

Assimilation? Or Marginalization and Discrimination?

Romani Settlers of the Colonial Gulf (Christophe Clan)

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By Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL, EASG

ABSTRACT

Modern genetic research suggests that *race* is more a visual concept than a biological one. Historical research attests that, above all, it has been an emotional perception—affected not just by color but also by the extent to which individuals comply with community values. Under the French and Spanish regimes in Louisiana, the marginalization suffered by some branches of this Romani clan rested primarily upon their lifestyles. Those who most openly flaunted community *morés* never escaped the “Gypsy” label under which they had been deported. Those who conformed to societal expectations enjoyed social acceptance and unchallenged legal rights. Historians elsewhere have noted similarly nuanced patterns with other ethnic groups. Ironically, considering the extent to which history has deemed Louisiana to be *sans religion, sans justice, sans discipline, et sans ordre*, the dominant factor differentiating Créole Louisiana’s brand of ethnic discrimination from that of Anglo America appears to have been *morés* rather than *caste* or *wealth*.

In 1851, the editor of an Alexandria, Louisiana, newspaper carried a curious item: “PARISH REMINISCENCES: We learn from the Marshall that took the census of the Parish, that it was originally settled by Egyptians and French. They made their settlement some time in the year 1770.”¹ *Egyptians? As settlers? Not a stray sailor coming ashore at New Orleans, but*

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farm families on Red River in the interior of the colony? Still, the rumor was not a rare one. The travel chronicler Frederick Law Olmsted heard the same when he toured Red River in the 1850s and reported local gossip in a sensationalist fashion:

A white planter ... told me that, when he was a boy, he had lived at Alexandria. It was then under the Spanish rule, and "the people they was all sorts. They was French and Spanish, and Egyptian and Indian, and Mulattoes and N ... s." "Egyptians?" "Yes, there was some of the real old Egyptians there then." "Where did they come from?" "From some of the Northern islands." "What language did they speak?" "Well, they had a language of their own, which some of 'em used among themselves, Egyptian, I suppose it was, but they could talk in French and Spanish too." "What color were they?" "They was black, but not very black. Oh! They was citizens, as good as any. They passed for white folks." "Did they keep close by themselves, or did they intermarry with white folks?" "They married mulattoes mostly, I believe. There was heaps of Mulattoes in Alexandria then—free n ... s [whose] fathers was French and Spanish men, and their mothers right black. ... Good many of them had Egyptian blood in 'em too."²

Olmsted was skeptical but open-minded. "The Egyptians were probably Spanish Gypsies," he concluded, adding that he had "never heard of any of them being in America in any other way." As late as 1874, the *American Cyclopaedia* raised the same point, saying "it has been a question whether a band of genuine Gypsies has ever been in America."³ Nonetheless, it was an era in which even learned men accepted lore as history and did not blanch at the thought of coloring it with their own views. Judge Henry A. Bullard of upriver Natchitoches, the first president of the Historical Society of Louisiana, asserted in his presidential address of 1836, "There are, in the Western District [the land between Red River and the Sabine], some families of Gipseey origin, who still retain the peculiar complexion and wildness of eye, that characterize that singular race."⁴

1. *Red River Republican*, Alexandria, Louisiana, 19 April 1851.

2. Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, with Remarks on Their Economy* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), 638.

3. George Ripley and Charles A. Dana, "Gypsies, Gipsies, or Gipseys," *American Cyclopaedia*, 16 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1873–76), 8:357. "Encyclopedic knowledge" about the earliest Romani presence in North America still suffers; from at least 7 January 2008 to the present, the consensus expressed at *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_people#North_America : last accessed 21 October 2011) has consistently but erroneously asserted that the first Romani group to arrive in North America came at the beginning of the *nineteenth* century.

4. Henry A. Bullard, "A Discourse Delivered before the H.S.L., January 13, 1836," B. F. French, *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, 5 vols. (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1846), 1:4.

If historical literature can be trusted, “that singular race” not only settled Red River in the colonial era but also the Mississippi Coast. According to an 1834 issue of the *American Journal of Science and Arts*: “There is a colony of ‘Gypsies’ on Biloxi Bay ... who were brought over and colonized by the French at a very early period of the first settlement of the state. They are French ‘Gypsies’ and speak the French language, they call themselves ‘Egyptians’ or ‘Gypsies’.”⁵ Perhaps that writer had read the memoirs of Milfort-Leclerc, the French adventurer also known as Tustanegy, war chief of the Creek Nation. Discussing the population of the Gulf in the late 1700s, Milfort-Leclerc informed his readers:

On leaving Mobile I went to Pascagoula. The inhabitants of this village are very lazy but since they have little ambition, they are happy and lead a completely tranquil existence. For the most part they are Bohemians [*bohèmes, Gypsies*] married with Indian women. There are some French Creoles among them. They are all carpenters and build the schooners for the coasting-trade in Mobile Bay, New Orleans, and Pensacola.⁶

Ethnic isolate groups of curious origin existed in all the Gulf States, as they have elsewhere in America. Many of those isolate groups have been studied extensively. Not so the “wild-eyed” settlers of Red River or the “lazy” coastal traders of Pascagoula and Biloxi Bays. Historians of the French-Spanish borderlands who encounter references to “bohèmes” in colonial records of Louisiana and the Mississippi Valley typically translate the term as simply “vagabonds.” On the other hand, Ian F. Hancock, professor of Romani Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, accepts the

5. Alexander Jones, “American Gypsies,” *American Journal of Science and Arts* 26 (1834):189–90.

6. Jean Milfort-Leclerc, *Mémoire, ou, Coup-d’oeil rapide sur mes différens voyages et mon séjour dans la nation Creek* (Paris, 1802), trans. and ed. by Geraldine de Courcy and John Francis McDermott as *Memoir; or A Cursory Glance at My Different Travels and My Sojourn in the Creek Nation* (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 1956), 41. Some translations word this passage differently, specifically using the term “Gypsy men,” rather than de Courcy’s and McDermott’s more ambiguous “Bohemians”; some translate the occupational reference to say that the community plied the coastal trade as well as built boats. A copy of the rare original has not been accessible to the present writer for clarification of the passage; but the historical evidence outlined in this paper documents the settlement, at Biloxi and Pascagoula Bays, of Roma deported from France, as Milfort-Leclerc relates.

The term *Créole*, in this society, meant “one born in the colonies of forebears from elsewhere.” It had no particular color connotation and was applied to colonial-born residents of varied hues—with the exception of Native Americans who remained in the tribal environment—and to their offspring. In Louisiana today, the term still reflects a *culture*, not a *color*.

probability that these isolate communities had Romani roots.⁷ Probability, however, begs for proof.

Who were these people? From where did they come? When? What exactly was their ethnic composition? How reliable is rumor as evidence of race, color, and culture?⁸ What role did they play in colonial society? What rights did they enjoy and which ones were denied to them because of social prejudices? Were they, as the authors of the 1874 American Cyclopedia asserted, people of “few redeeming characteristics ... treacherous, cowardly, revengeful, and cruel [with] little or no religious belief and no word in their language to signify God, the soul, or immortality”? Did those men of encyclopedic knowledge make a fair assessment when they concluded: “Marriage is a temporary form with them, and the limits of consanguinity are not respected. ... their industry reaches no higher than the tinkering of hardware and turning local articles in wood, with occasionally some instance reluctantly given in farm labor”?⁹

None of these questions can be answered, within a historical context, without first identifying *the specific individuals* who constituted this earliest identified Roma concentration in North America. Accounts such as those of Bullard, Olmsted, and Milfort-Leclerc provide rumors and conjectures. Intriguing though they may be, they ill-serve scholars who rely upon them to formulate hypotheses about the past. What is needed for these two particular groups of ethnic isolates is *proved facts for actual people*, whose reassembled lives can generate deeper perspectives and more concrete answers to the questions raised by those rumors and hypotheses.

Genealogical study can provide that foundation. As the present paper shows, the two communities—one on Louisiana’s Red River and the other along the Mississippi Gulf—were originally one.¹⁰ As Milfort-Leclerc re-

7. Hancock is a pioneer in the nascent American field of Romani history. His *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1987), provides a broad historical foundation for further study, as does Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 2d. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995), and Walter O. Weyrauch, *Gypsy Law: Romani Legal Tradition and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). For a significant genetic study, see David Gresham, Bharti Morar, et al., “Origins and Divergence of the Roma (Gypsies),” *American Journal of Human Genetics* 69 (December 2001): 1314–31.

8. This paper will examine the issue of color frankly—not because it matters *per se*, but to define the nuances of intercultural relationships and to test the validity of historical materials such as travel accounts and “first hand observations” on which scholars rely.

9. Ripley and Dana, “Gypsies, Gipsies, or Gipseys,” 357.

10. The Biloxi clan will be introduced herein, but treated separately in a later paper.

ports, they were indeed deported to Louisiana in the French regime. Like many early colonists, they bounced among various settlements—European and Amerindian—until they found hospitable land on which they could fashion their own lives. Along that journey, a few assimilated into the polyglot of New Orleans. Some sampled that life and fled. Those who sought to establish themselves as isolates, inviting into their communities only those they found compatible, enjoyed limited success. For the Red River clan, the arrival and eventual dominance of Anglo Americans would result more in ostracization from outside than protective isolation emanating from within.

IDENTIFYING THE ROMANI SETTLERS

Alexandria's history suffers from a handicap that discourages most researchers: the city was torched by the Union Army on 1 May 1864. Court-house offices, churches, social institutions, newspapers—all lost their historic records. Even so, countless resources exist elsewhere, created not only at the state and national levels but also by the governments of France and Spain who controlled the Gulf and the continent's interior throughout most of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The 1773 Spanish census of the Rapides Post on Red River provides the earliest list of settlers for the Alexandria area. It does, indeed, tag two of its eight families as *Bobèmes*: a middle-aged matriarch, "The Widow Varangue," shared her home with her son Jean, twenty-one; her daughter Marie Barbe, seventeen; and Barbe's infant Marie, one month. The second family, surnamed "Laprerie," was a typical nuclear household with a husband named Louis, a wife Marie Jeanne, and four young children. As also commonplace in colonial Louisiana, the farms and *vacheries* (pastures) of the settlement adjoined an Amerindian village—in this case, the Apalache.¹¹

Varangue. Laprerie. Were these the "Egyptians" of mid-nineteenth-century lore? If so, the censuses that bridge the generations between the Widow Varangue and the gossips of the 1850s do not support the descriptions recounted by Olmsted. The name Varangue, in fact, drops entirely from the census trail at Rapides after 1787. Only the name Laprerie (more correctly, *La Prairie*) remains in those records, and the census data yield no hint of nonwhites among that family's marital choices.

11. 1773 census of Rapides, legajo 189-a, folio 1066, Papeles Procedentes de Cuba [hereinafter Cuban Papers], Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

Land records help to span that time frame. Indeed, few records offer a surer bridge between generations than those that support land titles. Although local deeds were destroyed in 1864, numerous alternate resources exist at the National Archives. After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the United States ordered all colonial settlers to submit proofs of their land ownership to a new U.S. land office. Each settler's file would then be considered a 'claim' against the lands now 'owned' by the American government. Many of those claim cases would be litigated for decades, creating rich troves of documents and testimonies.

Land plats for the civil parish of Rapides provide a gateway to these claim files.¹² They pinpoint the Apalache village, they identify the individuals who claimed land in the wake of the Louisiana Purchase, and they cite claim numbers for each surrounding tract, for which corresponding files can be found in the General Land Office records at the National Archives, as well as in Louisiana's State Land Office. However, neither "Varangue" nor "Laprerrie" appears adjacent to the Apalache village on those maps. Instead, adjacent landholders are identified as *Joseph Gillard*, *Joseph "Taurus,"* and *Heirs of Vallery*. Those three sets of claim files—and the litigation that the claims generated—yield specific names for one of the rumored Egyptians and two of her offspring. Testifying in the Vallery case in 1851, one old timer reported:

"He [the deponent] came to Rapides about the year 1803 or 1804 & ... knew Joseph Mauritauros [José María Torres]. He used to see him on [Bayou] Cotile at Baptiste Vallery's. ... The wife of Mauritauros was an Indian woman. Her father was an Indian. Her mother was called Babé and *was what is called an Egyptian*. Madame Babé often told deponent that one of the Indian men was her husband and the father of her children.¹³

This Madame Babé—once she was identified and studied—became the linchpin connecting all the rumors with their underlying facts, not only at Alexandria but also along Mississippi's Coast.

12. Land maps of this type are routinely available from the State Land Office, Baton Rouge. Also see Private Land Claim files 1907 (Joseph Gillard), 4438 (Joseph Taurus), 4458 (J. B. Vallery and Joseph Maritauras), 4459 (Reps. of the Heirs of John B. Vallery), and 4460 (Mary Vallery and Joseph Maritauras); Records of the Bureau of Land Management, Record Group 49; National Archives, Washington. Claire Mire Bettag, CG, CGL, is thanked for help in obtaining and sorting out these four overlapping claim files at NARA.

13. Testimony of Bret Lacour, 13 May 1851, Private Land Claim 4459 (Heirs of Vallery). Italics added.

THE LINCHPIN

Marie Barbe Josephe “Babé” Marsant *dite*¹⁴ Castel, Christophe, Le Grand, and Varangue was not only a woman of many names but also one of many escapades that irked Louisiana’s civil and religious officials. Her first appearance on record hints at her clan’s unconventional ways:

MARIE JOSEPHE MARSANT

21 June 1755, New Orleans

Baptism of a child born of Bernard Marsant and Cécile Christophe, local residents. Godparents have been Jacques Lamÿ, soldier, and Marie Barbe Josephe Dessein.¹⁵

The word “legitimate” is noticeably absent from that sacramental entry. Five years later, Babé’s mother Cécile Christophe, widow of a French trader among the Choctaw named Pierre Castel, remarried at Mobile to a Spanish boat caulker named Joseph Sarde Barranco¹⁶—a Spanish name that French-speaking Louisiana corrupted to *Varangue*. Cécile’s daughter, the adventurous Babé, would use all those maternal and step-parental surnames in one document or another—but never the name of the man reputed to be her father.

Babé’s Amerindian association went much deeper than her chronicler of 1854 might have known. The end of the French and Indian War in 1763 disrupted settlement patterns throughout all the Gulf region. The

14. A *dite* (fem.) or *dit* (masc.) was a name used as an alternative for the surname. In the case of females, it might be the surname of a stepparent, a given name of a parent, or a nickname used by the parent. In the case of males, it might represent any of these situations but typically originated as a soldier’s *nomme de guerre*.

15. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:44, act 462. No abstract for the record has been found in the officially published volumes being issued under the title *Archdiocese of New Orleans, Sacramental Records*. That series presents fragmented abstracts of selected records, alphabetized under the name of one party, and are purged of references to race, legitimacy, and similar matters; they consolidate variously spelled names under one selected spelling and omit entries in which the principal parties lack a “decipherable surname.” These policies, unfortunately, hamstring scholarship. With the exception of baptismal registers for slaves and free people of color, 1777–1809, none of the original registers are available for “personal” or genealogical study, and the archives will not supply photocopies of the original entries to allow verification of apparent discrepancies in the published data. The above abstract is drawn from a photocopy of the original supplied to the writer by a former archivist, the late Alice Daly Forsythe, before the records were closed to the public. Throughout the present paper, citations will be to the originals in all cases in which the writer has been able to acquire photocopies.

16. Our Lady Parish (Mobile, Alabama), Marriage Book 1:44. Barranco’s occupation is provided in the 1763 census of New Orleans; see Jacqueline K. Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians: Census Records, 1758–1796* (Lafayette: University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1973), 33.

French and Spanish territory east of the Mississippi River became England's fourteenth and fifteenth colonies. New Orleans and French territory west of the River became Spanish Louisiana. Several native tribes from the Biloxi-Mobile coastline chose to move rather than live under the English. Migrating to uninhabited prairie land above and below the rapids of Red River, the Apalache, Biloxi, Chactot (not to be confused with Choctaw), Coushatta, Mobilien, Pascagoula, and Tensas created new villages on prime land that today surrounds the city of Alexandria.

There, in the winter of 1766–67, these tribes were joined by the once-again widowed Cécile who had lived among the coastal tribes in her youth. Because these new settlements were strategically located at the point where boatmen had to take their *bateaux* and goods ashore to bypass the rapids, the colonial government established a military outpost near them. Over the next three decades, Cécile and her daughter Babé would appear with unusual frequency in the records created there and at the upriver post of Natchitoches. Virtually every record attests a lifestyle that was considered 'irregular' in colonial Louisiana.

Babé's records make the point. In March 1772, the Rapides commandant Étienne Marafret de Layssard reported to the governor that the young girl had run off that winter with the bachelor Antoine Riché on a hunting trip. Now that they had returned, he had arrested Babé and was sending her to New Orleans to answer for her "lewd behavior."¹⁷ By the time Layssard took that 1773 census of Rapides, she was again at home and, as "Marie Barbe" (no surname), she appears with a one-month-old "natural" daughter. In January 1777, as "Marie Castel," she presented twins to a passing priest for baptism—one of them being the Baptiste Vallery mentioned in the 1854 land testimony. The father of her twins was recorded as unknown.¹⁸

17. Layssard to Governor, 29 March 1772, leg. 188-c, folios 143–49, Cuban Papers.

18. 1773 census of Rapides, leg. 189-a, Cuban Papers. St. François (Natchitoches) Parish, Register 4, unpaginated, unnumbered entries in roughly chronological order. As with New Orleans, the Catholic registers of Natchitoches are also private records not available now for public research. For translated abstracts made when the records were still accessible, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803: Abstracts of the Catholic Church Registers of the French and Spanish Post of St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1976), entries 1704–1705.

The baptismal entries for these twins appear amid a series of four for individuals at the Apalache post. The sequence of those entries illustrates the importance of studying records in their original order. The fact that the twins were baptized just two days after birth would ordinarily suggest that Babé was living at Natchitoches, where a priest was in residence, rather than the Apalache-Rapides settlement where there was no priest and no church. It is the sequence of the entries that reveal her location. The registers contain a gap in baptisms between 17 October 1776 and 16 January 1777, while Padre Luis de Quintanilla was absent

By July 1778, Babé was living upriver in the village of Natchitoches, reportedly to work as a wet nurse for a local family. The parish priest viewed the matter differently. Filing charges against her, he declared that “Babet Varangue” was a young girl of “bad life” and a “public prostitute” who lived, “as her place of employment,” in the house of the bachelor shopkeeper, Jean Jacques David. Arguing that their cohabitation gave rise to scandal, the priest demanded that she be expelled—and Padre Luis de Quintanilla was a man who stopped at nothing until he got his way.¹⁹ Soon driven from that post, Babé returned to her family enclave near the rapids. By 1785, when she bore the daughter Susanne who would marry José María Torres, Babé had settled into her unsanctioned union with the Apalache Indian Salmon.²⁰

But what of their ethnicity? What clues do the records offer to the origin of this pair of unconventional mothers. What do those records *say* about their offspring. Were they indeed Egyptian? French or Spanish? Amerindian? Or mulatto or Negro, as the unidentified gossip alleged? Indeed, what local factors or personal biases might have colored that informant’s views? As with many groups, when one probes beyond the aggregate—identifying and genealogically studying *individuals*—the specifics differ from the myths, stereotypes, and assumptions.

Babé’s cultural and ethnic origins are traceable to pariahs of Europe and the British Isles—variously known as Bohèmes, Cascarots, Cigani, Gitanos, Gypsies, Roma, Romanichals, Sinti, Tsignani, Zigeuners, and Zingari—who migrated out of Southern Asia into Europe before the 1300s.

from the post—then a rash of entries in late January and early February as he caught up with a backlog of entries for children born to families who *did* reside at the post. The last entry before the gap began, that of 17 October, was the baptism of a Poirier child at Rapides. In the first entries after the gap, that of 16 January, Quintanilla baptized an Apalache child and Babé’s newborn twins (19 January). Clearly, he left Natchitoches in October for his trip to New Orleans and stopped downriver at the Apalache-Rapides settlement where he baptized the Poirier child; past that point, the next settlement fell within the bounds of the Opelousas priest and Quintanilla performed no more rites. On his way back upriver in January, Quintanilla would have stopped again at Apalache-Rapides, for those baptisms of 16–19 January, and then returned to the village of Natchitoches before resuming baptisms there on 27 January.

19. Natchitoches Post, Archive Conveyance Records, doc. 1308, Rex v. Babet Varange et al. For Luis de Quintanilla’s campaign to reform the post of Natchitoches, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Quintanilla’s Crusade, 1775–1783: ‘Moral Reform’ and Its Consequences on the Natchitoches Frontier,” *Louisiana History* 42 (Summer 2001): 277–302.

20. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1892, baptism of Suzanne, daughter of “Solomon and Maria Barbara” [no last names]. The tribal affiliation for Solomon (more commonly *Salmon*) is identified in the 1773 census of Rapides, at which time he was still single. The 1789 census of that post shows their continued relationship as a couple, together with Babé’s Vallery twins; see leg. 201, Cuban Papers.

Historically, migrating bands that intruded into the territory of others have experienced one of four fates: they conquered, they merged, they were driven out, or they were enslaved. Arriving in small waves, the Roma lacked numbers sufficient to conquer. Dark skinned, they were too distinctive to discreetly merge. Thus, they were repelled or enslaved, depending upon the regime into which they migrated. Within Eastern Europe, enslavement was *en masse* and brutal for five centuries—into the 1860s in some principalities. Within Western Europe and the British Isles, the Roma were hounded into the forests, hunted and slaughtered for sport, and imprisoned or executed without trial for the crime of being who they were, when not accused of something more tangible.²¹ However, the rise of colonialism offered Western European powers another option: expulsion to the Americas.²²

The central Louisiana tales of “peculiar” complexion and eyes also speak to the European roots of the colony’s first Roma. Within Eastern Europe, the sexual use of Romani women across centuries of slavery lightened Romani skin, bleached hair blond, and turned eyes blue. Within Western Europe, some racial assimilation did occur amid their intermittent contacts with Caucasians, but members of the nomadic bands—living typically as maroons in the forests—retained far more of their genetic heritage than the enslaved Roma of the East.

21. Historians Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker chronicle British examples from “an Act of Mary [decreeing that] any Gypsy who remained in England longer than one month could be hanged” and recount the 1636 roundup of a band of Gypsies, after which “the men were hanged and the women drowned in Haddington.” See *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 57. In Germany, Hancock reports, “Charles VI passed a law that any male Gypsy found in the country was to be killed instantly, while Gypsy women and children had their ears cut off, and were whipped to the border.” Some aristocratic “sportsmen” in Germany boasted of their kills. “In 1826, Freiherr von Lenchen displayed his trophies openly: the severed heads of a Gypsy woman and her child,” while in 1835, another “entered into his list of kills ‘a Gypsy woman and her suckling babe’.” For the German incidences, see Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, web edition, *RADOC: The Romani Archives and Documentation Center* (http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=the_pariah_syndrome&lang=en&articles=true : last accessed 1 June 2013), chap. 8, para. 2. This web edition of Hancock’s monograph incorporates new findings not included within the print edition.

22. The random deportation of English and Scottish Roma to the Southern colonies is briefly treated in publications of Colonial Williamsburg such as Bruce P. Lenman, “Lusty Beggars, Dissolute Women, Sorners, Gypsies, and Vagabonds for Virginia,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Spring 2005), web ed. (<http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Spring05/scots.cfm> : accessed 21 October 2011). British genealogists Peter Wilson Coldham, FASG, and David Dobson, FSA Scot, have provided bedrock material for studying British deportation of Roma with their numerous abstracts of ship lists released over the last three decades by Polyanthos and Genealogical Publishing Company.

Thus, for this clan, *color* was an original sin. However, thorough genealogical study reveals that the assertions of Anglo contemporaries in the mid-nineteenth century were seriously off the mark. Indeed, their labels were tinted far more by disapproval of personal morés, by bias against a few marital choices, and by the kind of greed that prompts some to denigrate others in order to invalidate their rights and appropriate their goods.

The records created by Madame Babé's family bridge cultures and languages in ways that help to establish their ethnic identity. Through those records, one can intricately connect Louisiana's Red River Gypsies of "peculiar complexion and wildness of eye" to the "lazy coastal traders" of Mississippi's Pascagoula Bay. Together they can be tracked to their eviction from France, by way of Dunkirk, amid a herd of "forced laborers: *bohèmes*" aboard the ship *Le Tilleul* in May 1720.²³

Were they indeed Egyptians? Most Romani scholars think not and emerging genetic studies thus far agree.²⁴ The comparison was an ancient one throughout Europe and perhaps one fancied by residents of a river parish whose seat was *Alexandria*. However, it is the label "Gypsy"—*bohème* in French and *gitano* in Spanish—that recurs again and again throughout the many scattered records that allow reconstruction of this family.

23. This roll was first discovered and published in translated form by Albert J. Robichaux Jr. in his *German Coast Families: European Origins and Settlement in Colonial Louisiana* (Rayne, La.: Hébert Publication, 1997), 430–38. The present writer uses her own translation, drawn from a microfilm of the original in Archives Colonies, series F^{5b} 44, Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, France. The filmed records are arranged alphabetically by port (Dunkirk in the present case), then by the date of the document (20–21 May 1720). Robert de Berardinis of Houston is thanked for his assistance in locating this misfiled roll in the Archives Colonies film held by Houston's Clayton Library.

24. Most scholars agree that the lexicon of the Romani is rooted in the Indo-Aryan linguistic family. Accordingly, recent scholarship proposes origins in the Indian subcontinent. See, for example, Angus Fraser, "Looking into the Seeds of Time," *Tsiganologische Studien* 1 (1992): 236–66; and Endre Tálos, "Etymologica Zingarica," *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 46 (1999): 215–68. Some historical data place Romani in the Byzantine Empire in the tenth and eleventh centuries and chronicle even earlier contact with Persia (now Iran) and Armenia. A recent genetic study finds common markers with India's Rajput and Punjabi populations. See Radu P. Iovița and Theodore G. Schurr, "Reconstructing the Origins and Migrations of Diasporic Populations: The Case of the European Gypsies," *American Anthropologist* 106 (2004): 267–81, particularly 275. For a range of older and newer views on the origins of Gypsies, see the journal *Romani Studies*, which recently changed its name from the one under which it originated in 1888, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*.

FOUR GENERATIONS:
A GENEALOGICAL HISTORY

1. **Marie Agnes Simon dite de L'espine** was born about 1694²⁵ in Brest according to her burial record, or in “Bruges in Flanders,” according to one reading of a daughter’s marriage record.²⁶ She died 10 October 1743, at Mobile in the Louisiana colony, present Alabama.²⁷ About 1710, she married or had a relationship with (1) **Jean Baptiste Pierret**, about whom nothing more is known.²⁸ Before her 1720 deportation from France (possibly before 1718), she married (2) **Jean Christophe** (*possible var. Gaspard*), a field-surgeon said to have been born “in the troops” about 1687.²⁹ In 1725, Agnes was the wife of (3?) **Jean Gaspard**, a military drummer, whose surname and occupation suggests that he was not the same individual as the surgeon Jean Christophe.³⁰ When, as “Marie Agnes Simon,” Agnes was buried on 11 November 1743, she was said to be the wife of (4?) “**Joseph, Bohème, invalid,**”³¹ whose life is even more obscure than her own.

In 1720, Marie Agnes and Jean Christophe were deported together aboard *Le Tilleul*, which left Dunkirk shortly after the roll of its 341 passengers was compiled on 20–21 May. With them came their daughter

25. Age is derived from the entry for “Marie Agnes de L'espine,” no. 120, roll of *Le Tilleul*, Archives Colonies, F^{5b} 44. While Marie Agnes’s immigration record uses “de L'espine” as her surname, all records found for her in the colonies render her surname as *Simon*. It is likely that Simon was her father’s forename and that de L'espine was the family surname or (even more likely) her father’s *dit*.

26. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:65, for “Marie Agnes Simon.” *Archdiocese of New Orleans, Sacramental Records*, 19 vols. to date (New Orleans: The Archdiocese, 1987—), 1:112 (Gaspard), 217 (Raphaël), for marriage of Marie to Jean Baptiste Raphaël; restricted access to the originals makes it impossible, at this time, to verify the accuracy of the published reading.

27. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:65.

28. This point will be developed under the discussion of her first daughter, Jacqueline.

29. “Jean Christoph,” no. 260, roll of *Le Tilleul*, Archives Colonies, F^{5b} 44.

30. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:112 (Gaspard), 217, marriage of Marie “Gaspard,” identifying Agnes as the wife of Jean Gaspard, drummer. Some writers erroneously assert that Jean Christophe died in 1733 and that Marie Agnes married in 1734 to one “Melisan.” As their source, they cite Jacqueline O. Vidrine, *Love’s Legacy: The Mobile Marriages Recorded in French, Transcribed with Annotated Abstracts in English, 1724–1786* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1985), 227, n. 2. The cited page presents the marriage of Jean’s daughter Thérèse to Pierre Cajot. The cited note states: “The bride signed as ‘Marie Delande’. Her father had signed ‘Delandes’ in 1732. ... He died in 1733; her mother married Melisan in 1734.” However, that p. 227 note in Vidrine is miscued. It belongs with the Rochon-Deslandes marriage record on p. 237 and is, in fact, duplicated there.

31. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:65.

“Elisabeth Christophe, age 2,” and Agnes’s daughter Jacqueline (no last name), aged 10. As with many contemporary manifests, passengers are grouped according to “class”—typically: officers, administrators, and their servants; self-supporting emigrants; laborers who have indentured themselves; soldiers; and those who were deported as criminals, paupers, or *bobèmes*. Typically, too, the lower-class lists separate men from the women and children. As “Marie Agnes de L’espine, wife of Jean Christophe,” Agnes appears with her daughters in a cluster labeled “forced laborers: *bobèmes*.” Her husband, as “Jean Christophe,” appears in an occupationally mixed group of soldiers and male laborers. That list calls him a *surgeon*—that is, an untrained ‘barber surgeon’ who cut limbs as well as hair. Its statement that he was “born in the troops” suggests that his mother was a camp follower and that he picked up his trade on the battle field as he matured. (See Fig. 1.) No known record identifies him as a *bobème*; many apply that label to Marie Agnes.

Among the several dozen *bobèmes* deported on that vessel from Dunkirk was a cluster that would remain closely allied with the Christophes throughout the rest of the century. Most notable are the La Prairies, who intermarried with Marie Agnes’s offspring and settled on Red River; the La Garennes, who populated Biloxi and Pascagoula Bays on the Mississippi Coast; and the La Fontaines, whose branches spread across the Gulf from New Orleans to Pensacola. Later records in the colony would reveal kinship between some of them prior to deportation, despite their scattered birthplaces.³² All would associate extensively in Loui-

32. For example, at the 1722 marriage of La Garenne’s daughter Marie, who is said to be a native of St. Antoine Parish in Mastrick, one witness was “Jean Philippe La Prarie, *uncle* of the girl,” who appears on the ship roll as a native of Liege. For the marriage, see Winston De Ville, *The New Orleans French, 1720–1733: A Collection of Marriage Records Relating to the First Colonists of the Louisiana Province* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1973), 42 (Fiso-Le Garé). On the subject of earlier kinships and connections: When the patriarch of the La Garenne clan died in 1731, his burial entry reports his birthplace as Brest, the stated birthplace of Marie Agnes Simon in her burial record. For Barthelemy La Garenne’s burial, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:161 (“Barthelemey LeGaque *var.* Le Gacque, surnamed [*dit*] La Garesne”). La Garenne’s identity as Rom is repeated again on both manuscript versions of the 1726 census of New Orleans (Archives Colonies G¹ 464), where he is enumerated as “Antoine Barthelemy La Garenne, *Boëmien*.” The frequently consulted published version of this census omits the “Boëmien” description; see Glenn F. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Claitor’s, 1970), 2:38.

One other line distinctly separated itself after arriving in the colony—that of Marie Ann Elbert [Albert], wife of Louis LeClerc *dit* Belhumeur. Offspring settled on Red River at Pointe Coupée (below Alexandria) and Natchitoches (above Alexandria). Only one seemingly random interaction has been found between them and the other Christophes–La Garennes. The present writer’s children descend from both the Christophe Clan and the LeClerc *dit* Belhumeur line.

Figure 1

Extract from the Roll of *Le Tilleul*

Drawn at Dunkirk, 20–21 May 1720

*Focusing on individuals discussed in this study,
with key names in boldface*

“FORCED LABORERS, BOHÈMES”

[Female section, consecutive entries]

Marie Jeanne de Lestat, wife of **Jean Louis**, native of Beble in Cologne, 24

Pierre LaGandelle, her son, aged 2 1/2

Anne Marie Poupée, wife of Antoine Berthelemy *dit* **La Garenne**, 45

[with a daughter surnamed La Garenne, aged 20]

Philippe Cristine, wife of Nicolas Destain, native of Neufville in Champaign, 28

[with 2 daughters surnamed Destain]

Agnes Vicloin, native of Liers, wife of Joseph Sabatier, native of Liers, 35

[with a son surnamed Sabatier]

Jacqueline [no last name], “her daughter,” 10

Marie Agnes de L’espine, wife of **Jean Christophe**, 26

Elisabeth Christophe, 2, “her daughter”

Cristine Lavallée, native of Bruselles, wife of Gaspard Saluin, 30

[with 2 children surnamed Saluin]

Marie Jeanne Pierre **Page**, wife of Jean Phelipe *dit* **Laprairie**, native of Liege, 20

Marie Ann Elbert [Albert], wife of Louis Le Clerc *dit* Belle Humeur, 20

[Male section—no label]

Louis Le Clerc dit Belhumeur, of Brye sous Forges, 20, soldier

[*Skip 15 names*]

Louis Jacques Bernard of Reims, 24, surgeon

[*Skip 3 names*]

Jean Christoph, born in the troops, age 33, surgeon

[*Skip 29 names*]

Jean Fred[e]ric *dit* **Lafontaine** of Moulins in Bourbonnois, 20

Jean Louis, native of Cologne, 26

Jean **Gaspard** Lambert of Montauban, 32

Pierre François *dit* Lavallé of Neufville in Champagne, 50

Dominique **Lagareine**, native of Cambrai, 15

Antoine Barthelemy *dit* **Lagarenne**, native of Bayonne, 40

Jean Phelipe dit La Prairie, native of Liege, 28

Remy Philippe, 24, native of Cassel, 24

Joseph Sabattier, native of Bruselles, 24

Total passengers: 341

siana with other forced emigrants of French origin, who may or may not have shared their Romani heritage.

That deportation was just one episode of centuries of ethnic cleansing in Western Europe. The Romani historians Ian Hancock and Angus Fraser have identified numerous expulsion orders from 1568 forward, by which all the European powers, the British monarchy, and the papacy as well, seeded their American colonies with Roma. Of particular significance to the Louisiana-Mississippi clans is the 1682 mandate of France's Louis XIV who "ordered bailiffs throughout France to 'arrest, and cause to be arrested, all those who are called Bohemians or Egyptians ... to secure the men to the convicts' chain to be led to our galleys and to serve there in perpetuity, [and as for the women, they are to be] flogged and banished out of the kingdom; all this without any other form of trial'."³³

Physical wounds from those floggings were perhaps healed by the time *Le Tilleul* landed on 16 August 1720 at Biloxi—a bay that offered convenient draft for landing but little else, aside from a few crude buildings where government affairs were managed. From there, new arrivals were to be transported to New Orleans. Biloxi, however, was more of a dumping ground than a receiving station. Of the 5,420 colonists brought to Louisiana between 1717 and 1721, over 2,100 were then at the agriculturally barren Biloxi awaiting transport. Feeding the hordes of indigents posed a critical problem. As one contemporary reported, the only cargo aboard *Le Tilleul* was "about five hundred quarts of flour." Yet "there were the prisoners of both sexes and of all ages that had to be maintained at Biloxi until the settlers in the interior ... were able to support them. That assistance ... was not forthcoming and *the majority of the prisoners died at Biloxi*. Owing to a lack of flatboats to transport the people," the chronicler relates, "we were forced to ... build huts at New Biloxi and stores to shelter their effects. ... We had put to work all of the laborers, the Swiss troops, the prisoners and others in the service of the Company."³⁴

The first census taken of New Orleans after *Le Tilleul's* arrival reflects the assimilation of some "forced laborers" and *bobèmes*, as well as the continued ostracizing of others. That late 1721 document places "the one called Cristophle" on the list of *hommes de force* (male convicts). Marie Agnes's name does not appear on the corresponding female con-

33. The quotes here are from Hancock, *The Pariab Syndrome*, web edition, *Patrin*, chap. 7, paras. 10–11. For the edict by Louis XIV, Hancock quotes from E. de Fréminville, *Dictionnaire ou traité de police générale* (Paris: 1775), 305.

34. *Immigration and War, Louisiana: 1718–1721; From the Memoir of Charles Le Gac*, Glenn R. Conrad, ed. (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 1970), 37–52. Emphasis added.

vict list.³⁵ By the next spring, 4 May 1722, Jean was apparently a free man when, as “Jean Christophe,” he and the Rom Jean Philippe *dit* La Prairie witnessed the marriage of the Rom Marie La Garenne to another convict of the 1721 census, the candlemaker Nicolas Fisseau (*var.* Fiso, Fisaut, Fysseau, *and, erroneously, Fino in some published sources.*).³⁶ Mlle. La Garenne and her new husband would be the core of the Pascagoula-Biloxi Roma. Hence, their extended family is referred to in this study as the La Garenne Clan.

As a free man, Jean fathered two more daughters, both apparently by Marie Agnes, but no further records have been found for a man of his name. When Marie Agnes’s daughter Marie Jacqueline married in 1725, Marie Agnes’s husband is identified in the surviving record (itself a copy of a copy) as “Jean *Gaspard*, drummer in the company of LeBlanc.” Witnessing the marriage was the same Nicolas “Fisaut.”³⁷ While it is possible

35. The 24 November 1721 census of Louisiana, Archives Colonies, G¹ 464, exists in at least two manuscript forms, with at least one crucial anomaly. The list of “femmes de force” on both documents cites one female as “La *mere* du N^c Cristophle” (the *mother* of the one named Cristophle), rather than “La *femme* ...” (wife); it does not give that woman’s own name. It seems improbable that a 33-year-old field surgeon would be convicted and deported *together with his mother*. The only woman connected to him on the ship roll is said to be his *wife*, and no mother has been found for him in any other colonial record. Building on Le Gac’s statement about the numerous deaths of prisoners at Biloxi, an examination of surviving church records (some of them reconstituted in the eighteenth century from civil copies) reveals that the last identifiable prisoner death at Biloxi occurred on 1 September 1721. At most, the convicts were in New Orleans for no more than three months prior to the census that itemizes “Cristophle, convict” and “*mère* du N^e Cristophle, convict.” At New Orleans, the male and female convicts were housed separately, rather than living in family units. Whether the clerk who compiled the census worked from a list sent from Biloxi or whether he went to the barracks to itemize them, it would have been easy to identify *la femme de Cristophle* as *la mère de Cristophle*.

Again, with regard to this 1721 census, the translation provided in Conrad, *First Families*, 2:2–6, differs frequently from the manuscript versions extant in Colonies G¹ 464, each of which has small differences between them.

36. DeVille, *New Orleans French*, 42, reads the bride’s surname as “Le Garé.” *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:104, renders it as “L’Egare.” Fisseau has not been found on any known ship roll. However, many ship rolls cite males only by their *dit* or *nom de guerre*, without so much as a forename to help identify them. Hence, Fisseau may appear on one of the rolls under a *dit* not yet known or under a misreading not yet recognized. His occupation appears on the 1727 census. When his name is written with an above-line double-s, it is frequently mistranscribed as *Fino* in published records.

37. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:112 (Gaspard), 217 (Raphaël). This published abstract of the record reports the bride’s name as simply “Marie” (no surname) and identifies her mother as “Marie Agnes Simon.” The original New Orleans church records were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1788, after which an attempt was made to reconstruct the archives by making copies of copies of selected records that had been sent to France in earlier years. Most sacramental records from 1731 to 1744 still remain unaccounted for.

Regarding the identity of Marie Agnes’s husband of 1725 as “Jean Gaspard, drummer,”

that Jean the drummer and Jean the surgeon might have been one and the same, odds disfavor that assumption. A military drummer, like a field surgeon, had a distinct set of specialized skills.

The identification of Jean Gaspart's officer places the family back at Biloxi, where that officer and his unit were stationed.³⁸ For research, that placement is disastrous. The Biloxi settlement, isolated and by then sparsely populated, rarely saw a priest. More than a few marriages and baptisms that should have occurred there are missing from extant archives. No baptismal record can be found for the two daughters who later said they were fathered by Jean in those years.

Indeed, nothing more has been found on Jean Christophe or Jean Gaspart in the meager records surviving for the 1720s and 1730s.³⁹ Marie Agnes *might* have been the "Marie, *bobemienne*," who appears on the New Orleans census of 1732, living on Royal Street eight houses from "Joseph,"⁴⁰ the one-named man Marie Agnes later married. *If* this Marie, *bobemienne*, of 1732 is indeed Christophe's (or Gaspart's) widow, then her Christophe daughters did not share the quarters this Marie occupied in the home of a married tradesman on Royal Street (François Saussier, a joiner, and his wife Magdeleine Baptiste).⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Royal Street

one must also consider the likelihood that Jean Christophe had died and Agnes had remarried. One *Jean Gaspart* Lambert appears among the males deported with them on *Le Tilleul* (no. 302). In this fledgling colony, where the death rate was exceedingly high, remarriages often occurred within a matter of days. Regarding the occupation of Jean Gaspart, a significantly large number of the colony's military drummers are identified as Gypsies in one record or another.

38. For the placement of Le Blanc's company at Biloxi from 1721, see "List of Officers Who Are to Command the Twenty-Five Companies of Infantry Which the Company Maintains in Louisiana," 21 January 1721, translated in Conrad, *First Families*, 1:141.

39. In addition to the loss of records at New Orleans, those maintained at the Natchez and Yazoo posts were destroyed by Indians in the Natchez uprising of 1729. Whereabouts of virtually all those for Natchitoches prior to *ca.* 1732 are unknown. Mobile's baptismal records were preserved, but marriages prior to 1724 and burials prior to 1726 are lost. Some copied lists from Biloxi are available in "Dépot des Papiers des Colonies: État Civil, Louisiane, 1720–1734," FRNC12 759, Archives Colonies, G¹ 412; microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah and available as roll 959,147, Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

40. January 1732 census of New Orleans, Archives Colonies, G¹ 464. The use of a single name for *bobèmes* was common in this society—a fact that doubly handicaps genealogical and historical research, given the decision of the archdiocese to exclude from its published abstracts all entries in which the key parties did not have "decipherable" surnames.

41. The census, which renders François's name as "Sautier," does not identify his wife or the one child attributed to him. Church registers identify his wife as Madeleine Baptiste and credit them with three children—a son baptized on 14 April 1730 and two daughters born in Arkansas: Marie who married in 1741 and Marie Anne who married in 1745. The child of 1732 *should* have been a daughter, given that any daughter who married in 1741 *should* have been at least 12 for the marriage to be legal under church and civil law. However, younger marriages did occur occasionally among colonial French girls, and marriage as

home of Nicolas Fisseau, a few doors down, included two unidentified “orphans.” The Christophe girls would have qualified for the label *orphan* by eighteenth-century conventions. Even though they had a living mother, their father was not alive to provide for them. The older daughter Elisabeth, then fourteen, was likely on her own.

For the next decade, both the Saussiers and Marie Agnes disappear from the public record. In the Saussier case, later records place them in Arkansas.⁴² As for Marie Agnes, government correspondence makes it clear that women without husbands, particularly those with children who would be on the public dole, were not wanted at New Orleans. The problem was so acute, in fact, that Commissioner Jacques de la Chaise had earlier requested extreme orders from Paris:

There are here, Gentlemen, a number of women to whom rations are given as well as to some children, who are useless and who do nothing but cause disorder. The majority of these women are ruined with pox (syphilis) and ruin the sailors. It is necessary that you be so good as to order the Council to have them go into the interior among the Indians.⁴³

young as nine was traditionally permitted under Rom law, according to Walter O. Weyrauch and Maureen Anne Bell, “Autonomous Lawmaking: The Case of the ‘Gypsies’,” Weyrauch, *Gypsy Law*, 35.

For an example of an 11-year-old in a marital relationship, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 861 (23 Feb. 1766 birth of Marie Anne Dupré, [only] daughter of Robert Dupré and wife Marie Jeanne Cavé) and entry 1742 (29 September 1778 baptism of a child born 5 Sept. 1778 (i.e., conceived Dec. 1777) to “Juan [Jean] Pomier and “Maria Dupres.” A passing priest who baptized the infant assumed that Pommier and Marie were married and called the child *legitimate*, the couple did not legally wed until 17 Oct. 1780 (entry 1060, marriage of “Juan Pomier” and “Maria Dupres,” daughter of “Robert Dupres and Marie Cave”).

42. As noted above, the Saussier family would extensively interact with these Gypsy families throughout the 1700s. The younger Saussier (*var.* Saucier) daughter, Marie Anne, wed Jean Baptiste Bouton, brother of Jean Mathurin Nicolas Boutin who wed the Rom Marianne Du Rocher. That couple appear later in this paper as godparents to two grandchildren of Marie Agnes Simon—adding at least some weight to the possibility that Marie Agnes may have been the Marie who shared the Saucier home in 1732. For the Saucier–Bouton data, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:234 (Sancie), 3:281 (Saussier, Saucie, Saucier, Socie). The Sauciers would become a core family in the Gulf Coast clan, imprinting their name on a Mississippi town.

43. De la Chaise to Directors of the Company, 6 and 10 September 1723, translated in Dunbar Rowland and Albert Godfrey Sanders, *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1701–1729: French Dominion*, vol. 2 (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1929), 315. Paris obviously approved the proposed banishment. On 27 October 1727, the newly arrived Ursuline sister Marie Madeleine Hachard wrote her father from New Orleans about the “merit and amiable manner” of the commandant who, “has declared a war on vice [and] sends away anyone who leads a scandalous life and has corporal punishment for girls leading a bad life. He hangs and breaks on the wheel for the least theft.” See Myldred Masson Costa, *The Letters of Marie Madeleine Hachard, 1727–28* (New Orleans: Laborde Printing Co., 1974), 46.

“In the interior among the Indians” is where Agnes’s family seems to have spent its next decade—although a charge of infestation with the “pox” seems unwarranted, given that she survived for another eleven years. When she and her children came into “civilization,” it was Mobile rather than New Orleans to which they would go. There at Mobile in 1733, Marie Agnes’s eldest daughter Marie Jacqueline appeared briefly to baptize her first known child (though likely not her first child) eight years after her marriage.⁴⁴ There in 1742, Marie Agnes’s youngest daughter married a soldier from the outpost on Alabama’s Tombigbee River.⁴⁵ And there, in October 1743, Marie Agnes was buried.⁴⁶ Four daughters seem to have survived her.

By **Jean Baptiste Pierret**, Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L’espine bore

- + 2 i. MARIE JACQUELINE² PIERRET (*var.* GASPART), born about 1710; married (1) JEAN BAPTISTE RAPHAËL, free *nègre* of Martinique, on 14 August 1725 at Biloxi, probably;⁴⁷ and (2) JOSEPH DUVER (*var.* DUVERD, DUVERT), native of St. Loup in Vauch, Franche Comté, on 18 August 1760, Mobile.⁴⁸ That 1725 interracial marriage is the only such legal marriage on record for the early colony; the record specifically states that it occurred with the permission of the commandant-general. One might speculate that the bride’s ethnicity carried some weight in the decision to relax social and political rules against interracial *mésalliances*. However, the fact that special permission was needed does imply that the marriage of a *nègre* to a Rom *was* considered a *mésalliance* by the French.

By **Jean Christophe**, Agnes bore two proved daughters and, beyond reasonable doubt, a third one:

- + 3 i. MARIE ELISABETH CHRISTOPHE³, born about 1718, deported with her parents at age two; she is not known to have married but bore one child in 1753 who may have died without offspring.⁴⁹
- + 4 ii. MARGUERITE CÉCILE CHRISTOPHE³, born about 1723;⁵⁰ died between 1 August 1787 and 4 January 1789, near the rapids on Red River.⁵¹

44. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:100, for “Jean Baptiste.”

45. *Ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:30.

46. *Ibid.*, Burial Book 1:65, which renders her name as “Marie Agnes Simon.”

47. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:112 (Gaspard), 217 (Raphaël). Marriages from Biloxi are intermingled with those of New Orleans in the records that were reconstituted after the fire.

48. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:43.

49. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:20, for Bideau.

50. Cécile is said to be fifty on the previously cited 1773 Census of Rapides.

51. The Rapides commandant on 1 August 1787 reported finding a slaughtered horse belonging to “Widow Varangue”; Cuban Papers, leg. 206, folio 757. However, the widow was not included on the 1788 census that was drafted on 4 January 1789; *ibid.*, leg. 201. By deduction, her death likely occurred between these two dates.

She had three identifiable relationships: (1) PIERRE FRANÇOIS CASTEL *dit* LILOIS, a peltry trader among the Choctaw cited as married in March 1739,⁵² though the union may have been by Amerindian or Roma custom rather than by Catholic blessing; (2) BERNARD MARSANT, at New Orleans, about 1754–55, a soldier whom she did not marry;⁵³ and (3) JOSEPH SARDE BARRANCO *aka* VARANGUE, the boat caulker whom she wed on 15 December 1760 at Mobile.⁵⁴

- + 5 iii. THÉRÈSE CHRISTOPHE³ (probable daughter) born about 1725, reportedly at New Orleans; died after 23 August 1752,⁵⁵ probably at Mobile. On 31 July 1742, citing Jean Christophe as her father, she was married there to the soldier PIERRE CAJOT *dit* FAULEVENT, whose last-known appearance on record is dated 2 February 1764.⁵⁶

2. Marie Jacqueline² Pierret var. Gaspart (Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L'espine¹), born about 1710 somewhere within the bishopric of Macon, France;⁵⁷ died after August 1760, either at Mobile or New Orleans.⁵⁸ As “Marie Gaspart,” she married (1) 4 August 1725 at New Orleans, **Jean Baptiste Raphaël**, a free *nègre* of Martinique, said to be the son of Jean Raphaël and “Marguerite de St. Cristophe” (which likely should be read as “Marguerite of St. Christophe,” the then-French isle now known as English St. Kitts).⁵⁹ Jean Baptiste died about October 1759 at Mobile.⁶⁰ As

52. Contract for Service, Belair & Desillet with Castel, 3 March 1739, doc. 11120, Record Group 1, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans. The officially published abstracts of the New Orleans church records (the only means of access permitted for registers of this period) variously render his name not only as Pierre but also Joseph Pierre and Louis Joseph; see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:112. Some of these are likely misreadings made in the extraction process or in one of the recopyings in the 1700s. When Cécile married Barranco in 1760, the priest recorded her identity as widow of *François* Castel.

53. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:44, act 462, for Marie Joseph Marsant.

54. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:44.

55. Her last-known date is that of the baptism of her last child; see *ibid.*, Baptismal Book A:183.

56. *Ibid.*, 1:30 (marriage), and 224, for the Mortal baptism.

57. For her age, see Marie Jacqueline [no last name], no. 119, roll of *Le Tilleul*; for her birthplace, see her 1760 marriage record.

58. No burial record has been found for her in a line-by-line reading of the Mobile burial register or in the published abstracts from the Archdiocese of New Orleans. If she was buried at New Orleans and her entry used no surname, she may have been omitted from the published series. When the original registers are eventually opened for research, this record needs to be sought.

59. For the marriage, this paper relies upon the published abstract of De Ville in *New Orleans French*, 85. However, *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, at 1:112 (Gaspard) and 217 (Raphaël), gives the marriage date as 4 August. It has not been possible to obtain a photocopy of the manuscript entry for reconciliation of the contradiction.

60. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:74, for “Baptiste.”

“Marie Jacqueline Pierret, widow of Jean Baptiste Raphaël, daughter of Jean Baptiste Pierret and Arness Simon,” she married on 18 August 1760 at Mobile, **Joseph Duver** (*var. Duverd, Duverde*), a native of “St. Loup in Vauch,” Franche Comté, and the son of Antoine Charles Duver and Anne Claude Parer.⁶¹ Joseph was buried at New Orleans on 8 September 1773; the published abstract of his burial entry renders his birthplace as “Soisenvoge” in Franche Comté.⁶²

Marie Jacqueline’s identity reflects the difficulty of working with the early colonial population of Louisiana, where record destruction, high death rates and remarriages, and the fluid use of names make identification a challenge. In no two records is her name rendered exactly the same:

- 1720 ship roll: As “Marie Jacqueline, her daughter” no last name, she is listed two names *after* one Agnes Vicloin, wife of Joseph Sabatier, and immediately *before* Marie Agnes de L’espine, wife of Jean Christophe. Subsequent Sabatier research yields no records to support a connection between Marie Jacqueline and Agnes Vicloin.
- 1725 marriage: As “Marie Gaspard,” she is said (in that abstract of a copy of a copy of the original record) to be the daughter of Jean *Gaspard* and Agnes *Simon*. Her alleged father is presented as a living person then serving in the company of Captain Le Blanc. An official witness to her marriage was Nicolas Fisseau, whose own 1722 marriage had been witnessed by Jean Christophe, husband of Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L’espine.
- 1733 baptism: As “Marie Jacqueline *Talon*” she and her husband Jean Baptiste, *nègre libre*, baptized a son at Mobile. However, the record of that event has major errors, strike-throughs, and write-overs. Marie Jacqueline may have been erroneously given the surname of the godmother, Catherine Talon.⁶³
- 1746 burial: This Mobile record of her child does not name her, yet pro-

61. *Ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:43. Witnesses were Corporal Nicolas Zeringue *dit* L’esperance, Sergeant Antoine Joly and François Collin who in 1752 had served as godfather to a child of Jacqueline’s half-sister Louise Christophe, wife of Cajot.

62. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:116 (Duvert).

63. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:100. There was a Talon family at Mobile, but it has not been possible to associate her with that family. At this 1733 baptism, the godfather was Jean Baptiste Le Gros, and the priest first identified the *father* as Jean Baptiste Le Gros, then struck that last name for the father. The godmother was named by the priest as Catherine *Le Page*, but she signed as Catherine *Talon*. It seems likely that the priest was equally confused over the female names, and may have assigned the godmother’s surname to the mother, without correcting it. (If this group of Roma did speak their own language, as Olmsted was told in the 1850s, then the French priest may have had difficulty communicating with them.) For the surname *Le Page*, see Fig. 1, showing the Rom wife of La Prairie as Marie Jeanne *Pierre Page*. Several of the Romani females on *Le Tilleul’s* roll carry that unusual double surname.

vides valuable information within its report of the death of “Marie, daughter of Baptiste, *nègre libre*, and a *Bobemienne*.”⁶⁴

- 1760 marriage to Duver: As “Marie Jacqueline *Pierret*,” she is said to be the widow of Jean Baptiste Raphaël and daughter of Jean Baptiste Pierret and Arnesse [Agnes] Simon.⁶⁵

If one places more trust in the one original document in which Marie Jacqueline would have been responsible for naming her parents (the 1760 marriage), then the evidence suggests that at least two major errors exist in other key records: the 1720 assignment of the 10-year-old Marie Jacqueline to the wrong Agnes on the ship roll; and the 1725 identification of her as the daughter of her mother’s then husband.

Marie Jacqueline’s marriage to a *nègre* was a highly unusual pairing for the colony. French and Indian marriages were usually permitted, if the Frenchman chose to legitimize a liaison, although few felt the need to do so in those years. No prior record of a legitimate marriage between a French immigrant and a *nègre* has been found, and this entry itself states that the commandant-general of the colony gave special permission for it to occur. Considering that white females aged twelve and older were greatly sought for marriage and that even the female deportees were intended to be distributed among soldiers and sailors willing to settle in the colony, the permission for Jacqueline to marry a free *nègre* begs for an explanation beyond the colony’s extreme poverty.

As a free *nègre* from Martinique, Jean Baptiste Raphaël is likely to have arrived as a sailor. Free Negroes were rare at both New Orleans and Mobile in the 1720s and even to the 1750s. One Jean Baptiste Marly, free *nègre*, can be placed contemporaneously at Mobile, and separate men named Raphaël (with a wife Marianne) and Baptiste (a single man) can be placed at New Orleans. But Jacqueline and her Jean Baptiste Raphaël do not appear on the extant 1727 and 1732 censuses of New Orleans or the random records of any other post in colonial Louisiana. As shown below, they brought a son to the Mobile church for baptism in 1733 and buried a daughter there in 1746. They then disappeared again until 1759–60, at which time Baptiste was buried in the hospital yard at Mobile and Jacqueline found a new husband. In between those events, their existence is a cipher.

Clues to their lives might be milked from known facts about their children as well as lapses in the documentary trail. Of the two known chil-

64. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:58.

65. Ibid., Marriage Book 1:43. It is also possible that the surname *Gaspart*, assigned to the teenaged Marie Jacqueline in her 1725 marriage record could have been the *dit* of her actual father, Pierret, rather than that of Jean Christophe or yet another stepfather.

dren born across twenty-four years of marriage, a baptismal record exists for only one—suggesting that they lived in an area not visited by priests, rather than at Mobile where a priest was usually in residence and a steady run of church records have survived. Meanwhile, Jacqueline’s half-sister Cécile in the 1730s became the wife of a peltry trader with whom she spent several years among Mississippi tribes. Likely, Jacqueline’s husband also engaged in the hunt or the trade. Had he made his livelihood as a sailor during those years, his wife would more likely have remained in the port of either New Orleans or Mobile and would have periodically presented more children for baptism.

Marie Jacqueline Pierret (*var.* Gaspard) and Jean Baptiste Raphaël were the parents of only two known children.

- 6 i. JEAN BAPTISTE³, baptized 12 December 1733, as godchild of Jean Baptiste Le Gros and “Catherine Le Page,” who signed as “Catherine Talon.”⁶⁶ Like Jacqueline, Catherine has not been fitted into Mobile’s relatively well-known Talon family. However, Talon is a name found frequently among wives in other early Romani families. Nothing further is known for young Jean Baptiste. Neither he nor any other possible sibling is among the several witnesses at his mother’s re-marriage in 1760.
- 7 ii. MARIE BAPTISTE, buried at Mobile on 23 January 1746, age not stated.⁶⁷

3. Marie Elisabeth² Christophe (Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L’espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹), born about 1718 according to the May 1720 deportation record that gave her age as two years. As an adult, she has been found in only two documents; both are at New Orleans and both place her amid associates of her Mobile siblings. In 1753, she bore a child at New Orleans by **Antoine Bideau dit Berry**, about whom nothing is known other than the fact that he was a lance corporal in Le Verrier’s company in 1745 and was discharged on 1 May 1751.⁶⁸ As godparents, she enlisted Jacques Chauvin, of a prominent Canadian-Mobile family that had relocated to New Orleans, and Charlotte Metzinger (*var.* Mazanne), a soldier’s daughter, whose eight-year-old brother had served the previous year as godfather to a child of Elisabeth’s sister Cécile.⁶⁹ In 1754, Elisabeth her-

66. *Ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:100.

67. *Ibid.*, Burial Book 1:58.

68. 1745 Troop List, LO 299, Papers of Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, 1740–1753, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. For the discharge, see Conrad, *First Families*, 2:159. Several Bideau/Bidot lines were in Mobile, New Orleans, and coastal settlements in between, as well as Natchez on the Mississippi.

69. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:259.

self served as godmother to a child of the Swiss-born sergeant, Daniel Mitsch (*var.* Methe) and his wife Marianne Renaud. The Mitsches, while residing at Mobile in the 1740s, had twice used Bideaus as godparents to their older children;⁷⁰ and in 1758, Mitsch's son Pierre would serve as godfather to a child of Elisabeth's sister Cécile.⁷¹

No record found for Elisabeth reveals how she earned her livelihood. However, both records place her in the company of military families. As will be shown, her sister Cécile's records reflect closeness not only to the military but also to at least one barkeep. Both associations suggest that they may have been tavern maids.

Marie Elisabeth Christophe bore only one known child:⁷²

- 8 i. JACQUES³ BIDEAU, born 30 July 1753 and baptized about 7 August 1753, as the godchild of Jacques Chauvin and Charlotte Mazanne [Metzinger].⁷³ Nothing further has been found for this child.

4. **Marguerite Cécile Christophe** (Marie Agnes Simon¹ dite de L'espine and Jean Christophe¹), born about 1723;⁷⁴ died between 1 August 1787 and 4 January 1789.⁷⁵ She married (1) **Pierre François Castel dit Lilois**, before March 1739;⁷⁶ formed a temporary relationship with (2) **Bernard Marsant** at New Orleans by 1755;⁷⁷ and married (3) **Joseph Sarde Barranco aka Varangue** of Cadiz, Spain, son of Pierre Barrangue and Marie Antegue, at Mobile on 15 December 1760.⁷⁸

Cécile's first husband was a thrice-married farmer turned tribal-trader, who was old enough to have been her father. Castel had arrived in the colony aboard the *Gironde* in 1720 as a laborer.⁷⁹ On 21 July 1721, at

70. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:136–37. For Mitsch/Methe's ethnicity and occupation, see *ibid.*, 194, baptism of Daniel Colin.

71. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:99.

72. More children might be found for Elisabeth when the archdiocese reverses its present policy and allows open access to the records of slaves, free people of color, and those with no surname who were excluded from the published series.

73. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:20 (Bideau), citing original Baptismal Book 2:259.

74. 1773 Census of Rapides, previously cited. The only source of the name Marguerite for Cécile is the marriage record of her daughter Catherine, Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:42.

75. The Rapides commandant on 1 August 1787 reported finding a slaughtered horse belonging to "Widow Varangue" leg. 206, folio 757, Cuban Papers); the widow was not included on the 1788 census that was drafted on 4 January 1789 (*ibid.*, leg. 201). Thus, her death is placed between these two dates.

76. Contract for Service, Belair and Desillet with Castel, 3 March 1739, *op. cit.*

77. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:44, act 462, for Marie Joseph [Barbe] Marsant.

78. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:44.

79. For the translated ship roll, see Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 1:122.

Biloxi, he married Jacqueline Pinard, one of the ‘wayward’ females from the Salpêtrière recently shipped to Louisiana aboard *La Baleine* as a bride for male colonists. According to that marriage record, Castel was a native of the parish of Troyes in the diocese of Tournay, France, and son of Antoine Castel by his wife Marianne Masson.⁸⁰ After Pinard died without known children, Pierre married (25 September 1730) Marie Choup,⁸¹ a thirteen-year-old motherless child who had been born on 20 October 1716 in the Palatine village of Ittlingen. Marie’s middle-class family had paid its own passage to the colony in 1721, after her father had led a rebellion against the tyranny of the Palatine regime; but the *La Durance* on which they emigrated was one of the five ill-fated German ‘pest ships’ whose passengers were decimated by disease. Marie’s mother seems to have died before arrival, after which Choup placed his daughters with the Ursuline Sisters.⁸² Castel, after marrying Marie, abandoned the farm he had begun to develop on the east bank of the German Coast (i.e., the Mississippi River just above New Orleans) and disappears from known records for eight years.⁸³ In that interval, Marie also died, apparently childless.

Pierre’s third marriage, to Cécile, remains undocumented although it was said to be legitimate in the baptismal record of one child. On 3 March 1739, he contracted with two prominent New Orleanians, Jacques Hubert Belair and François Desillet, to serve them for two years, trading peltry with the Choctaw of Mississippi. Belair and Desillet agreed to pay him 400 *livres* per year and to provide food and lodging for Pierre “and his wife.”⁸⁴ While the Choctaw occupied a wide swath of Mississippi and southwestern Alabama, the family’s trade location is pinpointed in the marriage record of their third daughter Catherine, which states she was a

80. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:42–43 (Castel); roll of *La Baleine*, Archives Colonies F^{5b} 54. For a published translation of a related document that cites only the 89 *femmes de force* rather than the full roster of 226 passengers, see Bruce Ardoin, “The *Baleine* Brides: A Missing Ship’s Roll for Louisiana,” *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 75 (December 1987), 303–05. The larger roll was later discovered and shared by Robert de Berardinis, along with the related document, “Noms des Filles de la Maison de S^t Louis de la Salpêtrière qui ont été remises aux S^{rs} DeLages Et Betouzet Gardes de la Connetablie le 12 Juin 1720—pour les conduire à Painbeuf où Elles doivent estre Enbarquées pour la Louisiane,” 12 June 1720; Colonies F^{5b} 54, fol. 533–35.

81. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:42–43 (Castel), 52 (Choupe).

82. For the Choup family, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Deliberate Fraud and Mangled Evidence: The Search for the Fictional Family of Anne Marie Philippe of Natchitoches, Louisiana,” *The American Genealogist* 72 (July–October 1997): 353–68.

83. “After 1731 List of Landowners along the Mississippi River from Its Mouth to the German Villages,” Conrad, *First Families*, 2:66; this census reports that the farm of “Castel (called Lilois)” had been abandoned.

84. Contract for Service, Bellair and Desillet with Castel, op. cit.

native of “Chikachaya”—i.e., the *Tchikachaé Gros* village of the Yowani Choctaw on Chickasawhay River in Southeast Mississippi.⁸⁵

Cécile did not settle easily into marriage and motherhood. In the summer of 1744, by which time she had borne three daughters, Commandant Henri de Louboey of Mobile reported to Governor Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil that five of his subjects had deserted the colony, going first to Dauphin Island and from there to the Spanish at Pensacola. The culprits were identified as “the man Cousot, the son of Christianne, a young orphan named Pusot, one named Besson who is about twenty years of age, and a young Gypsy girl named Cécile.”⁸⁶ In response, the governor directed the commandant that he “must order the sergeant of [his] post to stop these kinds of people who do not own a passport or who alter its proper destination” and reported that he was writing the commandant of Pensacola to demand their arrest and return.⁸⁷ The date of their absconding is not stated, but the timing of the incident is genealogically critical. Six months after the governor responded to the commandant’s report, Cécile presented a new son for baptism at Mobile, at which time the priest stated that he had been born “of the legitimate marriage of Pierre Castel, *habitant*, and his wife Cécile Christophe.” According to the

85. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:42. The site appears on Danville’s 1732 map of the colony as “*Tchikachaé Gros*” village. It is placed in present Clark County, Mississippi, by Mary Frances Bass, “A Study of Place-Names of Clarke County, Mississippi” (M.A. Thesis, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, 1941), 21–22.

86. *The man Cousot*: In 1715, one Simon Coussot was a *patron* (master of a small transport vessel) in the employ of the administration at Mobile, when a son Daniel was born to his wife Marte Haye; see Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:18. Nothing more is known about either the father or the son. Alternatively, “the man Cousot” might have been a son of Pierre Cosson and Marie La Fontaine Le Page, who presented children for baptism at Mobile before 1720. Most (La) Fontaines and (Le) Pages in Louisiana trace to Romani origins; both family names are represented in other interactions chronicled in this paper.

Christianne: Christian Ladner was an integral part of the La Garenne Clan on Mississippi’s Gulf Coast, but is not known to have Romani origin. He arrived as a convicted tobacco smuggler, age 20, from Switzerland aboard the *Marie* in 1719; see Conrad, *First Families*, 1:53, for the *Marie*’s roll. Ladner’s wife is said to have been Marie Barbe Bounel, about whom nothing is known. His son Nicolas (sometimes called Nicolas Christianne) married the one-quarter Amerindian daughter of the French and Panis Marguerite Boudreau at Pascagoula. Offspring of both marriages would intermarry extensively with the La Garenne Clan. For the identity of Ladner’s wife, see Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:51, “Letdener.” For the son’s wife, see Brother Jerome LePré, “Origin of Marianne St. Martin Paquet Ladner,” *Mississippi Coast Historical Society [Journal]* 26 (October 1990): 86–99.

Pusot and Besson: These men have not been identified. A number of Bessons immigrated to the colony but have not otherwise been associated with the family or with known Roma. The name *Pusot* and variants have not been placed in the region.

87. Vaudreuil to Louboey, 2 August 1744, vol. III:105, Vaudreuil Papers.

convention of their society, the son was named Jacques by and for his godfather Jacques Tortelier; but the name Pierre was added, even though the giving of parental names was not a common custom.⁸⁸

The aging Castel perhaps forgave Cécile for her indiscretion—likely, in that society, with some physical chastisement—but the marriage did not last long thereafter. Both left Mobile. Cécile’s fifth child was born in New Orleans in 1747, at which time Pierre was called the father,⁸⁹ but he shows on no other known record. The godfather of the 1747 child was a Marine officer, an association more characteristic of Cécile’s future pattern than of Pierre’s past. Between 1750 and 1755 she bore four more children at New Orleans, outside of marriage,⁹⁰ prior to wedding Joseph Sarde Barranco in December 1760.⁹¹ Although her last marriage occurred at Mobile, her husband frequented New Orleans as well. As “Joseph Barranco,” in October of that year, he had stood as godfather to a child of the Rom Pierre La Fontaine, son of *Le Tilleul’s* Jean Frederic *dit* La Fontaine.⁹²

Cécile’s marriage to Barranco, apparently prompted by the fact that she was again pregnant and near term,⁹³ was short-lived. A 1763 census places the family in New Orleans, where “Varrangue” is identified as a caulker.⁹⁴ By the following year, he is inland on Red River, where he appears three times in the records of the Natchitoches Post. First, a letter of 9 September 1764, from Governor D’Abbadie to a friend, Andres Lacassagne (a Basque bachelor who had settled among the tribes at the rapids), states that “Sieur Varangue” had informed him that Lacassagne was ill.⁹⁵ Nothing was said as to why Varangue was so far inland; possibly, it was in pursuit of a debt Lacassagne owed him. In the second document

88. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:155. Under traditional laws in most European nations (including the British Isles, its colonies, and America into the modern era), a child born to a married woman was considered to be the legal child of that union, even when the husband and wife were apart at the time of conception.

89. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:45. This record has not been found in the published series. A photocopy was supplied in 1977 by the late archivist of the archdiocese, Alice Daly Forsythe.

90. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:45 (Castel).

91. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:44.

92. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:161 (La Fontaine).

93. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:212.

94. Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians: Census Records*, 33.

95. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, no. 375, Succession of André Lacassagne; Office of the Clerk of Court, Natchitoches. It is probable that Barranco was on Red River in early-to-mid 1764. For him to take to Natchitoches a letter from the governor, saying that he had told the governor that Lacassagne of Rapides was ill, implies that he had already made one trip up Red River and that he had reported the man’s illness to the governor upon his return to New Orleans on or about 9 September.

found for Barranco at Natchitoches, dated 8 February 1765, he acknowledged receipt of 95 *livres* silver from Lacassagne's succession.⁹⁶ Third, on 25 June 1765, while still at Natchitoches, he witnessed and signed a document for Cécile's new son-in-law, Jacques Rachal.⁹⁷ Both "J^{sp} Barranco" signatures were beautifully executed in a society in which most settlers were not literate. Meanwhile, Cécile bore and presented for baptism yet another child at New Orleans, one for whom no father was named.⁹⁸

Barranco apparently died at Natchitoches soon thereafter. A French census taken of Natchitoches in January 1766 does not mention the family, but one taken by the new Spanish authorities some three months later cites "Widow Barranco," with one daughter above puberty and one below, no land, three horses, six cows, twelve hogs and sheep, and one gun, living one house from her Rachal son-in-law.⁹⁹ By fall, Cécile had settled downriver at the rapids, where she claimed (without benefit of an actual title, apparently) three and a half arpents of frontage along the river by whatever depth it could carry. Two and a half superficial arpents of that tract she then donated to the young Robert Dupré,¹⁰⁰ son of the sister of her first husband's second wife, Marie Choup.¹⁰¹ No reason was stated for the donation.

96. *Ibid.*, no. 380.

97. *Ibid.*, no. 449.

98. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:45 (Castel). James Michael Hilton, who has worked extensively in Spanish records relating to early Rapides, proposes that "the French settlement of Rapides began during the first two or three years of the 1760s as there were already three families at Rapides by July 1764 (Porie, Laccassagne, and Varangue)." However, Lacassagne's succession indicates that he had no family, and Cécile was still in New Orleans with her children as late as January 1765, when her last child was baptized. Hilton's July 1764 date apparently applies only to "Porie" (Vincent Poirier), that being the date of his land grant. Even so, the May 1766 census of Natchitoches places both Poirier and Widow Varangue in that upriver post, not at the rapids. See Hilton, "A History of the Settlement of Colonial Rapides: 1764–1773," *Central Louisiana Genealogical Society Quarterly* 9 (July 1995): 82–88.

99. January 1766 French Census of Natchitoches, Miscellaneous Collection 3, Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches. Also, 6 May 1766 Spanish Census of Natchitoches, leg. 2585, Archivo Santo Domingo [hereinafter Santo Domingo Papers], Archivo General de Indias, Seville. For published translations of these censuses, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials: Censuses, Military Rolls, and Tax Lists, 1722–1803* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1981), 9–20.

100. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, no. 538.

101. On 1 March 1763, at New Orleans, Dupré had married Marie Jeanne Cavé, the 13-year-old daughter of a baker. In the marriage contract signed three days earlier, the friend who acted for him in lieu of family was Vincent Poirier, the first individual of record to receive a grant at the Rapides. When Dupré sold his 2.5 arpents in 1771, he cited the Widow Varangue as his neighbor on one side and the "saddle-making shop of Sieur Vincent" on the other side. For Marie Jeanne Cavé's baptism and the Dupré-Cavé marriage, see St. Louis

Cécile and her family, with the exception of the daughter who had married Rachal, would become permanent settlers on the prairie above *les Rapides*, as the area came to be known. On 26 March 1769, in appreciation of their help in establishing a *vacherie* (a small ranch), she donated a bull each to her daughters “Marie Joseph” (Marie Barbe Josephe “Babé”) and Françoise.¹⁰² Censuses credit Cécile with a small but growing herd that by 1779 amounted to two bulls, ten cows, ten calves under three years of age, three stallions, one other horse, one mare, and three colts.¹⁰³

Socially, the family’s position was far less settled. Her daughter Françoise had defied convention and taken an Indian husband, although the marriage was short-lived and it did not prevent her from finding an “American” to wed her thereafter. A second daughter, Marie Jeanne, had married another Rom from New Orleans—Louis La Prairie of the 1773 census, whose parents had come with Cécile’s parents to the colony aboard *Le Tilleul*. The young La Praries settled well into domesticity and their offspring would populate much of early Rapides.

Cécile and Babé, however, would continue to irritate authorities with their unconventional behavior; and the local commandant would repeatedly apply the “Gypsy” label to them (though rarely to the La Prairies after that first census). In 1771–72, when Babé ran off with the hunter Antoine Riché for three and a half months, the commandant wrote the governor of the “lewd” behavior of “Mlle. Babet, daughter of La Varangue, the Gypsy woman.” Alternately emphasizing that she was the *natural* daughter of La Varangue—i.e., illegitimate—he reported that he was sending both her and her mother to the capital to give an account of their conduct.¹⁰⁴ Again in 1775, Commandant Layssard wrote the governor that he had taken an “abandoned” Indian child, a girl of eight, from “La Varangua *Bobemiene*, where she was in a bad enough school and ill-reared, her head covered with sores and lice.”¹⁰⁵ Cécile last appears on record in June and August 1787, in a pair of documents that uncharacteristically pose *her* as a complainant—one of several local residents whose live-

Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:189 and “Baptisms and Marriages, 1763–66” (aka Baptismal Book 5): 168. For the Dupré sale, see doc. “Rap: 1771, May 16,” Opelousas Colonial Records, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge. For Poirier’s grant, see “Spanish Patents,” p. 1 (6th entry), Surveyor General’s Office of Louisiana, Baton Rouge.

102. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, no. 565, Widow Barranco to Marie Joseph[e] and Françoise.

103. “Livestock Census of Rapides Post, 1779,” leg. 192, folio 971, Cuban Papers.

104. Layssard to Governor, 29 March 1772, leg. 288-c, folios 145–49, Cuban Papers.

105. Layssard to Governor, 2 January 1775, leg. 189-2, Cuban Papers. The discovery of this document was made by Winston De Ville.

stock was being raided by the local Biloxi, Pascagoula, and Chactot (“Chocteaux”) tribes. Citing her losses as a horse, a mare, a colt, and four cows, she reported that the horse was killed by an Indian named “Pitoche, the son,” and that another horse belonging to her own son had been killed by “a ball in the heart,” slaughtered apparently for his mane.¹⁰⁶ Her death is thereby dated between 1 August 1787 and 4 January 1789, when the 1788 census of Rapides was completed by her old nemesis, Commandant Layssard. Her grown daughters are enumerated on that census, but she is not. Babé is cited there as the wife of an Indian. Françoise appears as the wife of a white “American.” Jeanne is enumerated with the La Prairie family she had produced. Once again, but for the last known time, the La Prairie family was labeled *bobéme*.¹⁰⁷

Cécile Christophe was the mother of eleven children by, perhaps, six or so different relationships. Of these eleven, only two would carry the “Gypsy” stigma through their lives—one on Red River and one in New Orleans.

By **Pierre Castel *dit* Lionnois**, Cécile bore

- + 9 i. LOUISE³ “LOUISON” CASTEL, born about 1739, probably in the Choctaw nation, where her parents were peltry traders; married about 1755, at New Orleans, the Rom PIERRE DENIS *dit* PANQUINETTE;¹⁰⁸ died at New Orleans, 9 July 1828, “aged about eighty-eight,” at 5 o’clock in the morning.¹⁰⁹ Through industry and employment by the parish church, the couple shed the “Gypsy” label—even though they continued their associations with others of Rom descent.
- +10 ii. CATHERINE CASTEL, born about 1741 at the “Chickachayay” Grand Village in present Clarke County, Mississippi; married 2 May 1759 at Mobile, the soldier CLAUDE LA FOREST.¹¹⁰ As “a Créole of Mobile,” she was buried at New Orleans on 22 February 1807. (The age given for her at death, seventy-two, was overstated.)¹¹¹ As a widowed proprietor of a house of questionable activity in New Orleans, Catherine was systematically identified as a “Gypsy.”

106. 20 June 1787 complaint by inhabitants of Rapides, roll 1, Jack D. L. Holmes Collection (microfilmed documents from the Cuban Papers and the Papeles des Estados), Northwestern State University, Natchitoches.

107. Leg. 206, folio 757, Cuban Papers, for Indian depredations; also leg. 201, *ibid.*, for 1787 Census of Rapides.

108. The date of the Panquinette-Castel marriage is estimated from the sacramental records of their children; see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, vols. 2–4, particularly.

109. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Funeral Book 14:278.

110. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:42. According to this marriage record, she was the “daughter of Pierre Castel and Marguerite Cécile Christophle.” The unpurged entry does not include the word *legitimate* for Catherine.

111. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 9:115 (Castel).

- +11 iii. MARIE JEANNE CASTEL, born about 1742–43,¹¹² reportedly at New Orleans; married there on 29 April 1766, the Rom, LOUIS LA PRAIRIE;¹¹³ died after the 1810 census of the Rapides Post.¹¹⁴ At Rapides, the La Prairies would only once be labeled *bobème* after that first Spanish census. Contrary to the gossip related by Olmsted in the 1850s—which asserted that their clan married mulattoes and lived as such—their offspring wed white American or French settlers, with an occasional marriage among distant cousins or other French-deported Roma.
- 12 iv. PIERRE JACQUES CASTEL, born about 15 February 1745, the date of his baptism at Mobile, at which time his godparents were the soldier Jacques Tortelier and Marthe Burel, one of the girls shipped out from the Salpêtrière aboard *La Baleine* in 1720.¹¹⁵ That baptismal record states the child was born to a legitimate marriage although his mother’s activities about the time of his conception leave open the question of his paternity. He does not seem to have lived past childhood.
- +13 v. MARIE URSULLE CASTEL, said to be the daughter of Pierre Castel in her baptismal record of 23 October 1747. Her godparents were Michel Chambly, a militia officer, and Marie Catherine Baudreau of another unconventional family at Pascagoula Bay.¹¹⁶ Marie Ursulle married before or about 25 June 1765, presumably at New Orleans, JACQUES RACHAL,¹¹⁷ whose mother had also been deported on *La Baleine* in 1720. At Natchitoches, Ursulle never had the “Gypsy” label applied to her, before or after her death on 23 December 1777.¹¹⁸ Nor has it been found applied to her offspring.

By an **unknown father**, Cécile bore

- +14 vi. MARIE FRANÇOISE “FANNY” *dite* CASTEL, born shortly before 16 March 1750, the day she was baptized at New Orleans with Jean Baptiste Le Gros, a tavern keeper, and Marie Françoise Renard, wife of the mason Étienne Reine, as godparents.¹¹⁹ Le Gros, seventeen years

112. Birth year is calculated from her stated age on the previously cited 1773 Census of Rapides.

113. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:45 (Castel), 170 (La Prairie).

114. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, p. 283.

115. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:155. For Marthe Burel on *La Baleine*, see Archives Colonies F^{5B} 54.

116. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:109.

117. The marriage is dated from the May 1766 census, which shows Jacques as a married man living next door to Ursulle’s mother, and from the subsequent baptismal records of their children. It is likely that the marriage occurred before the 1765 document in which Ursulle’s stepfather witnessed Jacques’s collection of his inheritance.

118. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1190.

119. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:180.

earlier, had served as godfather to a child of Cécile's half-sister Jacqueline and her *nègre* husband at Mobile. Françoise would marry twice at Rapides: (1) the Apalache Indian BISSENTE, and (2) ROBERT MCKIM, 10 May 1783.¹²⁰ She bore only one offspring who lived to maturity, and that son disappears from records as a young adult. No living descendants are known.

- +15 vii. JEAN GREGOIRE *dit* CASTEL, MARCHANT, and VARANGUE, born shortly before 21 July 1752, the day he was baptized (with the epithet *père inconnu*—"father unknown") at New Orleans. His godparents were Jean Gregoire Metzinger, the eight-year-old son of a sergeant-major, and Marie Louise Dorvain, about whom nothing else has been discovered.¹²¹ Jean married at Natchitoches on 22 May 1784, the wealthy Marie de l'Incarnation Derbanne, Widow Dupré.¹²² He died about January 1828, on lower Cane River near the Rapides-Natchitoches line. His only surviving child was indeed one of color—a slave child whom he manumitted shortly after her birth. She lived to adulthood and bore one child by a local white of some prominence.¹²³ While this branch of the family wobbled cross the color line, its singularity does not support the alleged pattern of interracial marriages asserted by Olmsted's informant.

By Bernard Marsant, a soldier, Cécile bore

- +16 viii. MARIE BARBE JOSEPHE "BABÉ" MARSANT *dite* CASTEL, LE GRAND, and VARANGUE, born shortly before 21 June 1755, the day she was baptized at New Orleans as "Marie Joseph, daughter of Bernard Marsant and Cécile Christophe." Her godparents were Jacques Lamÿ, soldier, and Marie Barbe Josephe Dessein.¹²⁴ About 1784 Babé married, apparently by Indian or Romani custom, SALMON of the

120. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1068; McKim–Françoise marriage contract, in Succession of Robert McKim, file "Rap:1803, January 11," Louisiana State Archives.

121. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:259.

122. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1079; Natchitoches Parish Succession Book 6:165–68.

123. This daughter, Perine Varangue, will be subsequently discussed in a bit more detail.

124. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:44. By 1759, Lamÿ was a sergeant stationed at English Turn; see "Detachements de la Nouvelle Orléans a Commencer du 9 Janvier, 1759," 2 January 1760, Archives d'Outre-mer, D^{2c} 52, fol. 89-108. Marie Barbe Joseph "Dessein" has not been identified. She may be a daughter of the master cannoneer at Mobile and New Orleans, Pierre Louis Doussin de Grandmaison; although that family continues to appear in the Mobile records through November 1755, they were 1763 neighbors of the Varangues in New Orleans. Equally possible, she may be the female called "the Dusigne woman," who was accused of selling liquor to slaves at New Orleans in 1744, for which she and her unnamed husband paid a fifty-*livre* fine; see Heloise Crozat, translator and abstractor, "Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 13 (April 1930): 321.

APALACHE; she died after 1803–04, according to the earlier quoted testimony of Bret Lacour. Babé's line is the only branch of the Rapides clan that retained the "Gypsy" label or the social stigma of color, although her offspring would eventually shuck both.

By an **unknown father**, Cécile bore

- 17 ix. PIERRE CASTEL, born 11 August 1758 and baptized 13 August 1758 at New Orleans, at which time his godparents were his sister Louise "Louison" Castel and the seaman Pierre Mareste Mitsch ("Melthe"), son of Sergeant Daniel Mitsch, for whom Cécile's sister Elisabeth had earlier served as godmother. The godfather was said to be absent and represented by Cécile's son-in-law, "Pierre Pantinet," husband of Cécile's daughter Louise.¹²⁵ This child appears to have died before the 1763 census of New Orleans.

By **Joseph Sarde Barranco** (*var.* **Varangue**), Cécile bore

- 18 x. NICOLAS JOSEPH SARDE, born in February 1761 in Mobile and buried "a few days" after birth, on 11 February; his godparents were Nicolas Zeringue, who had witnessed the parental marriage the preceding December, and Zeringue's wife Françoise Le Roy.¹²⁶

By an **unknown father**, Cécile bore

- 19 xi. CATHERINE CÉCILE CASTEL, born 27 December 1764 and baptized 10 January 1765 under the surname of Cécile's first husband, rather than the current husband. No father was mentioned. Godparents were Joseph Duverde, Cécile's new brother-in-law, and Anne Marie "Lisbette" Du Bois, wife of the Rom Pierre La Fontaine, for whom Barranco had served as godfather in 1760.¹²⁷ Nothing further has been found for this child.

5. Thérèse³ Christophe (Jean Christophe^I and probably Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L'espine^I), born about 1725—at New Orleans, according to her marriage record;¹²⁸ died after 23 August 1752, the baptismal date of her last known child.¹²⁹ On 31 July 1742 she married, at Mobile, **Pierre Cajot** (*var.* Cadieu, Cagiot) *dit* **Faulevant**, a soldier in Le Sueur's Company, a native of St. Nicolas Parish in Verdun-sur-Meuse, and the son of Philippe Cajot by his wife Jeanne George. Pierre died after 2 February 1764.¹³⁰

125. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:99.

126. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:212.

127. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:45 (Castel).

128. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:30.

129. *Ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:183.

130. *Ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:30. Pierre crudely signed this record, *Cagoit*. The date of Pierre's last known appearance is from his service as godparent; see *ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:224, for Mortal.

The personal data provided for Thérèse in her marriage record does more to muddle than to clarify the Christophes. While the record identifies her father as “Jean Christophe,” her mother is said to be “Marie *Langloise*.” The name is written clearly enough and it is not Marie *Agnes*, Marie *Simon*, or Marie *L’espine*, although the cleric might have misrecorded the name.¹³¹ The named witnesses did not include her mother, although Marie Agnes died at Mobile the following year. Nor do Thérèse’s sisters or their husbands appear. They also are noticeably absent from the exceptionally small number of people who served as godparents to Thérèse’s five children.

When associations are probed more deeply, however, links surface to support the conclusion that Thérèse belongs to the family under study. One friend whom she used as godparent was the wife of a man Cécile Christophe used as a godfather (Jacques Tortelier). Thérèse’s husband witnessed the marriage of Cécile’s daughter Catherine in 1759. Two godparents used by Thérèse witnessed the 1760 marriages of Cécile and her sister Jacqueline—as did Thérèse’s new son-in-law, Mortal.¹³² At New Orleans, offspring of all these would continue to interact and eventually intermarry in later generations. Moreover, a thirty-year search has upturned no other Jean Christophe in the colony who could be Thérèse’s father and no woman of the name Marie *Langloise* who cannot be eliminated from further consideration.

The circumstances under which Thérèse met and married Cajot are debatable but suggestive. The wedding apparently took place in Mobile, but Cajot’s company was stationed at the outpost Fort Tombecbe within the Choctaw nation.¹³³ That outpost, near Demopolis in present Alabama, lay at the point where the Alabama River forks to create the Tombigbee and Black Warrior Rivers. From Mobile, it was a 150-mile journey inland

131. The surname attributed to her, *Langloise*, translates as “the English woman.” While there were French individuals named *Langlois* in Louisiana, no kinship connections have been made to Marie Agnes. The dit *Langlois(e)* was also given, by scribes, as a surname for English people who settled in Louisiana. All things considered, *Langlois* could be a reference to Marie Agnes’s paternal or maternal origin.

132. *Ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:42.

133. 1742 list of officers in Louisiana and 1743 list of cadets in Louisiana, LO16 and LO19, Vaudreuil Papers. The sacramental entry does not actually *say* that the wedding took place in Mobile. However, it does say that banns were announced on three consecutive Sundays. Using the marriage and baptismal registers in tandem, one finds the priest in Mobile as late as 17 July; the next baptism is 31 August (both entries at Baptismal Book 1:286). Considering that the journey upriver to Fort Tombecbe would have taken several days of that 14-day interim, there was simply not enough time for both the trip and banns on three consecutive Sundays. One also has to consider that the marriage entry was actually signed by the witnesses, and it is highly improbable that the priest would have risked taking the parish register with him for an inland trip by pirogue or bateau.

by boat. However, the Indian trading path that led westward from the post passed through the Grand Village of Tchikachaé on the Chickasawhay, the locus of the Castels' Indian trade. Circumstances also suggest that Thérèse and Cajot had known each other for some time prior to the marriage, given that Thérèse was at least six months pregnant. Neither that situation nor the distance the couple traveled for a nuptial blessing prompted the priest to expedite the marriage. All three customary banns were announced on consecutive Sundays before he heard their exchange of vows. In all probability, as a common penance, he also required them to remain apart during those three weeks before the wedding.

In 1745 Cajot's company was transferred eastward to Fort Toulouse, near the present site of Montgomery, Alabama. The company roll of that year identifies him as a *fusilier* (rifleman).¹³⁴ In 1748, his captain was reassigned to Mobile; and the Cajots apparently went with him, given that a child was baptized at Mobile two days after his birth in 1748 and another was buried at Mobile on the same day of his death in 1749. Pierre was discharged on 1 November 1751,¹³⁵ and he and the children stayed in that settlement until after its transfer to the English.¹³⁶ However, Thérèse drops from the records after the August 1752 baptism of her last known child. At that time the Cajots were called *bourgeois* of Mobile,¹³⁷ indicating that Cajot had retired from the military. The "Gypsy" label has not been found attached to them or their offspring.

Thérèse Christophe bore at least five children to Pierre Cajot dit Faulevant, only one of whom left known issue:

- +20 i. LOUISE THÉRÈSE³ CAJOT, baptized 1 November 1742. Her godfather, Jean Girard, was a former Fort Toulouse soldier who then operated a small transport boat for the government (and may have been pressed into service as godfather during the time he carried the

134. 1745 troop list, LO259, Vaudreuil Papers. For other, unsubstantiated assertions see Johnnie Andrews Jr., *Fort Tombeckbe Colonials: A Compendium of the Colonial Families of the Tombigbee River Valley, 1735–1825* (Prichard, Alabama: Bienville Historical Society, 1987), 11; and Andrews, *Fort Toulouse Colonials: A Compendium of the Colonial Families of Central Alabama, 1717–1823* (Prichard: Bienville Historical Society, 1987), 5, 14–15.

135. Conrad, *First Families*, 2:169. Conrad, whose work draws records from the Archives Colonies at the Archives d'Outre Mer, did not identify specific sources for the individual items on his composite list.

136. Cajot swore allegiance to the British in 1764, after French Louisiana (east of the Mississippi) was transferred to England in the settlement of the French and Indian War; see Albert Tate Jr., "The French in Mobile, British West Florida, 1763–1780," *New Orleans Genesis* 22 (July 1983), 265–66. Parish records continue until 1771, but Cajot has not been found past that 1764 oath-taking.

137. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:183.

couple and their child downriver to the church). Her godmother was Louise Tellier, the eight-year-old daughter of the Mobile settler and master turner, Pierre Tellier.¹³⁸

Louise Thérèse married before 21 December 1759, the soldier JEAN CLAUDE MORTAL *dit* CHALAN.¹³⁹ In that same year, on 16 October, Mortal purchased the house and lot of Louise's late godfather, Girard. By 1762, the Mortals owned a slave *negresse* named Catherine; and in October 1763 Jean Claude appeared briefly in New Orleans, purchasing an eight-year-old *mulâtre* slave named Augustin from another former soldier, Charles Codet, for 4,000 *livres* cash.¹⁴⁰ After the transfer of Eastern Louisiana to the British and the release of the French military, the Mortals stayed on in Mobile. When their daughter Marguerite was baptized in February 1764, Mortal was called a "habitant" (settler) at Mobile. After British officials arrived, Jean Claude and Louise's father were two of the 112 men who took the British oath of allegiance in mid-1764.¹⁴¹ No record of Jean Claude's death has been found. However one of the rare surviving land records for colonial Mobile reports that the house and lot of "Mme. Mortal" was sold at auction in 1767.¹⁴² On 12 November 1768, the last of Louise's children was presented for baptism in New Orleans on the day of its birth. Louise was named as mother. The father's name was omitted, but the child was baptized under Mortal's *dit*, rather than Mortal's surname.¹⁴³ No known record calls them *bohèmes*.

138. *Ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:143. For Girard's military service at Fort Toulouse, see his 1732 marriage record, *ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:7. For his February 1742 occupation, see his daughter's baptismal record at Baptismal Book 1:283. For Louise Tellier, see Baptismal Book 1:216.

139. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:206, for Marie Mortal.

140. For an abstract of the purchase of the house and lot, see Works Progress Administration [WPA], "Transcripts of Mobile Land Records, 1715–1812" (MS, n.d., Mobile Public Library), 3–4. For the slave purchase of Augustin, see Doc. 8486, Superior Council Records, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans. The massive Louisiana slave database by Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, comp., available online as "Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1718–1820 (Slave)" (www.ancestry.com), states that Catherine was purchased on 21 September 1763 from Guillaume Guerin *dit* St. Aubin together with another slave named Louis, age 25. However, Catherine is identified as Mortal's slave on 15 February 1762, when she served as godmother to a Chastang slave; see Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:217. Hall's database apparently does not include for Mortal the 1763 purchase of Augustin. Two separate records appear to have been collapsed here into one database entry.

141. The list seems to carry no actual date. It was forwarded by the British commander to the Secretary of War on 2 October 1764. For the full (translated) list, see Tate, "The French in Mobile, British West Florida, 1763–1780," 265–66.

142. WPA, "Transcripts of Mobile Land Records, 1715–1812," 6–7.

143. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:48 (Chalant).

Louise died after the 1791 census of New Orleans on which she (as “Luisa Chalan”) is identified as an innkeeper on Orleans Street. She has not been found in the New Orleans burial records or on the 1795 census of the city (on which many names are illegible).¹⁴⁴ Her offspring are outlined below, to document both the continued Romani connections and the Chalan *dit*:

- a. MARIE⁵ CATHERINE (MANUELA?) MORTAL⁴ *dite* CHALAN (*var.* SALON), born 21 December 1759 and baptized 1 January 1760 at Mobile, her godparents being the aide-major Jean Baptiste Aubert and Marie Bernoudy, wife of Ensign Antoine Pichon, whose father had once commanded the Alabama post.¹⁴⁵ On 24 April 1783, “Marie Mortal” bore a child at New Orleans who is identified in the published abstract of his baptismal record as “Juan Baptista Luis, son of BERNARDO LUIS.” Godparents were “Juan Baptista Mortal” (Marie’s brother) and “Francisca La Foret” (Marie’s cousin). Other children through 1789 were baptized as children of “LUIS BERNARD and Maria Mortal.” (The inverted name used by the 1789-and-later diocesan *abstracts* matches the manner in which “Luis Bernard” identified himself in making a freedom-to-marry affidavit for his wife’s brother in 1786.) Past that point, all newly baptized children—and even the earlier ones when they were subsequently married or buried—are identified as children of “Luis Bernard and Maria *Cbalan*.” Similarly, Marie is identified as *Cbalan* rather than Mortal in the baptismal records of her grandchildren. No marriage record has been found for Marie and Louis; they left issue through at least one daughter, Marie Françoise, who married Jean Baptiste Catoire in 1803. This Louis Bernard appears to stem from the Louis Jacques Bernard of *Le Tilleul* who, like Jean Christophe, was a surgeon in the troops. Known records do not label any of the family *bohème*, although records apply that label to some of the couple’s associates.¹⁴⁶

144. 1791 Census of New Orleans, certified 6 November 1791 by Carlos de Morant. This paper uses an undated English-language copy apparently created shortly after the December 1803 transfer of Louisiana to the U.S.; doc. 431828, p. 2, New Orleans Public Library. The original Spanish-language copy is owned by the library but the document has never been filmed; because of its fragile condition, it can only be “viewed” onsite, with no photocopies made for study. Chuck Aprill and Jane Aprill, CG, are thanked for their assistance in obtaining the English-language copy. For the 1795 French-language census (which bears no day or month), see leg. 211-A, Cuban Papers.

145. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:206 for Marie Mortal.

146. For Louis Bernard’s appearance in the 1786 marriage contract, see Notarial Acts of Estevan de Quinones, 4:333, Notarial Archives, New Orleans. For the diocesan abstracts relating to his children, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:196 (Luis); 4:27 (Bernard); 5:30 (Bernard); 6: (Bernan); 7:25 (Bernard), 54 (Catoire), 181 (Ladner, for J. B. Chalan); and 8:192 (La Fontaine). Marie’s name appears as *Catherine* (“Catarina”) in the record of her daughter’s marriage to Catoire, and it appears as “Maria Juana Bautista Chalan” in the officially published baptismal record of Juan Bautista Catoire in 1803, where she is named

- b. JEAN BAPTISTE “BIBI” MORTAL *dit* CHALAN (*var.* SALON), born about 1762, at Mobile. On 27 April 1786 he executed a marriage contract with the Rom CATHERINE LA FONTAINE, daughter of Pierre Frederic *dit* La Fontaine and his wife Anne Marie Du Bois. The young couple apparently had no assets to divide at the time of the contract. The kinsmen who made affidavits as to their freedom to marry were Bibi’s brothers-in-law: Louis Bernard, who gave his age as 47, and Thomas Fargue, 37, who signed as “De fargue.” Pierre “Lafontaine” and “Madame Widow Mortal” gave permission for their children to marry.¹⁴⁷

The Mortal–La Fontaine vows were exchanged in St. Louis Church a week later, on 7 May 1786. Catherine, who had been born at Pensacola and baptized the following month (16 April 1768) at Mobile,¹⁴⁸ was the cousin of Anne Marie La Fontaine who married Jean Baptiste’s first cousin, Pierre Louis Panquinette. As “Catharina Lafonten, spouse of Bibi Salon,” she was buried 26 October 1788. Bibi apparently did not remarry. The 1795 census identifies him as a fisherman, living alone in rented rooms, in Block 16 of the Third Quarter.¹⁴⁹

Bibi appears once more on record 2 May 1801 when he and his cousin Charles Panquinette witnessed the marriage of Jean Baptiste Ladner and Françoise Carcoux of Bay St. Louis and the legitimation of that couple’s seven children. The spouses were both descendants of the *Tilleul* Rom, La Garenne. As cousins, whose intermarriage would have been frowned upon by the church under conventional circumstances, Ladner and Carcoux had done what many such couples did in that society—set up housekeeping in their home community (with the implication of community approval), then presented a stable family unit for legitimation when a priest eventually visited their community.¹⁵⁰

as grandmother and godmother. The published abstract of the burial of her son Santiago in 1793 mangles her name as “Maniela or Manicla”; see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 5:30 (Bernard).

147. Notarial Acts of Estevan de Quinones, 4:333, Notarial Archives, New Orleans.

148. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 4:175 (LaFontaine), 220 (Mortal). The officially published abstract of the Mortal–La Fontaine marriage presents the groom’s mother as “Luisa Fanlevan” (an obvious misreading of Faulevan). See also Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:234, for Catherine Fontaine’s baptism. Both the marriage contract and the sacramental marriage record identify the bride as a native of Pensacola.

149. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 4:175 (LaFonten); 1795 Census of New Orleans, Third Quarter, household 174.

150. Alice Daly Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriages: A Collection of Marriage Records from the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans during the Spanish Regime and the Early American Period, 1784–1806* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), 89. This volume by Forsyth, who was then archivist of the archdiocese, is especially valuable because it includes many personal details omitted from the official series now being published.

- c. MARGUERITE AUGUSTINE MORTAL, born at Mobile and baptized on 2 February 1764, by which time her father had retired from the military and was called a “habitant.” Godparents were the child’s grandfather Pierre Cajot and Christine Requiem, whose mother was another of the girls sent from the Salpêtrière to the colony aboard *La Baleine* in 1720.¹⁵¹ As “Margarita Agustina Mortel, native of Mobile, daughter of Juan Mortel and Luisa *Arcaijut*” she married on 19 December 1777 at New Orleans, a grenadier from Barcelona, JOSEPH LA VOZ (*var.* LA BEAU).¹⁵² Joseph apparently died before the 1791 census, on which “Marguerite Lavox” is cited on Orleans Street, living one house from her mother. On 8 March 1800, as “daughter of Juan Claudio Mortal and Luisa *Caseaux*,” she married the widower ESTEBAN LA FRANCE.¹⁵³ As “Margarita Augustina Mortall, daughter of Juan *Bautista* Mortall and Maria Luisa *Pedro Fontlevant*, and spouse of Estevan LaFrance,” she was buried on 25 December 1809 at the age of 46.¹⁵⁴ Marguerite is not called a *bobémienne* in any known record.
- d. MARIE LOUISE ELISABETH ROSALIE MORTAL *dite* CHALAN, born on the evening of 13–14 May 1766 at Mobile and baptized as “Louise Elisabeth” on the fourteenth; her godparents were Pierre Deux Fays *dit* Bourrie of Mobile and Henriette de St. Agnet (Mme. Lieutenant Herceaux de Livoy), daughter of the Créole noblewoman Laurence le Blanc, by the Chevalier de Cloches de St.

151. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:224. Christine’s parents, Charles Requiem and Antoinette “Euly” were married at Biloxi in 1721; *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:219 (Requiem). See also “Thoinette Huly,” *La Baleine* roll, AC F^{5B} 54.

152. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:185 (La Voz), 220 (Mortel). Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriages: A Collection of Marriage Records from the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans*, 80, renders Joseph’s name as *La Beau* in its translated abstract of Marguerite’s remarriage to La France. Italics are added in the text above for emphasis.

153. “1791 Census of New Orleans,” 7; and *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 7:182 (LaFrance), 233 (Mortall). Marguerite’s second husband was a quadroon (one-quarter African), although that label was never applied to him in any records seen to date, thanks to the prominence of his family ties. As previously shown, Marguerite’s great-aunt Marie Jacqueline had been a spouse in the first known black-white marriage in the colony. The only other such marriages until late in the colonial era were those of Marguerite’s mother-in-law, Christine Chauvin *dite* de Lery, who had been born in slavery but was manumitted and then married successively an Irishman and two Frenchmen. The abstracts of her marriages in *Archdiocese of New Orleans* omit color labels; see 1:76 (Denis), 145 (La France), and 2:66 (Dargene). More details appear in an earlier abstract published as “Index to Marriages,” *New Orleans Genesis* 1 (June 1962): 268. For proof that Christine bore Étienne (“Esteban”) La France, whose baptismal record and first marriage record are not in the published *Archdiocese of New Orleans* series but may be in the unpublished, inaccessible, registers for slave and free people of color, see Étienne’s 1770 marriage contract to his first wife, Jeanne Fenouilleau, doc. 10684, Black Boxes (pp. 96870–96872), Louisiana State Museum.

154. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 9:266.

Aignet.¹⁵⁵ Under the name “Maria Ysabel Rosalia Mortal,” she married THOMAS FARGUES [FANGUES?] on 20 September 1781, with the Rom Valentin La Fontaine (“Lafontin”) as witness.¹⁵⁶ As “Luisa Chalan” and wife of Fargue [Fangue?], she bore children between 1782 and 1787—children who were buried under the same names and parental identities in 1792 and 1795. She is identified as “Luisa Chalan, wife of Thomas Fangue” in the published version of her burial record dated 22 December 1795.¹⁵⁷ Fargue [Fangue?] himself was buried on 29 August 1797, age 40.¹⁵⁸ This couple, who also shed the *bobème* label, left descendants.

e. LAURENT CHALAN(T), born 12 November 1768, son of Marie Louise “Cazot,” was baptized 12 November 1768 with godparents being the merchant Jacques Lamothe and Marie Anne Couturie, the teenaged daughter of the surgeon-major of the Swiss troops.¹⁵⁹ The record does not name a father. Nothing further has been found on Laurent.

21 ii. FRANÇOIS CAJOT, baptized 28 November 1744, at which time his godfather was the same Jean Girard who had served two years earlier for his sister. The godmother was Marie Claire Le Clert (“Le Claire”), whose late husband, Sgt. La Place *dit* Montford, had witnessed the Cajot’s 1742 marriage.¹⁶⁰ François died and was buried at Mobile on 21 April 1749.¹⁶¹

155. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:229. These registers have little to say about the identity of the godmother, Henriette. The above is pieced together from Vidrine, *Love’s Legacy*, 331, 337; Alice Daly Forsyth and Ghislaine Pleasanton, *Louisiana Marriage Contracts ... 1725–1758* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1980), 69 (De Cloches–Le Blanc) and 129 (de Montaut–Le Blanc); and Laura Porteous, “Index [Abstracts] to the Spanish Judicial Records,” serialized in *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (ca. 1920s–1940s), vols. 5:592; 10:263, 13:314; and 19:768. Henriette also illustrates the many ways in which all these families are knitted into relationships that span generations. At the time Henriette was conceived, about 1737, her mother was widow of the man who fathered the multiracial Christine Chauvin of n. 153.

156. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:124 (Fargues), 219–20 (Mortal).

157. *Ibid.*, 5:72 (Chalan), 156 (Fangue, Fargue).

158. *Ibid.* 6:116 (Fang).

159. *Ibid.*, 2:48 (Chalon). For Lamothe’s identity, see the 1770 census of New Orleans in Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 397. For Marie Anne Couturie, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:62 (Couturier). The next generation of Lamothes would join the Christophe Clan at Rapides before the 1799 census of that post. See Winston De Ville, ed., *Rapides Post, 1799* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1968), 3, citing Archives Colonies G¹ 464, transcript in the Library of Congress. On Red River, their offspring would marry; see Glenwith H. McHenry, *The Louisiana Link: Paul, Castel, Iles, LaPrairie, Smith* (Pineville, La.: Privately printed, 1995), 31.

160. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:153; for the godmother’s identity, see her remarriage of July 1744 to Jacques Tortellier, Marriage Book 1:31.

161. *Ibid.*, Burial Book 1:51.

- 22 iii. PIERRE CAJOT *dit* FAULEVANT, born 18 April 1748 and baptized 20 April, at which time his godparents were the soldier Claude Husson *dit* Peau Couleur (a nickname that literally translates as “colored skin”) and Françoise (Le) Roy, wife of Nicolas Zeringue.¹⁶² The Zeringues, twelve years later, would also witness the marriage of Pierre’s aunt Cécile to Barranco and serve as godparents to the Barranco child.¹⁶³

As an adult, Pierre may have turned to tribal trade. He disappears from records until the age of thirty-eight when he surfaced at Natchitoches on 5 September 1786, requesting an expedited marriage to MARIANNE CÉCILE *dite* BONTEMPS.¹⁶⁴ Young Marianne was deeply rooted in Arkansas. Both her father (Pierre Cécille *dit* Bontemps) and her stepfather (François Baudoin) had been traders among the Osage. After the Spanish government severely curtailed that trade, the Baudoins had settled on Red River near present Cotile, just above the lands of the Christophe Clan and the Apalache tribe. The 1787 census places the newlywed Cajots, together with Marianne’s Baudoin children, on the southernmost farm of the Natchitoches post. Sharing their habitation was the family of José Torres Sr., including the two Torres teens who would soon marry Mme. Babé’s son Baptiste Vallery and daughter Susanne Salmon.¹⁶⁵ In the last record found for the Cajots, 2 July 1803, they sold half of their farm to Baptiste De Rouen *dit* Agent, a French newcomer who had married another Torres daughter.¹⁶⁶ The Cajot–De Rouens and their homestead were also caught up in the land wars that followed the American takeover.¹⁶⁷

- 23 iv. FRANÇOIS CAJOT, born 17 January 1750 and baptized the next day, with godparents being Marie Anne Hierle and François Hierle, a former witness to the Cajot-Christophe marriage who, like Cajot, was a *fuselier* in Le Sueur’s Company.¹⁶⁸ François has not been found on record thereafter. Despite the birth of a same-name brother two years later, one cannot assume that this François of 1750 was dead by 1752. In their society, siblings often bore the same given names, because they typically were named by and for their godparents.

162. *Ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:171. *Zeringue* is variously rendered in these records as *Sering* and *Ceringue*.

163. *Ibid.*, Marriage Book 1:44 and Baptismal Book 1:212.

164. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1478.

165. 1787 Census of Natchitoches, leg. 201, Cuban Papers.

166. Natchitoches Post, Archive Conveyance Records, doc. 3061.

167. Widow De Rouen in 1810 filed charges against an Italian immigrant who had settled among them saying that “with foarce of armes,” he and others had “maliciously and willfully batter[ed] and pulled down level with the ground” the house in which she lived with her children and aged mother [Widow Torres], leaving all of them homeless. See Natchitoches Parish, Parish Court Suits, roll 7 (1810, Marie Gertrude vs. Pierre Michel [Zorichi]); and *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:199 for “Maria Gertrude Du Roy” [De Rouen].

168. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:176.

- 24 v. JEAN FRANÇOIS CAJOT, born 1752 and baptized 23 August 1752, at which time his godparents were François Collin (who would later witness the marriage of the child's aunt Jacqueline), and Louise Angélique Requier, whose mother had been sent from the Salpêtrière aboard *La Baleine*.¹⁶⁹ Jean François was buried at Mobile 7 March 1764 at the stated age of "about twelve years."¹⁷⁰

9. **Louise³ "Louison" Castel** (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L'espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was born about 1739, probably in the Choctaw nation where her parents traded pelts. About 1755, likely at New Orleans where her mother was then living, she married **Pierre Denis [La Gandelle?] dit Panquinette** (*var.* **Panguinet, Pantinet**, etc.), who is said to have been born about 1719 at Biloxi. He was buried at New Orleans, as sexton of the parish, on 4 May 1793, after dying "the preceding night, aged 74."¹⁷¹ Louise died in New Orleans at five a.m. on the morning of 9 July 1828, at the stated age of ninety-eight, and was buried the following day.¹⁷²

Louise's husband shared her Romani roots. Like others, he is often identified with no surname in his earliest records. Thereafter, even when the name "Panquinette" or its phonetic equivalents appear, it is frequently labeled a *dit*. No known record states an identity for his parents. However, the surname is highly uncommon; only one person carries that name in colonial records from the preceding generation: the "Widow Pantinet, *boëmienne*" lived with one child on Royal Street in New Orleans at the time of the 1732 census. A second (undated) list of that era, titled "Those persons who own land in the city of New Orleans," identifies her as a homeowner. As "La Paline" [La Patine—that is, the woman called Patine], that document assigns her the same neighbors as "Widow Pantinet" of the population return.¹⁷³

169. *Ibid.*, 1:183. For Mlle. Requier's mother, see Thoinette Euly, roll of the *La Baleine*, Archives Colonies, F^{5B} 54.

170. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Burial Book 1:79.

171. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Funeral Book 4:21, for "Pedro Dionisio Panquinette." Norma Rose of Longview, Texas, a descendant of the La Prairie line, shared a photocopy of this record and that of Louise Castel's burial, below—copies she received from the archdiocese before the records were closed.

172. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Funeral Book 14:278, for Louise Castel, native of Mobile, widow of Pierre Denis Panquinette. Louise's nickname is from *ibid.*, Baptismal Book 2:45, where she served as godmother to her brother Pierre Castel.

173. At least two copies exist for the 1732 census. One, provided to the present writer by Robert De Berardinis, is in Archives Colonies G¹ 464. Conrad, *First Families*, 2:68–75, attributes his transcription to Archives Colonies C^{13C} 2:270–75, along with the "1732?" list of landowners. The G¹ 464 document differs significantly from Conrad's C^{13C} transcription. The Widow Pantinette does not appear on the 1721 or 1727 censuses of New Orleans; a

Several extant records for the early colony indirectly suggest that the Widow Pantinette and her one child of 1732 were indeed Pierre Denis *dit* Panquinette and his mother:

- At his earliest appearance on record (1745), Pierre's name is rendered as "Pierre Denis" with no surname accorded him. In that record, he and one "Marie Jeanne" (again no surname) acted as godparents to a child of the Rom soldier-drummer and future in-law, Jean Frederic *dit* La Fontaine.¹⁷⁴
- The only references to a male Pantinette prior to Pierre Denis's marriage to Louison Castel relate to a soldier of the 1745–50 era. He first appears as "*Louis Panquinette*" on a colony-wide troop list, where he is identified as the drummer for Benoist's company at New Orleans; he was discharged from the troops in 1750 under that same forename, Louis.¹⁷⁵ No military or militia service has been found for a "*Pierre Denis*" or any other man surnamed Panquinette or one of its phonetic variants.
- These threads of evidence are brought together in a 1760 record in which Pierre Denis *dit* Panquinette's sister-in-law Jeanne Castel (Mme. La Prairie) served with "*Pierre Louis Panquinette*" (*var.* "*Louis*

residence at Biloxi in that interim might explain the attribution of a Biloxi nativity to Pierre Denis *dit* Panquinette, whose attributed birth year antedates their arrival in the colony.

On the 1727 enumeration, part of the widow's 1732 Royal Street neighborhood is duplicated for Clairmont Street. Clairmont would be renamed St. Philippe Street by 1732, and the family home of Panquinette's brother-in-law La Prairie was said to be on St. Philippe in 1745. (See the La Prairie and La Fontaine discussions later in this paper.) Backing up to the St. Philippe/Clairmont lots were those on St. Ursulle Street where the Gypsy community is enumerated in the 1760s and 1770s.

174. For Pierre Denis's godparental role, see *ibid.*, 1:145 (La Fontaine). After being deported on *Le Tilleul* in 1720, Jean Frederic *dit* La Fontaine "of Moulins in Bourbonnois" married Marie Isbette La Valle at New Orleans, with Nicolas "Fisau" as witness. Fisseau and his Rom wife of the La Garenne Clan, would also serve as godparents to the La Fontaine children; and those offspring married other descendants of *Le Tilleul* deportees. In 1745, at which time La Fontaine was the drummer of De Gauvry's company (LO259, Vaudreuil Papers, Huntington Library), he was arrested amid a group of soldiers charged with mutiny in New Orleans's so-called "Bad Bread Revolt." He escaped the death sentence levied on the ringleader (LHQ 14:263). Of all the Romani families, the La Fontaines were most frequently, across the generations, saddled with the label *bobème*. For a start at sorting out this Frederic *dit* La Fontaine family from contemporary Frederics, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:109–10 (Frideric), 145 (La Fontaine); 2:129 (Friderick), 161–62 (La Fontaine); 3:80 (De la Fontain), 172–73 (La Fontaine); and 4:175 (Lafontaine, Lafonten).

175. 1745 Troop List, LO259, Vaudreuil Papers, renders the name as "*Louis Panquinette dit Panquinette*." See also "General Roll of Louisiana Troops, 1720–1770," Conrad, *First Families*, 2:220, for Louis "Pintinette."

Panquinette *fil*s”) as godparents to a grandchild of the *Tilleul* Roma couple, La Garenne.¹⁷⁶

- When Pierre *Denis* Panquinette presented his own first child for baptism in 1756, the godfather was “Nicolas *Jean Louis*, the infant’s paternal uncle.”¹⁷⁷

That identification of a paternal uncle seems to provide the link needed to place “Widow Pantinet, *boëmienn*e” with one child in 1732 on the *Le Tilleul* roll. Clustered with Marie Agnes Simon, among the twelve married *bobéminnes* deported in May 1720 (see Fig. 1) was “Marie Jeanne Lestat, wife of *Jean Louis*, native of Beble in Cologne, of the age of 24 years.” She was at that time the mother of one child, a two-year-old called “*Pierre La Gandelle*.”¹⁷⁸ Identifying the Pierre of 1720, son of Marie Jeanne (Mme. Jean Louis), as Pierre Denis, whose child had a paternal uncle named Nicolas *Jean Louis* could also provide a resolution to another identity issue—that of the otherwise unplaced “Marie Jeanne” who served with Pierre Denis as a godmother to a La Fontaine child in 1745.

By 1763, Pierre Denis *dit* “Pantinet” was a dance instructor living in Martin’s District of New Orleans. Three houses away lived the tailor Nicolas Jean Maturin Bouton. Not coincidentally, Bouton—who had served as godfather to a Panquinette child the year before—was the husband of Marianne Du Rocher, whose first husband had been a Rom named Jean Baptiste Evrard *dit Jean Louis*.¹⁷⁹ The 1766 enumeration of New Orleans

176. The identity of this Panquinette godfather is also muddled by conflicting published records and the diocesan policy of not allowing a reexamination of the original register. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:121 (Fayard-Fisseau), renders the name as Louis Panquinette, *fil*s (i.e., the son). However, Brother Jerome Lepré, a descendant of the La Garenne–Fisseau–Fayard family who has the reputation of being a careful researcher, has published his own account of the baptism in which he renders the godfather’s name as *Louis Pierre* Panquinette. See Jerome Lepré, “Fayard Family,” *New Orleans Genesis* 22 (July 1983): 337.

177. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:220 (Pantinet).

178. Some interpretations of the evidence might challenge this identification. If Pierre, son of Marie Jeanne, was also the son of Marie Jeanne’s husband Jean Louis, then one would expect the child’s surname to be *Louis* or *Jean Louis*. It is possible that Pierre “La Gandelle” was born to Marie Jeanne prior to her marriage to Jean Louis—or equally possible that “La Gandelle” was a *dit* of the *Jean Louis* family. As a *dit* for young Pierre, the name could represent “the little one from the Gand.” At least one other Rom on *Le Tilleul* was from the Gand, a commune in old Franche-Comte.

179. For the 1763 census, see Voorhies, *Some Late-Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 37 (Pantinet). Jean Baptiste Evrard (*var.* Evera) *dit* Jean Louis, *bobème*, appears on the list of settlers killed in the Natchez Massacre; see Archives Colonies C^{13A} 12:57–58 *verso*. His widow (Marianne Du Rocher, later wife of Bouton) and their Casberg offspring appear throughout the present study. As late as 23 November 1780, when Genéviève Viger, Widow

places “Panguinette” in the city’s First District (Milhet’s Company), two doors from his brother-in-law Claude La Forest, husband of Catherine Castel. Contemporary church records for occasions on which Pierre and Louise acted as godparents for other Romani children reveal that neither could read or write.¹⁸⁰

In 1770, as “Pierre Denis *dit* Pantinette or Panquinette,” he bought a half-lot on Bourbon Street, described as 30 feet wide by 100 feet deep, paying the equivalent of 725 livres in Mexican *piasters*. That site would remain the family home through the 1790s. His next purchase of adjacent property in 1779 embroiled Pierre in financially disastrous litigation. A Frenchman who had defected to the English at Mobile in 1769 returned in 1783 to find that the house and half-lot he had bought from one Hery *dit* Duplanty shortly before his defection was now in the possession of “Pierre Denis *called* Pantinette.” Duplanty’s executor countered that the defector, Estoupan, had paid only 120 livres on a 300-livre mortgage at the time he defected and that Duplanty had judicial permission to seize and resell the lot to “Pierre Denis” (no last name accorded him).¹⁸¹

The court disagreed. Observing that Duplanty had not notified Estoupan prior to seizing the property, it ruled that Estoupan’s absence did not extinguish his rights. Pierre was required to pay Estoupan rent from the date of his 1779 purchase, while Duplanty’s executor was to reimburse Pierre for the 300 livres he had paid Duplanty for the prop-

Labbe, sold the house she had occupied on St. Ursulle Street, her neighbor was said to be “Juan Luis, *el gitano*”; see Porteous, “Index [Abstracts] to the Spanish Judicial Archives,” *LHQ* 15 (January 1932), 169. This Jean Louis still lived there on St. Ursulle Street at the time of the 1791 census (p. 12), which identifies him as “Juan Luis Casbergue.”

One other “Jean Louis” has been found in the colony, with no discernable connection. This man served as a *patron* (boatman) for the colony at the time of the 1732 census that places him on Royal Street also. At that time, he had no wife and no children of his own but made a home for three orphans. In 1735, as the parish cantor at New Orleans, he died a philanthropist, leaving his estate to fund ornaments for the church, clothing for orphans, support for the poor, and an infirmary for the sick. See will of Jean Louis, doc. A35^{B5}, 16 November 1735, Superior Council Records, Louisiana State Museum.

180. For example, see the baptism of Jean “Fachard” (Fayard) *dit* La Lancette and his wife Françoise Fisseau of the Mississippi La Garenne Clan, 20 July 1760, recorded St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 4:35. For the 1766 census, see Voorhies, *Some Late-Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 138 (Panguirette).

181. Porteous, “Index [Abstracts] to the Spanish Judicial Records,” *LHQ* 6 (April 1923): 318. Here, Pierre’s name is rendered “Pierre Denis,” “Pierre Denis *dit* Panquinet,” and “Pierre Denis *dit* Pantinette.” The location of the property is stated in the case Estoupan vs. Pierre Denis, translated by Porteous at *LHQ* 22 (July 1939): 606–11. The 1779 neighbor, when Pantinette bought the property, was Jean Baptiste “Saussier”—a Bouton in-law in multiple ways. See nn. 41–42 for a discussion of the Saussier/Saucier family.

erty. This adjacent lot perhaps had been purchased for service as a shoemaker's shop, considering that the 1791 census of Bourbon Street attributes that occupation to both Pierre and his eldest son. However, the house was occupied in that year by Pantinette's daughter and son-in-law, the tailor Jacques Martinez.¹⁸²

In the Spanish regime, the family's social stature rose somewhat, as Pierre became a fixture in St. Louis Parish. Church records call him the parish beadle (1773–76) and *sacristan* or sexton (at his death in 1793). In the last decade of his life he witnessed a number of marriages—apparently in a functionary position, considering that in some cases he acted for those in the noble class. Although Pierre left Louise a home, she was not an idle widow. The 1795 census of Block 6 of the Third Quarter enumerates the dwelling of “Widow Panquinet, dressmaker,” with nine white inhabitants, next door to the tailor “Mr. Martine” (her son-in-law) and his family of five whites and four slaves. Pierre's post as sacristan was assumed by his bachelor son, Charles. It does not appear, however, that other offspring shared their closeness to the church. When, at the close of the century, bishops arrived in the colony to conduct confirmations, only two of the many Panquinette progeny sought that sacrament for themselves or their children.¹⁸³

The ten known children of Louise Castel and Pierre Denis *dit* Panquinette were as follows:

- 25 i. MARIE LOUISE⁴ PANQUINETTE, born 24 September 1756 and baptized 28 September 1756 at which time her godparents were “Nicolas Jean Louis, the infant's paternal uncle,” and Catherine Castel, her maternal aunt. On 12 January 1778, she married JACQUES RENÉ FERRET-FERRAND, by whom her first child was born 17 July 1778, with her mother, Louise Castel, as godmother. The “Gypsy” label has not been found applied to this couple. Louise may be “La Viuda [Widow] Ferard” cited on a *circa* 1804 English copy of the 1791 census as a resident of Royal Street, in a household with three females in Age Group 2 (that is, females in their fertile years), and one young male slave.¹⁸⁴

182. 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 18.

183. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:231 (Panquinet), 3:55 (Charrayse), 4:78 (de Glaves), 85 (de la Veuvre), 97 (DeVil-Casberg), 101 (Doriocourt), 119 (Fabret), 125 (Ferrer), 203 (Martinez); also 5:36 (Bister), 203 (Helliott), and 294 (Panquinet). See also Alice Daly Forsyth, *Libro Primero de Confirmaciones de Esta parroquia de Sn. Luis de la Nueva Orleans* (New Orleans: Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans, 1967), 90, for Dionisio Atanasi Tirado (“Firado”), Luisa “Firado” and Joaquin Agapito [Martine]; Luisa Castel (“Castet”) and her Cuban son-in-law, Juan Tirado, served as the sponsors for these three children.

184. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:220 (Pantinnet), 3:127–28 (Ferand and Ferret-Ferand), 231–32 (Panquinet). 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 17.

- 26 ii. MARIE ANNE PANQUINETTE, born and baptized 25 April 1758 at New Orleans; godparents were the soldier Joseph Bailly (published as “Bailliff”)¹⁸⁵ and Marianne De Rocher (*var.* Deroche, Du Rocher), Bailly’s mother-in-law who had first married the Rom Jean Baptiste Evrard (*var.* Evera) *dit* Jean Louis and subsequently married Nicolas Maturin Bouton. Some of the godmother’s offspring would join the Christophe Clan on Red River before 1792.¹⁸⁶ Nothing further has been found for this child.
- 27 iii. PIERRE LOUIS PANQUINETTE, born 9 May 1760, privately baptized shortly after birth, when death seemed imminent, and formally baptized on 12 May 1760, at which time his godparents were Chevalier Louis de Billaud, a Swiss officer, and the 16-year-old Jeanne Constance Grondel, daughter of the officer Goujon de Grondel.¹⁸⁷ In 1786, Pierre Louis married ANNE MARIE LA FONTAINE, daughter of Pierre La Fontaine *dit* Cadet, the younger of two Gypsy brothers of the same name, whose father had been deported with the Christophes on *Le Tilleul*.¹⁸⁸ A shoemaker like his father, Pierre Panquinette lived down Bourbon Street from the parental home at the time of the 1791 census. He was buried at New Orleans on 5 February 1795, having died on “8 or 9 January (*sic*)” at the age of 32.¹⁸⁹
- 28 iv. JEAN PIERRE PANQUINETTE, born 5 November 1762 and baptized two days later, with his godparents being Nicolas Maturin Bouton and Bouton’s wife, Marie Anne De Rocher, who had also served as godmother to Jean Pierre’s sister Marie Anne four years before. Jean died on 11 November, just a week after his baptism.¹⁹⁰

185. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:231–32 (Panquinet). Although nothing is known about Joseph Bailly’s origins, *Bailly*, *Baillie*, etc., is a Rom surname that prevails throughout Europe and the British Isles and is discussed by several of the Rom studies cited early in this paper.

186. *Ibid.*, 2:220 (Pantinet). Marguerite Casberg, daughter of Marianne Du Rocher by a prior husband, married Michel De Ville. A De Ville daughter, Marguerite, married Jean Baptiste Jannot *dit* Bellegarde, whose grandmother was the Mme. François Saussier (Sautier) with whom “Marie, *bobemienne*” lived in 1732 (see the discussion under Marie Agnes Simon, no. 1). The De Villes and the Bellegardes joined the Christophe Clan on Red River between 1788 and 1792. To outline the De Ville family, consult *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:32 (Bouton), 99 (Evera), 138–39 (Katzeberg), 192 (Monpierre), and 234 (Sancie); 2:44 (Casberg), 154 (Janot); 3:36 (Bouton), 99 (De Vil); and 4:22 (Bellegarde), 53 (Castevergye). Also see St. Paul Parish (Avoyelles), Baptismal Book 1:6 and 201 (Belgarde) and 86, 185 (De Ville).

187. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:220 (Pantinet). For Constance Grondel’s identity, see her 1744 baptism, Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:312.

188. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 4:236–37 (Panquinet). The bride’s stated surname, “Cadet La Fontaine,” indicates that she came from a younger (i.e., *cadet*) branch of the family.

189. *Ibid.*, 5:294. The *sic* appears in the published version of the record.

190. *Ibid.*, 2:220.

- 29 v. FRANÇOISE ROSALIE PANQUINETTE, born 25 October 1763 and baptized 29 October 1763, at which time her godparents were the ship captain Francisco Xavier de Acosta and Marie Joseph Gauvain, about whom nothing more is known.¹⁹¹ At twelve (on 13 December 1775), she served as godmother to a child of the Rom Marguerite Casberg and her husband Michel De Ville, who had already joined the Rapides clan.¹⁹² On 5 September 1785, Rosalie married SANTIAGO MARTINEZ (originally, JACOB MARTINE), said then to be a native of “Perne in Germany.” Their official witness was Jean Baptiste Saussie of the family discussed at notes 41–42. Rosalie’s first child, a daughter, was buried as a “Panquinet” in February 1786, five months after the marriage.¹⁹³

The 1791 census places the family next door to Rosalie’s parents on Bourbon Street and identifies “Santiago Martinez” as a tailor. The 1795 chimney tax list of New Orleans again places “Mr. Martine” next door to his mother-in-law “Mme. Widow Panquinet” at nos. 75 and 76 of Block 6 in the Third Quarter.¹⁹⁴ Martine also served with the Louisiana Infantry for 9 years and 4 months and with the New Orleans militia for 15 years and 8 months. He was elevated to corporal first-class on 1 May 1787, militia sergeant second-class on 1 May 1791, and militia sergeant first-class on 1 June 1796. His service sheet credits him with participation in Gálvez’s American Revolutionary campaigns of Baton Rouge (1779), Mobile (1780), and Pensacola (1781). Personally, he was said to have “accredited valor; average application & capacity [and] good conduct.”¹⁹⁵

Notarial records also reveal that, as “Santiago Martinez,” he bought a newly imported female slave off the ship *Amable Victoria* in 1792, but sold her two months later, making only 5 piasters off his 245-piaster investment. As “Jacques Martinez” he made another turn-

191. Ibid. For De Acosta’s occupation, see *ibid.*, 2:47 (Cazellar).

192. Ibid., 3:99 (De Vil). The Casberg–De Ville couple appear on the 1773 census next to Widow Varangue; they had, however, shed their “Gypsy” label. Unlike the widow and the La Prairies, the De Villes were not called *bobèmes* in known records of Rapides. This couple are the forebears of the well-known Louisiana genealogist Winston De Ville, FASG.

193. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:202–03 (Martin, Marten, Martinez). See also the two prior discussions of the family’s Saussier connections. For the burial of the first Martinez-Panquinette daughter, see *Ibid.*, 4:236 (Panquinet). Regarding Jacob Martine’s varied forenames, Spanish scribes of this society routinely translated French, German, and English names into their Spanish equivalents.

194. 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 18. Winston De Ville, *The 1795 Chimney-Tax of New Orleans: A Guide to the Census of Proprietors and Residents of the Vieux Carré* (Ville Platte, La.: Smith Publications, 1994), 20.

195. For translated abstracts of Spanish colonial service records, see Jack D. L. Holmes, *Honor and Fidelity: The Louisiana Infantry Regiment and the Louisiana Militia Companies, 1766–1821* (Birmingham: Louisiana Collection Series, 1975), 206.

around purchase in May and June 1809, acquiring an enslaved male for his kinsman Nicolas De Ville of Rapides; and on 18 January 1812 he sold together a black mother and her daughter, whose purchase by him has not been discovered. At his burial on 8 December 1812, he was called a native of Prague in Bohemia and a resident of New Orleans, aged sixty. Rosalie survived him.¹⁹⁶ Neither *bobème* nor *gitano* has been found attached to either of their names.

- 30 vi. JEAN PIERRE PANQUINETTE, born 29 August 1766 and baptized 31 August, with his godparents being Pierre Moustie (*var.* Mostique) of Malta and Marguerite Martinlam [*sic*].¹⁹⁷ On 15 March 1794, he witnessed the marriage of Pierre Jusan, son of the former *alcade* (mayor) of Mobile.¹⁹⁸ On 18 August 1784, he married CATHERINE ST. CYR (*var.* St. Sire), daughter of Joseph St. Cyr *dit* Rouilliard and Thérèse Assaye, of the German Coast.¹⁹⁹ On 16 July 1803, he and his brother Charles served as witnesses when two third- and fourth-generation offspring of the *Tilleul* Rom La Garenne sought a dispensation to marry at Bay St. Louis.²⁰⁰ Jean Pierre died on 7 October 1827, at the age of about sixty-four, and was buried in New Orleans the following day; his wife “Catherine St. Cyr,” survived him.²⁰¹ They, too, assimilated into the mainstream.
- 31 vii. ANASTASIE PANQUINETTE, born 9 January 1769 and baptized 21 January 1769 at which time her godparents were Joseph Chalon (a merchant who has not been connected to the Jean Claude Mortal *dit* Chalan *aka* Salon who married Anastasie’s cousin Louise Cajot) and Magdeleine Brasilier, widow of Duplanty who sold the Panquinettes their troubled lot on Bourbon Street.²⁰² On 9 September 1790, as “Anastasia *Denis*” (note the use of her father’s given

196. Notarial Acts of Pedro Pedesclaux, 1792, docs. 451 and 551; 1812, docs. 26; notarial acts of Narcisco Broutin, 1809, docs. 225 and 264; cited in the Hall database, “Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1718–1820 (Slave).” For his burial, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 10:301 (Martinez).

197. *Ibid.*, 2:220 (Pantinet); also 2:212 for Pierre Mostique, a close friend of the Frederic *dit* La Fontaine and Frederic *dit* Listine family. The orthography of the published “Martinlam” name is suspect.

198. *Ibid.*, 5:216 (Jusan).

199. *Ibid.*, 4:236 (Panquinet), 277 (St. Sire). Catherine is named in the settlement of her father’s succession, St. John the Baptist Parish, 19 March 1775, as is her mother, who had by then remarried to Jean Baptiste Curot *dit* La Tulipe. See St. John the Baptist Parish, Colonial Acts, 1775: no. 10, Edgard, Louisiana.

200. Shirley Chaisson Bourquard, *Marriage Dispensations in the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas, 1786–1803* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1980), 61–62.

201. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 17:296 (PanquINETTE).

202. For Joseph Chalon’s occupation, see *ibid.*, 2:48 (Chalon). For Magdeleine Brasilier, see *ibid.*, 7:38 (Brazillier).

name as her surname) she married SILVAIN (“Silverio”) GOSSON, born 17 October 1766 to Corporal Antoine Gosson and wife Françoise Gorderain. The next year’s census of homeowners places the tailor “Silberio Gason” and family on Front Street.²⁰³ The 1800 militia roll of New Orleans identifies “Silbano Gozon” as a corporal first-class.²⁰⁴ He was buried at New Orleans on 10 March 1812, aged 46.²⁰⁵ Anastasie apparently was still alive on 8 June 1829 when her daughter Anastasie, daughter of “deceased Silvain Gosson and Anastasie Panquinet,” married Pierre Duroche.²⁰⁶ If this line was ever treated as Roma, the evidence remains to be found.

- 32 vi. JEAN CHARLES PANQUINETTE, born 15 June 1771 and baptized 17 June 1771, with his godparents being his sister Marie Louise and Jean Louis Maturin Casberg, whose mother (Marianne Evrard/Evera *dite* Jean Louis) and wife (Angela La Fontaine) were both Roma.²⁰⁷ In 1792, Jean Charles witnessed two marriages: first, that of Corporal Marcos Aquilera from Andalucia to the Canary Islander, Francisca Pereira; and second, that of José Gracia of Cadiz, a soldier in the dragoons, to Maria Richard, the Canadian-born widow of Louis Menard.²⁰⁸ At the death of Charles’s father in May 1793, Charles obtained his father’s post as sacristan of the parish; and on the 1800 roll of New Orleans militia he is cited as sergeant, second-class.²⁰⁹ On 2 May 1801, he and his cousin J. B. Mortal *dit* Chalan, witnessed the marriage of Jean Baptiste Ladner of Bay St. Louis, the great-great-grandson of the *Tilleul* Roma, Anne Marie Poupée and Barthelemy La Garenne.²¹⁰ At Jean Charles’s death on the night of 25–26 October 1815, he was said to be a bachelor, aged 44.²¹¹ He was perhaps the father of Marie and Elisabeth (or Marie Elisabeth) Pantinette, *créole(s) de couleur*, who began bearing children in New Orleans in 1810.²¹² Although Charles repeatedly appears in the

203. *Archdiocese of New Orleans* carries the marriage at 4:236 (Panquinet) and 4:138 (Gosson). Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriages*, 33, renders Gosson’s given name as *Jayme* (the Spanish equivalent of Jacques) rather than Silvain. See also 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 13.

204. Holmes, *Honor and Fidelity*, 243.

205. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 10:208 (Gosson).

206. *Ibid.*, 18:181 (Gosson). Subsequent records are not accessible because the published series has progressed only to 1831 (vol. 19) and the original records are not open for genealogical research.

207. *Ibid.*, 2:220 (Pantinete); also 1:139 (Katzeberg) and 3:49 (Casberg).

208. *Ibid.*, 5:7 (Aquilera), 192–93 (Gracia), 301 (Pereira), and 327 (Richard).

209. For his post as sacristan, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 5:82 (Cofi). For his militia service, see Holmes, *Honor and Fidelity*, 252.

210. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 7:181

211. *Ibid.*, 11:331 (Panquinet).

212. For relevant entries from the registers for “slaves and free people of color,” see *ibid.*, 10:338 (Panquinet, Pantinete), 11:27 (Beltran), 331 (Panquinete, Panquinete).

- records of both New Orleans and Mississippi Coast Roma, that label has not been found attached to him personally.
- 33 viii. MARIE CLAIRE PANQUINETTE, born 5 November 1773 and baptized 7 November, with her godparents being Marie Thérèse Dupree and Pierre De Flandres (offspring of the old sergeant Daniel Mitsch, who had godparental interactions with Marie Agnes Simon's three daughters in the 1730s–50s).²¹³ Nothing further has been found for Marie Claire.
- 34 ix. CHARLOTTE SOPHIE PANQUINETTE, born 5 April 1776 and baptized 27 May 1776, with her sister Françoise Rosalie as godmother and her sister Marie Louise's future husband, René Ferrand ("Feraud"), as godfather.²¹⁴ On 8 November 1795, she married JUAN PEDRO TIRADO ("Tirao") of Sancti Spiritus, Cuba.²¹⁵ She bore her last known child in 1823 and has not been tracked past her service as godmother to a granddaughter on 7 April 1825.²¹⁶ No *bohème* or *gitano* reference has been found for the Tirados.
- 35 x. HENRI PANQUINETTE, whose baptismal record has not been found. He had two wives. On 19 August 1802, "Enrique Panquinet, son of Pedro Denis and Luisa Castell, native and resident of this city," married MARÍA MANUELA BASQUES, daughter of José Basques and wife María Hernandez, at which time his witnesses were the Rom violinist Jean Louis "Casberg" (who had just married the daughter of Henry's cousin Marguerite La Forest), his brother-in-law Santiago Martinez, his brother Jean Pierre (for whom no surname is used in the record), and the bride's father.²¹⁷ Manuela died on 16 May 1804 at about the age of twenty-three.²¹⁸ No subsequent marriage record has been found for Henri. However, on 1 April 1806 there was baptized a child born 20 March 1806 to "Henrique Panquinet and MARGARITA BERNARD." The child's grandparents were said to be (paternally) Pedro Denis Panquinet and Luisa Castel; and (maternally) Louis Bernard and Maria [Mortal *dite*] Chalan. Henrique and Margarita have not been tracked past the 1810 birth and burial of another daughter.²¹⁹ The apparent absence of a marriage record

213. *Ibid.*, 3:232 (Panquinet). For Pierre De Flandres, see *ibid.*, 2:72 (Deflandre).

214. *Ibid.*, 3:231–32 (Panquinet).

215. *Ibid.*, 5:294 (Panquinet), 366 (Tirao).

216. *Ibid.*, 15:369 (Tirado), 16:381 (Tirado).

217. *Ibid.*, 7:245 (Panquinet), 17 (Basquez), 53 (Casberg). For Casberg's occupation, see 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 12.

218. *Ibid.*, 8:18 (Basquez).

219. *Ibid.*, 8:251 (Panquinet); 10:338 (Panquinet). One line of descent from this couple is the focus of a widely publicized genealogical memoir released by a major publisher in 2007: Bliss Broyard's *One Drop: My Father's Hidden Life—A Story of Race and Family Secrets* (New York: Little Brown & Co.), especially 172–73. Henrique and Margarita's daugh-

for them is likely due to the fact that Henri's grandmother, Cécile Christophe, was sister to Margarita's great-grandmother, Thérèse Christophe. Dispensations for marriage between first-cousins once removed were not easy to obtain in their society.²²⁰ Neither Henri nor Margarita are labeled "Gypsy" in any record found to date.

10. Catherine³ Castel (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon dite de L'espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was born about 1741 at "Chickachayay,"²²¹ the "Grand Village" of the Yowani Choctaw on the Chickasawhay River in present Clarke County, Mississippi, while her parents were employed as pelt traders with the tribe. She was buried at New Orleans on 22 February 1807.²²² On 2 May 1759 at Mobile, she married **Claude La Forest**, a native of Chalons-sur-Saône in the province of Burgundy, son of Charles La Forest and Jeanne Marie Roy.²²³ Claude appears to have died after March 1768, when the last La Forest child was conceived.

At the time of their marriage, Claude was a soldier in the company of Captain Louis de Bonille. Within three years he would be promoted to sergeant. However, the subsequent transfer of Mobile to English control resulted in a general discharge of French forces on 15 September 1763.²²⁴ At that point, the La Forests followed Catherine's sister Cécile to New Orleans, rather than live under the English. As "Claudio La Forest," her husband appears as the family head on the first Spanish census of the city in 1766, residing in the heart of the French Quarter in a neighborhood that, by today's expectations, was surprisingly mixed—ethnically, socially, and economically. Catherine's sister and brother-in-law, the dance instructor Panquinette, were two houses away; the royal secretary, three; and

ter Marie bore a son to the French Créole Gilbert Broyard. That son, Henry Antoine (as did his father, in unions prior and subsequent to Marie) lived in concubinage with a free woman of color. Henry's great-grandson, Anatole Broyard, crossed back over the color line and enjoyed two decades of considerable literary prominence as, first, the *New York Times* daily book critic and, then, the editor of the *New York Times Book Review*.

220. Enlightening perspectives on this subject can be gleaned from the dispensation requests for the diocese published in Bourquard's previously cited *Marriage Dispensations in the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas, 1786–1803*.

221. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:42.

222. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 9:64 (Castel).

223. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Marriage Book 1:42.

224. Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2:205, carries Claude La Forest on the roll of those discharged. Conrad cites "Folio 8," but does not identify the document, file, register, or archive in which he found the record; as previously noted, most of his material for his two-volume publication comes from the Archives Colonies. Conrad includes no rank for La Forest, but the couple's Mobile marriage and the baptismal record of the first two children state Claude's rank at each point in time.

Marianne, free *mulâtresse*, lived next door. Other close neighbors included the Gypsy “La Fontene Dormien” [La Fontene, Boëmien?] who is identified on the 1763 census as a chambermaid, three captains with their families, and the royal attorney, Doucet.²²⁵

After La Forest’s death, Catherine appears to have been a well-known fixture in New Orleans, routinely associated in the public mind with the Romani underclass. Even slaves spoke of her in that context. In March 1777, for example, the *negro* Cesario, a slave of the wealthy Antonio Maxent, was arrested and charged with robbing the house of the Widow Courtebleau. Amid his interrogation, when he was asked what part of the city he lived in, he replied that “he lives, eats, and works in his master’s house, but sometimes leaves to go to a room that Mda. Montreuil’s *negra* Margarita occupies in the house of ‘M[adama] La Forest, *la gitana*,’ to sleep with her [Margarita].” When asked whether Margarita knew that the Widow Courtebleau had been robbed, his response repeated the label he had used for Margarita’s landlady: “Mda. La Forest, the Gypsy [*la gitana*] had told her about it.”²²⁶

Margarita, who was also arrested and questioned the same day, elaborated a bit on her relationship to both Cesario and Mme. La Forest. Asked whether she knew Cesario, she responded, “Yes, she knows him very well because he is her husband.” As to whether he “slept” with her the preceding Wednesday night, she “forgot because he had the habit of not coming regularly; he sleeps anywhere and she did not know if he spent that night at his master’s house or not.” As for her own circumstances, she paid four pesos a month to hire herself from Mme. Montreuil, and three pesos a month to Mme. La Forest for her room. When Cesario had the money, he paid the rent for her. When he did not, then she or her mother had to pay it. For food, she “ate as best she could,” and for clothes she “worked out by day.” Margarita also spoke of her landlady in the same terms Cesario had used. When asked if she knew of the robbery, her response was, “Yes, Mme. La Forest, the Gypsy, had told her.”²²⁷

Testimony also reveals other nocturnal activity at Catherine’s house. When questioned about the slave Francisco who had been charged with Cesario, Margarita called him a “rogue of bad conduct.” When asked how

225. Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 138–39; for the 1763 enumeration of Mlle. La Fontaine, see *ibid.*, 35.

226. Rex vs. Cesario, Francisco, et al., labeled “Año de 1777 ... Criminales: Quiere sigue de oficio contra los Negros Cezario, Fran^{co} Christoval, Noel, y la Negra Margarita,” folder 3671, doc. no. 1777-03-13-01, Judicial Records of the Spanish Cabildo, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans; 58 unnumbered pages.

227. *Ibid.*

long it had been since Francisco “slept at her house” (the document did not say “in her room”), she responded that “she did not know if it was last Monday or the one before that [but] when she awoke in the morning, she saw him and asked Cesario who he was and he told her Francisco.” A third defendant, Christoval, slave of the Saulet children, spoke in the same vein: “When he came to the city, he met Mr. Baure’s Francisco [who] took him to Margarita’s house, to whom he complained because he found people in her house.” He “then went out of the house, leaving Francisco inside and—upon the suggestion of Margarita, he closed the door and locked it.” A fourth defendant, Mme. Brazillier’s Noël, testified the following day that he had gone to the house of Cesario and Margarita” (i.e., Catherine’s house) about ten o’clock at night, saw someone come in with a bundle, and “before they went to bed, he *heard* them break a little box that contained money. (The word *heard* rather than *saw* implies that he was in a different room within the La Forest home.) Francisco, he reported, left when the box was opened; he then *heard* Cesario and Margarita counting the money from the box, but “*heard* nothing else they said because he fell asleep.”²²⁸

Eventually, Cesario and Margarita confessed to the robbery, after the latter’s sister Roseta swore Margarita had given her part of the proceeds. Roseta was then charged with receiving stolen goods—an act the council considered inexcusable because, as a domestic and a Créole, she was expected to know better. Besides, the council ruled, she must have known that her sister could not honestly earn enough money to pay for her hire and rent, much less food, clothing, candles, firewood, soap, and other necessities. The case ended in September when Cesario, Francisco, Margarita, and Roseta were sentenced to be driven through the streets on a “beast of burden,” while receiving 200 lashes each, as a lesson to the public. Notably, no one expressed concern or surprise over the extent to which slaves from various parts of the city and beyond came and went nocturnally at the house of “Mme. La Forest, the Gypsy.”²²⁹

Throughout this period, Catherine appears to have resided in the same small part of the Vieux Carré, although she would later relocate. The 1778 census places “Widow La Foret” on the left side of St. Ursulle Street, just off Bourbon, at which time several of her neighbors matched those of 1766. (That residence also suggests that she and Claude may have been among the group of unnamed *Bobèmes* attributed to St. Ursulle Street by the 1770 census.) The 1778 census also credits Catherine with

228. *Ibid.*, emphasis added. Mme. Brazillier, owner of Noël, was the Widow Hery *dit* Duplanty who served as godmother to Catherine’s niece Anastasie Panquinette.

229. Rex vs. Cesario, Francisco, et al.

only four of her five children: two males and two daughters.²³⁰ The 1791 census places her on the “Woods side” of Front Street, as a head of household with no occupation and one male resident who, like Catherine, was said to be in the oldest of three age brackets. The legible portions of the 1795 enumeration do not include Catherine’s residence, but “Widow La Foret” is said to be the owner of a house rented to the washerwoman Marie Louise in Block 16 of the Third Quarter.²³¹

After that point, except for one of Catherine’s daughters, the La Forests elude detection in New Orleans. Catherine’s sons were of age to have served with the Louisiana militia during the Gálvez Campaigns of the American Revolution, but they have not been found in those records. Neither male nor female offspring appear in the confirmation records of the Gulf Coast for three decades after the new bishop assigned to New Orleans began administering the sacrament in 1795. One son has been tracked upriver to Rapides. If the other son remained in New Orleans, he may have adopted a *dit* that has not been discovered.

The known children of Catherine Castel and Claude La Forest were

- 36 i. LOUIS⁴ LA FOREST, born on the evening of 24–25 February 1760 at Mobile and baptized the following day. Godparents were his father’s captain, Louis de Bonille, and Louise Dutisné, wife of the Swiss officer Goujon de Grondel (whose daughter would, two months later, serve as godmother to Louis La Forest’s Panquinette cousin in New Orleans).²³² Louis has not been found thereafter. Either he or Jean Baptiste, below (but apparently not both), lived at least until the census of 1778.
- 37 ii. JEAN BAPTISTE LA FOREST, born on the evening of 17–18 February 1762, at Mobile; baptized the next day with godparents being Sergeant Jean Morel and Thérèse Mitsch (“Micht”),²³³ daughter of the Swiss-born sergeant Daniel Mitsch, with whom this family frequently interacted in godparental roles. (See discussion at Marie Elisabeth Christophe, no. 3.) Nothing further has been found for Jean Baptiste.
- 38 iii. PAUL LA FOREST, born 26 April 1764 at New Orleans; baptized 29 April with godparents being Paul Dubourg (about whom nothing more is known) and Marie Elisabeth Vanderveken (the 11-year-old daughter of the German master tailor, Gaspar Vanderveken).²³⁴ Before 1792, Paul left New Orleans for the upcountry settlement of Rapides,

230. Albert J. Robichaux Jr., *Louisiana Census and Militia Lists, 1770–1789* (Rayne, La.: Hébert Publications, 1973), 66. For the 1770 census entry covering St. Ursule Street, see both Robichaux, 15, and Voorhies, *Some Late Eighteenth-Century Louisianians*, 396.

231. 1791 Census of New Orleans, p. 22.

232. Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:207.

233. *Ibid.*, Baptismal Book 1:217.

234. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:162 (Lafores), 271 (“Vanderveke[r]”).

where his La Prairie–Castel cousins had settled. He first appears there, as a seeming newlywed, on the 14 January 1792 population and land censuses, which cite him as a white male militiaman in Age Group 2 (of age to bear arms), and his wife Marie (also Age Group 2, meaning—for females—those of fertile years). The census assigns them no children and one tract of land on the right ascending bank of Bayou Rapides.²³⁵ Paul’s name is carried on the June 1795 roster of “proposed” militia companies for Rapides, and he is enumerated (as “Paul Laforay”) on the 1799 census, in the same community as his cousins.²³⁶ The first U.S. census of Louisiana, taken in 1810, credits his household with six children and one slave.²³⁷ No marriage record has been found for him. Baptismal records for his children identify his wife as MARIE COUILLARD *dite* VIDERQUIN. Marie’s parents, Gracien Nicolas Couillard *dit* Viderquin and Marie Louise Courtesie, formerly of Pointe Coupée, appear next door to Paul and his wife on the 1792 censuses. The association between their two families was longstanding. Gracien Viderquin Sr. had served with Louis Panquinette in Benoist’s company of Marines nearly a half-century before.²³⁸ No Rapides record has been found that applies the “Gypsy” label to Paul La Forest or his children.

- 39 iv. FRANÇOISE LA FOREST, born 8 July 1766 at New Orleans and baptized on the 10th; godparents were Françoise Roussel and Jean Baptiste Wiltz, whose German father had married a convict’s daughter but nonetheless enjoyed considerable respectability at both Mobile and New Orleans.²³⁹ At age five, Françoise served as godmother to Jean Baptiste, the “natural” son of Marianne Fayard of Biloxi (great-grand-

235. 1792 population census of Rapides, leg. 205, Cuban Papers; 1792 land census of Rapides, leg. 206, folios 699, 707–11, *ibid*.

236. 1795 Statement of the Proposed Company of Infantry at Rapides, Valentine Layssard’s company, leg. 211, folios 799–800, Cuban Papers. See also De Ville, *Rapides Post, 1799*, 3.

237. 1810 U.S. census, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, p. 283.

238. St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura), Bapt. Book 1:9, 225; 2:35, records the baptisms of three of their children but mangles the Couillard identity, calling Mme. La Forest’s parents Graciano Cullar (*var.* Graciano Viderguin) and Maria Luisa Cortez (*var.* Marie Theotiste Cruz). The 1792 censuses render the family’s surname *Couillard*; see leg. 205 (population) and leg. 206, folios 699, 707–11 (land), Cuban Papers. For the Viderquin-Courtesie marriage, as well as young Marie’s birth in 1777, see *Diocese of Baton Rouge: Catholic Church Records* (Baton Rouge: The Diocese, 1980), 2:718. This Baton Rouge diocesan series follows the same style as the New Orleans series, although the diocesan archives has a more open policy for verifying discrepancies. See also LO259, Vaudreuil Papers, for the 1745 troop list that places Viderquin and Panquinette in the same company.

239. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 162 (Lafores). Lorentz Conrad Wiltz, a Swiss soldier and woodworker originating in Saxony, married Marie Anne Colon at Mobile in 1735; see Our Lady Parish, Marriage Book 1:11 and 12. Marie Anne’s mother, the Widow Colon *dite* Violette appears in the previously cited convict section of the 1721 census with Jean Christophe and wife.

daughter of the *Tilleul* Rom La Garanne).²⁴⁰ On 15 April 1785, Françoise herself bore a son Juan Ignacio by TOMÁS GARCIA, “first corporal of the infantry regiment of Louisiana, native of Cadiz.” No record of a marriage has been found for the couple in the officially published abstracts of *selected* church records. Eighteen years later (1803) a daughter María del Carmen is credited to the same couple.²⁴¹ Nothing further is known for Tomás. The scarcity of the name La Forest in New Orleans suggests that Françoise might have been the “Francisca La Foret” whose daughter Maria Juanna was baptized in 1804 (father unidentified) and entered into the register for slaves and free people of color.²⁴² If so, it is debatable whether the child’s consignment to the “colored” register was due to the color of Françoise or that of her child’s father. The 1803 and 1804 births were thirteen months apart—close but appropriate if the 1803 infant died soon after birth.

- 40 v. MARGUERITE LA FOREST, born 25 December 1768 and baptized 7 January 1769; her godparents were Joseph Roth, an immigrant from Lorraine whose associates were of the merchant class, and Marguerite Godinet.²⁴³ On 30 April 1786, she married JOSEPH PLAZERES, a native of La Palma in the Canary Islands and son of Antonio Plazeres by his wife “Maria De Vega?” [*sic*]. Witnesses to their marriage were Vicente Llorca and “Josef Martinez,” both of whom served the same role the next week for Marguerite’s cousin Jean Baptiste Mortal. The Plazeres marriage was shortlived. Joseph died on 11 February 1791 and Margarita appears on the census of that year as “Widow Plazeres,” a young woman with no occupation, living with her two small girls on Bourbon Street.²⁴⁴ Those daughters left issue. Significant to this study, her daughter Maria del Carmen Plazeres married 31 July 1802 Juan Luis Casberg, whose mother was the Rom Angelique Frederic *dite* La Fontaine, another *Le Tilleul* descendant.²⁴⁵

11. Marie Jeanne³ Castel (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes de Simon *dite* L’espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was born about 1742–43, at New Orleans (according to her marriage record); she died after the

240. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:121. Service as a godmother at such a young age was not typical, but neither was it rare.

241. *Ibid.*, 4:139 (Garcia); 7:145 (Garcia). To locate stray references such as this, one must *read* page by page the nineteen volumes of published abstracts. Entries are arranged alphabetically by the principal party, and no master index exists. It is possible that some buried references, creatively spelled, have been missed.

242. *Ibid.*, 8:192 (La Foret). Nothing further has been found for this “Francisca La Foret,” the 1804 mother.

243. *Ibid.*, 2:162 (Lafores), 245 (Roth).

244. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 5:312; and 1721 Census of New Orleans, p. 18.

245. *Ibid.*, 4:221 (Lafore), 251 (Plazeres & Plazeres); 7:53 (Casberg), 260 (Plazeres).

1810 census of Rapides.²⁴⁶ Jeanne married at New Orleans on 29 April 1766, **Louis La Prairie**, born about 1732–33,²⁴⁷ a native of New Orleans said to be son of the deceased “Louis La Prairie and Jeanne Talon” (more likely Jean Philippe La Prairie and Marie Jeanne Pierre Page *dite* Talon).²⁴⁸ Louis died after the 1799 census of Rapides. Marie Jeanne survived at least until 5 July 1815, the date on which she served as godmother to a slave of her son, Michel.²⁴⁹

As with so many records relating to these Romani families, La Prairie’s parental and birth data suggest his roots, but they have to be traced circuitously. No La Prairie baptismal records appear in the officially published abstracts from New Orleans or the fairly complete original registers at Mobile. Registers from the Biloxi, Natchez, and Yazoo settlements have been destroyed. Even so, Louis’s family can be identified with reasonable confidence. On 19 October 1745, one “Marie Jeanne” (no last name accorded to her) petitioned the Superior Council for permission to sell a lot on St. Philippe Street, 20’ wide by 60’ depth, left by her deceased husband *Jean Philippe* La Prairie. The petition names two minor heirs, *Louis* and *Marie*.²⁵⁰ Jean Philippe, himself, is easily enough identified. As shown in Fig. 1, he was deported at the age of 28, on *Le Tilleul* in 1720, with the other Roma under study. His Rom wife is identified on the manuscript copy of the roll as “Marie Jeanne Pierre Page,” age twenty.²⁵¹

246. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, p. 283.

247. The 1773 Ccnsus of Rapides gives his age as 40 but appears to round off the ages of the adult heads of families; he is listed as 40, his wife as 30, his mother-in-law as 50; see leg. 189-a, Cuban Papers.

248. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:45 (Castel), 170 (Laprairie), gives the paternal name as “Louis.” However, “Louis” and “Jean” are often misread one for the other by those working in records of this period. Talon is a surname found several times among the Romani wives; and one Catherine Le Page *dite* Talon has already been presented herein as a 1733 godmother to a child of Marie Jacqueline Pierret (no. 2) at Mobile. However, the only *Jeanne* Talon who has been found in the colony was the child born and baptized 5 January 1719 at Mobile to Robert Talon, the first French male born on the Gulf; see Our Lady Parish (Mobile), Baptismal Book 1:60. This Jeanne has not been accounted for by death or marriage. She would have been only twelve in 1732—ostensibly, “too young” to have borne a child that year. However, twelve was the legal age of marriage, it was a common age in this decade when women were scarce, and at least one birth to a mother short of twelve has been documented for the colony. For the latter, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Genealogical Patterns for Study of Eighteenth-Century Louisiana,” *Louisiana Genealogical Register* 31 (March 1984): 2–15, especially p. 2.

249. De Ville, *Rapides Post, 1799*, 4; Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826: Translated Abstracts of Register Number Five of the Catholic Church Parish of St. François des Natchitoches in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1980), entry 2382.

250. Doc. 26864, Superior Council Records, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans.

251. Clustered with Marie Jeanne Pierre Page (Mme. La Prairie), no. 125 in the “Forced people, *Bobèmes*” section of the *Tilleul* roll, are two other women of the same uncommon surname: Marie Jeanne *dit* Pierre Page, native of Gand, wife of Gaspard Ferlin, age twenty-

In 1722, Jean Philippe witnessed the marriage of Marie La Garenne (also of Fig. 1) to the former convict Nicolas Fisseau, at which time Jean Philippe was said to be the bride's uncle.²⁵² The 1732 census of New Orleans places "La Prairie, Gypsy" on St. Philippe Street and credits his household with a wife, one child, and an orphan.²⁵³

No trace has been found, however, of a "Louis La Prairie" and "Jeanne Talon" as named as in the published version of the La Prairie–Castel marriage record. Collectively, the evidence suggests that the Louis La Prairie who married Jeanne Castel was the Louis La Prairie named as a son of deceased Jean Philippe in 1745. If so, then the marriage record errs in identifying the first name of young Louis's father—a common occurrence in that source. In the case of his mother, if the marriage record does not err, then it reveals another *dite* not yet known for her.

As an adult male, Louis would have been liable for military service, at least in the militia if not the troops. His name ("La Prairie") appears somewhat ambiguously on an annual list of military assignments, amid fourteen "inhabitants" dispatched to the Arkansas Post on 20 February 1759 and "paid in bread up to and including the 20th of February 1759." No wives and family are mentioned. Not surprisingly, three other known Roma were dispatched with him: "La fontaine *L'aine*" (Pierre La Fontaine, the elder), Nicolas Bouton, and "Berhugue *fiils*" [Casbergue, the son].²⁵⁴

The La Prairie–Castel marriage celebration in 1766 was likely a spirited one, considering how strongly their culture was represented. In addition to the bride and groom, both of whom are called "Gypsy" in their early records, the official witnesses included the Rom dance-master Pierre Panquinette, the Rom Pierre La Fontaine (son of Jean François of *Le Tilleul*), and the Rom tavernkeeper, Louis Bernard.²⁵⁵ Missing were

four (no. 106); and Marie Jeanne Pierre Page, a single woman, described as "*liegoise de nation*" [native of Liege?] age twenty, no. 135.

252. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 1:110 (Fiso).

253. Louis Philippe La Prairie's son of that year appears to be the short-lived Frederique La Prairie baptized at New Orleans in 1731; see Thelma Coignard James, "Baptismal Register, St. Louis Basilica, 1731–1733: Volume 1," *New Orleans Genesis* 5 (June 1966), 216. This record has not been found under any conceivable spelling in the official series of selected abstracts published by the archdiocese.

254. "Détachements de la Nouvelle Orléans a Commencer du 9 Janvier, 1759," folio 94.

255. Louis Bernard may be *dit* Pantinette; if not, he is still an integral part of the kin network. In 1760, "Louis Bernard" served as godfather to a child of Françoise Fisseau (granddaughter of La Garenne of *Le Tilleul*). In 1761, an otherwise unidentified "Louis Pantinet *fiils* [Jr.]" served with Mme. La Prairie as godparents to another child of Françoise Fisseau. In 1765, "Louis Bernard" and Mme. Pierre Pantinette served as godparents to a child of the Rom Jeanne La Fontaine (Louis Bernard's neighbor on the 1766 census). In 1767 Bernard fathered a child by Angélique La Fontaine, apparently the same Angélique who later married Jean Louis Casberg. From 1783 onward, this Louis Bernard or a younger

the bride's mother and three sisters who, just one week later, were enumerated on the 1 May 1766 census of upriver Natchitoches.²⁵⁶

By October, the La Prairies had left New Orleans to join the rest of the family on Red River and would earn a niche in history as one of the first half-dozen families of Rapides Parish. They and their first four children appear on the 1773 census as "*bobèmes*," listed consecutively with Marie Jeanne's mother Cécile and siblings. Thereafter, that label would be applied to the La Prairies in only one known record. The 1779 livestock census of Rapides credits the couple with two bulls, five cows, ten calves (one to three years of age), two mares, and two horses (one to three years).²⁵⁷ At the time the first militia roll was compiled for the post (1788), Louis was past mandatory age for service.

The 1792 land and population censuses of Rapides reveal that the Red River clan had been augmented by kin and associates from New Orleans. Louis Sr. is cited as the owner of a surveyed tract on the left ascending bank of Bayou Rapides, one farm from the first tract settled in the region, that of Vincent Poirié. Past Poirié and the Layssard sons of the old commandant, lay the farm of the newcomer Baptiste Bellegarde, who had recently married a daughter of Michel De Ville and the Rom Marguerite Casberg. Across the bayou on the right descending bank, Louis La Prairie Jr. held a surveyed tract next door to that of De Ville. Above them was Paul La Forest, son of Catherine Castel, and his Couillard in-laws. Below them was Celestin Vincent, the half-Indian son of Françoise Castel by her Apalache husband Bissenté; Adam Huffman, the Virginian who had married Louise La Prairie; and Jacques Cidre, the French and German Créole son-in-law of Bellegarde. The growing clan, however, was no longer an isolate community on Bayou Rapides. A number of Anglo newcomers—Browns, Frasiérs, Kirklands, Martins, McGlothlins ("Meglaen"), Nelsons, and Nugents—had settled farms in and among them, as did the French-Indian Huets who had migrated inland from Pascagoula.²⁵⁸

namesake settled into a long-term relationship with Marie Mortal *dit* Chalon, niece of Mme. Pantinette and Mme. La Prairie. See *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 2:18 (Bernard), 121 (Fayard-Fisseau), 162 (LaFontaine); 3:196 (Luis); 5:30 (Bernard); 6:22 (Bernan); 7:26 (Bernard); 8: 192 (LaFontaine); and 9:206 (LaFontaine, for grandparental data). One other official witness to the La Prairie–Castel marriage was Joseph LePire (Le Pierre? Lapine?), who remains unidentified.

256. 6 May 1766 census of Natchitoches, leg. 2585, Santo Domingo Papers.

257. 1779 livestock census of Rapides Post, leg. 192, folio 971, Cuban Papers.

258. "List of the Habitations and Arpents of Land in the District of the Rapid," 1792, leg. 206, folios 705–6, *ibid.* The census, as might be expected, uses various spellings of the names of these individuals. The grandparental data that appears in turn-of-the-century baptismal records in St. Paul Parish (Mansura) are also indispensable for reconstructing these families. See, too, the 1792 land census of Rapides, leg. 206, folios 699, 707–11, Cuban Papers.

The 1799 census of the post reports much the same community. Tallied also for the La Prairie household were three males 25–49, three females 25–49, no slaves, four horses, fifteen head of cattle, and one farm.²⁵⁹ Louis appears to have been dead by the time of the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and the 1806 appointment of the U.S. Land Commissioner for Louisiana. No land claim or confirmation is found in his name. His son Michael claimed ownership of 269 acres “by settlement and occupation,” as well as 677 acres (800 arpents) by an incomplete Spanish title that was likely the land surveyed for his father as a step in the colonial patent process.²⁶⁰ As “Madame La Prairie,” Marie Jeanne is listed among householders on the first U.S. census of Louisiana taken in 1810. The size and composition of her household at that time suggests that a married child, with family, shared her home.²⁶¹

Marie Jeanne Castel bore eight known children to her husband Louis La Prairie. None are labelled “Gypsy” in any record found for them past the 1787 census. Nor did they bring into their community any *nègre* or *mulâtre* spouses, as nineteenth-century Anglo detractors alleged. Their spouses in descending generations were, in fact, frequently of Anglo-American or Celtic-American origin.²⁶²

- 41 i. CÉCILE⁴ LA PRAIRIE, born about 1766, enumerated on the 1773 census as aged seven. She married (1) about 1782, WILLIAM “BILLY” O’NEAL, who died between the censuses of 1787 and 1792. As his widow, on 19 March 1793, she married (2) JEAN BAPTISTE JANNOT (*var.* Janeaux, Janote, Jeannot), a native of Montreal who had come to Red River after spending several years at the Ouachita Post in Northeast Louisiana.²⁶³ The fact that the official witnesses to Cécile’s second marriage were all residents of the Natchitoches outpost, some forty miles upriver, suggests that the couple journeyed to Natchitoches and remained at the post until all three banns had been

259. De Ville, *Rapides Post*, 1799, 4.

260. *American State Papers: Documents Legislative and Executive of the Congress of the United States, Public Land Series*, 8 vols. (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834–61), 2:822, 830.

261. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, p. 283. The census is semi-alphabetized by first letter of surname, making it impossible to identify neighbors with any precision.

262. For later generations of La Prairie descendants, see McHenry, *The Louisiana Link*.

263. St. François Parish (Natchitoches), Baptismal Book 4; see translated abstract in Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 3396; in this record of the second marriage, the prior husband’s name appears to be “Belloeuil,” rather than “Billy O’Neal.” For Jannot at Ouachita, where he was tallied as a 31-year-old “habitant” on the 2 January 1790 census and later that year joined sixteen other residents in contributing timber to rebuild the fort, see E. Russ Williams Jr., *Ouachita Valley in the Era of Transition, 1804–1820* (Monroe: Monroe–Ouachita Valley Bicentennial Commission, 1982), 57 (1790 census extract); and Williams, *The Military Tradition of Fort Miro and the Poste d’Ouachita in Colonial Louisiana, 1783–1804* (Monroe: M-OVBC, 1982), 28.

announced. At her first known birthing, Cécile bore twins, the second set identified for the family (the earlier being the Vallery boys borne by her aunt Babé in 1776).²⁶⁴ The 1799 census of the post places the Jannot household as the last farm “North of Red River” in the area later known as Cotile or Boyce. There, she and Jean are tallied in the 25–49 age bracket, with six children, no slaves, no horses, fifteen head of cattle, and one farm.²⁶⁵ Jannot apparently died before 1802, when Cécile bore a “natural” daughter to the Anglo settler (3) JOEL THOMPSON.²⁶⁶ The circumstances of the child’s birth were not uncommon in Rapides at that time, because that post still had no priest or parish and civil marriage was not yet an option in Louisiana.

- 42 ii. LOUISE LA PRAIRIE, born about 1768, enumerated on the 1773 census as five. She married on 14 January 1782, while several of the La Prairies were visiting New Orleans. Her husband, ADAM HUFFMAN “of Virginia in America,” had been born after 1749 as the son of Adam Huffman and wife Barbara “Mayre.”²⁶⁷ The couple settled with Louise’s family at Rapides where Adam appears amid twelve “Americans” on the 1788 and 1794 militia rolls, as well as the June 1795 list of proposed militia companies for Rapides.²⁶⁸

Unlike most members of this family, the German-American Adam was a slaveholder. The 1792 census credits him with two *negro* males; in 1795, he bought another slave from William Rafferty at Avoyelles, the next settlement down-river.²⁶⁹ The 1799 census of Rapides lists him twice. First, in the La Prairie family cluster, he is credited with thirteen slaves aged 25–49 (as well as nine whites, twelve horses, thirty cattle, and two farms). Then, in the new Cotile settlement “North of Red River” that was mostly occupied by Anglo-Americans, he is enumerated consecutively with his wife’s brothers-in-law Jacob Paul and Jean Jannot. His household of eight is credited there with the same three slaves, fifteen horses, and fifty head of cattle, but only one farm.²⁷⁰ The first American census of

264. St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura, La.), Baptismal Book 1:15, Chancery Archives, Alexandria, Louisiana. De Ville, *Rapides Post*, 1799, 7.

265. De Ville, *Rapides Post*, 1799, 7.

266. St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura, La.), Baptismal Book 2:41.

267. *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:180 (Laprerrie), 225 (Ofmanie). Two of the bride’s younger siblings were also baptized at New Orleans on that day. For Adam’s age, see the 1799 census of the Rapides post.

268. 1788 militia roll of Rapides, leg. 215B, folio 379, Cuban Papers; 1794 militia roll of Rapides, leg. 211, folio 1793; 1795 roll of proposed militia, leg. 211, folios 799–800, Cuban Papers.

269. 14 January 1792 population census of Rapides, leg. 205, Cuban Papers. “Guillaume Rafetey” to Adam “Offman,” doc. 1795:205, Avoyelles Notarial Records, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge.

270. De Ville, *Rapides Post*, 1799, 4, 7.

Louisiana, 1810, credits Adam Huffman Sr. and his wife, both over forty-five, with twelve slaves. Seven children were still at home that year; two sons were married and living elsewhere.²⁷¹ Their offspring would intermarry with Anglo-Celtic families such as Richey and O'Connor, one ostensibly Spanish family (Cruz, a spelling that could have been a Spanish priest's transliteration of the associated French family *Couterie* or the English family *Crooks*, who also settled in their neighborhood), and their La Prairie cousins.²⁷²

43 iii. LOUIS LA PRAIRIE, born about 1770, enumerated on the 1773 census as three years old, and included on the April 1788 militia roll of Rapides. Either Louis or his father Louis served as godfather to a child of Marianne La Prairie and James Paul on 23 March 1801.²⁷³ Louis Jr. does not appear as a head of household on the 1799 or 1810 censuses.

44 iv. MARIANNE "NANETTE" LA PRAIRIE, born about 1772, enumerated on the 1773 census as age one year. She married 17 July 1792, JACOB PAUL JR. (*var.* James Paul, Juan Pablo), son of Jacob Paul and wife Rachel O'Brien (*var.* Oberlin) of North Carolina. Like her sister Cécile, Nanette traveled with her affianced to the Natchitoches Post to be married and then waited for all three banns to be announced. They appear to have brought their own kinsmen (Adam Huffman and Louis De Ville) upriver with them to serve as witnesses with the church officials, Ignace Maiou and François Rambin. Jacob made his profession of faith and accepted Catholicism on that same day.²⁷⁴ Baptismal records for their children also suggest that the couple had already set up housekeeping at least a year or so prior to the marriage—a common circumstance on the frontier where families were far removed from a church.

The family appears on the 1799 census of Rapides in the "North of Red River" district (Cotile), living in a cluster with the other La Prairie sons-in-law, Adam Hoffman and Jean Jannot. There, the Pauls (aged 25–49) are tallied with three children, no slaves, two horses, five head cattle, but no land.²⁷⁵ Jacob apparently died before 1806, given the 10 September 1806 baptism of a child born to "Marie Nanette La Prairie" by her second husband BAPTISTE RABALAIS, a French Créole settler from the older post of Point Coupée

271. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, p. 281.

272. See the various baptisms in Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, and St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura), Baptismal Books 1 and 2.

273. St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura, La.), Baptismal Book 1:323.

274. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 3387, 3455. For the baptism of their first child, see St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura), Baptismal Book 1:2. For John Paul's parents, see *ibid.*, 1:131–32, 323, as well as the couple's marriage record.

275. De Ville, *Rapides Post, 1799*, 7.

downriver.²⁷⁶ Nanette has not been tracked past December 1806, when her son Louis and her sister Louise's daughter—both already three years old—were baptized by an Opelousas priest five days before Christmas.²⁷⁷

- 45 v. MICHEL LA PRAIRIE, born about 1774, appears on the April 1788 militia roll of Rapides, together with his brother Louis. His age at that time, fourteen, was below the typical muster age. However, military liability at fourteen is documented elsewhere in the colony where few males were available to serve.²⁷⁸ The entire roll consists of only forty-one males, including twelve Americans. Michel married before 1802, MADELEINE FOGEL, "Widow Rogers," a daughter of Louis Fogel and Marie Landry "of Canada." Michel died after 5 July 1815, when he presented a slave to a passing priest for baptism. He and Madeleine left issue.²⁷⁹
- 46 vi. MARIE JEANNE LA PRAIRIE, born about 1776–77. Nothing is known of her except that she appears as a daughter in Age Group 2 (a female of fertile years) on the 1792 census of the Rapides post.
- 47 viii. MANUEL LA PRAIRIE, born about 1776–77, appears on the 1794 militia roll with his brother Michel and on the June 1795 roster of "proposed" militia companies for Rapides.²⁸⁰ He has not been found past that point.
- 48 vii. MARIE ROSALIE "ROSIE" LA PRAIRIE, born 28 February 1779, baptized as "Rosalia Lapreri" on 13 January 1782 at New Orleans; godparents were her cousin Rosalie Panquinette and Ramon Gallard, a long-time neighbor of the Panquinettes.²⁸¹ On 27 November 1809, the Opelousas priest baptized a child of one year, identifying him as the son of JOSEPH POIRET and "Rosie" La Prairie.²⁸²
- 49 viii. MARIE MARGUERITE LA PRAIRIE, born 19 December 1780, baptized as "Margarita Lapreri," 13 January 1782 on a family trip to New Orleans; godparents were the Roma Louis La Fontaine ("Laconten")

276. St. Paul Parish (Mansura), Baptismal Book 1:286.

277. Donald J. Hébert, ed., *Southwest Louisiana Records*, vol. 1, 1756–1810 (Eunice, La.: Hébert Publications, 1976), 288 (Hoffman), 445 (Paul).

278. See, for example, the proposed militia roll titled "Roster of the Habitants of Atakapas from 14 to the age of 50," leg. 189-A, Cuban Papers, published in Winston De Ville, *Mississippi Valley Mélange*, vol. 2 (Ville Platte, La.: Privately printed, 1996), 39–44.

279. For the baptism of their first child in 1802, see St. Paul the Apostle Parish (Mansura), Baptismal Book 1:397; see also Book 2:12, 28. For Michel's last known appearance, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entry 2832.

280. Leg. 211, folios 799–800, Cuban Papers.

281. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 9:226. Ramon Gallard was the father of Adelaide Gallard, f.w.c., who was a neighbor of Catherine Castel, Widow La Forest, on the "Woods side" of Front Street in 1791.

282. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records*, vol. 1, 1756–1810, 149.

and Marguerite Casberg (“Casteverg”), wife of De Ville.²⁸³ By 9 November 1805, Marie Marguerite became the wife of Joseph Crooks, who is earlier found on the 1792 census of the post as a son of “Jn. and Margueritte Crouck.”²⁸⁴ The 1810 census of the Rapides Post enumerates “Joseph Crooks” as a male past 45 with a wife 26–45, five children and no slaves.²⁸⁵

12. Marie Ursulle³ Castel (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L’espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was born before 23 October 1747, the date of her baptism at New Orleans; died 23 December 1777 at Côte Joyeuse, the Cane River community that sprawled some two to ten miles below the village of Natchitoches.²⁸⁶ Ursulle married, probably about mid-1765, **Jacques Rachal**, a Créole born 4 December 1735 at the Natchitoches Post of a French soldier-drummer (Corporal Pierre Rachal *dit* St. Denis from the Île d’Oleron) and a Parisian mother, Marianne Benoist, whose father had been a porter for the royal palace at the time Marianne was shipped to the colony with other *femmes de force* aboard *La Baleine* in 1720.²⁸⁷

283. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 9:226.

284. Hébert, *Southwest Louisiana Records*, 1:454, records the baptism of their first known child, Joseph Jr., on 9 November 1805. See also 1792 population census of Rapides, leg. 205, Cuban Papers. Records of the subsequent baptisms of three of their children by a passing priest from Natchitoches state that the couple were living as man and wife “by contract”—i.e., a civil agreement rather than a church marriage.

285. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, p. 228.

286. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1190.

287. Marianne Benoist’s sentence, to be “expelled from the Retinue of the Court and the Council of His Majesty” for a period of five years was unique among *femmes de force* in several ways:

- Most contemporary females charged with crime were simply consigned to the Salpêtrière by a *lettre de cachet*. Those who were actually tried were judged by Parlement. However, Marianne and a female companion, Françoise Renault, were judged by the Prévôte de l’Hôtel du Roy, which had jurisdiction exclusively and without appeal for offenses committed in the royal houses of the king.

- Those who were convicted of an alleged crime and branded with a *fleur de lis* were permanently exiled. Marianne’s papers indicate that she was convicted but they record no branding, and a marginal note curiously states that it would not be “fair” to sentence her to the colony for more than five years.

- The final record of her trial states that it was held in the presence of the king. That statement would appear to be a formality, given that the king was only six years old; France was then under the regency of Louis XIV’s brother, the Duc d’Orleans.

- Marianne’s “crime” was also unusual among the *femmes de force*. She was first said to be a “famous blasphemer”; as an afterthought there was added “and moreover, *prostituée*”—the latter being the common charge for the girls deported in this year. More specific details of the charges have not yet been uncovered. See “Personnes renfermées en la maison de force de la Salpêtrière, bonnes pour les isles,” 27 June 1719, Archives de la Bastille, doc. 12692; and “Extrait des Reg^{res} du greffe de la prevosté de l’hotel du Roy et grande prevosté

Less is known about Marie Ursulle, personally, than for any other daughter of Cécile, although more is known about her lifestyle. On 25 June 1765, her thirty-year-old husband acknowledged having finally received from his guardian (Dominique Monteche, retired officer of the militia) his small inheritance of eighty-eight *livres*, nine *sols*, genuine silver. Witnessing Jacques's receipt was Joseph Barranco, Ursulle's step-father.²⁸⁸ Four months later, Jacques entered into an agreement with a prominent local planter, Pierre Derbanne (himself the offspring of a French official by a Chitimacha Indian, and the son-in-law of another pair of *Le Tilleul* Gypsies, Marie Anne Albert and Louis Le Clerc *dit* Belle Humeur of Fig. 1), agreeing to make a crop on Derbanne's land "near the Indian village of the post." Derbanne was to provide seven *nègres* for labor—three adult males named Daouain, Pacales,²⁸⁹ and Julien; a boy named Baptiste; two older girls named Thérèse and Marie, and a little girl named Marianne—all of whom would be put to raising corn, beans, potatoes, pumpkins, and tobacco. Two thirds of the crop they all produced would go to Derbanne; Jacques would be allowed to keep one third.

The dwelling Derbanne provided for Jacques (and Ursulle) was described as "a little cabin of round wood [logs], 20' long by 16' wide, on the elevation opposite" (i.e., across the river from) Derbanne's own farm. Jacques and the *nègres* were to perform repairs on the house while they were not farming. Moreover, Jacques was to provide "fuel wood for his provisions"; fencing for the yard, garden, and crops; and wood, bark, and iron necessary to repair the house. In exchange, Derbanne was to subsequently provide Jacques with bark, iron, and labor from the *nègres* to build Jacques's own house at the post when their partnership ended.²⁹⁰

Presumably Jacques fulfilled the terms of the contract; there is no cancellation, no suit, and no complaint to indicate otherwise. The 1 January 1766 census of the Natchitoches Post places him at a considerable distance from his landlord—but deceptively so. Jacques' residence, adjacent to his own brother Barthelemy, lay just across the river from that of

de France," doc. 10659 (1719), Archives de la Bastille, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Archives Nationales, Paris. (Mme. Barbara Allemand of Paris is thanked for uncovering the second document.) Marianne did not return to France after her five-year exile was served. For Jacques's birth and baptism, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 32.

288. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 449.

289. The house that Pacales (Yves *dit* Pacalé) later built for himself as an aged freedman still stands at Natchitoches and has been preserved as a historic attraction. For background see Elizabeth Shown Mills and Gary B. Mills, *Tales of Old Natchitoches* (Natchitoches: Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches, 1978), 41 (sketch)–44.

290. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 437 as per translation supplied by the late Irma Sompayrac Willard, who made the translation in the 1950s when the record was in much better condition.

Derbanne. (The census taker simply polled one side of the river to its limits before coming up the other side, thus arbitrarily separating cross-stream neighbors.) That enumeration also credits Jacques with 700 pounds of tobacco “in twists” and 20 barrels of corn still on the cob.²⁹¹ By 6 May, Ursulle’s mother and sisters had joined them. Jacques is still said to be landless, still adjacent to Barthelemy, and credited this time with one horse, two head of cattle, five hogs or sheep, and a gun.²⁹² The 1772 militia roll of the post describes Jacques as 5' 2" (French measure being slightly less than English measure) and states that he had served in the militia for nine years.²⁹³ With that militia, he would have been called up for service in the first of the Gálvez Campaigns of the American Revolution, leaving several motherless children behind. However, when the troops left for the second Gálvez campaign (Mobile) in mid-February 1780, Jacques was allowed to stay home.

Ursulle had died two days before Christmas 1777 and had been buried in the parish churchyard. Jacques was then in no haste to open a succession (probate) in settlement of her half of their estate. Unless he planned to remarry, there was no need. Likely, it was the recall of the troops that prompted him to officially notify civil authorities in February 1780 that his three surviving minors had lost their mother. The troops had just left the post when the post notary drew a sheaf of papers and his quill pen, then began to record the old commandant’s dictation: “I have just been notified of the death of Ursulle Castel, wife of Jacques Rachal, and have gone to [his] habitation in the country about two leagues [four to five miles] from the post, to make the inventory of the goods held in community between the couple, for the purpose of settling the rights of their minor children.” Jacques was physically present for the inventory along with three prominent neighbors and “Sieur Jean Varangue, maternal uncle of the minors.” Two officials and one retired officer signed the document. Jacques and two of the witnesses made their marks. Neither a signature nor a mark appears for “Sieur Jean Varangue.” Instead, one finds “X mark of Jean Castel.” The implication that Varangue and Castel were one and the same is borne out by numerous other documents.²⁹⁴

The farm and household goods inventoried for Jacques and Ursulle were sparse, but typical of the yeoman class on that frontier:

291. January 1766 census, Miscellaneous Collection 3, Cammie G. Henry Research Center.

292. May 1766 census of Natchitoches, leg. 2585, Santo Domingo Papers.

293. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 741.

294. *Ibid.*, doc. 1379. This discrepancy between the signature and the text’s stated identity of the maternal uncle provided the breakthrough that placed Ursulle Castel, wife of Jacques Rachal, into the Christophe clan.

Assimilation? Or Marginalization and Discrimination? Romani Settlers of the Colonial Gulf

an old wooden bed with a small bed of feathers, one old cover	
1 old beef hide robe, estimated with 1 old sheet	..... 10p.
4 iron boilers, more good than bad	..... 5p.
2 jars, 1 pot, 1 plate [and 2 other illegible items]	..... 4p.
3 good settings [of tableware] and 2 bad, 5 old pewter dishes and 3 [illegible]	..... 2p.
4 cords of tobacco and 8 hangers	..... 6p.
6 different baskets of canes	..... 10p.
2 old pickaxes, 1 old hatchet, 1 old [illegible]	..... 6p.
2 old chests and 1 [illegible] valued with 1 old table and	
3 bad chairs	..... 3p.
16 chickens, 2 cocks	..... 22p.
5 horned animals, both large and small	..... 200p.
1 horse	..... 80p.
1 tract of land with about 2 arpents of river frontage [by about 40 of depth] and a house of posts in the ground covered with piling, the said land being bounded on one side by the Sr. Joseph Dupré and on the other by the Sieur Charles Lemoine	..... 800p.

The said Jacques Rachal declares that he owes to different people at the post the sum of 46p.

Signatures: [Capt. Jean Louis] Borme; [Lt.] Remy Poissot; [Notary J. B.] Roujot
X marks: Jacques Rachal, Sieur [J.B.] Brevel, Louis Buart, Jean Castel

The family did not fare well after Ursulle's death in 1777. Fever hit the river that September. Their neighbor Baptiste Dupré, brother of Joseph above (and brother of Robert to whom Ursulle's mother had given part of her Rapides farm in 1766), died on 31 August. Jacques's toddler Dominique was buried on 9 September. On the 21st, the community buried the Duprés' German mother, Anne Marie Poissot (whose husband had helped to inventory Ursulle's estate and whose sister, five decades before and 500 miles away, had been the second wife of Ursulle's father).²⁹⁵

Jacques, himself, appears on no known record thereafter. When, on 17 August 1787, officials at the post took an every-name census of its occupants, Jacques was not included. On the farm next door—once the property of Joseph Dupré but now in the hands of Ursulle's brother Jean who had married Dupré's widow—the sixteen-year-old “Marie Rachal, orphan” is cited last in the Varangue-Dupré household. Across the river, “Étienne Rachal, orphan” appears in the household of his probable god-

295. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 1279–1281. Neither the burial entries nor subsequent succession records for Dupré and Poissot state the specific kind of fever. Typically in August–October it was malaria or yellow fever.

father, Étienne Verger, who had married the Widow Dupré's daughter.²⁹⁶ Apparently, Jacques died on his farm during a season when weather conditions prevented travel into the post for burial.

Marie Ursulle Castel bore five known children by her husband Jacques Rachal:

- 50 i. THÉRÈSE⁴ RACHAL, born 10 January 1766, baptized 11 January, at which time godparents were Pierre Derbanne, her father's farming partner, and Thérèse La Malathie, whose sister had married Jacques's brother Barthelemy, next door.²⁹⁷ The baptismal record carries a marginal addition, "the infant died." That death would have occurred after the 27 January 1766 census on which a female child of her age is tallied.
- 51 ii. JACQUES REMY RACHAL, born 1 February 1768 and baptized the following April. His godparents were the old lieutenant Remy Poissot and Marie Françoise Bourdon, wife of the father's guardian, the retired lieutenant Dominique Monteche.²⁹⁸ Young Jacques Remy died before his mother's succession was opened in March 1780. Burial records of the parish contain no entry for him.
- 52 iii. MARIE JACOB RACHAL, born about 1770, married 2 April 1788 at Natchitoches, the Canadian newcomer ANDRÉ BOTIEN *dit* ST. ANDRÉ.²⁹⁹ André's succession was opened on 12 November 1828 and Marie's on 2 February 1842, both at Natchitoches. Exact death dates are not given in either case. The St. Andrés had moved from the Natchitoches Post down to lower Cane River and farmed near the present community of Marco just above the Rapides Parish line—just above their La Prairie cousins of Cotile. At the time of André's death, his property was valued at \$18,677.91. Marie's would be appraised at \$13,145.84—both significant sums for their era.³⁰⁰ As with many contemporary families along Red River, this farm family's shift from tobacco to cotton, after Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin, made them wealthy by the standards of their place and time. No

296. Leg. 201, Cuban Papers. For a published translation of the full census, see Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*, 45–62, particularly 51, 55.

297. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 855; the La Malathie–Rachal relationships are easily charted through the records in this same volume.

298. *Ibid.*, 928.

299. *Ibid.*, 1589. Marie was said to be ten when her mother's succession was opened on 1 March 1780. She was said to be sixteen at the time of the 17 August 1787 census.

300. Natchitoches Parish succession files, no. 128, André St. André, and 459, Marie Jacob Rachal, wife of St. André. The couple was likely buried in the Rachal Cemetery near present Marco, but no markers were extant for them in 1970, when the present writer first canvassed that graveyard. Engraved iron crosses were the standard in their society, but the cows that grazed the cemetery frequently uprooted the crosses. A few iron markers were found on that 1970 visit, tossed into the woods, but not theirs.

known records apply the “Gypsy” label to Mme. St. André or her numerous offspring.³⁰¹

- 53 iv. ÉTIENNE RACHAL, born about 1775–77; married about 1812–13 apparently, ____LISE RAMON (the record is partially illegible), by whom he had one son baptized as legitimate.³⁰² By an earlier relationship with the free woman of color Dorothée Monet, Étienne fathered several other children. Most of their offspring married into the Anglo and Spanish families who settled the piney woods between Red River and Texas. There, they were considered white.³⁰³ No known record applies to them the label “Gypsy.”
- 54 v. DOMINIQUE RACHAL, born 18 July 1777 and baptized the following 21 September, at which time his godparents were the old militia lieutenant Dominique Monteche and Marie Jeanne Le Vasseur, wife of the neighboring planter, Jean Lambre. Young Dominique was buried at Natchitoches on 9 September 1781.³⁰⁴

13. Marie Françoise³ “Fanny” dite Castel (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon dite L’espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was born shortly before her baptism on 16 March 1750.³⁰⁵ She married (1) apparently by Indian or Rom custom and probably before 1772, **Bissinte**,

301. Given that this line represents the only mitochondrial DNA line identified to date for this Gypsy clan, the following may be of value for genetic research. Marie Jacob’s daughter Lise St. André married a second cousin Louis Solastie Rachal and died young from tuberculosis, leaving a daughter Marie Florentine who married the French immigrant Charles Claude Bertrand. Florentine also developed tuberculosis and Bertrand took her back to his birthplace where his family had been physicians for generations; they did not cure her and she was buried at Couches-les-Mines, Saône-et-Loire, in 1855. Bertrand returned to Cane River with his son and two daughters, where the son married and fathered 13 children, but tuberculosis wiped out all his offspring even before he died. One daughter of Florentine and Charles Claude, Henriette Bertrand, wed Joseph Charleville and bore a daughter Minerva Charleville, who married Hugh Eugene Mills. One living daughter of the Mills marriage has a living daughter who would carry the mitochondrial DNA of this Roma line. A son of Minerva and Hugh, Harold Garland Mills, married his fourth cousin, Hazel Cecilia Rachal (a descendant of Jacques’s brother Louis) and produced Gary Bernard Mills, the late husband of the present writer. Whether this line’s proclivity toward tuberculosis (which ended about 1900) originated with Ursulle or in the St. André side of the family has not been determined.

302. Étienne was said to be four in his mother’s succession record and ten in the 1787 census. For details from the partially destroyed record of his legitimate child’s baptism, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entry 483. In this era, Natchitoches was frequently without a priest and the record book that was randomly kept was heavily damaged in the fire that destroyed the church in 1823.

303. Gary B. Mills, “Monet-Rachal: Backtracking a Cross-Racial Heritage in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *The American Genealogist* 65 (July 1990): 129–42.

304. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 1721, 1270.

305. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:180.

Apalache Indian; and (2) 10 May 1783 at Natchitoches, **Robert McKim** (*var.* Mechim) of “Baltimore, province of Pennsylvania,” son of William McKim and “Marie Dever” (Deves, Davis?). Robert died before October 1802. Françoise survived him and apparently died after 1815.³⁰⁶

While Françoise used *Castel* as her surname on one occasion, her baptismal record identifies her as a “natural” child of “Cécile Christophe, widow of Jean [*sic*] Castel.” No subsequent record hints at the identity of her father. She was only sixteen when, about April 1766, she became pregnant with her first child. The father has not been identified and a reconstruction of the circumstances is complicated by the fact that she and her mother removed from New Orleans to Natchitoches about the time of the conception. Godparents to the child were the half-siblings Pierre Poissot and Elisabeth Dupré, whose mother’s sister had been the wife of Pierre Castel before he married Françoise’s mother.³⁰⁷ The fact that Françoise’s mother, three months earlier, had donated two-thirds of her Rapides land to the brother of the child’s two godparents (Robert Dupré) might suggest a gift to a prospective son-in-law. However, young Dupré was already married.³⁰⁸

Françoise was still single in March 1769 when her mother donated to her a one-year-old bull in exchange for her “help in the establishment of a *vacherie* at Rapides.”³⁰⁹ She is not enumerated with her mother and siblings on the 1773 census of the fledgling Rapides Post. The next year’s census of the Apalache tribe explains her absence from the maternal household. The sixth of the twenty households in that Apalache village was that of Bissinte, his wife Françoise, a boy Celestin, and a girl Catherine. No ages are given.³¹⁰ The livestock census of 1779 cites “Widow Bissainte” living between her mother and the Apalache village; it credits her with four bulls, ten cows, eighteen calves (1–3 years), two stallions, four horses, eight mares, and sixteen geldings (1–3 years). Her herd was, in fact, the largest at the post—greater even than that of the commandant—although it still fell short of that attributed to Denis, the Apalache chief.³¹¹

306. Succession of Robert McKim, file “Rap:1803, January 11,” Louisiana State Archives; 1810 U.S. Census of Rapides, p. 276 (underscored number), for “Madame Bobb.” As “Famy [Fanny] Makim,” Françoise served with another Bayou Cotile resident, the notary Pierre David Cailleau La Fontaine, as a godparent to an O’Connor grandchild of her sister Jeanne La Prairie on 7 May 1815; see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entry 553.

307. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1068, for 1767 baptism of Marie Françoise.

308. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 538. For Dupré’s contract of marriage, 28 February 1763, see Alice Daly Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriage Contracts*, vol. 2 (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1989), 59. One witness to the contract was Vincent Poirier, who settled with Dupré and Cécile at Rapides.

309. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 565.

310. Leg. 189, folio 1108, Cuban Papers.

311. Leg. 192, *ibid.*

In the wake of the American Revolution, when the new state governments began charging for land and Anglo-Americans learned that it was being given freely in Spanish Louisiana, Rapides saw a surge in population. Given Françoise's relative prosperity, it is not surprising that one of those newcomers soon courted her. On 13 February 1783, three months before their church wedding, she signed a marriage contract with Robert McKim. An inventory of her property taken at the time of the contract attests the rudimentary accommodations of the first settlers of that wilderness:³¹²

2 copper boilers, one holding 10 pots and the other 4	.....	9.0 p.
1 old coverlet of skin [fur? leather?]	.....	.6 p.
1 feather bed [i.e., a mattress, but no bedstead]	.....	8.0 p.
8 mother cows and their young	.....	112.0p.
5 large bulls	.....	40.0 p.
4 mares and their young	.....	32.0 p.
3 large fillies	.....	15.0 p.
1 stallion	.....	10.0 p.
2 geldings	.....	20.0 p.
	.....	246.6p

By the terms of their contract, McKim promised to raise her one surviving child, Celestin, in the event of her death, in exchange for half of her inventoried property; the rest was to be held in Celestin's name. They also agreed that future accumulations by either of them would belong to that spouse alone but that if McKim died without children, his property would fall to Françoise.³¹³

The union produced no known offspring. In fact, the couple appears to have parted company before McKim's death. The 1789 census of Rapides, the last that includes McKim, credits him with two thousand *carrotes* (bundles or twists) of tobacco, twenty barrels of corn, one residence, and one "stepson ... Indian male." It also places the family next to one Jim McKim ("Guim Meckim"), an apparent brother with a wife and a son Robert, but no land.³¹⁴ The 1792 census of the post, however, cites "Françoise" and "Celestin, her son"—no surname for either—with no other residents in their household.³¹⁵ Françoise appears as the head of a household on the 1799 census of the post as "Madame Bob McKim," aged

312. Inventory of the goods of Françoise, widow Bissente, filed in Robert McKim Succession.

313. McKim-Françoise marriage contract, Robert McKim Succession. In this document, the commandant identifies Françoise's former husband redundantly as *Vincente* Bissente. In Spanish, the "B" and "V" sounds are interchangeable.

314. Leg. 201, folio 854-B, Cuban Papers.

315. *Ibid.*

25–49, sharing her home with six others—including a male in that same broad age bracket (apparently her son, Celestin).³¹⁶ Subsequent documents suggest that McKim had moved on to another relationship. After the Purchase of 1803, when Louisiana landholders were required to submit to the U.S. Land Office proofs of ownership for their lands, one Andrew Weaver created a file of paperwork showing that a Robert McKim and “Madame Morris” occupied a piece of land on Prairie Mamou in the Opelousas District in 1801, that neither lived on the property in the late 1802–early 1803 period, and that Weaver had purchased the property from Madame Morris.³¹⁷

That McKim-Morris chronology coincides with the opening of Robert McKim’s succession in October 1802, when kinsmen appeared to claim his estate. One William (*var.* James) Brown of Bayou Chicot in the Opelousas District laid claim to a share on the basis that McKim was *carnal tio* (blood uncle) to Brown’s wife Celeste Chover.³¹⁸ Commandant Laysard, who had been at the post from its founding in the 1760s, produced the 1783 “McKim-Françoise [no surname]” marriage contract to squelch Brown’s inheritance claim. The goods that Françoise then inherited from McKim suggests that the family home and most of their livestock were already hers, and that McKim may have been a carpenter:³¹⁹

2 broken horses	1 gouge
1 broken mare	1 drawing knife
1 2-year-old beef	1 round knife
Cash \$7.50	2 crows
1 shot gun	1 rasp & lathing hammer
1 hoe	2 brands
1 falling ax	2 gimblets
1 hand ax	1 iron wedge
2 plaines [planes]	1 jointer
1 hand saw	1 parcel of cypress staves
1 frow	2 blankets
1 grind stone	1 coat

316. De Ville, *Rapides Post*, 1799, 3.

317. For a published summary of those land records, see *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:117–18.

318. Petition of Guillermo Brom [*sic*], 26 October 1802, McKim Succession. Although the petition begins by identifying him as “Guillermo” (Spanish for William), he signed—badly—as *James Brown*.

319. “Inventory of the effects belonging to Robert McKim, Deceast,” 7 November 1802, McKim Succession. The document label carries an unexplained notation, “Madame Bobe,” suggesting that she may have been known in the community by the diminutive of her husband’s name—i.e., “Madame Bob.” This echoes the 1810 U.S. census listing of one “Mme. Bobb”; see *Rapides Parish*, p. 276.

2 horse bells	2 bear skins
2 steel traps	1 case of razor & shaving box
1 cooper's adze	1 Spanish saddle & bridle
1 trowel	1 pair cooper's Coumpasses
1 small saw	2 carottes of tobacco
2 clivesses & link	
1 note on James McLaughlin for \$65	
1 note on Patrick Clark for \$20.	

Marie Françoise *dite* Castel was the mother of three known children, only one of whom lived to adulthood:

By unknown father:

- 55 i. MARIE FRANÇOISE⁴ *dite* CASTEL, born 18 January 1767, baptized 30 January 1767, with her godparents being Pierre Poissot and his half-sister, Elisabeth Dupré.³²⁰ Marie died before the 1773–74 censuses of the Rapides Post and Apalache village.

By Bissente, Apalache Indian:

- 56 ii. CELESTIN BISSENTE *aka* VINCENT, born about 1772. He is enumerated as a child, “Celestin,” on the 1774 census of the Apalache village³²¹ and is listed last (as “Celestin Bissente”) on the 1788 militia roll of the Rapides post.³²² Curiously, while the Natchitoches priest periodically journeyed to Rapides to baptize children born into the Apalache tribe, no baptismal record has been found for Celestin or his younger sister Catherine. (It is also possible that they were baptized by a travelling priest from another post and the entry was recorded among Indian and slave records not yet published or open for study.) The 1789 census of the post cites “Celestin Bissente” as an “Indian male” and a militiaman.³²³ He appears with his mother on the 1792 census of Rapides, as a militiaman, and (under “Celestin Vincent”) his farm is placed between Louis La Prairie and La Prairie’s son-in-law Huffman on the 1792 census of tracts already surveyed.

Celestin does not appear on the 1794 militia roll³²⁴ and has not been found thereafter. He is likely the adult male in his mother’s household on the 1799 census, where the composition of the household suggests that he had a wife and family.³²⁵ He does not appear

320. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, no. 1068.

321. 1774 census of Indian tribes, leg. 189, folio 1108, Cuban Papers.

322. 1788 militia roll of Rapides, leg. 211, folio 793, *ibid.*

323. 1788 census of Rapides, leg. 201, *ibid.*

324. 1792 population census of Rapides, leg. 205; 1792 land census of Rapides, leg. 206, folios 699, 707–11; and 1794 militia roll of Rapides, leg. 215B, folio 379, *ibid.*

325. De Ville, *Rapides Post, 1799*, 3.

on the first federal census of Rapides, taken in 1810, and he appears not to have filed a claim with the U.S. land office for the land that was surveyed for him before 1792. Offspring within the Apalache community are probable but not known. A female named Tonton (*var.* Touton) Celestin appears in baptismal records of tribal members in 1815, together with Celestin's cousin, Susanne Salmon (Babé's Apalache daughter), and Susanne's husband José María Torres.³²⁶

- 57 i. CATHERINE BISSENTE, born before the census of 1774; died before her mother's marriage contract in 1783.

14. Jean Gregoire³ dit Castel, Marchant, and Varangue (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon *dite* de L'espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹) was baptized at New Orleans on 21 July 1752.³²⁷ He married at Natchitoches, about 22 May 1784, **Marie de l'Incarnation Derbanne**, widow of the prosperous planter, Joseph Dupré.³²⁸ Marie died at Natchitoches about 1808; Jean, about January 1828.³²⁹

Jean's father has not been identified. At his baptism, he was called "Gregoire [no surname], *natural* son of Cécille [no surname], widow Castel." His father goes unnamed. The godfather for whom he was named was the eight-year-old Jean Gregoire Henry Metzinger, son of the sergeant-major of the Swiss troops at New Orleans. His godmother was Marie Louise Dorvain, about whom nothing else has been found. Both godparents made their marks. The 1773 census of the Rapides Post places him in the household of "Widow Varangue," and names him only as "Jean, her natural son, 21." In that same year Jean witnessed an inventory of the goods of the Rapides commandant, at which time he printed his name in block letters, "JEAN CASTEL."³³⁰

As an adult, Jean first used the surnames Castel and Marchant, but settled early upon Varangue. His color apparently was an issue at least once in his life. White males of his age were obliged to do militia duty, and the previously mentioned documents from the Rapides post shows his half-Indian nephew serving in the militia there. However, the first militia roll on which Jean appears, that of Natchitoches in 1780, reveals

326. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1826*, entries 661–71, 1804–05. See also the reference to Celestin in the subsequent discussion of Jacques Vallery's (no. 63) possible New Orleans residence in 1840.

327. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 2:259.

328. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, no. 1079.

329. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 3625, Succession of Marie Derbanne; Natchitoches Parish, Succession Book 6:165–68, Jean Varangue.

330. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 869.

that he was not mustered into either of the two companies. Instead, as “Jean Varangue,” he heads an appended list of six “free men of color” who served as couriers.³³¹ That document represents the only known instance in which Jean, his mother, or his siblings had “color” attached to them in records created during their lifetimes. The 1782 and 1787 militia lists accord him full status as a cavalryman.³³²

Natchitoches, not Rapides, was clearly Jean’s home base. When his sister Babé was charged with prostitution by the Natchitoches priest in 1778, he filed her defense for her.³³³ When a succession was opened at Natchitoches for his late sister Ursulle in 1780, he attended the taking of an inventory.³³⁴ On 18 March 1784, he petitioned the Natchitoches commandant for help collecting 40 *piastres* due him for having “caulked entirely the bateau” of the deceased Gaspard Bayarre,³³⁵ referring to a trade likely taught him by his stepfather Barranco, who was cited as a caulker on the 1763 census of New Orleans.

Jean’s fortunes and lifestyle radically changed in that year 1784, when (as “Jean *Marchand*,” a phonetic spelling of the name of his sister Babé’s father) he married the Widow Joseph Dupré. Although the widow was fifteen years his senior and already the mother of thirteen children, the circumstances of their marriage earned her the distinction of being the oldest pregnant bride in the colonial history of Natchitoches.³³⁶ Marie’s late husband had died two years earlier, leaving her seventeen slaves and three tracts of land that spread across thirty arpents of river frontage well under cultivation. Her children would, in the year of her remarriage, inherit another 1,102 *piasters* from their paternal grandmother.³³⁷ Predictably, the widow’s children were not happy over her remarriage. Her

331. Leg. 193-A, Cuban Papers.

332. Ibid, leg. 195 (1782 list) and leg. 13 (1787 list).

333. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 1308, Rex vs. Babet Varange et al.

334. Ibid., doc. 1379.

335. Folder 649, Melrose Collection.

336. Marie de l’Incarnation Derbanne was born in 1737, making her 47 at the time she married Jean. For the reported results of a study of marriages, childbearing, and bridal pregnancies, made after reconstituting all families who inhabited colonial Natchitoches, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, “Family and Social Patterns of the Colonial Louisiana Frontier: A Quantitative Analysis, 1714–1803” (Thesis, University of Alabama, 1981), particularly chapters 3 and 4, pp. 92–205. Marie was the niece of the previously discussed Pierre Derbanne. Her paternal grandparents were Canadian and Chitimacha; her maternal grandparents were a Spanish officer and his Spanish wife from the adjacent and rival post of Los Adaÿes.

337. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 2780, succession of Joseph Dupré, and doc. 1820, succession of Anne Marie Philippe (Widow Jacques Dupré, then Mme. Remy Poissot). Jean Varangue, representing his wife who was ill, collected that inheritance for her Dupré minors.

oldest son and daughter, with their spouses, promptly filed suit against their mother, saying that two years had passed since their father's death, that she had made no settlement of his estate, and that she had "been remarried for some days now." No widow, they pointed out, could remain tutor (financial guardian) of her children after she took a new husband. Because he would have legal control over her and her funds, he might appropriate for his own use the goods that belonged to the children of the first union. The commandant agreed and forced a division, one that still left the widow with considerable goods to her name.³³⁸

Jean's marriage was no more successful than those of Cécile, Babé, and Françoise. The child that prompted the marriage was buried three months after that April wedding. Two years later, despite Marie's age, she produced another son to replace him, but that child has not been found past the August 1787 census. Meanwhile, when a Spanish transient stole goods from the commandant in 1785 and took them to the cabin of two Varangue-Dupré slaves, Marie was called to testify, with Jean duly present as the law required when a wife was questioned.³³⁹ The 1790 church tax roll shows that Jean supplied eight of his wife's slaves to provide labor for the parish, together with 9 *reales* of Spanish silver. Through 1794, he paid their assessments on time, but a 1795 list shows him delinquent in the payment of 4 *piasters* and 4 *escalins*.³⁴⁰ The 1795 census of slaveholders credits him with no slaves of his own; Marie's holdings had dwindled to eight (of all ages). In a community in which slaveholders claimed from one to fifty bondsmen, with three being the median, Marie's diminished tally that year still placed her in the top 20 percentile, economically.³⁴¹ In the meanwhile, Jean had also begun to sell off Marie's land—two of her three parcels, in October 1793.³⁴²

The couple soon separated. Jean applied to the Spanish government for a grant of his own and received a concession of fifteen arpents on both sides of the river, by the usual depth of forty or so. His chosen tract was bounded above by Antoine Rachal (nephew of his sister's husband Jacques Rachal) and below by the lands of Jacob St. André (brother of Jacques's

338. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 1819.

339. *Ibid.*, doc. 1788, Rex vs. La Costa (1785).

340. 1790 church tax roll of Natchitoches, Box 1, Natchitoches Parish Records, 1734–1916, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. August 1795 delinquent tax roll, folder 716, Melrose Collection. For other tax rolls on which Varangue appears paying assessments on his wife's and stepchildren's property, see folder 703, Melrose Collection (1793 list), and the 1794 public works roster of Natchitoches, in Natchitoches Parish Records Collection, LSU. All are translated and published in Mills, *Natchitoches Colonials*.

341. 1795 census of slaveholders, leg. 201, Cuban Papers.

342. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, docs. 2476 and 2477.

son-in-law). That location places Jean on lower Cane River, near present Marco. Even before his American title was cleared, however, Jean sold the still-raw tract to his wife's son-in-law, Louis Lambre.³⁴³ On 24 November 1804, Jean and Marie were still separated when "Marie Derbanne, wife of Jean Varangue, absent" went into the post to report the drowning of a slave child belonging to her son Pierre Dupré.³⁴⁴ On 23 September 1805, with Jean again absent, she sold a tract of land eight leagues (about twenty miles) below the post, containing eight *arpents* on each side of the river (to the usual depth of forty or so). For two years, the sale remained in limbo until Jean went to a notary to ratify the sale in his capacity as her husband. At that time, the notary identified Jean as "a resident of this county, actually living at the place called Les Ecores."³⁴⁵ Jean had returned to his roots. *Les Ecores*, the bluff region later known as Monette's Bluff and Monette's Ferry, lay along the parish line at Bayou Cotile, just above the old Indian villages of Rapides and not far below his land concession at Marco. Marie's succession was opened at Natchitoches in 1808. Jean was not named the administrator; rather, that task went to a neighbor, Auguste Langlois.³⁴⁶

One cause of the separation—or perhaps a result of it—might be found in the manumission of a family slave. On 10 May 1804, Jean appeared with his wife's former sister-in-law before a local notary to buy the freedom of the infant Marie Louise Perine, in a document that explicitly states the infant was the daughter of "Monsieur Jean Varangue."³⁴⁷ In the decade that followed, he owned one other slave whose acquisition is not on record. Possibly it represented his marital portion of Marie's estate. On 15 October 1815, the freedwoman Isabelle Marianne, called *mulâtresse* mortgaged her land to the Cane River entrepreneur Alexis Cloutier, to cover 800 *piastres* "owed to Monsieur Jean Varangue on the purchase of her *mulâtre* son named Etienne."³⁴⁸

343. *Ibid.*, doc. 3679.

344. *Ibid.*, doc. 2872.

345. *Ibid.*, doc. 3307 and 3463. For other transactions executed by Marie, see doc. 2940 (c. 1800), sale of slave to her son Athanase Dupré; doc. 2979 (c. 1801), sale of slave to Yves Pacalé, free man of color; doc. 3078 (1804), sale of the *mulâtre* child Dorsino, aged 8, to Remy Lambre.

346. *Ibid.*, docs. 3625 (a succession inventory, now missing) and 3645 (administrator's bond, missing). Monette's Bluff carries the name of the land's patentee, the freed slave Dorothee Monet(te), who was at the time bearing children to Jacques and Ursulle (Castel) Rachal's son Etienne.

347. *Ibid.*, doc. 3127.

348. *Ibid.*, docs. 4519, 4521. (Doc. 4521 is misfiled and mislabeled. Docs. 4520–4532 are scattered amid the 4540s. Doc. 4521, Isabel's manumission of Etienne, is numbered 4522 on its back, but is indexed as 4521. The next document in the series—unrelated to this set of transactions—is also numbered 4522 and is indexed as such.)

The only other record found for Jean after Marie's death puts him back into the presence of the Indians. About 1813, he was called to testify in the land claim of the wealthy Joseph Gillard of Rapides. In that deposition Jean reported that he had been present and acted as interpreter when, in 1798, the Pascagoula Indians sold (to Gillard's wife's first husband) tribal land between Bayou Descotés and Bayou de la Borne (also called Bayou des Apalaches). The tribe had later returned and resettled on the land, Jean reported, but Gillard had run them off.³⁴⁹ Subsequent litigation before the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled that the purchase of the Pascagoula land was legitimate; and those records verify Jean's role as interpreter, although they place the sale at 1795 rather than the 1798 of his recollection. For reasons not stated, Jean's own testimony about the event was excluded by the appellate court.³⁵⁰

Jean's death was reported to the Cane River notary on 29 January 1828 by his sister Babé's grandson, Marcel Vallery. His meager estate consisted of "one simple gun" and thirteen animals that brought \$117.75 at the succession sale. No heirs were named.³⁵¹

Jean Gregoire *dit* Castel, Marchand, and Varangue fathered three known children.

By Marie de l'Incarnation Derbanne (Widow Dupré):

- 58 i. [UNNAMED]⁴ MARCHAND, buried 25 July 1784, as son of "Jean Marchand and Maria Darban."³⁵²
- 59 ii. JEAN BAPTISTE CASTEL, born 12 March 1786 and baptized 26 April 1786 as "Jean Baptiste, son of Jean Castel [Casteille? Christille?] and Maria Darban." Godparents were their neighbor Augustin Buard and the infant's half-sister, Marie Louise Dupré.³⁵³ The child has not been found past his appearance, age one year, on the 1787 census.

349. *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:245–46. Gillard was then married to the widowed mother of Bret Lacour who testified in 1851 as to his knowledge of the area and its settlers; see note 13. Gillard's own first wife, coincidentally, was a Sarde from New Orleans. However, her father, Nicolas Sarde of Bordeaux, has not been connected to the Cadiz-born Spaniard, Joseph Sarde Barranco, who married Cécile Christophe. As far as known evidence shows, it appears to be mere coincidence that the two Sarde lines ended as neighbors on Red River. For Gillard and Sarde, see *Archdiocese of New Orleans*, 3:141 (Gillard); and Alice Daly Forsyth, *Louisiana Marriage Contracts*, vol. 2, *Abstracts from Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana, 1728–1769* (New Orleans: Genealogical Research Society of New Orleans, 1989), 140.

350. *Maes v. Gillard's Heirs et al.*, 7 Martin (N.S.) 314 (1828).

351. Natchitoches Parish, Succession Book 6:165–68.

352. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, no. 1308.

353. *Ibid.*, no. 1908.

By **Celeste**, *négresse* slave of Widow Marie Louise Monette:

- 60 iii. MARIE LOUISE PERINE VARANGUE, born early 1804. Even before her baptism on 18 November of that year, Jean went to the child's mistress, paid \$200 for the child, and declared her free.³⁵⁴ In 1825, as "Perine Varan," she presented for baptism a son named "P. Azenor Landreau."³⁵⁵ Her child appears to have been considered white at baptism. Neither have been found past that date.

15. Marie Barbe Joseph³ "Babé" Marsant dite Castel, La Grand, and Varangue (Marguerite Cécile Christophe², Marie Agnes Simon dite L'espine¹ and Jean Christophe¹), was baptized at New Orleans on 21 June 1755.³⁵⁶ She married about 1784,³⁵⁷ possibly by Indian or Rom custom, **Salmon, Apalache Indian**, who last appears on record with her as a godparent to other Apalache Indians on 11 June 1793.³⁵⁸ Babé is said to have died after 1803–04, at the Apalache site above the rapids on Red River, Rapides Parish.³⁵⁹

Babé is the only one of her mother's natural children for whom a father is named. According to her baptismal record, he was Bernard Marsant. Nothing is known about him except that he was soldier in the company of Monberault, who was paid his bread ration in Illinois on 31 January 1759, was at Cat Island (an outpost off the Mississippi Coast) on 14 June and 8 August 1759, was discharged from service on 1 March 1765, and was granted a half-pay pension of 6 *livres* on 24 June 1765.³⁶⁰ As an adult, Babé never used his name, although her older brother Jean used it as his surname when he married the Widow Dupré. The records Babé created sometimes called her by the *dit* of her stepfather Varangue or

354. Natchitoches Post, Archive Conveyance Records, doc. 3127, Widow Monet to Jean Varangue. For the child's baptism, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entry 1930.

355. St. François Parish (Natchitoches), Register 6, entry 1825:181.

356. St. Louis Parish (New Orleans), Baptismal Book 3:44, act 462.

357. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1892, baptism of Suzanne, daughter of "Solomon and Maria Barbara" (no last names).

358. *Ibid.*, entries 2145–45, 2149–50.

359. Testimony of Bret Lacour, 13 May 1851, Private Land Claim 4459 (Heirs of Vallery). The last actual record found for Babé is the 1800 church census of Cotile, "6 leagues distant [above] the rapids," where only 6 families resided (Babé, Dubois, Lattie[r], Huett, Dison, and Wells). Babé had 5 arpents under cultivation and her household was credited with 2 women, 2 boys, 2 girls, 0 mulattoes, and 0 Negroes. See *Records of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre-Dame microfilm publication, n.d.), reel 9, frame 36.

360. For Bernard in 1759, see "Detachements de la Nouvelle Orléans a Commencer du 9 Janvier, 1759," ff. 99 and 102 *bis*. For the 1765 discharge, see "General Roll of Louisiana Troops, 1720–1770," Conrad, *First Families of Louisiana*, 2:214, 216.

the surname of her mother's first husband, Castel—although she would come to be widely known as simply Madame Babé. The *dite* La Grande was attributed to her in her fifties, just once, by her son; its literal translation suggests that, as she aged, she was of impressive girth.³⁶¹

As a young woman, Babé distinguished herself as the only free woman along Red River to be legally charged with prostitution—in her case, not once but twice. In the first instance, after failing to corral the teenaged girl, Commandant Layssard of Rapides bluntly declared to the governor that she was “a prostitute to Indians, Whites and passers-by.”³⁶² His efforts to squelch her “scandalous commerce” with the bachelor Antoine Riché of Natchitoches, an employee of the Melmies vacherie at Rapides, prompted the couple to elope into the woods for a three-month hunting trip, after which Layssard sent both Babé and her mother to New Orleans for “correction.” Babé returned pregnant, and the timing of the child who was enumerated with her on the 1773 census suggests the conception occurred at New Orleans.

After a relatively quiet five years, Babé bore twins, then left with them for Natchitoches in the summer of 1778, to work as a wet nurse for the family of the prosperous frontier merchant, Joseph Armand. Their families had long known each other—Mme. Armand's father, the New Orleans tavernkeeper Le Gros *dit* La Tendresse, had served as godfather to both Babé's sister Françoise at New Orleans and a child of Babé's Aunt Jacqueline at Mobile. However, the Armands did not supply a home for Babé. Therein lay the root of the girl's new problem.

The man with whom Babé lodged at Natchitoches mounted a spirited offense against the crusading priest who branded Babé anew with the charge of prostitution.³⁶³ Jean Jacques David, a bachelor shopkeeper and tobacco manufacturer, declared that in all the while she had “rented a room” from him, he had never found anything in her conduct to warrant the “frenzied censure” of the priest. Invoking his “parental regard” for Babé and his love for God, as well as her “extreme poverty” and his friendship with her employer, he called the aspersions against her “false, odious, and at the same time absurd.”

361. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 90–91.

362. Leg. 188-c, Cuban Papers. James Michel Hilton is thanked for providing this document. Layssard's offspring also consorted with the Indians, albeit his *male* offspring rather than female. Needless to say, male dalliances were socially and legally tolerated, while comparable behavior by females was vehemently censured. For Layssard dalliances, as an example, see the baptism of a “natural” child born to Nanette, Indian, and André Maraffret Layssard in Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entry 657.

363. Natchitoches Colonial Archives, doc. 1308, Rex vs. Babet Varange et al.

Babé's brother Jean began her defense in a somewhat more-subdued vein. "If La Varangue had failed at her state of girlhood," he swore, "it was not from a delight in libertinage or the rewards coming from prostitution, which she has never practiced." Calling for a tribunal to see if his sister merited that charge, he added that "her conduct, after her unfortunate weakness [a concession to the undeniable fact that she was an unmarried, nursing mother], has been regular, the same as the people near whom she has lived and now lives." Asserting that "public prostitution creates scandalous notoriety" and that "the unfortunate conduct" of his sister had never been public, he joined David in branding Quintanilla's charges as "unchristian" and referred obliquely to a "wild, vindictive, and unjust visit" the priest had made while Babé was working as a wet nurse for the Armands. The priest had found her in bed with nothing more than a fever. Extant records at the post do not reflect the specific outcome of the case, but Babé has not been found thereafter in the records of that post.

Possibly, as with a number of other criminal charges in that jurisdiction, Babé's case was sent to New Orleans for resolution. While the Spanish priest was clearly a firebrand, his accusations usually had substance. His difficulty was that both his vocabulary and his intolerances differed from those of his flock. In the one other case in which he charged a woman (that one a slave) with being a "public prostitute," the woman lived in concubinage with a white bachelor by whom she bore ten multi-racial children.³⁶⁴ Quintanilla apparently defined *public* prostitution as female participation in an unsanctioned relationship that was "public knowledge," not as one in which a woman made herself "available to the public" for pay.³⁶⁵

Those who knew Babé in her last years would later report that "Madame Babé often told [them] that one of the Indian men was her husband and the father of her children." Paternity can be documented for one child only. When her daughter Susanne was born in 1785, the infant was baptized as "daughter of Solomon and Maria Barbara."³⁶⁶ The 1788 census of the Rapides post enumerates "Salmon, Indian resident" with "Babet, his wife," and her twins Baptiste and Jacques.³⁶⁷ Both of the boys are tallied as "Indian males." Whether Salmon was their father is debat-

364. That interracial relationship is also the core of the present writer's historical novel, *Isle of Canes* (Provo, Utah: Ancestry, 2004).

365. For Luis de Quintanilla's concerted efforts to reform the post of Natchitoches, see Mills, "Quintanilla's Crusade," 277–302.

366. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1892.

367. 1788 census of Rapides, leg. 201, Cuban Papers.

able. At baptism, the infants were named Jacques *Vallery* and Jean Baptiste *Vallery*.³⁶⁸ *Vallery* would be their surname throughout their lives, with only two exceptions: the 1794 militia roll compiled by Capt. Layssard listed them as Jacques Babé and Jean Baptiste Babé;³⁶⁹ and the 1810 U.S. census by the Anglo newcomer, R. Claiborne, renders Jean Baptiste's name as "B^{te} Babby."³⁷⁰ *Vallery* would be the name carried down by all male offspring. When Babé's first grandchildren were baptized in 1804, Louisiana's church policy required the naming of grandparents as well as parents. In both entries, the children's father, Baptiste *Vallery*, identified his mother as "Marie Barbe *La Grand*" and declared his own father's identity as unknown.³⁷¹ Only Susanne, whose baptismal record identifies her as Salmon's daughter, would use *Salmon* as a surname. One final piece of evidence also bears on the parentage of Babé's twin sons. As discussed subsequently in this paper, Baptiste's adversaries in later land cases made much of the dark color of his half-sister Susanne Salmon, his wife María Torres, and his brother-in-law José María Torres who had married Susanne—but they did not do so for Baptiste *Vallery*. The impression left is that Baptiste's color was essentially their own.

Marie Barbe Josephe Marsant *dite* Castel, *La Grand*, and Varangue bore only four known children.

By an **unknown father**:

- 61 i. MARIE⁴, aged one month when the 1773 census was taken of the Rapides post; she does not appear to have lived long enough for a priest to visit their outpost and perform a baptism.³⁷²
- 62 ii. JEAN BAPTISTE VALLERY, a twin, born 17 January 1777, apparently at Natchitoches, where he was baptized 19 January, as godchild of Jean Baptiste Derbanne (first cousin of Marie who married Jean Varangue) and Derbanne's free spirited fiancée, Marie Felicité Dupain (a young woman of prominence whom Derbanne left at the altar a few months later, upon learning that she was pregnant by a son of the Armands).³⁷³ On 12 January 1801 Baptiste married at

368. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 1704–05. Salmon is enumerated on a contemporary census as a single man in the Apalache tribe; see Census of the Apalaches, Rapides, August 1774, leg. 189, folio 1108, Cuban Papers.

369. 1794 militia roll of Rapides, leg. 215-b, folio 379, Cuban Papers

370. 1810 U.S. Census, Rapides Parish, p. 276.

371. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entries 89–90.

372. 1773 census of Rapides, leg. 189-1, Cuban Papers.

373. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entries 1704–1705 (Castel), 1738 and 1754 (Armand), 1037 (Derbanne-Dupain), 1044 (Armand-Dupain). It was likely Marie Felicité Dupain whose infant Babé was nursing while she lodged with David. Marie Felicité's child was born in February 1778 and was baptized a "natural" child fathered by Jean Baptiste Armand. She married Armand in June 1778, soon after Babé began her employment for the

Cotile, in Rapides Parish, the Indio-Spanish MARIE DE L'ASCENSION TORRES,³⁷⁴ whose family had settled a farm adjacent to the tribe in the 1770s. As an adult, Baptiste stayed attached to the Apalache tribe. He died there, apparently in mid-to-late 1813.³⁷⁵ Acquaintances would later testify that he and his mother lived in separate houses on their farm, adjacent to the Torres, who owned the farm abutting the tribal lands.

Baptiste Vallery's decision to stay rooted in the place where he grew up would heavily cost him and his offspring, as subsequently discussed. A faithful Catholic in spite of the fact that their remote area had no priest, Baptiste presented his children for baptism whenever a priest passed on the river; and his family served frequently as godparents to the Christianized Apalache.³⁷⁶ His offspring remained in the area along the Rapides-Natchitoches parish line, intermarrying with the old French families as well as Spanish and "Anglo" American newcomers.³⁷⁷ Baptiste's son François, aged forty-five in 1850, carried forward at least one trait of his cultural heritage; his occupation is given on the census of that year as *fiddler*.³⁷⁸

- 63 iii. JACQUES VALLERY, a twin, born 17 January 1777 and baptized 19 January with Joseph Dupré and Marie Anne "Deroy" (likely Mme. José Torres) as his godparents.³⁷⁹ At twenty-one, Jacques left the tribal environment and settled a few miles upriver in Natchitoches Parish (Township 6, Range 5). He is last on record in September 1813 and July 1814, when he sold his farm in two parcels. The first tract, "640 acres or 750 arpents," went to the surveyor Joseph Irvin for \$450.

Armands; and on 10 February 1779 Felicité bore another child to Armand. If she were nursing her own child, a second delivery within twelve months would have been unlikely.

374. *Ibid.*, entry 3447.

375. On 14 December 1813, one Louis Procelle testified for María before the U.S. Land Office examiners, stating that María "Taurus" (née Vallery) was a widow; *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:201. On 3 July 1815, the couple's last two children were baptized with problematic birth dates reported for them: 1 January 1813 and 22 May 1813 [1814?]; see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entries 598–99.

376. For appearances of Baptiste Vallery, José Torres, and their wives and children as godparents to Indians, white neighbors, and the child of a slave that the widow owned, see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826*, entries 598–99, 634, 652, 656, 660, 669, 2081, 2477, and 2892.

377. An immensely valuable genealogical chart of Torres-Vallery descendants appears in the succession of José María Torres that was reopened in the late 1890s to settle an old land claim; see Natchitoches Parish Successions (original packets), no. 2347, "Joseph Taurus."

378. 1850 U.S. census, Natchitoches Parish, population schedule, p. 62, dwelling and family 1125 (François "Valere"). The identity of François's immediate neighbors on that census suggests that his locus may have been the multiracial community reported to Olmsted in the 1850s; they included Jacques Vercher (French) on one side and, on the other, Manuel Metoyer, Sévère Monet, and Louis Balthazar, all three of whom belonged to Cane River's famed *Créole of color* community and no connection to the Romani clan.

The identity of its purchaser attests that the land was prime acreage; Irvin, like most U.S. surveyors, was a speculator who used his post to identify the best tracts that could be bought at bargain prices. Jacques also sold another five arpents on each bank of Red River, by whatever depth it carried, to the Cane River notary, Jean Pierre Marie Du Bois.³⁸⁰

Jacques, like his half-Indian cousin Celestin Vincent, disappears from Red River's records. The 1840 census of New Orleans presents a possibility for their fate. In the third municipality, amid multiple families of the surname Jean Louis, Bernard, Cadot, Cordier, Ferrand, Mazange, Tirado, Wiltz, and other kin and associates of Jacques's mother and grandmother, appear two adjacent households: Jacques Valery and V^{ve} [Widow] Celestin. Both families are tallied as free people of color by the French Créole census taker. The heads of both families are fifty-five or older, as Jacques and Celestin (or Celestin's widow) would have been in that year.³⁸¹

By **Salmon, Apalache Indian**, Babé had one known child:

- 64 iv. SUSANNE "SUSETTE" SALMON, born in February 1785 and baptized 3 January 1786.³⁸² About 1800, she married José María Torres,³⁸³ the man introduced as "Joseph Maritaurus" by the witness accounts that began this paper. Her death apparently occurred before 1835, judging from the various testimony presented in the Vallery-Torres land cases discussed below. Four generations of her offspring are identified in the succession of her father-in-law, José Torres, which was reopened in the late 1890s to settle an outstanding land float.³⁸⁴ Most married Anglo-American migrants to the region. None are known to have married free people of color.

379. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1705.

380. Natchitoches Parish, Deed Book 3: 129–30, 288. *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:198. Shortly prior to this (on 27 October 1812), Jacques served with Marie Angelle Baudouin (Baudoin) as godparent to a child of Manuel Derbanne and wife Marguerite Denis of Natchitoches, when a priest from Mansura passed through the Cotile area; see St. Paul Parish (Mansura), Baptismal Book 2:98.

381. 1840 U.S. Census, Orleans Parish, New Orleans, District 3, folio 184; see also several pages before and after for the neighborhood. Their entire neighborhood seems to be missing on the 1830 census, and no Jacques Vallery seems to have been enumerated anywhere in the state in 1850.

382. Mills, *Natchitoches, 1729–1803*, entry 1892.

383. All of her children were identified by the Natchitoches priest as legitimate when they were baptized. The 1800–02 period in which the union occurred is one for which a major gap exists in the sacramental registers at Natchitoches. Marriages for all the Torres siblings appear before and after the gap, attesting the Torres family's commitment to "regular" unions sanctioned by the church.

384. Natchitoches Parish Successions (original packets), "Joseph Taurus," no. 2347. Very little is known yet about this man who was Susanne's father-in-law. The earliest records for

Litigation on the rich prairie land settled by Cécile, Babé, and their Vallery-Torres offspring would continue for generations.³⁸⁵ Anglo-American representatives of those who claimed to have purchased their tracts in 1803 did not rest their case on the legality of the purchase so much as on a denigration of the family's rights and social status. Painting adversaries as "a pack of knaves," as the opposition did, is a time-honored legal tactic for all classes of people; but the overriding themes of the opposition in these cases were *color* and *morés*.

Witnesses were regularly questioned about ethnicity in their testimony, but the emphasis of the Anglo newcomers was markedly different from that of the old French witnesses. Four consecutive depositions on 4 January 1854 clearly make that point. Austin Burgess, an overseer for the Anglo judge who controlled the Vallery-Torres land in the 1820s, asserted, "Mauritaurus [José María Torres] was very dark and like an Indian and told deponent that his parents were Mexican. ... Mrs. Vallery [Torres's sister] also was dark and resembled a Mexican very much ... Mauritaurus [said] his wife [Susanne Salmon, Vallery's sister] was an Apalachi Indian woman." James Bryant, who claimed to know the family in the 1820s, added, "Maritau [*sic*] looked like a Mexican, but spoke English." However, neither of them used a similar description for Baptiste Vallery. Given their efforts to denigrate the Vallery-Torres claims on the basis of race,

him connect him to the St. Denis family. For example, the settlement of the succession of Louis de St. Denis *fiis* in the 1780s includes the sum of 113 livres, 18 sols "payable to the one called Joseph Torres," engaged by the [St. Denis] heirs to tend their cattle. See undated document no. 573, Melrose Collection, NSU. In Doc. 575, Melrose Collection, dated 30 March 1780, the natal family of St. Denis (Louis DeBlanc, Mde. Marie de St. Denis, and Mlle. Felicité de Mézières, filed an affidavit saying that they had hired "the one named José de Tores, Espagniol," on 15 August 1778 at the rate of six *escalins* per day. A Spanish-language note in this file, apparently written and signed by Torres himself, renders his name as *Juan Joseph de Torres*. If this is indeed written in his own hand, then his literacy is notable for a colonial Spaniard of his occupational class. Torres was likely the unnamed "Spaniard" hired by Cane River's legendary freed slave Marie Thérèse Coincoin in the 1795–1806 period to tend her *vacherie* on Old River; see affidavit of Pierre Coinquoin for Marie Thérèse, file "OPEL:May 1794," Opelousas Notarial Records, Louisiana State Archives.

385. As a beginning point for this protracted litigation, see "Claim Papers, Section 60, T5N R3W, Louisiana Meridian," State of Louisiana, Division of State Lands, Baton Rouge; and the previously cited Private Land Claim files 1907 (Joseph Gillard), 4438 (Joseph Taurus), 4458 (J. B. Vallery and Joseph Maritaurus), 4459 (Reps. of the Heirs of John B. Vallery), and 4460 (Mary Vallery and Joseph Maritaurus); RG 49, National Archives. Beyond that, several legal suits pursued in Louisiana's superior courts address the issue, particularly *Martin v. Johnson*, 5 Martin (O.S.), 655 (1818); *Maes v. Gillard's Heirs*, 7 Martin (N.S.) 314 (1828); and *Mathews v. Compton*, 3 La. 128 (1828).

their skirting the issue of Baptiste's coloring suggests that Baptiste was as light-skinned as his detractors.³⁸⁶

By contrast, the two prominent French witnesses called to testify that day, Bret Lacour and Auguste Baillio, saw only one ethnic issue worth noting: "Madame Babé was what is called an Egyptian."³⁸⁷ The primary spokesman for the Anglo-American claimants, attorney J. Kingsbury Elgee of Alexandria, hammered the racial issue over and over again, repeatedly characterizing Babé's offspring as "Indians who were likely to vacate the land" and "half-breed Mexicans and Indians" who now "audaciously" appear in "our court." His agitation culminated with the ultimate charge possible, one even he did not support with evidence: "The present plaintiff under this last claim [Vallery] is a Negro woman!"³⁸⁸ The exclamation point was his.

Although both Baptiste and Susanne had legally married the Torres siblings, opposing attorneys were anything but subtle in their attempts to portray the unions as illicit. Speaking of Susanne's husband, Elgee wrote, "Jose Marie Taurus ... *took for his wife* a daughter of the Apalache Indian and the Gipsy woman." For Baptiste, his denigration carried a slight concession, "Vallery had married or *bad for a wife* a sister of Taurus." Curiously, his assessment of the qualities of different ethnic minorities seemed to rank the "Gypsy" higher than the Rom-Indian-Mexican *mélange*. Again speaking of Baptiste Vallery, he reported a rumor that Vallery had abandoned his own land at Cotile and had removed to the

386. All four of the 4 January 1854 depositions, taken before Gwin Harris, a Rapides Parish justice of the peace, appear in "Claim Papers, Section 60." Other depositions taken from Burgess and from Vallery's neighbor Valentine Du Bois on 7 May 1851 show the same marked difference toward race. Burgess's descriptions of the Vallerys and the Torres family members was much the same as those expressed above. The French Du Bois, who had been in the neighborhood for fifty or so years, ignored physical descriptions of the Vallerys and focused on the issue of land ownership.

Regarding possible bias on the part of Bret Lacour: *Lacour* is a name prominently carried by free people of color on Red River and its earlier channel, now the Cane. Therefore, a discussion of his attitude toward issues of color should note that he bore absolutely no relationship to the Cane River family. Bret Lacour stemmed from the Natchez-Pointe Coupée family sired by Nicolas La Cour who immigrated in 1720 as a worker for the Ste. Catherine Concession at Natchez (see Conrad, *First Families*, 1:113). The Cane River *créoles* of color surnamed Lacour were actually *Le Courts*, descending from the noble lieutenant Joseph Le Court des Presle who was dispatched to Natchitoches in the 1740s. Nonetheless Bret Lacour obviously knew the Vallerys better than he implied; the 1850 census places him just seven houses from Baptiste Vallery's son Marcel; see 1850 U.S. census, Rapides Parish, pop. sch., pp. 44-45, family/dwelling 30/34 and 37/42.

387. Testimony of Bret Lacour, 4 January 1854.

388. See, for example, Elgee to U.S. Land Office, 10 April 1847 and 5 January 1854.

Indian village to be near his Torres mother-in-law, gratuitously adding, “perhaps with the *more enlightened views of civilizing [them]*.”³⁸⁹

Fifty-four years after their land was taken by Anglo-American newcomers, Babé’s offspring won their contest. Before the land office and the appeals courts, the issue was not color, culture, caste, or morés—just the legality of the title. While the Anglo claims rested upon several alleged purchases of the land from “the tribes,” the facts were not so simple. Babé, her Vallery son, her Torres son-in-law, and Torres’s parents held land separate from those tribes, but their land was adjacent to the prairie settled by the Apalache tribe and they suffered by association.

Among the many legal bones of contention, one was repeatedly gnawed. The Apalache had, for strength of numbers, allowed several other dwindling bands to settle among them. At the turn of the eighteenth-nineteenth century, the chief of one of these, the Tensas, was extended credit by a pair of newly arrived Anglo-American merchants, Alexander Miller and William Fulton. When the debt grew sufficiently large, the merchants pressed the Tensas chief to clear it by “selling” them the prairie that the Indians occupied. Considering that the indebted Tensas chief had no authority over the Apalache land, Miller and Fulton wrote into the record that the Tensas chief had been “verbally authorized” by the Apalache chief, who was not actually present to confirm his alleged consent.³⁹⁰

Upon the basis of that deed, Miller and Fulton lay claim not only to the Indian village, but to the adjacent land of Babé, Baptiste Vallery, and the Torres family—some sixty-thousand acres in all. The Apalache were said to be “angry” and “hostile” and refused to move. Fearing them, Miller

389. *Ibid.*

390. In 1814, three members of the Apalache testified before the U.S. Land Board (through their interpreter Louis De Ville, an offspring of the Rapides Roma) that Miller and Fulton had promised to pay an additional \$2,500 to the Apalache but that the tribe had never received “one picayune” of that sum. See *American State Papers: Public Lands*, 3:249.

Records in these two land cases are clarified by materials created by the Red River Indian Agency between 1824 and 1830. See *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824–1881*, microfilm publication M234 (Washington: National Archives, n.d.), roll 727. Particularly revealing is the sophistry of Judge Isaac Baldwin, who claimed the Vallery and Torres land “by right of purchase” from the firm Miller & Fulton. Baldwin’s six-point argument was (a) Indians have no rights as individuals and cannot by law institute a suit; (b) Indians have no rights except as a nation; (c) a nation cannot be a plaintiff in any court of law; (d) a nation whose national character has been injured by an individual of another nation must claim for redress from the government of that other nation; (e) Indians cannot take this course of action in a land controversy because the United States does not recognize them as proprietors of any soil; Indians are merely tenants of their land at the sufferance of the U.S.; therefore (f) the Apalache Indians have no case against him. See Isaac Baldwin to the Hon. Josiah S. Johnston, Alexandria, 18 December 1826, in *Letters Received*.

and Fulton initially let the tribe stay in their cabins. However, the “civilized” Vallerys and their Torres in-laws did not generate the same apprehension. More than once, Miller and Fulton and those who held title under them (particularly Judge Isaac Baldwin) sent their slaves to burn out the Romani-Indian homesteads and drive off the occupants. After the first attack, Vallery attempted to make a living off the half of his land that lay across the river—apparently an unproductive site the Anglo-Americans did not want—but sold it and returned to his homestead outside the Apalache village. In late 1826, the judge sent another force of slaves—said to be a hundred or so—to obliterate the Apalache settlement. Baptiste, by then, was dead. The Torres “hut” was demolished, and Torres was said to have “disappeared.” As for the Indians, they refused to leave and Vallery’s widow stayed with them. Ultimately, the “difficulty” was “terminated,” in Elgee’s language, when cholera hit the river in 1833 and “swept off nearly every Indian.”³⁹¹

Despite Elgee’s assertion that the difficulty had been resolved by the extinction of the tribe, the issue would stay before the courts for another quarter century. Meanwhile, Elgee’s attempt to paint the family as untutored “savages,” is belied by other records. Baptiste’s eldest son Marcel, for example, operated a relatively prosperous Red River trade in the 1830s–50s, making frequent trips back to New Orleans to conduct business. Twice, in 1836, he purchased slaves there, paying \$600 for one and \$1000 for the other—roughly \$37,000 in modern currency. In 1839, amid a worldwide depression that saw rampant bank failures and personal suicides, Marcel purchased off the New Orleans auction block three families and two young men—a dozen slaves total—paying \$4900 in cash (over \$100,000 in modern currency).³⁹² Whatever his reason for the purchases (whether it be for personal use or for resale upriver), one must conclude that Marcel’s life bore more resemblance to that of his accusers than to that of the “untutored savages” his kin were alleged to be.

The evidence in this web of claims and suits also reveals that the chicanery from which Babé’s family suffered was in part a continuation of years of disrespect between this Romani family and local authorities. When Chief Louis of the Tensas ‘sold’ the Apalache land to Miller & Fulton, he was accompanied by a French interpreter who claimed to represent the

391. Elgee to U.S. Land Office, 10 April 1847 and 5 January 1854. Testimony of John Elam, 23 December 1826, Red River Indian Agency Records. The details in these three accounts are often contradictory. The summary in the text above reports the gist of them.

392. Acts of Theodore Seghers, Notary, Orleans Parish Notarial Archives, vol. 14, docs. 118 and 133, 2 and 8 March 1836; Orleans Parish Conveyance Book 26:216, 20 March 1839.

Apalache chief—Valentine Layssard, son of the old commandant who had been Cécile and Babé’s nemesis.³⁹³

CONCLUSION

Modern genetic research suggests that *race* is more a visual concept than a biological one. Historical research attests that, above all, it has been an emotional perception—affected not just by color but also by the extent to which individuals comply with community values. Under the French and Spanish regimes in Louisiana, the marginalization suffered by some branches of this Romani family rested primarily upon their lifestyles. Those who most openly flaunted community *morés*—Cécile and her daughters Catherine (Widow La Forest of New Orleans) and Babé (on Red River)—never escaped the “Gypsy” label under which the family had been deported. Those who conformed to societal expectations—such as the Panquinettes of New Orleans, the La Prairies of Red River, and Ursulle (Mme. Rachal) of Cane River—enjoyed social acceptance and unchallenged legal rights.

Ironically, considering the extent to which history has deemed Louisiana to be *sans religion, sans justice, sans discipline, et sans ordre*,³⁹⁴ the dominant factor differentiating Créole Louisiana’s brand of discrimination from that of Anglo America appears to have been *morés* rather than *caste* or *wealth*. The South Carolina Supreme Court justice William Harper decreed in 1834 that being Negro or mulatto was not just a matter of being brown. Rather, a “man of worth [could] have the rank of a white man, while a vagabond of the same degree of blood should be confined to the inferior caste.”³⁹⁵

The Anglos who settled Red River among Cécile’s offspring also measured *worth* in terms of *wealth*. Françoise, widow of the Apalache Bissente, easily found an Anglo husband of the yeoman class because she had a financial stake on which he could build. The elite Anglos who followed—Judge Baldwin and his ilk—brought wealth with them, scorned the poorer population they found there, and used *color* as both justification and means to wrest property from others in order to expand their own fortunes.

393. See “Land Claim Papers,” dated 1803–13, filmed between letters of 23 December 1826 and 24 November 1828, Red River Indian Agency Records.

394. This judgment of Louisiana was popularized in the late nineteenth century by the regional colorist George Washington Cable, an Anglo Presbyterian who abandoned New Orleans for New England soon after this judgment went to print; see *The Creoles of Louisiana* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884), 25.

395. *State v. Cantey*, 1835 (2 Hill 614, S.C.).

While the Gulf Coast Roma (The La Garenne Clan) found an area in which few others wanted to settle and so enjoyed some success in creating a community on their own terms, the Red River clan chose prime, alluvial land for settlement. There, they discovered what their forebears had learned in Europe, across centuries of being denied the Christian sacraments, flogged from village to village, and hung on the public square: Ownership of a valued slice of society required conformity to society's norms. Those who defied them, especially by intermarrying with natives and thereafter displaying a "lazy," nonacquisitive lifestyle, would be publicly tarred with the same scorn meted out to Native Americans. Under this code, white became Indian. Indian became mulatto. Mulatto became black. Ultimately, their redefined ethnic label—accurate or not—would be used as the bar by which political and economic interests would measure their worthiness to reside on the very land they had tamed.