (Washington, D.C., 1900), 1188-90.

⁸ Perry H. Howard, *Political Tendencies in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971). In addition to Howard’s excellent history, for a deeper understanding of antebellum politics and class formation in Louisiana, see Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers during Slavery, 1840-1875* (1939; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1968).

⁹ This statistic is taken from Table 1 in Sacher, 7.

Louisianans, whether Creole or American, voted on the basis of ethnicity regardless of party affiliation.”¹⁰

This tide slowly began to turn when John Slidell, one of Louisiana’s ablest politicians and a staunch advocate of southern rights, followed the example of Duncan Kenner by marrying into an elite New Orleans family. This union gave him the vital link to this ethnic group and allowed him to entertain constituents from both Creoles and Anglos, slowly breaking down the ethnic barriers in Louisiana, but this process did not come to fruition entirely until 1860.

Political debates in Louisiana, as in other states across the American South, centered largely on the split between Whigs and Democrats and their differing values on state- and national-level issues.¹¹ Like her sister states, South Carolina and Alabama, Louisiana remained split before the 1850s but those states’ differences typically resulted from geographic distinctions and the disparities between older and younger populations within the states.¹² In Louisiana the Creole-Anglo schism created a unique fault line which split the population in half. Of course, this peculiarity only existed in the southern portion of the state where the Creole population lived; the northern half of Louisiana, and much of the Florida Parishes operated more similarly to the rest of the American South.¹³ Starting in the 1820s, however, this distinction between the two

¹⁰ Sacher, 303-304.

¹¹ The best histories of the Whig Party and its opposition to the Democrats remains Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹² For two of the finest studies of politics at the state level and their relationship to the coming of civil war, see Lacy K. Ford, Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society: Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

¹³ The Florida Parishes refer to those parishes located east of the Mississippi River and north of Lake Ponchartrain. For a political history that focuses on this region, consult Samuel C. Hyde, Jr., *Pistols and Politics: The*

disparate ethnic communities in southern Louisiana became murkier, and Louisianans concentrated more on their allegiance to a specific political party than on the differences that tore them apart ethnically. Slidell's marriage to Mathilde Deslonde, the daughter of a prominent Creole family, certainly served as a catalyst for this process, but the two groups also came together based on a unified interest to see the success of the sugarcane industry continue.

One of the most important issues that surfaced before the secession crisis in Louisiana captured the complete attention of all sugar planters. The tariff became a vital component in the American System under Henry Clay's plan for America, generating heated debate over the proper role of the federal government in the economic sector. Clay and his supporters intended that the tariff would create revenue for the nation's internal improvement projects while protecting American businesses and products. Louisiana's sugar planters quickly adopted the tariff as a worthwhile venture for the success of the sugarcane industry.¹⁴ As production boomed throughout the antebellum period and the planters reaped tremendous profits, they also knew that they absolutely needed the tariff to protect domestic sugar in order for their own estates to survive. The Caribbean remained the most suitable environment for sugar, and Cuba continued to endanger the outlook of Louisiana's sugar planters. "Prospects are much very much in favor of sugar, which, if the democrats will just leave the tariff where it is, will no doubt next year be a very fair business, at least in comparison to cotton," wrote F. D. Richardson about the debates in Louisiana over the tariff.¹⁵ Several years later, Moses Liddell described the potential

Dilemma of Democracy in Louisiana's Florida Parishes, 1810-1899 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ The best and most thorough account to date remains Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Louisiana and the Tariff, 1816-1846," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 25 (January 1942): 3-94.

¹⁵ F. D. Richardson to St. John Liddell, January 1, 1843, Liddell (Moses, St. John R. and Family) Papers, LSU.

“Redemption of the Tariff sugar at 30 per cent on the foreign cost which may be about equal to ¾ cents per lb which will I fear be a breaking business with the planters and growers.”¹⁶ The tariff remained crucial to the success of the sugar industry, factoring into the planters’ uncertainty over secession because they feared that the Confederate government might not levy duties on foreign sugars.

The presidential election of 1860 marked a turning point for Louisiana politics because it galvanized the two communities, encouraging them to start acting as one political force in order to defend Louisiana’s sugar planting interests. John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, Virginia in October 1859, helped to steel Louisiana’s sugar planters, urging them to think more in terms of race and class than ethnicity. The perception of northern support for Brown’s actions, coupled with the Republican nomination of Abraham Lincoln, whom southerners largely viewed as a threat to the future of slavery, forced Creoles and Anglo-Americans to think differently. Even before John Brown’s raid, Thomas O. Moore received a congratulatory letter from a friend in Baltimore who ended his letter with an ominous report about the rise of the “Black Republicans.”¹⁷ Planters across Louisiana scurried to garner support for their candidates whom they believed could best oppose Lincoln for the presidency.

In the 1950s Charles Roland wrote an account of Louisiana’s sugar plantations during the Civil War that still remains the most useful analysis of its kind.¹⁸ In his narrative, Roland credits the Pugh family with helping to sway others along Bayou Lafourche to the John C. Breckinridge banner during the 1860 election. He uses this example to illustrate the political complexity in the

¹⁶ Moses Liddell to John Liddell, February 27, 1846, Liddell (Moses, St. John R. and Family) Papers, LSU.

¹⁷ R. I. Brent to Thomas O. Moore, May 29, 1859, Moore, Thomas O. Papers, LSU.

¹⁸ Charles Roland, *Louisiana Sugar Plantations during the Civil War* (1957; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1997).

region regarding the discussions about the legitimacy of secession as a response to the possibility of a Republican president. Alexander Franklin and William Whitmel Pugh led their family as they strove to gather support for Breckinridge in the surrounding parishes from both Creole and Anglo-American neighbors, but they failed to make up any significant ground on his opponents' supporters. Alexander Pugh lamented that "we had our Barbecue at Paincourt today, and a failure it certainly was. We had but two of the speakers we expected, and they the most inferior. We got along anyway better than at Labadie and kept it going until near night."¹⁹ When they tallied the final votes following the election, Terrebonne Parish stood as the lone parish along Bayou Lafourche that voted in the majority to support Breckinridge's candidacy. While the Pughs helped Terrebonne Parish to favor Breckinridge, other sugar-dominated parishes along Bayou Lafourche, including Ascension, Assumption, and Lafourche threw their support behind Stephen A. Douglas.²⁰

The debate over secession grew exponentially across Louisiana in the months surrounding Abraham Lincoln's election. As early as September, whispers began to mount over the course that the state should take if Lincoln ascended to the presidency. "Pennsylvania gone leave me without hope to beat Lincoln and yet holding an office at the hands of the Democratic Party I am restrained in writing my opinions for fear of injuring a party that has honored me so much," wrote Aleck Barrow to his good friend, James Bowman. "As for this Union in my opinion 'the silver cord is loose [illegible] the golden bowl' is broken, and yet I must only

¹⁹ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), October 28-30, 1860, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

²⁰ Roland, 19. This reprint of the initial 1957 edition receives support for its political analysis from John Sacher's recent work on Louisiana's political history during the secession period. Sacher illustrated the extreme complexity of voting patterns during the 1860 presidential election as Louisianans supported Breckenridge, Bell, and Douglas, while further breaking up into support for cooperation or secession. For detailed analysis of this election and the voting blocs, see Sacher, 279-290.

whisper this,” for fear that his opinion would foment great discord amongst his party at the state level.²¹ Unfortunately for Louisianans, their efforts bore no fruit because Lincoln, who did not even appear on the ballot in Louisiana, proved how lop-sided the nation’s population had become. Lincoln became the sixteenth president of the United States at the head of the entirely northern-based Republican Party.

Louisiana plunged into chaos and excitement as people debated the best course of action for the state to take regarding secession.²² Ethnicity did not divide those who exhibited uncertainty about the future. Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans understood that they had stepped into a new world with Lincoln’s election and that decades of sectional conflict had finally culminated in a call for southerners to strike. The state’s residents, no matter their stance on secession, all explored ways in which they could prepare themselves for the uncertain future. Louis Amedee Bringier received a letter from an associate who informed him of conditions in New Orleans immediately following Lincoln’s election. The New Orleans markets faced an uncertain future as both merchants and consumers jostled hesitantly to position themselves in a sound economic position. “I have never since I have been in business, seen such a total want of confirmed.²³ Paper negotiations are impossible,” he wrote, voicing his belief that “people fear

²¹ Aleck Barrow to James Bowman, September 14, 1860, Bowman Family Papers, LSU.

²² For broader studies of the secession crisis, see William J. Cooper, Jr., *We Have the War Upon Us: The Onset of the Civil War, November 1860-April 1861* (New York: Knopf, 2012); Russell A. McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); David M. Potter, *Lincoln and His Party in the Secession Crisis* (1942; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995).

²³ The term “confirmed” likely refers to paper money backed by some form of metal (gold or silver). His next sentence mentions that negotiations through paper money are impossible, probably because it did not have the backing that made it reliable currency.

the consequences of the election of Lincoln. Secession is openly proclaimed. It will be carried out...this is the cause of the commercial crisis.”²⁴

Not two full weeks after the 1860 presidential election, Alexander Pugh reported on Sunday evening that “talk now is disunion. The Governor is to call the Legislature together this week, which is to take into consideration the propriety of calling Convention to take the matter of Secession into consideration.”²⁵ Though many Louisianans, both Creole and Anglo-American believed that Lincoln’s victory and secession looked imminent on the eve of the national election, others hoped that Louisianans would continue to practice rational politics and search for a compromise that might benefit all of the state’s planters. Alexander Franklin Pugh wrote happily about the upcoming Secession Convention: “I think we shall have two pretty good Secessionists from this parish, and one other, who will eventually go for it, if there should be no chance for Cooperation, as is more than probably. We are bound to secede I think, and sooner it is done the better.”²⁶ Pugh refers to a movement of cooperationists who opposed immediate secession; they sought to wait to see what other southern states did in order to achieve strength in numbers. Terrebonne Parish, which had voted for John C. Breckenridge during the 1860 presidential election, had thrown its weight largely behind secession as the new year dawned. Just after the first of January, Pugh wrote of the complete failure of compromise after he spent the day in nearby Napoleonville, the seat of the local government for Terrebonne Parish. He expressed his discontent over the fact that his neighbors had elected cooperationists but promised that “we shall however have an immediate secession convention by a large majority and they

²⁴ Illegible author to Louis A. Bringier, November 12, 1860, Louis A. Bringier Papers, LSU.

²⁵ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), November 18, 1860, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

²⁶ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), January 7, 1861, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

now consider Louisiana as virtually out of the Union. Cooperation is dead there is no state even asking for it, and how humiliating now for this state to propose it. I have no fear of it's being done."²⁷

The Secession Convention met in Baton Rouge on 24 January 1861 to decide, as John Sacher described it, "a foregone conclusion," in favor of secession, joining Louisiana to her southern sisters in the formation of a new independent nation.²⁸ Sugar planters factored heavily in the convention's proceedings, including John Moore, a planter and judge from St. Mary Parish, who nominated a former Louisiana governor, Alexander Mouton, to oversee the proceedings as the president. Mouton earned a reputation as the "Creole Hotspur," due to a determination to push Louisiana toward secession and out of the union from a very early point in the discussion. Mouton's nickname likely derived from Eliza McHatton-Ripley, the prominent socialite, who described how Mouton spoke with a "French accent, made ten times more unintelligible by his vehement manner and rapid utterance, [as] he explained the attitude of his State!"²⁹

Louisianan's secessionists had fought a long and difficult battle to wrest the state out of the Union, despite a lop-sided vote in favor of secession at the end of January 1861. Cooperation had dominated public opinion and advocates of caution and patience battled stubbornly against the immediate secessionists. In the gubernatorial election of 1859, Thomas O. Moore defeated Thomas J. Wells and preached southern rights but urged for Louisiana and her sister states to

²⁷ Ibid., January 9, 1861.

²⁸ Sacher, 296.

²⁹ Eliza McHatton Ripley, *From Flag to Flag: A Woman's Adventures and Experiences in the South during the War, in Mexico, and in Cuba* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 47.

proceed with caution.³⁰ Following the presidential election's results, John Slidell hoped that Louisianans would not act alone, without the help of other southern states, though excitement for immediate secession began to gain traction quickly but he expressed that he understood that Louisiana *would* act and secession likely would result.³¹ Between Moore's election and Lincoln's triumph in 1860, the political climate changed rapidly in Louisiana and the governor expressed that "were Slidell or I to plead for rational thought at these times our positions would be worth nil to us."³² The secessionists overwhelmed the cooperationists in the winter of 1860-1861, branding them as "submissionists" and putting them immediately on the defensive. They triumphed and the Secession Convention tallied the votes. Louisiana seceded from the United States on 26 January 1861 by a vote of 113 for and 17 against secession.³³

Noticeably, the only members of the Bringier family who opposed secession immediately following Lincoln's election had married into the family from among their Anglo-American neighbors. Otherwise, the family stood steadfast behind secession. Martin Gordon, Jr., and Richard Taylor, however, feared the potential outcome of a war against slavery, preaching caution in the face of the fire-eaters' passionate demands for immediate secession.³⁴ As the crisis mounted and Louisiana's secession became more certain, Gordon and Taylor shifted their

³⁰ Mary Lilla McLure, "The Elections of 1860 in Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 9 (October 1926): 601-702.

³¹ John Slidell to E. G. W. Butler, November 1, 1860, Butler Papers, LSU.

³² Thomas O. Moore to R. J. Brent, December 2, 1860, quoted in Edwin J. Putzell, Jr., "Cui Bono: A Study of Secession in Louisiana," Typescript, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, 1935.

³³ For further reading on the secession convention in Louisiana, see Charles P. Roland, "Louisiana and Secession," *Louisiana History* 19 (Fall 1978): 389-399; Sacher, 29-296; *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans: J. O. Nixon, 1861).

³⁴ The most useful in-depth account of the fire-eaters is Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). While this analysis is very helpful, scholars would certainly benefit from an over-arching narrative that ties these men together into a regional history.

support to the Confederacy, and Taylor, especially, became a leading proponent of immediate secession entering the winter of 1860-1861. His biographer, T. Michael Parrish, has concluded that Richard Taylor travelled to Baton Rouge for the Secession Convention as the only one of three delegates from St. Charles Parish who supported immediate secession by the time he made it to the state capital.³⁵ Duncan Kenner also trended against most of his sugar-planting colleagues when he led the movement toward secession.³⁶ Kenner also found himself in the minority in Ascension Parish, and his bid to represent the parish at the secession convention ended in failure. Once Louisiana seceded, however, he became one of six delegates to represent Louisiana at the Montgomery Convention to oversee the formation of the Confederate States of America.³⁷ This became the first step in his long rise to prominence in Confederate politics, assuring that the Bringier family maintained direct ties to the highest levels of the Confederate government during the war.³⁸

³⁵ T. Michael Parrish, *Richard Taylor: Soldier Prince of Dixie* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 101-102. This excellent biography details Taylor's life, including his relationship to his father, marriage into and relationship with the Bringier family and his military service to the Confederate States of America.

³⁶ Despite Kenner's leading role in local politics and his avid support for secession, his Ascension Parish largely supported compromise and remained one of the most staunch unionist areas of the state. Ascension Parish voted for Stephen Douglas in the 1860 presidential election, one of the few parishes to do so. During Louisiana's secession convention in 1861, 63 percent of the parish's delegates voted against immediate secession.

³⁷ Kenner joined the other five Louisiana delegates: Charles Magill Conrad, Alexandre Etienne DeClouet, Henry Marshall, John Perkins, Jr., and Edward Sparrow. Of the six, only Kenner and DeClouet owned sugar plantation but both represented the elites of the Creoles (DeClouet) and Anglo (Kenner) communities. For studies that cover the formation of the Confederate government in Montgomery, Alabama, consult William J. Cooper, Jr., *Jefferson Davis, American* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

³⁸ Duncan Kenner chaired the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives and Jefferson Davis, in large part due to his standing with the Creole community in Louisiana and comfort with French, chose him for a daring last-ditch mission to France to meet with Napoleon III, hoping to entice them once and for all to recognize the Confederacy's legitimacy. Resulting from a late start and a treacherous journey through New York City, Kenner failed to achieve his mission before the war ended. For an account of this mission, see Craig A. Bauer, "The Last Effort: The Secret Mission of the Confederate Diplomat," *Louisiana History* 22 (Winter 1981): 67-95; Cooper, *Jefferson Davis*, 553-554.

Eliza McHatton-Ripley described the excitement on her Arlington Plantation, located just downriver from Baton Rouge, as its residents worked to replicate their own version of the Confederacy's new national flag.³⁹ "Full of wild enthusiasm, the family at Arlington voted at once that the banner should unfold its brave States-rights constellation from a staff on our river-front," Ripley recalled after the war. They cobbled together materials on the plantation to fashion a make-shift flag that resembled the one that emerged from the meeting in Montgomery, Alabama. Ripley remembered that "there was red flannel and white cotton cloth in the house, but nothing blue we could find; so a messenger was hastily dispatched to town with orders for goods of that color, no matter what the quality or shade."⁴⁰ Once they had sewn the flag and procured a staff from the slaves on the plantation, they stuck it in the ground at a promontory in the river for all passersby to see and "its gay banner loosened to the breeze, the enthusiastic little party danced round and round, singing and shouting in exuberance of spirit."⁴¹

Once Louisiana seceded from the United States and the Confederacy became a reality, Louisiana's sugar planters of both ethnicities trumpeted their support for the southern war effort and voiced their opinion that the war would end soon in southern victory. Valcour Aime helped to raise troops to fill local regiments, giving \$500 to each of eight units that St. James Parish raised; in honor of this support, Company D of La 30th Regiment named itself the Valcour Aime Guards.⁴² Alexander Franklin Pugh who provides some of the best commentary for the war and whose daily journal traces the ebb and flow of the war's events, discussed the excitement

³⁹ Arlington Plantation stood where Brightside Drive runs into the river today, and locals called it Arlington because it resembled the Lee family home on the Potomac River in Alexandria, Virginia.

⁴⁰ Ripley, 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁴² Matrana, 183.

immediately after secession. Following breakfast on 22 February 1861 Pugh “went [to Paincourtville] to witness the turn out on account of the Birthday of Washington. It was a great display of military and the people. Everybody seemed to be out,” and that “night there was an illumination, and everybody seemed to have turned out again to witness that.”⁴³ This scene played out in small towns across the southern Confederacy, and the uniqueness of sugarcane slavery and the split between Creoles and Anglo-Americans did not dampen the enthusiasm for independence and war in Louisiana’s southern parishes one bit. For the first time, it seems that Louisianans put aside their ethnic distinctions almost entirely and focused on winning the war, gaining independence, and defending slavery. The war seems to have bolstered the sugar planters, creating an almost unified class for the first time in the state’s history. When Pugh travelled to New Orleans to conduct the spring’s business, he found the “city more lively than it was in February. The racing following are assembling for the races which will commence on Saturday,” which, of course, drew the attention of Duncan Kenner and his horse racing colleagues even as war loomed before them.⁴⁴ Unable to set aside his personal hobbies, Kenner remained focused heavily on his horse racing ventures, maintaining his stable of thoroughbreds into the war and partaking in important races as 1861 dawned when he won a \$500 purse at the New Orleans race course.⁴⁵

But most Louisianans did not go to the race track. Americans and Creoles flocked to enlist in a display of solidarity that signaled a coming end to ethnic tension. Regiments filled up

⁴³ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), February 22, 1861, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, March 28, 1861.

⁴⁵ New Orleans *Daily Delta*, January 2, 1861 reported the results for the New Year’s Day horse races in New Orleans. Kenner’s racing stable helped to save his life when he visited his home at Ashland Plantation during the war. When Union soldiers knocked at his door, Kenner fled successfully on the back of one of his thoroughbreds.

as excitement ran across the swamps and bayous. Sons of prominent sugar planters joined the Confederate Army, including Anne Octavie Bringier's husband, Allen Thomas, who organized an infantry battalion in St. Landry Parish which soon grew to regimental strength. He served with his unit before the Confederate surrender at Vicksburg, but he quickly received a parole and carried the campaign report from General John C. Pemberton to President Davis in Richmond. He eventually returned to command, obtaining the rank of brigadier general before taking command of a division until the end of the war.⁴⁶ In addition to this son-in-law, Aglae Bringier also had to witness her young sons, Doradou (Dadou) and Louis Amedee, and grandsons Julien Bringier Trist and Nicholas Trist march to war. Louis Amedee, a stout believer in the southern cause, joined the militia before Louisiana's secession, and Governor Moore assigned him to a colonelcy in the state militia giving him the task of raising troops. Likely, his bi-lingual expertise and high social standing helped him to raise the troops he required. When Admiral David Farragut steamed up the Mississippi River and New Orleans fell, Louis Amedee's unit was among the last to leave the city. Shortly thereafter, he transferred to Company A of Colonel John Sims Scott's Cavalry, serving with several prominent family members, brothers-in-law George and James Tureaud, and nephew, Emile Tureaud. A year into the war, Dadou and Nicholas hoped to join Scott's First Cavalry as well, but upon reaching the assembly point in Corinth, Mississippi, they found that their mounts, which they had sent ahead, did not arrive safely. Luckily, they located Julien Trist and joined his infantry unit, the Crescent Regiment, so the family essentially served together until after the battle of Shiloh. Following that terrible conflict in April 1862, they procured mounts and signed transferred to Leed's Light Horse, a

⁴⁶ Bringier Papers, IV: 11-12a, Historic New Orleans Collection; Glenn R. Conrad, *A Dictionary of Louisiana Biography* (New Orleans: Louisiana Historical Association, 1988).

body guard unit assigned to General Leonidas Polk.⁴⁷ Thus the Creoles marched to war alongside their Anglo brothers. With a couple of notable exceptions, Leopold Amant's "Creole Regiment" for example, most of the regiments that formed in Louisiana reflected the geography of their origin and consisted of both ethnicities fighting together to oppose the northern invaders.

Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans hoped to position themselves comfortably to withstand wartime. Since planters and their slaves had already planted the sugar crop for 1860-1861, they turned their attention to the summer's activities following the bombardment of Fort Sumter in far-away South Carolina. The war seemed as if it might take place thousands of miles away to those who lived on the frontier of American society in the southwestern corner of the country. But Louisianans soon realized that they would feature heavily in the grand strategy of the Union war plans due to their location along the state's vital waterways. Because the Mississippi River became a dominant feature in Union strategy, the sugar planters who lived along its banks came in contact with the enemy much earlier than most planters who lived in the Confederate interior in states like Mississippi and Alabama.

While the governor readied the state for its contribution to the national effort to wage war and prepared for the state's defenses, individual citizens also made arrangements to position themselves for the conflict ahead. Their hopes for the future rested largely on their ability to harvest the 1860-1861 crop and ship it to market in New Orleans or beyond.⁴⁸ And in the months immediately following secession, most could not imagine that they would face any

⁴⁷ Much of the Bringier Family Genealogy, especially the portions regarding their military service, derive from "Mother in the Civil War: The War Time Reminiscences of Wilhelmine Trist," Trist Wood Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. Bringier Papers, III: 47-49, 53-54a, Historic New Orleans Collection.

⁴⁸ The 1861 sugarcane crop marked the largest one up to that point with 459,410 hogsheads produced across the sugar parishes. P. A. Champomier, *Statement of the Sugar Crop, 1861-1862*, vi.

prohibitive obstacles to their achievement of that end. They also contracted to buy extra goods that would see them through the coming year and help them to avoid any price increases that they feared might accompany the looming interruption of regular supplies.⁴⁹ Just like in many pockets of the American South, white southerners attempted to and often did continue to practice their everyday activities as if the war did not rage around them.

Though they sought to continue their daily plantation regimen unimpeded, many Louisianans flocked to the Confederate banner and it seems that Creoles and Anglo-Americans served the southern armies with equal enthusiasm because both viewed their service as a rite of defense of their state and the institution of slavery. The war essentially galvanized the slaveholding class of two disparate ethnicities, bringing it together over the greatest commonality that existed between the two ethnic groups: their perceived right to own slaves as property. Throughout the archives, letters written in French to family members on the home front accompany others written in English, illustrating the complex sugar-planting society that transformed from one of ethnic schism and dissent to a new vision of shared whiteness in the face of an abominable foe who sought to abolish slavery and turn upend southern society.

Alexander Pugh reveled in the coming of war and reported gleefully on April 13 that “the war has commenced. The attack was made on Fort Sumter yestermorning at 4 oclock. The war feeling is getting up,” and to answer the need for troops a “company of volunteers have been ordered from Terrebonne. They will leave tomorrow morning for Pensacola.”⁵⁰ His neighbors joined the army and marched enthusiastically to war while Pugh himself stayed behind to continue planting and rouse local defenses. Less than one week after the firing on Fort Sumter

⁴⁹ For examples of what appear to be the purchase of extra goods, see Gay (Edward J. and Family) Papers; Minor (William J. and Family) Papers; Randolph (John H.) Papers.

⁵⁰ Diary for 1859-1865 (vol. 2), April 13, 1861, Alexander Franklin Pugh Papers, LSU.

and Lincoln's ensuing call for 75,000 volunteers, Alexander Franklin Pugh travelled to Napoleonville where he met with Walter Pugh so that they could assume a leadership role within the local parish in preparation for war. While in Napoleonville, the two Pughs "got out Hand bills for a mass meeting there on Saturday for the purpose of arousing a military spirit among our people. We gave them pretty good circulation before night."⁵¹ The next day, Judge Howell arrived at A. Franklin Pugh's plantation with the "glorious news" of Virginia's secession which Pugh predicted would "mean the secession of all the other Southern states."⁵² Pugh wrote diligently of developments in faraway states indicating his strong desire to remain well-informed so that he could help to bolster support in Terrebonne Parish to help strengthen the Confederacy locally and nationally. He remained abreast of the eastern campaigns and governmental developments in the North and the South, making a daily log of events as they occurred and his reaction to them. "The revolution is still going on and as the ball rolls it gathers strength," roared Pugh, citing that "Old Abe is in despair in Washington and the Star of the West has been seized. Hurrah for the South."⁵³

Unfortunately, for the Pughs, the outlook took a severe turn for the worse and by November 1862, Pugh exclaimed sadly that he "staid at home all day. Times are very gloomy, and the future promises to be worse."⁵⁴ One month later, Pugh's mood seemed even more foul when he wrote that he "staid at home all day. What a miserable time we are having here on this bayou. Existence is hardly tolerable." He stayed home during these days "for fear of unpleasant

⁵¹ Ibid., April 18, 1861.

⁵² Ibid., April 19, 1861.

⁵³ Ibid., April 21, 1861.

⁵⁴ Ibid., November 20, 1862.

visitors in my absence,” because reports from local planters had begun to indicate a northern military presence in the nearby countryside that threatened livestock and supplies while encouraging slaves to flee their masters.⁵⁵ Clearly the flood of enthusiasm had dissipated in a very short time.

The northern strategists outlined a plan that they believed would surround the Confederacy, restrict its ability to fight a war, and slowly choke it until the “rebellion” ended. The Anaconda Plan set out to weaken the South’s military capability by strangling it and preventing goods and supplies from entering or exiting the southern states.⁵⁶ Union army and naval forces sought to cut the Confederate states into smaller and smaller pieces, effectively stamping out the peoples’ ability to conduct a war. Following through with this plan, federal forces very soon reached Louisiana’s sugar planters with brutal effectiveness. This reality became especially clear in the commercial center of New Orleans and the surrounding countryside that relied on the city.

While many Anglo-American planters had sold their sugarcane as far away as New York City, St. Louis, and Liverpool prior to the war, they now faced an inability to get the nearly 460,000 hogsheads that they had produced to those markets. The crop of 1860-1861, a bumper crop, went largely unsold; planters failed to generate significant income for that year. John Burnside the proprietor of the massive Houmas Plantation, expressed his desperation and concern for the future to the visiting English journalist, William Howard Russell. Having just purchased the plantation for an astonishing \$1,000,000 before the war, “he reckoned on an

⁵⁵ Ibid., December 20-21, 1862.

⁵⁶ To gain a clearer understanding of Union Naval operations as they pertained to the Anaconda Plan in practice, see Kevin Dougherty, *Strangling the Confederacy: Coastal Operations in the American Civil War* (Philadelphia: Casemate Publishing, 2010); James McPherson, *War on the Waters: The Union and Confederate Navies, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

income of £100,000 for his sugar alone; but if he cannot send it North it is impossible to estimate the diminution of his profits.”⁵⁷ Russell pondered that Burnside might already regret “that he embarked his capital in these great sugar-swamps, and that he would gladly now invest it at a loss in [Ireland], of which he is yet a subject.”⁵⁸ It did not take long for the Anaconda Plan and Union forces to reach Louisiana’s sugar planters, driving the Creoles and Anglo-Americans together, largely due to their shared suffering as northern armies and naval squadrons plied the rivers and swamps of southern Louisiana.

Martin Gordon, Jr., the member of the Bringier family who initially opposed secession, became one of the leading administrators of New Orleans’s defenses. Once the levee of unionism broke, secession overflowed the efforts of its adversaries, including Gordon, and he joined his colleagues in defense of the state. John T. Monroe, the mayor of New Orleans, quickly appointed him to the Committee on Public Safety and he worked diligently to coordinate Confederate efforts to build the city’s defenses. Southern strategists gambled that northern forces could not succeed in reaching New Orleans, but they quickly succumbed to disappointment as the urban gem of the South fell to the United States without struggle. The war arrived in Louisiana’s sugar parishes in the spring of 1862 when David Farragut’s Union naval forces chugged up the Mississippi River, running the gauntlet between two forts that guarded the entrance to the river from the Gulf of Mexico.⁵⁹ Surging past Forts St. Philip and Jackson,

⁵⁷ The original quotation reported that Burnside wanted to achieve a net profit of £100,000 but for agreement with his purchase price of \$1,000,000 I used a historical currency converter to ascertain the equivalent value in American dollars for 1860.

⁵⁸ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* 2 vols. (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1863), 1:409.

⁵⁹ For extraordinarily detailed account of the war in Louisiana, see Donald S. Frazier’s four-part series: Donald S. Frazier, *Fire in the Cane Field: The Federal Invasion of Louisiana and Texas, January 1861-January 1863* (Buffalo Gap, TX: State House Press, 2009); *Thunder Across the Swamp: The Fight for the Lower Mississippi, February 1863-May 1863* (Buffalo Gap, TX: State House Press, 2011); the final titles in the series are forthcoming with State House Press and promise to continue Frazier’s excellent work, bringing the war to a close.

Farragut's squadron arrived at New Orleans nearly unopposed.⁶⁰ On the far southwestern frontier of the wide expanse of the Confederacy, Louisiana's defenses relied largely on its remoteness and the inability of Union forces to navigate the complex bayous and swamps on foot. Unable to defend New Orleans successfully, Gordon remained in the city, becoming a unique figure for the observance of conditions within the city, helping to illustrate how both Creoles and Anglo-Americans navigated the tenuous years during the war.⁶¹

Because the planters all lived on the rivers and bayous of southern Louisiana, which northern forces also used as their roadways for strategic maneuvers, their sugar plantations soon came face-to-face with the conflicting armies.⁶² Planters' estates became the sites of combat and tactical operations as both armies attempted to position themselves across the difficult terrain. When the Union forces, under Admiral David Farragut and General Benjamin Butler (and

⁶⁰ For a unique look at how Admiral Farragut ran the gauntlet between Forts Jackson and St. Philip, wherein the author suggests that the Confederacy had alienated its own defenders (German and Irish immigrants) in Fort Jackson, see Michael D. Pierson, *Mutiny at Fort Jackson: The Untold Story of the Fall of New Orleans* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

⁶¹ I largely used the narrative for Gordon from Craig A. Bauer, *Creole Genesis: The Bringier Family and Antebellum Plantation Life in Louisiana* (Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2011). I found many letters pertaining to Gordon's pre-war business and family dealings but could not locate any wartime writings myself. Gordon's involvement is confirmed in Fred Harvey Harrington, "A Peace Mission of 1863," *The American Historical Review* 46 (October 1940): 76-86; *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter cited as *Official Records*), Series 3, Vol. 2 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1900), 796.

⁶² Recent work has show masterfully how the marching armies influenced the decisions of slaves on plantations in Confederate territory and historians have found direct correlations between the movement of slaves and the maneuvers of Union armies. For examples of these works, including those not limited to Louisiana, see Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); James L. Roark, *Masters without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); Yael A. Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012). Edward Ayers and Scott Nesbit at the University of Richmond are currently conducting invaluable research for an online visual database which can be found at <http://dsl.richmond.edu/emancipation/> (accessed 10 January 2012). Here, viewers can see the direct correlation between Union army movements and the self- or legal emancipation of slavery.

subsequently, Nathaniel P. Banks) took control of New Orleans they began to exert their power over the city's markets while extending their reach out from the city. Northern leaders wanted to use New Orleans as a base of operations from which they could launch forays upriver into the Lower Mississippi Valley while the western armies under Generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman snaked southward to meet them, cutting off the Trans-Mississippi from the rest of the Confederacy.⁶³ Those planters who lived on the Mississippi River first came in contact with the Union navies and armies who moved northwestward along the river toward Baton Rouge, the state's capital. Northern soldiers found rich plantations with thousands of slaves employed at numerous tasks under the tutelage of a very small number of white planters and their families because many white Louisianans had joined the Confederate armies.

Not all Louisianans trumpeted the triumph of secession, however. Only one year into the war, Robert Butler lamented over the downfall of the Union and the failure of compromise. He wrote emotionally to his sister about the sadness that he had experienced following the death of a mutual friend whom he described as a "poor old gentleman, how many there are and those too the best in our land, who share the same opinions with him, who look upon both sides [of the war] as infatuated, whose heart still clings to the Union and liberty our fathers bequeathed us and which demagogues and a people crossed by prosperity have wantonly broken up."⁶⁴ Henry Minor spoke even more directly about the problems wrought by war when he wrote to his mother, Rebecca, that "it worries me very much to hear how much trouble Pa has with the negroes. Is there nothing by which you can make them work, stopping rations and pay, do you

⁶³ Earl Hess, *The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012) provides a very useful of the overall operations in the Western Theater.

⁶⁴ Robert Butler to his sister, July 26, 1862, Butler Family Papers, LSU.

not think it would make them work.” Hinting that Louisianans already sought a new labor system whereby they could still use African-American laborers, Minor wrote hopefully that “the officers here give us the power to employ negroes for a month or longer, and if they do not work faithfully and fulfill their contract, we have the power to put them in jail, and are not bound to pay them anything, so you see we have a little power over them yet.”⁶⁵ As soon as federal forces entered the neighborhood for any extended period of time, it spurred the post-war movement toward a freed labor system. Thus, Louisiana became a testing point for what other southerners would adopt following the abolition of war and Creoles their Anglo-American neighbors worked together to design a system that helped to conserve their racial superiority.

The single area where ethnicity seemed to have dictated the actions of the slaveholder lay in the planters’ reactions to northern armies and navies who traversed the waterways and roadways across southern Louisiana. While many voices hurraed at the onset of the American Civil War, they soon turned to more calculated whispers as the northern forces moved out from New Orleans and into the countryside. When the sugar planters came in contact with the federals, they often turned from patriotic defiance to a more timid stance as they attempted to minimize their losses and maintain some semblance of power that they possessed before the war. John Burnside, the owner of the great Houmas Plantation, survived the war with his holdings intact because he saved his mansion and property by using his Irish nativism. When federal officials attempted to confiscate his property, he declared immunity because he owed allegiance

⁶⁵ Henry Minor to Rebecca Minor, December 13, 1863, Minor (William J. and Family) Papers, LSU. The system to which Minor refers is the topic of John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana’s Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2001).

to the British Crown. As a British citizen, northern soldiers could not prosecute him or seize his property on the grounds of treason.⁶⁶

Martin Gordon, Jr. used his connections within the city as a leading merchant and sugar factor in order to maintain friendly relations with both Union and Confederate officials; he employed these relationships to his own and his family's advantage. Gordon became especially close to General Nathaniel P. Banks when he took command of the city following Benjamin Butler's reign. They became so cordial that Banks chose Gordon to serve as an emissary to Richmond in June 1863 in a failed attempt at negotiating the end of the war, illustrating Banks's self-serving desire to maneuver his military position to garner political capital because he hoped to gain a nomination for the upcoming 1864 presidential race. This doomed attempt at peace reached a predictable end in failure, but Gordon completed the assignment to the best of his ability. He probably also hoped for peace so that his family and New Orleans's commercial sector could return to its pre-war dominance as quickly as possible.⁶⁷

Shortly after his mission to Richmond, Gordon found himself behind Confederate lines meeting with General Edmund Kirby Smith in Shreveport, Louisiana. Gordon hoped to gain an audience with Kirby Smith because he wanted to ask the commander of all forces for the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department if he could obtain an ample supply of cotton to help guarantee the "relief of the suffering families of Confederate citizens and for our soldiers" in New Orleans.⁶⁸ Gordon hoped to use his mercantile connections in order to alleviate some of

⁶⁶ Several items in the Houmas Plantations and William Porcher Miles Collection, The Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill confirm the interpreters' story that Burnside retained his plantation after the war when many of his neighbors did not because he had maintained his status as a British subject.

⁶⁷ Fred Harvey Harrington, 76-86 details this mission.

⁶⁸ Edmund Kirby Smith to Major General Richard Taylor, January 24, 1864, *Official Records*, Series I, Volume 34, Part 2, 911.

the difficulties that Confederate citizens in New Orleans faced during their time under Union occupation. The records give no indication as to whether or not the Confederate commander granted this request but Kirby Smith did, in fact, pass along the note to Gordon's brother-in-law General Richard Taylor.⁶⁹ The next spring, Gordon again met with Smith in order to report to him the size of the invasion force that General Banks possessed ahead of the Red River Campaign. No answer to his report of "an overwhelming force" exists but Craig Bauer discusses the complexity of this situation as Gordon sought to play both sides to help him maintain financial security.⁷⁰ Gordon maintained a close relationship with General Banks and Union administrators throughout the war in New Orleans but he also remained loyal to the state of Louisiana and to his brother-in-law, Confederate general, Richard Taylor. Most assuredly, he used his unique two-sided relationships to benefit himself and his family first and foremost because he possessed connections to both sides of military power in southern Louisiana.

Gordon, in fact, travelled with the Red River Campaign along with other cotton speculators who hoped to acquire cotton from this interior region which had remained largely untouched by the war up to this point.⁷¹ The larger Union force quickly overwhelmed the smaller Confederate army, led by his brother-in-law and the Confederates destroyed much of the

⁶⁹ In addition to their relationship by marriage, Martin Gordon served as the factor for Taylor's Fashion Plantation and when Taylor declared bankruptcy in 1866, Gordon made no claims against Fashion allow Taylor to regain his property in federal court. For further discussion of Taylor's post-war financial struggles, see Parrish, 456-458.

⁷⁰ Edmund Kirby Smith to Major General Richard Taylor, March 13, 1864, *Official Records*, Series I, Volume 34, Part 1, 493-494.

⁷¹ For further analysis of the Red River Campaign, a glaring failure for Union General Nathaniel P. Banks, consult Ludwell H. Johnson, *Red River Campaign: Politics & Cotton in the Civil War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1993); Gary D. Joiner, *Through the Howling Wilderness: The 1864 Red River Campaign and Union Failure in the West* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006); *One Damn Blunder from Beginning to End: The Red River Campaign of 1864* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003); T. Michael Parish, *Richard Taylor*.

cotton before the federals could confiscate it.⁷² Following this incident, however, the Confederate forces turned the tide at the battle of Mansfield, halting the Federals advance in the worst Union defeat west of the Mississippi River in the four years of war. This action brought the campaign to a rapid halt and a frustrated Gordon, along with his fellow speculators returned to New Orleans essentially empty-handed. Many of the Union commanders did not seem to have as difficult of a time acquiring items through speculation as did Gordon and his colleagues. General Banks and some of his other administrators soon found themselves accused of taking cotton and other plantation supplies without following proper military protocol which drew the ire of many local planters, even after they had reconciled themselves under Union control.⁷³

John Burnside found a loop hole in Union military policy that allowed him to withstand the invasion largely unscathed but many of his neighbors did not have such luck in their negotiations with northern forces; here the only, but very significant, distinction between Creoles' and Anglo-Americans' experiences with the war becomes most evident. The Creoles possessed strong ties to the state of Louisiana and this bond dictated their interactions with federal soldiers; Creoles sought to remove themselves from the conflict as quickly as possible but they wanted to remain within the state's borders. Alcée Fortier remembered the day when federal gun boats arrived at Le Petit Versailles to bombard his grandfather, Valcour Aime's, estate. The entire family ran toward the levee to use the earthen barrier as their protector and "we stood behind the levee, my sisters and myself, our schoolmistress and our nurses, while our father stood on the levee to look...at the shells that generally passed over our heads." The home

⁷² Parrish, 318-320. Professor Parrish suggests that Abraham Lincoln encouraged federal forces to speculate in cotton and sugarcane in order to test the patriotism of planters in their path. Additionally, when Taylor ordered that the cotton be fired, the public outcry at this waste caused him significant discomfort.

⁷³ Charles Roland discusses the possible speculation and the looting of plantations by federal soldiers and officers during several campaigns during the war. For some specific discussion of this topic, see Roland, 66-74.

escaped the bombardment but “the houses of a number of our people, our relatives, were considerably damaged.”⁷⁴ After heading to the Teche region, away from the front lines, they returned home to a nearly ruined plantation, and Fortier closed his account by stating “from this ruin we sons of rich planters, have now partially recovered, and the men who were boys in 1862 do not keep any unkind remembrances of the war.”⁷⁵ Up and down the Mississippi River, his fellow Creoles often took the path of least resistance in order to maintain their familial estates on which they had thrived for generations. As they had never participated in the westward migration that motivated Anglo-American planters to come to Louisiana in the first place, they largely desired to stay in place instead of leaving the state.

The Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, because they participated in the westward migration before the Civil War, had opportunities by which they might gather their moveable property and attempt to outrun the conflict by fleeing to Texas.⁷⁶ Many Anglo planters either moved their entire families, both white and black, along with their supplies and as much as they could carry westward, or they sent the bulk of their property with a responsible family member or trusted friend so that they could stay in Louisiana to protect their assets. Even before the war, Louisiana’s sugar planters had explored the possibility of continuing their migration westward into Texas. John H. Randolph received several letters from a friend who hoped that they could raise sugarcane in Texas and urged Randolph to invest in this enterprise. Ironically, on the very day that South Carolina seceded, Randolph purchased a map of the area surrounding Richardson,

⁷⁴ Account given by Alcée Fortier, cited in Herman De Bache Seebold, *Old Louisiana Plantation Homes and Family Trees* (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing Company, 1941), 176.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Andrew Torget has provided a fine study on the westward migration to Texas up to 1845, focusing heavily on the cotton planters and their westward movement but his analysis informs this conversation for sugar planters as well. Andrew Torget, “Between Two Empires: Slavery in the Texas Borderlands, 1820-1845” PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2009.

Texas from Peter O'Donnell in New Orleans for \$7.60.⁷⁷ Several years earlier, one of Randolph's associates had written him about his opportunities in Texas, encouraging him to take a chance on the recently opened Texas lands. "I was led to the belief that you, possibly might consent to invest some of your means in Texas, provided you could do so safely and profitably," wrote Tyler Raymond from Austin, Texas. After proposing potential terms of business, Raymond assured Randolph that "I am not so vain as to believe that these operations I speak of here would not be attended with some risk, and if made by persons in acquainted with Texas and her people with a good deal of risk, but I can say I think truthfully that I could make them and get a good genuine title every time free from litigation."⁷⁸ In less than two years, Randolph had acquired patents for land purchased through D. C. Freeman for less than 50 cents per acre.⁷⁹ Randolph's symbolic decision to invest in new western lands completed his westward migration from Virginia to Mississippi, Louisiana, and, finally, to Texas. His new purchase also provided a safe haven for his investments when the war came to southern Louisiana in the spring of 1861. He moved a great portion of his operations westward to escape Nottoway Plantation's riverfront exposure.

As the war dragged on into the third year and Randolph's holdings became increasingly tenuous in Louisiana, he and his fellow sugar planters began evacuating the state, leaving their holdings and the items that they could not transport to the northern armies and naval squadrons that plied the Mississippi River and its banks. Randolph's daughter, Cornelia provided a third-person account of her life at Nottoway Plantation under the clever pseudonym "M. R. Ailenroc,"

⁷⁷ Bill for purchase, December 20, 1860, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU. Today, Richardson, Texas lies in the northern portion of the Dallas cosmopolitan area.

⁷⁸ Tyler Raymond to John Randolph, February 26, 1856, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁷⁹ D. C. Freeman to John Randolph, March 11, 1858, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

(Cornelia backwards). In her account she remembered “when Mr. R[andolph] heard the enemy were near he took many of his slaves to a secluded spot in Texas to keep them together until the war should be over.” Additionally, he took furniture, glassware, and china to keep these family pieces safe from northern soldiers and to help furnish his Texas house while he remained away from his primary estate.⁸⁰

Randolph negotiated terms with Robert Metcalfe of Washington County, Texas near current-day Navasota. Metcalfe granted Randolph’s family and the slaves that he brought to Texas full permission to “reside upon [his] lands with their negroes and...to make use of any and all timber thereon and cultivate the land as long as the war may continue or at their pleasure free of all rent.” Randolph would have complete access to all of the buildings that existed on the property and “It is further understood and agreed by and between the parties that the Prairie place owned by Judge Baylor is rented for the term of one year, (to date from the first of February, 1864) to be paid for by giving one third (1/3) of the corn crop owned thereon.”⁸¹ The Louisiana sugar planter could count himself lucky to have established such business connections in Texas during the antebellum period so that he could take advantage of these relationships when the tide of war turned against the Confederacy. Once he had established himself temporarily in Texas, he addressed his slave force, telling them “he would be a good master to them and hoped they would give him no trouble, that some of them were separated from their families just as he was from his, but that all who wished it would be reunited in due time.”⁸² Emily Jane Liddell

⁸⁰ M. R. Ailenroc, *The White Castle of Louisiana* (Louisville, KY: John P. Morton & Company, 1903), 57.

⁸¹ Agreement between Joseph R. and Robert Metcalfe and John Randolph and Franklin Hudson, March 3, 1864, Randolph (John H.) Papers, LSU.

⁸² Ailenroc, 57.

Randolph, John Randolph's wife remained behind with the children and a select few slaves to make sure that their home escaped destruction.⁸³

Arlington Plantation, the site of such patriotism immediately following secession, quickly became a site of disorder and chaos as the federal soldiers arrived in the area. With Baton Rouge in danger, the McHatton family made prompt efforts to flee the area, heading westward toward Texas. They left Arlington hastily on 28 December 1862 "leaving the sugar-house crowded to its utmost capacity with the entire crop of sugar and molasses of the previous year...leaving cattle grazing in the fields, sheep wandering over the levee...clothes too fine for me to wear now hanging in the *armoires*...table spread."⁸⁴ Shortly down the road, the McHatton family encountered their overseer who "instead of remaining on the plantation attending to his duties, had taken flight on the first appearance of the Federals." Upset, Ripley recalled how the overseer had "departed without the slightest notification, leaving me to do the best I could, without the help of a living soul but Willy; seeking a place of safety for his worthless self."⁸⁵ Clearly Arlington's overseer had acted on motivations and allegiances that differed from his employer, marking a stark contrast between a "good" overseer and one who challenged his employer excessively. Nonetheless, Arlington's refugees sallied westward toward Texas which Ripley described as "the great State that opened its hospitable doors to hundreds of refugees fleeing like

⁸³ Cornelia Randolph stayed behind with her mother who stood her ground against federal forces who shelled the plantation, drove away their sheep and cattle, and took the estate's firearms. She recounted how Mrs. Randolph defended the home against the federal soldiers until all of the remaining ladies at Nottoway took the oath of allegiance to protect their home from insistent foraging. *Ibid.*, 58-61.

⁸⁴ Ripley, 59.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 61.

ourselves from our homes,” and her family did not flee alone; countless others followed in their path, but all of them Anglo-American planters.⁸⁶

The alternative to fleeing in the wake of Federal invasion would have meant staying behind and negotiating with the northern soldiers. One army chaplain described what he saw when he ventured out from New Orleans along the Mississippi River. “If you leave the city, and take the level road to Baton Rouge, George Hepworth recounted, “the desolation becomes all the more marked. There is not a single planter in the department who has not personally suffered through this war. Their crops of sugar-cane, yielding from five hundred to a thousand hogsheads of sugar, are still standing in February; and there is no hope of saving them.”⁸⁷ Planters wanted to take their slaves as far away from the front lines as possible because many of the slaves who remained in the sugar parishes refused to work or fled their masters. John Ransdell, a Rapides Parish sugar planter and close confidant to Louisiana’s wartime governor, Thomas O. Moore, recorded the influence of northern soldiers when they appeared near his plantation. “The immediate effect of the arrival of the Federal troops was complete demoralization of the Negroes,” decried Ransdell, remarking that “all work was stopped at once and all discipline thrown aside. Many of the soldiers came on to the place and had conversations with the blacks and the result was always greater dissatisfaction.” Word reached Ransdell that the previously obedient and happy slaves “were elated beyond expression at being told they were free and that they could do as they pleased.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁸⁷ George Hughes Hepworth, *The Whip, Hoe, and Sword: or, the Gulf Department in '63* (Boston, 1864), 92.

⁸⁸ Journal Entry for May 13, 1863, John H. Ransdell Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

The hard-line racial control began to crumble as soon as northern soldiers arrived in any neighborhood if the planters' family did not remove their slaves from the region. Shortly thereafter, Ransdell wrote another letter to Moore informing him of conditions on the governor's plantation while he occupied his office in Baton Rouge. Ransdell informed Moore that "the arrival of the advance of the Yankees alone turned the Negroes crazy. They became utterly demoralized at once and every thing like subordination and restraint was at an end... the Yankees...telling them every thing was theirs and that they were free to do as they pleased...for the space of a week they had a perfect jubilee."⁸⁹ The freed African-Americans fled to the woods where they rounded up nearby hogs and sheep, killed them, and consumed them. To the white master class who had grown accustomed to order and rule, this likely seemed like the end of their world as any previous sense of peace turned into total chaos and self-preservation. Ransdell summed up his feelings about the institution of slavery succinctly when he declared "my feelings, too, have entirely changed towards the Negro. I now care nothing for them save for 'their work.'"⁹⁰ Any concern that Ransdell possessed of the benignity of slavery and respect that he had for the African-American laborer disappeared when he realized that the reciprocal loyalty upon which southern slaveholders had founded the entire institution had proven fictitious.

Sugar planters trod hesitantly toward secession in the winter of 1860-1861 but after Louisiana left from the Union, both Creoles and Anglos turned enthusiastically to conducting the war that they believed would protect their liberty through slavery once and for all. The new southern nation would stand as a beacon for the institution, protecting it explicitly and

⁸⁹ John Ransdell to Thomas O. Moore, May 24, 1863, John H. Ransdell Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

⁹⁰ John Ransdell to Thomas O. Moore, June 6, 1863, John H. Ransdell Papers, Historic New Orleans Collection.

strengthening the slaveholding class no matter its internal differences. The two ethnic communities which had worked tirelessly to remain unique and largely independent of one another during the antebellum period suddenly converged to fight a war that would benefit both groups if they achieved success. But Louisiana's sugar planters nearly lost everything when they gambled on independence and Creoles and Anglo-Americans both necessarily emerged from the war into a much different world. This new world, predicated on the abolition of slavery, challenged residents of both ethnicities and they worked together to maintain racial control, putting aside the differences that had split them for almost one hundred years. While 1,291 sugar estates existed in the state's borders in 1861, fewer than 200 remained in 1865. Production fell catastrophically from 549,410 hogsheads in 1861-1862 to around 10,000 in 1864-1865. The value of the region's sugar industry dropped from \$194,000,000 in 1861 to between \$25,000,000 and \$30,000,000 in 1865.⁹¹ Sugar plantations looked very different following the American Civil War.⁹² Although, free African-Americans toiled in conditions not unlike that of slavery, they possessed a greater degree of freedom to work as they wished and move from one plantation to another.⁹³ Additionally, vast corporations consumed even the larger of the pre-war estates and the sugar plantations became much bigger units than they had in the Old South. Both Creoles and Anglo-Americans worked diligently to hang on to some semblance of their antebellum existence and to do so they put aside their differences, emerging from the war, not as Creole or

⁹¹ John David Smith compiled these numbers in his foreword to a new edition of Charles Roland, *Louisiana Sugar Plantations during the Civil War*, xiii. For access to the original compilation of figures, see Glenn R. Conrad and Ray F. Lucas, *White Gold: A Brief History of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1795-1995* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1995); John Alfred Heitmann, *The Modernization of the Louisiana Sugar Industry, 1860-1910* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

⁹² According to Heitmann and Conrad and Lucas, Louisiana's sugar production did not return to pre-war high until the 1890s.

⁹³ For the best analysis of the shift away from slave labor on Louisiana's sugar plantations, see John C. Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields*.

Anglo overlords of slave labor, but a white master class, positioning itself into a stance of white supremacy over the black laboring class.

EPILOGUE: RACE CONSUMES ETHNICITY

Louisiana Creoles clung tightly to their cultural identity for generations with parents proudly passing their cultural distinctions on to their children even as an increasing Creole-Anglo unity over the perpetuation of slavery brought the two closer communities together during the antebellum years. While the two groups forged an alliance in the defense of slavery, Creole heritage still provided a great deal to those who claimed it. Most Louisianans of French, Spanish, and German descent celebrated their background separately. Their Anglo-American counterparts flooded into the state following the Louisiana Purchase, but they never dislodged the *ancienne population* from its place of honor, wealth, and reverence. James Oakes, in his study, has argued that the “French slaveholders certainly survived until the Civil War, but...their influence was diminished as the aggressive, expansive, and upwardly mobile culture of American slaveholding overwhelmed the conservative, hierarchical, and paternalistic culture of the Louisiana culture.”¹ But my analysis has illustrated that Creoles *did* maintain their culture and French slaveholders not only survived but, rather, they thrived all the way until the American Civil War. Certainly, a close inspection of *slaveholding practices* seems to indicate that the divergence between cultures ceased to exist by the wartime years, yet other cultural distinctions remained as strong as they had been in 1815.

The architecture of the homes and the layouts of these plantations continued to distinguish the two ethnic communities, becoming obvious examples of Creole pride. These manifestations of ethnic dignity remain present on the landscape to this day. An affinity for speaking and writing in French remained strong even through the wartime years as Confederate soldiers wrote home to their families in Louisiana in their native language. Creoles clung tightly

¹ James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (1982; repr., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 45.

to Roman Catholicism during this period, and they preferred to practice their business locally in New Orleans and the state at large, foregoing national networks in which the Americans participated.

Subtle hints of differing strategies contrasted their plantation administration, though the two communities converged out of necessity when it came to many managerial details. Creoles, who typically owned one plantation and remained in residence on that estate, hired overseers less often than their Anglo colleagues who often owned several plantations across parish lines. A careful analysis of the historical record indicates that the Creoles continued to think independently and freely from 1815 until the Civil War. And, contrary to Oakes's assertion that their status had reached its zenith earlier in the nineteenth century, many prominent families, including the Romans, Destrehans/Rosts, Bringiers, and Landrys all still held powerful social influence until the war. If anything threatened their status and financial stability, it came in the form of four long years of war in which hundreds of thousands of Americans died; it came in a war that threatened the legacies of *both* Creoles and Anglo-Americans.

But the two communities did in fact converge. They maintained their ethnic identities at the same time that they exhibited increasingly similar patterns of behavior in the decades leading up to the Civil War. Plantation management, especially, demanded a steady hand and careful decision-making in order to achieve success. Raising sugarcane in an environment that both supported and threatened the crop each year, sugar planters of both ethnicities had to remain alert, savvy, and practice careful administrative choices. Ensuring that slaveholders kept their laborers fed, healthy, and working as happily as they could, simply made for good business. Common sense dictated that slaveholders, no matter their ethnic background, perceptions of their

role within the American nation, or outlook on the future, all adhere to similar patterns, decisions, and choices.

Additionally, the increasing sectional conflict meant that Creoles and Anglo-American Louisianans, like other slaveholders across the South, had to weigh the consequences of promoting ethnic individualism over class unity. And so, as the nineteenth century progressed, and the threat to slavery became more seemingly potent, sugar planters began to realize that they had to close ranks to have any hope of defeating the abolitionist and anti-slavery northerners, the “Black Republicans” who sought to prevent slavery from entering the territories and, perhaps, abolish it where it existed. Even though Creoles and Anglos might have possessed different motivations for attaining wealth, they both felt that they needed slavery to achieve their goals, and they fought bitterly to protect the institution. Under this system, it becomes increasingly clear that *race* had created the ethnic tension, in large part, because the system of tight racial control allowed the white masters to splinter into various sub-groups. The two ethnic slaveholding groups gambled on independence and they fought alongside one another, but they lost, and all Louisianans emerged from the Civil War into a different world.

The abolition of slavery brought about the end of the great tension between the two communities as they turned to a concerted effort to maintain white supremacy in the face of an ascending African-American population. The rivalry that had thrived before the war stumbled following emancipation, and both groups emerged from the war with a new-found awareness that, despite their cultural distinctions, they possessed a largely identical racial ideology; they both perceived the African-American population as the enemy. Virginia R. Domínguez has conducted a stunning display of the term “Creole” and its significance in Louisiana. After the war, “there had to be a psychological-cultural campaign to transform the antebellum system of

racial classification in Louisiana, which was ternary (white/colored/Negro),” Domínguez argues, “into a binary one (white/Negro).”² In other words, if they wanted to survive and continue to wield the power, whites would have to change the way they saw themselves and their neighbors, not as French, German, Spanish, Anglo, etc., but as *white*.³

Today, many travelers and tourists flock to New Orleans for cuisine and jazz, for Super Bowls and bachelor parties, but Mardi Gras marks the starkest contrast between the city and the rest of the nation. This spectacle of parades, marching bands, and brightly-lit floats came from extremely humble and reverent beginnings. In a fundamental sense, the nineteenth-century history of Mardi Gras symbolized the ethnic conflict between Creoles and Anglo-Americans. For much of the city’s history, the balls and festivities that took place during the Mardi Gras season belonged to the Creole population as they celebrated proudly their Roman Catholicism and cultural heritage. But, as one historian of the holiday has illustrated, it had changed by the middle of the nineteenth century. Creoles and Americans began coming together, as they did in slaveholding, to celebrate the holiday so that the Carnival season became “what *Orleanians* did and not what Creoles or Catholics did, at least to the eyes of outsiders.”⁴ Over time, ethnicity became less an indicator of difference, marking a shift that mirrored larger social developments during the time.

Whereas they had looked at the Carnival celebration with astonishment at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Americans began to adopt many of the traditions that their Creole

² Virginia R. Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification of Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 136-137.

³ For a broader analysis of this point, see Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

⁴ Samuel Kinser, *Carnival, American Style: Mardi Gras at New Orleans and Mobile* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 71.

counterparts exhibited. In 1856 a group of elite Anglo-Americans formed the oldest krewe that remains in existence today. The Krewe of Comus effectively, “declared American independence from the French way of participating in Carnival, but at the same time it incorporated the Creole practices of masked balls and sumptuous banquets into its parade-centered activity,” and before long, “Comus very soon attracted and admitted prominent Creoles to its membership. Both elites were satisfied.”⁵ This krewe remains active today but does not parade because the city passed an ordinance in 1991 demanding that, in order to obtain a license to parade, each group had to certify publicly that they did not discriminate based on race for membership.⁶ The city demanded that the oldest and most prestigious krewes, Comus, Momus, Proteus and Rex integrate their membership and accept African-American members; Comus refuses to do so to this day.⁷ Essentially, this krewe, founded on the convergent principles of Creoles and Anglo-Americans stood unified on the basis of racial exclusion.

So, if Anglo-Americans and Creoles came together over race, working together to promote complete exclusivity to the point that segregation and racial control infested the most important holiday season in New Orleans, what does that mean for the classification of the two long-time ethnic communities? Throughout Louisiana’s history, the term “Creole” has meant many different things to many different people. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines “Creole” in three ways, first as “a person of mixed European and black descent, especially in the Caribbean.”

⁵ Kinser, 91.

⁶ The Supreme Court has actually overturned this ordinance as an unconstitutional infringement on the First Amendment, but Comus still refuses to return to parading.

⁷ For a history of Carnival, especially as it pertains to racial questions in New Orleans throughout its history see Kevin Fox Gotham, *Authentic New Orleans: Tourism, Culture, and Race in the Big Easy* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); Reid Mitchell, *All on a Mardi Gras Day: Episodes in the History of New Orleans Carnival* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jonathan Mark Souther, *New Orleans on Parade: Tourism and the Transformation of the Crescent City* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006).

Next, *Oxford* labels “a descendent of Spanish or other European settlers in the Caribbean or Central or South America,” as a Creole. Lastly, Creole might refer to “a white descendent of French settlers in Louisiana and other parts of the southern US.”⁸ Thus, the term becomes problematic by today’s standards. It would allege that *any* inhabitant of Louisiana born in the state during the antebellum period, including the offspring of Anglo-Americans, could fall under the umbrella of Creole. But Anglo-American parents shunned this classification of their children. Virginia Domínguez has suggested that “classification as Creole had sociocultural connotations that were incompatible with classification as American.”⁹ It would have conflicted with the ethnic tension that existed during the antebellum period when Anglo-Americans held that Creoles exhibited backward, primitive behavior.

But other considerations dictated that the two groups meet to eye one another on equal footing, and the coming of war and abolition brought this to bear. When the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and the two ethnicities came together, finally unifying over the basis of race, something extraordinary occurred-Creoles began to push the term “Creole” to the periphery, distancing themselves from that classification. When the Reconstruction period and Jim Crow racial policies drew such hard lines and pushed all people into categories, Creole became a problematic term. The other definition which *Oxford Dictionary* mentions, the concept of “mixed race” comes to the forefront. Because Creole could carry the potential weight of

⁸ Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg, *New Oxford American Dictionary* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ Domínguez, 125.

miscegenation, proud Creoles who had held steadfast to their culture during slavery, began to re-imagine their own community as *white*.¹⁰

By the twentieth century, both the white and black communities either approached the term with caution or pushed it out of their conversations altogether. Virginia Domínguez's invaluable field work holds some startling observations. She discussed the challenges of terminology with the principal of St. Augustine, a prominent Catholic and historically black high school in the Seventh Ward of New Orleans. The principal indicated that Creole had, by the 1970s even fallen by the wayside in the African-American community. "The kids all consider themselves black now and with pride. They're not Creole, they're black," stated the principal.¹¹ Conducting a questionnaire at an all-white school in New Orleans whose student body typically came from families of French ancestry, Domínguez noted some fascinating trends about the status of the term Creole in this community. The answers showed that, of 111 students, only 14 (12.6 percent) identified themselves as Creole while 71 (64 percent claimed French ancestry). On the specific questions, the students made sure to distance themselves from their Creole background, preferring to focus on the "French" part of their lineage. When Domínguez asked them to define their families as Creole, Canjun, or as what? they generally replied "French." They almost all downplayed Creole and preferred to think of themselves as French or American with French background.¹² Certainly the previous 115 years had changed their cultural outlook with race certainly playing a large role in that transformation.

¹⁰ For a deeper understanding of new historical concepts, including whiteness and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991); Matthew Frye Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

¹¹ Domínguez, 174.

¹² Domínguez, 176-181.

During my research and writing, I have had many conversations with long-time white residents of Louisiana who cringed when I mentioned the term “Creole” in relation to my project. Some assumed that I planned to write about the African-Americans who had white family members in their ancestry, and some went so far as to allege that I could not use the term at all because of its cultural baggage in the state, specifically in New Orleans. But in 1815 Creoles proudly proclaimed themselves as such. They often married other Creoles, did business with Creoles, ascribed to a specific style of architecture, generally standing proud as a Creole population in the face of the flood of Anglo-American immigrants coming into the state. What changed in two hundred years? Essentially, the abolition of slavery made it more difficult for sub-groups among both the white and the black populations within the state. Creoles and Anglo-Americans joined together to enforce a supposed racial superiority for another 100 years. Countless cultural distinctions separated the two ethnicities throughout Louisiana’s complex history but one glaring similarity-race-superseded them all; racial unity brought the two worlds together, combining two histories into one future.

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