

*Slave Narratives*

OF LOUISIANIANS LIVING IN TEXAS



1936-1938

Compiled and prepared by

CHRISTOPHE LANDRY

SIMILAR RESEARCH BY CHRISTOPHE LANDRY

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Database of Christenings of People of Color, St Louis Cathedral, Register 4

Selection of Births, Baptisms, and Marriages

1777 Slave Census of the Attakapas and Opélousas Post

1830 Slave Holder Statistics in St. Landry Parish

1860 Slave Holder Statistics in St. Martin Parish

1860 Slave Holder Statistics in St. Mary Parish

Louisiana Mixed Marriages

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We encourage researchers to contact us to request (1) copies of entries of original acts in this body of work, (2) translations into English from Spanish and French, (3) genealogical research, or (4) modifications or addenda. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans played no role in the assembly of this database. Content in the pages to follow has been materialized through original St. Louis King of France Roman Catholic Cathedral-Basilica sacramental records now in the public domain.

[info@mylhcv.com](mailto:info@mylhcv.com)

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I stumbled upon these narratives sometime while conducting genealogical and (subsequently) doctoral research. I was trying to locate resources to better understand the migrations of Louisiana Latins to Texas, New Mexico, and California in the 20th century. What I found was a collection of carefully edited interviews intended to represent a collective voice of what slavery was like for Americans socio-legally regarded as Negroes during Jim Crow. I emphasize the intentional edits of the interviews to remind the reader that, after all, it was a Federal Writers Project of the national Library of Congress; writers were conducting the interviews, and editing the transcriptions along the way.

Important for my own research needs, I discovered a large number of Louisianians interviewed for the federal project; mostly residents of Jefferson County (Port Arthur and Beaumont) and the greater Houston area. They were both freeborn and slaveborn, Latin-American and Anglo-American, Francophone, Creolophone and Anglophone, Roman Catholic and Protestant, propertied and economically impoverished, blue-eyed and brown-eyed.

And while I was able to substantiate information on Louisiana out-migrations for the purpose of my dissertation, I still "itched" to give the narratives a closer, comparative look. When I did finally return to the material with a more probative eye, I discovered that some of the concerns I had for the narratives, had already been tackled by other historians, social scientists, and researchers. It is now common knowledge in intellectual circles that there was a specific "story" of slavery, which interviewees were meant to tell. When they did not, their interviews were either tossed entirely by Field Specialists, or were watered down to match the intended needs of the project.

But I had more indigenous (localized) anthropological type questions unanswered still. For instance, I wondered whether other persons engaging the material had noticed the structure of each narrative, despite linguistic differences of interviewees. It made no sense to me how the monolingual Creolophone, Olivier Blanchard's "halting English," would yield the exact same "slave talk" typically associated with Southern Anglophone slaves. Cognitively, functionally and culturally, it seemed impossible; most Latins in Louisiana whose first or primary language, even today, do not speak this way, slave descended or not. These questions and many others I do plan to pursue more seriously at a later time.

For authenticity purposes, I have provided the interviews verbatim from the transcriptions. Hoping that you can weed through the formulative "slave dialect," and all the "red flags," these narratives within will offer you a wealth of information on the lives of the persons interviewed. Significantly, the genealogist will be able to connect arboral dots and the ethnomusicologist will learn songs in French and in English performed in the middle of the 19th century. There is a treat for every reader, I suspect. Where my own professional knowledge in genealogy, culture and history serves to clarify any ambiguities, you will find footnotes.

I must warn you: the interviews within are not exhaustive. I only selected a mélange of Latin and Anglo experiences so as to be able to better understand the narratives and, perhaps, the experiences of these Louisianians.

The curious researcher, descendant, and others, is strongly encouraged to contact the United States Library of Congress, where original interviews, subsequent edited versions, audio and textual collections, are accessible. You may be able to obtain copies of the original, unedited transcriptions of the interviews. And if you're particularly lucky, you may even gain access to recordings and images.

*Christophe Landry*

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



*Louisiana Creole Interviewees*



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 *gathe Babineaux*

Alias Agatha BABINO<sup>1</sup>  
Née Agathe RICHARD  
Carencro, Lafayette Parish  
Ex-slave of Auguste GUIDRY

---

<sup>1</sup> A longer version of this interview can be found at [Roots Web](#) with an [addendum](#) offering information deleted in edited transcriptions



Joseph Tésphore BABINEAUX & Agathe RICHARD  
Pictured provided by public profile on Ancestry.com, user handle B. BIAGASE

" "



ld Marse was Ogis<sup>2</sup> Guidry. Old Miss was Laurentine. Dey had four chillen, Placid<sup>3</sup>, Alphonse and Mary and Alexandrine, and live in a big, one-story house with a gallery and brick pillars. Dey had a big place. I 'spect a mile 'cross it, and fifty slaves.

My mama name was Clarice Richard. She come from South Carolina. Papa was Dick Richard. He come from North Carolina. He was slave of old Placid Guilbeau.<sup>4</sup> He live near Old Marse. My brothers was Joe and Nicholas and Oui and Albert and Maurice, and sisters was Maud and Celestine and Pauline.<sup>5</sup>

Us slaves lived in shabby houses. Dey builded of logs and have dirt floor. We have a four foot bench. We pull it to a table and set on it. De bed a platform with planks and moss.

We had Sunday off. Christmas was off, too. Dey give us chicken and flour den. But most holidays de white folks has company. Dat mean more work for us.

Old Marse bad. He beat us till we bleed. He rub salt and pepper in. One time I sweep de yard. Young miss come home from college. She slap my face. She want to beat me. Mama say to beat her, so dey did. She took de beatin' for me.

My aunt run off 'cause dey beat her so much. Dey brung her back and beat her some more.

We have dance outdoors sometime. Somebody play fiddle and banjo. We dance de reel and quadrille and buck dance. De men dance dat. If we go to dance on 'nother plantation we have to have pass. De patterrollers come and make us show de slip. If dey ain't no slip, we git beat.

I see plenty sojers. Dey fight at Pines and we hear ball go 'zing—zing.' Young marse have blue coat. He put it on and climb a tree to see. De sojers come and think he a Yankee. Dey take his gun. Dey turn him loose when dey find out he ain't no Yankee.

When de real Yankees come dey take corn and geoses and hosses. Dey don't ask for nothin'. Dey take what dey wants.

Some masters have chillen by slaves. Some sold dere own chillen. Some sot dem free.

<sup>2</sup> English approximation to Creole language pronunciation /o gees/ of the forename Auguste. Augustin "Auguste" GUIDRY  *fils*, native of St. Martin Parish (Augustin *père* & Adélaïde ROBICHAUD, deceased) married 27 Feb 1827 Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX, native of Lafayette Parish (Jean & Marie ARCENEAUX, deceased) (Lafayette Ch v 1 #63). Alexandrine GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) married 19 April 1853 Lucien GUILBEAUX ( ) (Lafayette Ch v 4 p 83). Marcéline GUILBEAUX (Augustin  *fils* & Éléontine GUILLEBAUD) was born 27 Feb 1828 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 67). Jean Lucien GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 6 June 1834 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 117). Placide GUIDRY of Lafayette (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) married 11 Oct 1859 Philomène THIBODEAUX of Breaux Bridge (Breaux Bridge Ch v 1 p 51-a). Jean Numa GUIDRY (Augustin  *fils* & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 8 Aug 1838 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 168). Marie Adélaïde GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 3 Aug 1840 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 178). Marie Émérite GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was baptized 17 Sept 1841 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 189). Jean Ernest GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 29 Dec 1842 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 203). Jean Alexius GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 22 Jan 1844 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 218). Alphonse GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 5 June 1845 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 253). Marie GUIDRY (Augustin & Marie Léontine GUILBEAUX) was born 28 Dec 1848 (Grand Côteau Ch v 1 p 293).

<sup>3</sup> Placide

<sup>4</sup> Placide GUILBEAUX, native and resident of St. Martin Parish in the Attakapas (Jean & Marie ARCENEAUX, deceased) married 2 Feb 1819 Julie CORMIER, native of St. Landry Parish (Anaclet, deceased & Madeleine RICHARD) (Opélousas Ch v 1-B p 335). Placide and Léontine GUILBEAUX were full siblings. So, Agathe's parents belonged to two different siblings.

<sup>5</sup> 1870 US Federal Census, Population Schedule, Louisiana, Lafayette Parish, enumerated 1 July 1870 by Ed. P. GOODWIN, census page 146, Ancestry.com page 126, dwelling 1323, family 1374: RICHARDSON, Dick (Head of household, age 47, male, black, occupation: field hand), Clarisse (43, black, occupation: keeping house), Cola (20), Agate (17), Josephine (15), Paul (13), Modeste (11), Marie (3). All children were field hands. All in household born in Louisiana. Living next door to large planters Valery GUILBEAU and Vilmont BABINEAU, both white, married, and contemporaries of Dick, on census page 145, Ancestry.com page 125. Many other GUILBEAUX and CORMIERs on the same page.

When freedom come we have to sign up to work for money for a year. We couldn't go work for nobody else. After de year some stays, but not long.

De Ku Klux kill niggers. Dey come to take my uncle. He open de door. Dey don't take him but tell him to vote Democrat next day or dey will. Dey kilt some niggers what wouldn't vote Democrat.

Dey kill my old uncle Davis. He won't vote Democrat. Dey shoot him. Den dey stand him up and let him fall down. Dey tie him by de feet. Dey drag him through de bresh. Dey dare his wife to cry.

When I thirty I marry Tesisfor Babino<sup>6</sup>. Pere Abadie<sup>7</sup> marry us at Grand Coteau. We have dinner with wine. Den come big dance. We have twelve chillen. We works in de field in Opelousas. We come here twenty-five year ago. He die in 1917. Dey let's me live here. It nice to be near de church. I can go to prayers when I wants to."

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<sup>6</sup> Télesphore Babineaux; he was known as Joseph Théodore BABINEAUX, Joseph Télesphore BABINEAUX, and Joe BOBINO or BABINO, son of unidentified father and Lucinda, native of Carencro, Lafayette Parish. He and Agathe produced a large family, baptized at St. Peter Catholic Church at Carencro and at St. Francis Regis Catholic Church in Arnaudville, beginning in 1872.

<sup>7</sup> Père ABADIE was one of the Jesuit priests at Sacred Heart Catholic Parish at Grand Coteau, St. Landry Parish. Sacred Heart is now known as St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church.



Near St. Martinville, St. Martin Parish  
Né Ursin Olivier BLANCHARD  
Ex-slave of Clairville LASSEIGNE

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<sup>8</sup> A longer version of this interview can be found at [Roots Web](#) with an [addendum](#) offering information deleted in edited transcriptions and lost information.

**I** was plowing and hoeing before the freedom and I talk more of the French 'cause I comes from St. Martinville Parish<sup>9</sup>. I was born there in Louisiana and my mama was Angeline Jean Pierre and she was slave born. My papa was Olivier Blanchard and he white man carpenter on old plantation. We belong to Clairville La San<sup>10</sup> and all live on that place. My papa just plain carpenter but could draw patterns for houses. I don't know where he larn that work.

I was count freeborn and still have one white half sister alive. When freedom come my mama and papa split up and mama get marry.

I pick cotton and mama cook. She make koosh-koosh<sup>11</sup> and cyayah—that last plain clabber<sup>12</sup>. Mama cook lots of gaspergou<sup>13</sup> and carp and the poisson ami<sup>14</sup> fish, with the long snout—what they call gar now. I think it eel fish they strip the skin off and wrap round the hair and make it curly.

The Bayou Teche, it run close by and the women do all the clothes with a big paddle with holes in it to clean them in the bayou. They paddle them clean on the rocks and then wash them in the water.

One time one big bayou 'gator come up and bite a woman's arm off. She my sister in law. But they keep on washing the clothes in the bayou just the same.

We have plenty to eat and peaches and muscadines and pecans, 'cause there right smart woods and swamp there. We play in the woods and most time in the bayou on boats with planks what would float. We had the good time and had a little pet coon. You know, the coon like sweet things and he steal our syrup and when we chase him with the switch he hide under the bed.

My old missus was good Catholic and she have us christened and make the first communion. That not registered, 'cause it before the freedom, but it were in old St. Martin's church, same old church what stand now. There was a statue of Pere Jean<sup>15</sup>, the old priest, in front the church and one of St. Martin, too.

Plenty men from St. Martinville go to the war and Archie DeBlieu<sup>16</sup>, he go to Virginia and fight. The first one to pass our place was John Well Banks and he was a Yankee going up the Red River.

The yellow fever came durin' that war and kill lots. All the big plantation have the graveyard for the cullud people. That fever so bad they get the coffin ready before they dead and they so scared that some weren't dead but they think they are and bury them. There was a white girl call Colene Sonnier<sup>17</sup> what was to marry Sunday and she take sick Friday before. She say not to bury her in the ground but they put her there while they got the tomb ready. When they open the ground grave to put her in the tomb they find she buried alive and she eat all her own shoulder and hand away. Her sweetheart, Gart Berrild, he see that corpse, and he go home and get took with yellow fever and die.

<sup>9</sup> St. Martin Parish, the Parish seat being St. Martinville.

<sup>10</sup> Clairville LASSEIGNE (André & Marguerite WICKNER) married 24 Feb 1840 Joséphine ALLÈGRE (SM Ch v 8 #160).

<sup>11</sup> *Couche-couche* (Louisiana creole dish): small panfried cornmeal clusters, consumed with milk and, often, sugar

<sup>12</sup> *Kyayá* (Louisiana creole dish): a kind of breakfast food, similar in consistency to yogurt, made from unpasteurized milk that is allowed to sour, and curdle. Due to its sour taste, it was commonly sweetened with molasses, honey or brown sugar.

<sup>13</sup> Freshwater Drum, also called "Goo"

<sup>14</sup> *Poisson armé* = Alligator Garfish

<sup>15</sup> Apparently a universally beloved French-born priest named Ange-Marie JAN, serving the St. Martin Parish Church, now called St. Martin de Tours, for much of the 19th century.

<sup>16</sup> Achilles DE BLANC

<sup>17</sup> Corinne SONNIER

'They was the old lady what die. She was a terrible soul. One time after she die I go to get water out of her rain barrel and I had a lamp in one hand. That old lady's ghost blowed out the lamp and slapped the pitcher out my hand. After she first die her husband put black dress on her and tie up the jaw with a rag and my girl look in the room and there that old lady, Liza Lee, sittin' by the fire. My girl tell her mama and after three day she go back, and Liza Lee buried but my wife see her sittin' by the fire. Then she sorry she whip the chile for sayin' she saw Liza Lee. That old lady, Liza Lee, was a tart and she stay a tart for a long time.

I marry 72 year ago in the Catholic Church in St. Martinville. My wife call Adeline Chretien<sup>18</sup> and she dead 37 year. We have seven children but four live now. Frank my only boy live now, in Iowa, in Louisiana, and my two girls live, Enziède De Quèrive<sup>19</sup> and Rose Baptiste."

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<sup>18</sup> The two married 23 December 1874 at St. Martinville (SM Ch v 10 p 276). Adéline CHRÉTIEN was the daughter of Adèle Antoinette ANTOINE and, likely, Hyppolite or Gérard CHRÉTIEN, her slaveowner's (Magdeleine CHRÉTIEN, wife of Louis JUDICE) brothers.

Olivier's name at marriage was Olivier Ursin BLANCHARD. He appears in the 1880 U.S. Federal Census, enumerated as Ursin BLANCHARD, 1st Ward of St. Martin Parish, district enumeration 33, page 14, line 30; his mother-in-law, Adèle (widowed) and sister-in-law, Anna WILLIAM [Élisabeth Anne BROOKS], are in the household.

<sup>19</sup> Euzéide BLANCHARD





*Donaville Broussard*

Alias Donaville BROUSSARD  
St. Pierre (Carencro), Lafayette Parish  
Ex-slave of Émilien CARMOUCHE

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"Donaville Broussard, a polished gentleman of his race, was the son of a mulatto slave of Emilier<sup>20</sup> Caramouche. He was born in 1850, but appears vigorous. Light skinned, with blue eyes and a genial expression, he gave the story of his life in the French patois spoken by Louisiana French Negroes, which has been translated into English." - Interviewer

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<sup>20</sup> Émilien Carmouche

"



y mama was daughter of one of the Carmouche boys. One of M'sieur Francois' sons. She call herself Armance Carmouche. She was house servant for the family and I worked around the house. I remember my Madame brought me the little basket and it had a strap on it. I put the strap over the shoulder and went round with the sharp stick and picked up the leaves on the ground with the stick.

It was a great house with trees and flowers. Madame liked all clean and pretty. I never worked hard. The ladies and my mama, too, petted me as if I was the white child.

M'sieur had a widow sister. She made us learn the prayers. We were glad to go where she was for she always had something good in her bag for us. I never saw the baptizing. In those days all the slaves had the religion of the master and the Catholics didn't have no baptizing. They didn't have to half-drown when they got their religion. The church was 15 or 20 miles off. The priest came and held Mass for the white folks sometimes.

I remember one wedding. My aunt got married. M'sieur Caramouche killed a big pig. The white folks ate in the house. The slaves sat under the trees and ate in the yard. At four o'clock the justice of the peace came. He was the friend of M'sieur Caramouche. He made my aunt and the man hold hands and jump over the broom handle. When the priest came he made M'sieur sign some papers.

A slave always had to ask M'sieur to marry. He always let the women slaves marry who they wanted. He didn't loose by that. He was so good the men would come to his plantation.

We all wore the long chemise. Made out of heavy cloth. They made the cloth on the place and the women sewed it up. We didn't wear the shoes. We didn't like them when we had them.

Each slave could have the little garden. They raised vegetables and had a couple of beehives for the honey.

When the Yankees came they told us we could be free, but I don't know of any slaves that left. Old M'sieur died of the fever in the second year of the war. His wife died before he did. No children. They sold us, the house and everything. M'sieur Cyprien Arceneaux of Lafayette bought me and Madame Arvillien Bernard of St. Pierre bought the mama. They used to call it St. Pierre. They call it Carenero now. When war was finished I left M'sieur Arceneaux and lived with mama.

A year and a half after that the mama married a black man and us three farmed the little farm. My steppapa didn't like me. I was light. He and me couldn't get along. So when I had 20 years I left there and hired myself out. I saved till I bought a little piece of land for myself. Then I married and raised the family. Me and my wife and the children farmed that place up to ten years ago and then she died. My son farms the place now and I came to Beaumont. I live with my girl.

I remember me in time of war we danced. Round dances. We sang and danced La Boulangere in time of war. De song go:

*La Boulangere ait ta victoire  
Et nous, qui sont en guerre,  
Voici le jour que je dois partir.*

*Mon cher ami, tu pars,  
Tu me laisses un enfant dans les bras  
et prend tes armes.  
Et moi, je vais dans le moment  
verser des larmes.*

*Quand je serai en le guerre, [Handwritten Note: à la guerre?]  
Tu serais de garnison,  
Et tu m'oublierais moi,  
Qui serai en les baillons.*

*J'entends le tombour qui m'appelle  
A les points de jour.  
Mon cher Armande, si tu m'aimes  
Tu penserais à moi, quand tu serais,  
Dans tes plaisir.  
Moi—que serai au bout du fusill!*

I got one real scare. I was with M'sieur Arceneaux in Lafayette. There was the battle. Lots of fighting. Lots of killing. The Yankees came right inside the house. I stayed hid.

I don't know whether it's been better since the war. At all times one has his miseries. We managed to get along on the farm. But now I have nothing. Oh, I don't mean slavery was better than to be free. I mean times were better.

The reason I'm so light is, my mama was half-white. My papa was Neville<sup>21</sup> Broussard and he was all white.

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<sup>21</sup> Neville BROUSSARD



Alias Valmar CORMIER  
Lafayette Parish  
Ex-slave of Duplessin DUGAS


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"Valmar Cormier was born a slave to Duplissent Dugat<sup>22</sup>, a small slave-holder of Lafayette, Louisiana. He tells his story in a mixture of English and French. As far as he knows, he is nearly 90 years old. He now lives with his sister, Mary Moses, in the Pear Orchard Settlement, in Beaumont, Texas." - Interviewer

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<sup>22</sup> Duplessin or Dupléchin Dugas

"  'member de day my old marster go to de war. I kin 'member dat jes' like yesterday. He used to like to play de fiddle and make me dance when I was li'l, but he went to de war and got kilt. He name Duplissent Dugat. Mary, my sister, she don't 'member de old marster.

De slaves did de work on dat farm. Dey was two growed-ups, my mama, Colaste, and my uncle, and dere was us two chillen. My father was a white man, a white Creole man. I never carry he name till after freedom.<sup>23</sup>

Marster was jes' a poor man and he have jes' a ordinary house. De slave house was jes' a old plank house 'bout twelve feet by twenty feet and have dirt floor. Us cook in de big fireplace and take a log 'bout four foot long and have a big iron pot with a iron lid. Dey put red hot coals under de pot and on top de lid and dey have a big iron poker with a hook on it what dey took de lid off with.

Befo' dey have coal oil lamp dey used to use homemade candles. Dey'd kill de brutes and keep and save all de tallow and one day was set off to make de candles. All de neighbors come and dey have kind of party and eat and things. Sometime dey make three, four hunnerd candles in one day and lay dem in a big box, so dey won't git break.

Us make soap on de plantation, too. Dey melt de tallow and cracklin's and git lye out de fireplace ash. We have cotton and corn and potatoes growin', so we has plenty to eat. Us have coosh-coosh<sup>24</sup>, dat cornbread and meat, and some fish to eat. Snails us jes' go through de woods and pick dem up and eat dem jes' like dat. Us eat plenty crawfish. De chillen git string and old piece fat meat and tie on de end, and us go to de bog and drap de string down dat crawfish hole. When de old man grab de meat with he pincher, den us jerk us up a crawfish, and bile him in hot water, or make de gumbo.

Us drink French coffee befo' de war, but endurin' de war us couldn't git de good kind. Den us make coffee out of coffee weed. Dey parch dat weed in de iron oven, grind it and put it in de iron pot.

I seed de sojers and I run under de house, I was so scared. Mary, she hide under de bed in de house. De Yankees come take de cattle and went 'way with dem. I kin sho' rec'lect when dose sojers come and de road was full goin' day and night. De Yankees find a lot of Confed'rate sojers close to Duson, de other side of Rayne and dey captures lots and brung dem back by dere.

After while it all over and dey told us we free, but my mama kep' working for old missus after freedom, 'cause old marster, he kilt in dat war. Den old missus die and left three li'l chillen, but I don't know what happen to them, 'cause us go to another place and I plow and Mary she he'p pick cotton.

I git marry at 20 and my first wife de French gal. We marry by de priest in de church. Us have so many chillen us have to keep a map to account for all dem, dere was 19 in all. We stays in Louisiana long time, den come to Texas."

<sup>23</sup> Valmond [sic] CORMIER (Unidentified father & Scholastique SÉNÉGAL) married 22 Feb 1876 Émélie BROUSSARD (Carenco Ch v 1 p 52). He married (2) 24 Jan 1895 Louise EVANS (Grand Côteau Ch, Registre de couleur, v 4 p 340). Only his mother named in both marriages.

<sup>24</sup> *Couche-couche*

 *arie Donatto*

Alias Mary DONATTO  
Née Marie Camille AUZENNE  
Near Opélousas, St. Landry Parish  
Born free

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François Alcide DONATO & Marie Camille AUZENNE  
Image from Ancestry.com public tree, user Aneva LACHAPELLE-DÉCULUS

"Not one word was spoken by Mary Donatto , of Ames, Texas, aged Louisiana negress, when questioned concerning her life during slavery time. From answers made by her daughter Mary , with whom she makes her home, a brief summary of her youth was secured. Mary's health has completely failed, and with it her mental faculties, and speech. She sat, apart, in an uncomfortable looking rocker while her daughter spoke; a tan-skinned old woman, with a vacant stare and a full face, triple chins descending upon an ample bosom. Mary was free-born and, it is said that her people once owned slaves of their own. She was living in Opelousas, Louisiana when freedom came, a youngster of about ten years at the time. This story will, of necessity, be in the third person, but still dialectic because of the uneducated speech of the old woman's daughter." - Interviewer

”



ary Donatto was bo'n 'bout 1855, in St. Landry parish, Louisiana.<sup>25</sup>  
She was bo'n near Opelousas.<sup>26</sup>

De situation at dis time was diff'rent wid her dan wid mos' cullud people befo' de war.

She was free-bo'n and her people all been free-bo'n befo' her. Den she marry a free-bo'n man and dat mek all de chillen wid dat same strain.<sup>27</sup>

Dey was a li'l woods settlement where Mary's folks live. Dey was one big fiel' what you have to cross and all de houses 'roun' in de fiel'.<sup>28</sup>

Dey was li'l trails w'at lead up and down and all through de settelement. Mos' de cullud folks what live dere in dis place was all kinfolks.

A book was wrote 'bout de settlement but dis' fam'bly ain' never had none 'cause dey never did do much readin'.<sup>29</sup> Mary she tell dat de book tell where all dese folks come from and how come dey's free, and 'bout ev'ryt'ing concernin' dem.

Some of de generations was Spanish, dey say, and dat's how dey happen to own dey lan' and not belong to nobody. Mary's daddy he owned a small farm in de settlement. He raise cotton and co'n<sup>30</sup> and sol' it in Opelousas. He was name Sostan Ozan.<sup>31</sup>

My mother was Celeste Ozan befo' she marry.<sup>32</sup> De folks have li'l plank houses, mos' all alike, wid home-mek furn'chure. Dey wasn' much diff'rent to de settlement houses dey have now. Dey wasn' like de quarters houses runnin' side by side like dey do in dem day on de big plantations for de slaves. Clo's was mek by all de folks.

Dey have dey own loom and t'ings. De li'est chillen was taught to help wid de loom. By de time dey good size dey could weave t'ings like blanket' and de like. When de wool come in from dey sheep dey mek wool pants. De li'l boys have strap and buckle pants atter dey git a size. Dey wo' long knit stockin' too. Dey kinder look funny though, when dey go to dances wid dem pants. All dem wo' shoes mek wid a piece of brass on de en' of de toe.

Dem shoe' was heavy like lead. De li'l chillen ain' never had no hats but de growed up wimmen all have dem a lov'ly white bonnet for Sunday. Dem was sho' fine bonnets. Dey save all de money what dey could git and buy de bes' white clo'f dey could git for de money. Dem bonnets was huge, dey was

<sup>25</sup> Born Marie Camille OZENNE [sic] – *femme de couleur libre* (Sosthène & Céleste DONATO) was born 10 September 1854 (Opél Ch v 5 p 85). She married 24 Oct 1873 François C. DONATO [sic, François Alcide DONATO] (Opel Ct Hse Marriage #7552), her cousin.

<sup>26</sup> Likely in the vicinity of what is now known as Léonville, Upper St. Martin Parish, bordering St. Landry Parish, where many of her relatives still reside today.

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, she descends from a long line of free Creoles of Color, on both her paternal and maternal lineage.

<sup>28</sup> Probably the Frilot Cove or Léonville area where many of the DONATO family resided and still does today. It was an open surrounded by woods on 2 or 3 sides, called *Anse aux Frilot*.

<sup>29</sup> Not sure how much of this was reported by Mary DONATTO or her daughter, as they descend from St. Landry Parish's wealthiest Free People of Color, including her great-grandfather, Martin DONATO-BELLO, a banker, farmer, and land speculator.

<sup>30</sup> Corn

<sup>31</sup> Sosthène AUZENNE, born circa 1826 near Opelousas, son of Valérien AUZENNE of Pointe-Coupée and Henriette GALLOT of Opelousas, all free Creoles of Color.

<sup>32</sup> Céleste "Célestine" DONATO, born circa 1828 near Opelousas, daughter of François Cyrille DONATO and Célestine DOBBS, both of the Opelousas area, all free Creoles of Color. Céleste Donatto and Sosthène AUZENNE married at Opelousas on 12 November 1849 (Opél Ch v A #82).

mek wid slats runnin' all 'roun' de front, and wide ruffles. De Sunday dress was white, but not de gran'folks nor de chillen ever had no silk dress to dey back. (The daughter paused to explain that she had never owned a silk dress, and only one pair of rayon stockings in her life.) li'l settlement was mos'ly in itse'f.

Dey didn' buy nuthin', no food or nuthin' much outside. Dey go to de bayou for all kinds of fish and de like, and to de woods for de fresh meat. Dat crawfish was good. Skin de tail and use de white meat in a good brown gravy wid onion. Den dey mek what dey call jambalai<sup>33</sup>. Dey brown de meat in right smart lard, good rice, and water, wid onion, red pepper and salt. Dat better iffen it cook in a i'on pot and cook down dry. Don' eat no bread wid it. Dey use po'k, or bird, or chicken in de jambalai. For t'ree generations dey have no school for de chillen in de settlement. Atter de war dey have a school in Opelousas and Mary go and learn to read and write, but she done forgit dat wid all her troubles long ago.

All dem belong to de Cath'lic chu'ch and still does. Dere wasn' no contact wid de sojers, and de white folks didn' bodder none much. De war didn' mean nuthin' to de settlement 'cep'n' dat some de run-aways pass through dere abouts, on de way sou'f or crost to Texas.

Mary marry a free-bo'n man name' Francois Aleced Donatto<sup>34</sup>. He was from New Orleans. He been raise by a gran'ma in Opelousas 'cause his mama and daddy done die and he a orphan chillen. Bofe he mama and daddy die in de yellor fever.<sup>35</sup>

When Mary's ol'es' daughter was fo' year ol' she move' to Ville Platte. Dey was 12 chillen and fo' boys and five gals is still livin'. Dey's Mary , de ol'es' gal, she lives wid.

Den Edolie, Cecile , Anna , Celeste , Joe , Welfred<sup>36</sup>, Alice , and Sostan<sup>37</sup>, mos' all farmers and house-keepers. De fam'bly move' to Ames 23 year ago. Dat is, what was togedder. Mary live wid a son back in de woods for one year and den move up closer to de road where she is now. She uster be talky and tol' lots 'bout dem time but she been too sick, and she failin' now.

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<sup>33</sup> Jambalaya

<sup>34</sup> François Alcide "Frank" DONATO, born in 1851 near Opélousas, son of François Auguste DONATO *fils* and Clarisse "Clara" DONATO, first cousins.

<sup>35</sup> Conflicting information. François Alcide DONATO's parents had six children after him, the last of whom, Bernard DONATO, was born in 1866. François Auguste DONATO *fils* died 19 January 1874 near Opélousas, age 43 (Opél Ch v 2 p 304).

<sup>36</sup> Wilfred DONATTO

<sup>37</sup> Sosthène DONATTO



Between Broussard and Royville<sup>39</sup>, Lafayette Parish  
Ex-slave of Jean-Baptiste DUHON

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<sup>38</sup> A longer version of this interview can be found at [Roots Web](#).

<sup>39</sup> Royville is now called Youngsville

"Victor Duhon was born 97 years ago in Lafayette Parish, La., a slave of the Duhon family. His blue eyes and almost white skin are evidence of the white strain in his blood. Even after many years of association with English speaking persons, he speaks a French patois, and his story was interpreted by a Beaumont French teacher." - Interviewer

" My papa was Lucien Duhon and my mama Euripe Dupuis. I was born over in Louisiana in Lafayette Parish, between Broussard and Warville.<sup>40</sup> I'm 97 years old now.

I didn't have brothers or sisters, except half ones. It is like this, my mama was a house servant in the Duhon family. She was the hairdresser. One day she barbered master's son, who was Lucien. He says that he'll shave her head if she won't do what he likes. After that she his woman till he marries a white lady.

My grandmama was stolen from Africa and she lived to be 125 years old. She died last year in April. I think I'll live long as she did. There were fifteen slaves on the land what Duhon's had but I never ran around with them. I had room at the back of the big house. You know, Madame Duhon was my grandmama. She was good to me. The only thing I did was look to my master's horse and be coachman for Madame. Master had four sons. They were Ragant and Jaques and Lucien and Desire<sup>41</sup>. Desire was shot at the dance.

Master had about 100 acres in cotton and the corn. He had a slave for to hunt all the time. He didn't do other things. The partridge and the rice birds he killed were cooked for the white folks. The owls and the rabbits and the coons and the possums were cooked for us. They had a big room for us to eat in. Where they cook they had a long oven with a piece down the middle. They cooked the white folks things on one side. They cooked their own things on the other. They had each ones pots and skillets.

I didn't play much with the black children. My time went waiting on my white folks.

Sometimes the priest came to say Mass. The slaves went to Mass. The priest married and baptized the slaves. They gave a feast of baptizing. We all had real beef meat that day.

When my mama had 22 years she married a Polite Landry<sup>42</sup> slave. Then she went to the Landry plantation. There was often marrying between the two plantations. When they married the wife went to her man's plantation. That made no difference. It wouldn't be long before a girl from the other place marry into the man's plantation. That kept things in balance.

My mama married Fairjuste Williams<sup>43</sup>. They had two sons and a daughter. I didn't know them so much. They were half brothers and sister.

I had 22 years when war came. You know what war I mean. The war when the slaves were set free. I wasn't bothered about freedom. Didn't leave master till he died. Then I went to work for Mr. Polite Landry.

<sup>40</sup> Royville /rwah veel/, was the original name of Youngsville. Victor DUHON married 5 Feb 1883 Marie PILLETTE (Youngsville Ch v 3 p 141).

<sup>41</sup> Lucien DUHON (Jean-Baptiste & Euphémie PRÉJEAN) was baptized 21 May 1837 (Lafayette Ch v 5 p 43). Désiré DUHON (Jean-Baptiste & Euphémie PRÉJEAN) was baptized 30 Dec 1833 (Lafayette Ch v 57 p 198). Jean Jacques DUHON (Jean-Baptiste & Euphémie PRÉJEAN) was born 19 Feb 1841 (Lafayette Ch v 5 p 219).

<sup>42</sup> Hyppolite LANDRY (Henry & Lize BÉGNAUD) married 20 Sept 1837 Marie Azélie VALLOT (Nicolas & Marguerite ROMERO) (Lafayette Ch v 2 p 270).

<sup>43</sup> Ferjus or Fréjus WILLIAMS

I was always in good hands. Some slaves were treated bad. Mr. Natale Vallean<sup>44</sup> beat up a slave for stealing. He beat him so hard he lay in front of the gate a whole day and the night.

I worked on farms all my life. Then I came to Beaumont. About 23 years ago, it was. I worked at anything. Now I'm too old. I live with my daughter."

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<sup>44</sup> Nicolas VALLOT was Hyppolite LANDRY's father-in-law.

 Aurelia Frank

Alias Orelia Alexie FRANKS  
Near Opélousas, St. Landry Parish  
Ex-slave of Valérien MARTIN

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Orelia Alexie Franks was born on the plantation of Valerian<sup>45</sup> Martin, near Opelousas, Louisiana. She does not know her age, but thinks she is near ninety. Her voice has the musical accent of the French Negro. She has lived in Beaumont, Texas, many years."  
- Interviewer

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<sup>45</sup> Valérien Martin



" 's born on Mr. George Washington's birthday', the twenty-second of February but I don't know what year. My old massa was Valerian Martin and he come from foreign country. He come from Canada and he Canada French. He wife name Malite<sup>46</sup> Guidry. Old massa a good Catholic and he taken all the li'l slave chillen to be christen. Oh, he's a Christian massa and I used to be a Catholic but now I's a Apostolic, but I's christen in St. Johns Catholic Church, what am close to Lafayette, where I's born.

My pa name Alexis Franks and he was American and Creole. My ma name Fanire Martin and I's raise where everybody talk French. I talks American<sup>47</sup> but I talks French goodest.

Old massa he big cane and cotton farmer and have big plantation and raise everything, and us all well treat. Dey feed us right, too. Raise big hawg in de pen and raise lots of beef. All jes' for to feed he cullud folks.

Us quarters out behind de big house and old massa come round through de quarters every mornin' and see how us niggers is. If us sick he call nuss. She old slavery woman. She come look at 'em. If dey bad sick dey send for de doctor. Us house all log house. Dey all dab with dirt 'tween de logs. Dey have dirt chimney make out of sticks and dab with mud. Dey [*Transcriber's Note: unfinished sentence at end of page*] Lots of time we eat coosh-coosh. Dat make out of meal and water. You bile de water and salt it, den put in de cornmeal and stir it and bile it. Den you puts milk or clabber or syrup on it and eat it.

Old massa have de graveyard a purpose to bury de cullud folks in. Dey have cullud preacher. Dey have funeral in de graveyard. Dat nigger preacher he a Mef'dist<sup>48</sup>.

Old massa son-in-law, he overseer. He 'low nobody to beat de slaves. Us li'l ones git spank when we bad. Dey put us 'cross de knee and spank us where dey allus spank chillen.

Christmas time dey give big dinner. Dey give all de old men whiskey. Everybody have big time.

Dey make lots of sugar. After dey finish cookin' de sugar dey draw off what left from de pots and give it to us chillen. Us have candy pullin'.

Dey weave dey own cloth. Us have good clothes. Dey weave de cloth for make mattress and stuff 'em with moss. Massa sho' believe to serve he niggers good. I see old massa when he die. Us see old folks cry and us cry, too. Dey have de priest and burn de candles. Us sho' miss old massa.

I see lots of sojers. Dey so many like hair on your head. Dey Yankees. Dey call 'em bluejackets. Dey a fight up near massa's house. Us climb in tree for to see. Us hear bullets go 'zoom' through de air 'round dat tree but us didn't know it was bullets. A man rid up on a hoss and tell massa to git us pickaninnies out dat tree or dey git kilt. De Yankees have dat battle and den sot us niggers free.[Pg 62]

<sup>46</sup> Émilie "Mélite" GUIDRY

<sup>47</sup> The word for English in Louisiana Latin-based languages is "American" (e.g. *américain*, *Mérikain*, *Americanò*).

<sup>48</sup> Methodist

Old massa, he de kind man what let de niggers have dey prayer-meetin'. He give 'em a big cabin for dat. Shout? Yes, Lawd! Sing like dis:

*Mourner, fare you well,  
Gawd 'Mighty bless you,  
Till we meets again.*

"Us sings 'nother song:

*Sinner blind,  
Johnnie, can't you ride no more?  
Sinner blind.  
Your feets may be slippin'  
Your soul git lost.  
Johnnie, can't you ride no more?  
Yes, Lawd,  
Day by day you can't see,  
Johnnie, can't you ride no more?  
Yes, Lawd."*



Near New Iberia, Iberia Parish  
Ex-slave of Édouard Bélisaire BROUSSARD

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

"Gabriel Gilbert was born in slavery on the plantation of Belizare Brassard, in New Iberia Parish, Louisiana. He does not know his age, but appears to be about eighty. He has lived in Beaumont, Texas, for sixteen years." - Interviewer

" **M**y old massa was Belizare<sup>49</sup> Broussard. He was my mom's massa. He had a big log house what he live in. De places 'tween de logs was fill with dirt. De quarters de slaves live in was make out of dirt. Dey put up posties in de ground and bore holes in de posts and put in pickets 'cross from one post to the other. Den dey build up de sides with mud. De floor and everything was dirt. Dey had a schoolhouse built for de white chillen de same way. De cullud chillen didn't have no school.

Dem was warm healthy houses us grew up in. Dey used to raise better men den in dem houses dan now. My pa name was Joseph Gilbert. He old massa was Belleau Prince<sup>50</sup>.

I didn't know what a store was when I was growin' up. Us didn't have store things like now. Us had wooden pan and spoon dem times. I never see no iron plow dem days. Nothin' was iron on de plow 'cept de share. I tell dese youngsters, 'You in hebben now from de time I come up.' When a man die dem days, dey use de ox cart to carry de corpse.

Massa have 'bout four hundred acres and lots of slaves. He raise sugar cane. He have a mill and make brown sugar. He raise cotton and corn, too. He have plenty stock on de place. He give us plenty to eat. He was a nice man. He wasn't brutish. He treat he slaves like hisself. I never 'member see him whip nobody. He didn't 'low no ill treatment. All de folks round he place say he niggers ruint and spoiled.

De li'l white folks and nigger folks jus' play round like brudder and sister and us all eat at de white table. I slep' in de white folks house, too. My godfather and godmother was rich white folks. I still Cath'lic.

I seed sojers but I too li'l to know nothin' 'bout dem. Dey didn't worry me a-tall. I didn't git close to de battle.

My mammy weave cloth out cotton and wool. I 'member de loom. It go 'boom-boom-boom.' Dat de shuttle goin' cross. My daddy, he de smart man. I'll never be like him long as I live in dis world. He make shoes. He build house. He do anything. He and my mammy neither one ever been brutalize'.

De first work I done was raisin' cotton and sugar cane and sweet and Irish 'taters. I used to cook sugar.

I marry on twenty-second of February. My wife was Medora Labor. She been dead thirty-five year now. I never marry no second woman. I love my wife so much I never want nobody else. Us had six chillen. Two am livin'.

Goin' back when I a slave, massa have a store. When de priest come dey hold church in dat store. Old massa have sev'ral boys. Dey went after some de slave gals. Dey have chillen by dem. Dem gals have dere cabins and dere chillen, what am half white.

After while dem boys marry. But dey allus treat dey chillen by de slave womens good. Dey white wife treat dem good, too, most like dey dere own chillen.

<sup>49</sup> Édouard Bélisaire BROUSSARD (Édouard & Annette THIBODEAU, inhabitants at Fausse-Pointe), was born 11 April 1804 (SM Ch v 6 p 219). He married 20 Feb 1832 Émilite BROUSSARD, his cousin (SM Ch v 7 p 198).

<sup>50</sup> Gabriel GUILBERT (Joseph & Françoise JULIEN) married 22 Feb 1888 Médora LEBARRE (Antoine & Rosélia HAMILTON) (SM Ch v 11 p 112). Pierre Viléor PRINCE, son-in-law of Bélisaire BROUSSARD, husband of Caroline BROUSSARD.

Old massa have plenty money. Land am only two bits de acre. Some places it cost nothing. Dey did haulin' in ox-carts. A man what had mules had something extra.

Us have plenty wild game, wild geese and ducks. Fishin' am mighty good. Dey was 'gaters, too. I seed dem bite a man's arm off.

If a slave feelin' bad dey wouldn't make him work. My uncle and my mammy dey never work nothing to speak of. Dey allus have some kind complaint. Ain't no tellin' what it gwine be, but you could 'low something ailin' dem!

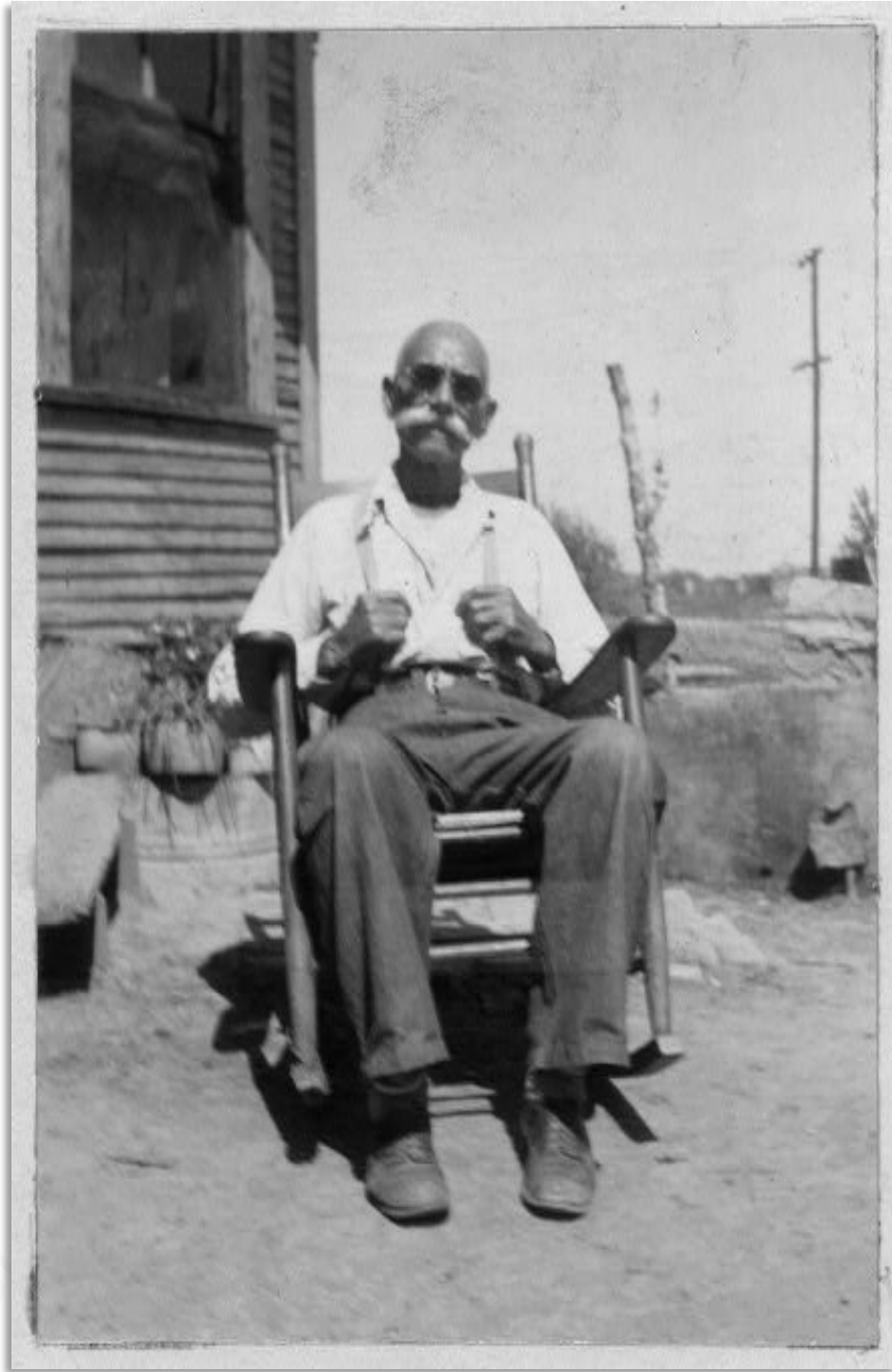
I 'member dey a white man. He had a gif'. I don't care what kind of animal, a dog or a hoss, dat man he work on it and it never leave you or you house. If anybody have toothache or earache he take a brand new nail what ain't never work befo' and work dat round you tooth or ear. Dat break up de toothache or earache right away. He have li'l prayer he say. I don't know what it was.

I's seed ghosties. I talk with dem, too. Sometimes dey like people. Sometimes dey like animal, maybe white dog. I allus feel chilly when dey come round me. I talk with my wife after she dead. She tell me, 'Don't you forgit to pray.' She say dis world corrupt and you got to fight it out."



Alias La San MIRE  
Abbéville, Vermilion Parish  
Ex-slave of Prosper BROUSSARD

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"La San Mire, 86, aged French Negro of the Pear Orchard Settlement, near Beaumont, Texas, is alert and intelligent, and his long, well-formed hands gesture while he talks. He was born in Abbeville Parish, Louisiana, a slave of Prosper Broussard. His father was a Spaniard, his mother spoke French, and his master was a Creole. La San's patois is superior to that of the average French Negro. His story has been translated." - Interviewer

"



he old war? No, I don't remember so much about it, because I was so young. I was ten years old at the beginning of the war. I was born the 13th of May, but I do not know of what year, in the Parish of Abbeville, on M'sieu Prosper's plantation between Abbeville and Crowley<sup>51</sup>. My parents were slaves. My father a Spaniard, who spoke Spanish and French. My mother spoke French, the old master too, all Creoles. I, as all the other slaves, spoke French.<sup>52</sup>

During the war all the children had fear. I drove an old ox-cart in which I helped pick up the dead soldiers and buried them. A battle took place about 40 miles from the plantation on a bluff near a large ditch--not near the bayou, no. We were freed on July 4th. After the war I remained with my old master. I worked in the house, cooked in the kitchen. Early each morning, I made coffee and served it to my master and his family while they were in the bed.

The old master was mean--made slaves lie on the ground and whipped them. I never saw him whip my father. He often whipped my mother. I'd hide to keep from seeing this. I was afraid. Why did he whip them? I do not remember. He did not have a prison, just 'coups de fault' (beatings). But not one slave from our plantation tried to escape to the north that I can remember.

The slaves lived in little cabins. All alike, but good. One or two beds. Rooms small as a kitchen. Chimneys of dirt. Good floors. We had plenty to eat. Cornbread and grits, beef, 'chahintes'<sup>53</sup> (coons), des rat bois<sup>54</sup> (possum), le couche-couche, and Irish and sweet potatoes.

Everyone raised cotton. In the evenings the slave women and girls seeded the cotton, carded it, made thread of it on the spinning wheel. They made it into cotton for dresses and suits. No shoes or socks. In winter the men might wear them in winter. Never the women or children.

How many slaves? I do not recall. There were so many the yard was full. They worked from sun-up to sundown, with one hour for dinner. School? I hoed cotton and drove the oxen to plow the field.

I never went to Mass before I was twenty years old. Yes, there were churches and the others went, but I did not want to go. There were benches especially for the slaves. Yes, I was baptized a Catholic in Abbeville, when I was big.

<sup>51</sup> Jefferson Davis Parish

<sup>52</sup> Prospère [sic] BROUSSARD (Hilaire & Anastasie BROUSSARD) was baptized 13 Aug 1833 at age 3 weeks (Lafayette Ch v 4 p 69). He married 3 Jan 1859 Marie Délasca TRAHAN (Lafayette Ch v 4 p 167).

<sup>53</sup> *Chaoni* = racoon

<sup>54</sup> *Rat de bois* = possum



Sunday the Negro slaves had round dances. Formed a circle--the boys and the girls--and changed partners. They sang and danced at the same time. Rarely on Saturday they had the dances. They sang and whistled in the fields.

The marriages of the slaves were little affairs. Before the witnesses they'd 'sauter le balais'--the two--and they were married. No celebration, but always the little cakes.

We had no doctor. We used 'vingaire' (an herb) for the fever; la 'chaspere' (sarsaparilla); la 'pedecha' (an herb), sometimes called L'absinthe amer, in a drink of whiskey or gin, for the fever. Des regulateurs (patent medicines). On nearly all plantations there were 'traiteurs', (a charm-doctor, always a Negro).

Noel we had the little cakes and special things to eat, but no presents.

I was married by the judge first, and after the marriage was blessed by the priest. I was 21 years old. I wore a new suit, because I had some money. I worked in the house during the day and at night I caught wild horses and sold them. I remember my wedding day. It was the Saturday before Mardi Gras. My wife came from Grand Chenier<sup>55</sup> (Cameron) to Abbeville when she was small. We had 16 children, 11 boys and five girls. Three girls and two boys died when they were small.<sup>56</sup>

One year after my marriage I left the big house and made a home of my own. For an enclosure I made a levee of earth around. I planted cotton. I worked the place for a half or a third.

I came to Beaumont 12 years ago, so my children could work, because I was sick. I could no longer work."

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<sup>55</sup> Grand Chênère, located in Cameron Parish

<sup>56</sup> Lessin MIRE, *filz*, son of Lessin MIRE, *père* and Annonciade CATALAN, was born c. 1860. He married 22 May 1884 Clarenzia Laurenza LABAUVE (Abbéville Ch v 2 p 294).



Alias Peter RYES  
Near St. Martinville, St. Martin Parish  
Ex-slave of Valsin FOURNET

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<sup>57</sup> This family, originating on the eastern seaboard, in St. Martin and Iberia Parishes has, historically, spelled the surname a number of ways. Language is a huge culprit: they are Methodists, a few are Catholics, originally Anglophones, but became Creolophones on Valsin Fournet's plantation. You therefore find Latinized approximations (raize) and a number of Anglicized approximations (Rice, Rhys, Ryze, Rize, Rise, Rayas, etc.).

"Peter Ryas, about 77 years old, was born a slave of Volsant Fournet, in St. Martinville Parish, Louisiana. He speaks a French patois more fluently than English. Peter worked at the refineries in Port Arthur for sixteen years but ill health forced him to stop work and he lives on what odd jobs he and his wife can pick up." - Interviewer

"**I**'s borned 'bout 1860, I guess, in a li'l cypress timber house in de quarters section of de Fournet Plantation. Dat in St. Martinville Parish, over in Louisiana. Dem li'l houses good and tight, with two big rooms. Two families live in one house. Dey 'bout ten houses.

M'sieu Volsant Fournet, he my old massa and he wife name Missus Porine.<sup>58</sup> Dey have eight chillen and de baby boy name Brian. Him and me, us grow up togedder. Us allus play togedder. He been dead three year now and here I is still.

All dem in my family am field workers. I too li'l to work. My mama name Annie and papa name Alfred. I have oldes' brudder, dat Gabriel, and 'nother brudder name Marice, and two sisters, Harriet and Amy.

Old massa's house have big six or eight room. Galleries front and back. Us cullud chillen never go in de big house much.

Old massa he done feed good. Coosh-coosh with 'lasses. Dat my favorite dem day. Dat make with meal and water and salt. Dey stir it in big pot. Sometime dey kill beef. Us have beef head and neck and guts cook with gravy and spread on top coosh-coosh. Dat good food.

Down on Vermilion Bayou am alligators. Dey fish and snakes, too. Us eat alligator tail steak. Taste like fish. Jes' skin hide off alligator tail. Slice it into steak. Fry it in meal and hawg fat. Dat like gar fish. Sometime git lamper eel. Dey hard to cotch. Perches and catfish and mud-cat easy to cotch. Water bird, too. Duck and crane. Crane like fish. Us take boat, go 'long bayou, find nesties in sedge grass.

Old massa allus good. He 'low papa and some to have li'l patch round dey door. Dey eat what dey raise. Some sells it. Papa raise pumpkin and watermelon. He have plenty bee-gum with bees. After freedom he make money awhile. He sell de honey from dem bees.

Dat plantation full cotton and corn. Us chillen sleep in de cotton-house. It be so soft. In de quarters houses chillen didn't have no bed. Dey slept on tow sack on de floor. Dat why dem cotton piles felt so soft.

Massa have special place in woods where he have meanes' niggers whip. He never whip much, but wartime comin' on. Some de growed ones runs away to dem Yankees. He have to whip some den. He have stocks to put dey neck in when he whip dem. Massa never chain he slaves. I seed talkin'

<sup>58</sup> Antoine Valsin FOURNET (Antoine Philippe & Marie Carmélite AMI, inhabitants at La Pointe [St. Martin Parish]) was born 28 July 1817 (SM Ch v 7 #837). He married 20 June 1839 Marie Charlotte Pauline BRIANT (Pierre Paul & Marie Françoise Éléonore Arsène SÉVEIGNE) (SM Ch v 8 #138).

parrots. Massa didn't have one, but other massas did. Dat parrot talk. He tell when de nigger run away or when he not work.

Us white folks all Catholic. Us not go to church, but all chillen christen. Dat in St. Martinville Catholic Church. All us christen dere. After freedom I start go to church reg'lar. I still does.

Dey ain't give us pants till us ten year old. In winter or summer us wore long, split tail shirt. Us never even think of shoes. After I's twelve papa buy my first pair shoes. Dey have diamond brass piece on toe. I so 'fraid dey wear out I won't wear dem.

De war goin' on. Us see sojers all de time. Us hide in bresh and play snipe at dem. All de white folks in town gang up. Dey send dere slaves out on Cypress Island. Dey do dat try keep Yankee sojers from find dem. It ain't no use. Dem Yankee find dat bridge what lead from mainland to island. Dey come 'cross dat bridge. Dey find us all. Dem white folks call deyselves hidin' us but dey ain't do so good. Dey guard dat bridge. But some de niggers dey slip off de Island. Dey jine de Yankees.

Dey plenty alligators in dat bayou. Sometime I wonder if dem niggers what try go through swamp ever git to Yankees. Dem alligators brutal. I 'member black gal call Ellen, she washin' clothes in bayou. Dey wash clothes with big rocks den. Dey have wooden paddle with hole and beat clothes on rocks. Dis gal down in de draw by herself. She washin' clothes. Big alligator had dug hole in side de bank. He come out and snap her arm off jes' 'bove elbow. She scream. Men folks run down and killed alligator. Us chillen wouldn't watch out for alligator. Us play in li'l flat, bateaux and swing on wild grapevine over water. I done see snakes. Dey look big 'nough swallow two li'l niggers one bite. Dey alligator turtles, too. If dey snap you, you can't git loose less you cut dey neck slap off. I kill lots dem.

Dey old mens on plantation what they think witch mens. Dey say could put bad mouth on you. You dry up and die 'fore you time. Dey take your strengt'. Make you walk on knees and hands. Some folks carry silver money 'round neck. Keep off dat bad mouth.

Old massa oldes' son, Gabriel, he Colonel in war. He and old massa both Colonels. Lots sojers pass our place. Dey go to fight. Dem with green caps was white folks. Dem with blue caps was Yankees. Us hear guns from boats and cannons.

After war over massa come home. Dey no law dem time. Things tore up. Dey put marshal in to make laws. Some folks call him Progo(provost) Marshal. He come 'round. See how us doin'. Make white folks 'low niggers go free. But us stay with massa a year. Dey finish crop so everybody have to eat.

Den us papa move to Edmond LeBlanc farm. Work on shares. Second move to Cade place, run by Edgar DeBlieu. Jes' railroad station, no town. I shave cane for money.

In 1867 or 1877 yellow fever strike. People die like dem flies. Dat fever pay no 'tention to skin color. White folks go. Black folks go. Dey die so fast dey pile dem in wagons. Dey pay mens \$10.00 to go inside house and carry dem out to wagon. Lots niggers makes \$10.00. Dat fever strike quick. Man come see me one mornin! He all right. Dat man dead 'fore dark. It bad sickness. It sev'ral years after dat dey have smallpox sickness. It bad, too.

All us stay 'round farm till I's 22 year. I never go to school. In 1882 I marry Viney Ballieo. She Baptist. I marry in Baptist church. Cullud preacher. Never white preachers 'round dere. Allus white priests. Viney die and all us four chillen dead now. I marry Edna LeBlanc in 1917.

I git dissatisfy with farmin' in 1911. I come to Lake Charles. To Port Arthur nex' year. I work at refinery sixteen year. I too old now. Us git what work us can. Jes' from dere to here."

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

*African American Interviewees*




Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

A decorative initial letter 'F' with intricate scrollwork and floral patterns. To its right is the name 'rank Bell' written in a cursive script.

New Orleans, Orleans Parish  
Ex-slave of Johnson BELL

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

"Frank Bell, 86, was a slave of Johnson Bell, who ran a saloon in New Orleans. Frank lives in Madisonville, Texas." - Interviewer

"  was owned by Johnson Bell and born in New Orleans, in Louisiana. 'Cordin' to the bill of sale, I'm eighty-six years old, and my master was a Frenchman and was real mean to me. He run saloon and kept bad women. I don't know nothing 'bout my folks, if I even had any, 'cept mama. They done tell me she was a bad woman and a French Creole.

I worked 'round master's saloon, kep' everything cleaned up after they'd have all night drinkin' parties, men and women. I earned nickels to tip off where to go, so's they could sow wild oats. I buried the nickels under rocks. If master done cotch me with money, he'd take it and beat me nearly to death. All I had to eat was old stuff those people left, all scraps what was left.

One time some bad men come to master's and gits in a shootin' scrape and they was two men kilt. I sho' did run. But master cotch me and make me take them men to the river and tie a weight on them, so they'd sink and the law wouldn't git him.

The clothes I wore was some master's old ones. They allus had holes in them. Master he stay drunk nearly all time and was mean to his slave. I'm the only one he had, and didn't cost him nothing. He have bill of sale made, 'cause the law say he done stole me when I'm small child. Master kept me in chains sometimes. He shot several men.

I didn't have no quarters but stays 'round the place and throw old sack down and lay there and sleep. I'm 'fraid to run, 'cause master say he'd hunt me and kill nigger.

When I's 'bout seventeen I marries a gal while master on drunk spell. Master he run her off, and I slips off at night to see her, but he finds it out. He takes a big, long knife and cuts her head plumb off, and ties a great, heavy weight to her and makes me throw her in the river. Then he puts me in chains and every night he come give me a whippin', for long time.

When war come, master swear he not gwine fight, but the Yankees they captures New Orleans and throws master in a pen and guards him. He gets a chance and 'scapes.

When war am over he won't free me, says I'm valuable to him in his trade. He say, 'Nigger, you's suppose to be free but I'll pay you a dollar a week and iffen you runs off I'll kill you.' So he makes me do like befo' the war, but give me 'bout a dollar a month, 'stead week.

He say I cost more'n I'm worth, but he won't let me go. 'Times I don't know why I didn't die befo' I'm growed, sleepin' on the ground, winter and summer, rain and snow. But not much snow there.

Master helt me long years after the war. If anybody git after him, he told them I stay 'cause I wants to stay, but told me if I left he'd kill him 'nother nigger. I stayed till he gits in a drunk brawl one night with men and women and they gits to shootin' and some kilt. Master got kilt. Then I'm left to live or die, so I wanders from place to place. I nearly starved to death befo' I'd leave New Orleans, 'cause I couldn't think master am dead and I'm 'fraid. Finally I gits up nerve to leave town, and stays the first night[Pg 62] in white man's barn. I never slep'. Every time I hears something, I jumps up and master be standin' there, lookin' at me, but soon's I git up he'd leave. Next night I slep' out in a hay field, and master he git right top of a tree and start hollerin at me. I never stays in that place. I gits gone from that place. I gits back to town fast as my legs carry me.



Then I gits locked up in jail. I don't know what for, never did know. One the men says to me to come with him and takes me to the woods and gives me an ax. I cuts rails till I nearly falls, all with chain locked 'round feet, so I couldn't run off. He turns me loose and I wanders 'gain. Never had a home. Works for men long 'nough to git fifty, sixty cents, then starts roamin' 'gain, like a stray dog like.

After long time I marries Feline Graham. Then I has a home and we has a white preacher marry us. We has one boy and he farms and I lives with him. I worked at sawmill and farms all my life, but never could make much money.

You know, the nigger was wild till the white man made what he has out of the nigger. He done ed'cate them real smart."

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vista



Near Opélousas, St. Landry Parish  
Ex-slave of Thomas LEWIS

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

"Aunt VIRGINIA BELL, 1205 Ruthven St., Houston, was born a slave near Opelousas, Louisiana, on the plantation of Thomas Lewis. Although she remembers being told she was born on Christmas Day, she does not know the year, but says she guesses she is about 88 years old." - Interviewer

" Well, suh, the fus' question you ask me, 'bout how old I is, I don' know 'zactly. You see it ain't like things is today. The young folks can tell you their 'zact age and everything, but in those days we didn' pay much 'tention to such things. But I knows I was bo'n in slavery times and my pappy tol' me I was bo'n on a Christmas Day, but didn' 'member jus' what year.

We was owned by Massa Lewis. Thomas Lewis was his name, and he was a United States lawyer. I ain't gwineter talk 'gainst my white folks like some cullud folks do, 'cause Massa Lewis was a mighty fine man and so was Miss Mary, and they treated us mighty good.

Massa had a big plantation near Opelousas and I was bo'n there. I 'member the neighbor folks used to bring their cotton to the gin on his farm for ginnin' and balin'. My mother's name was Della. That was all, jus' Della. My pappy's name was Jim Blair. Both of them was from Virginny, but from diffrent places, and was brought to Louisiana by nigger traders and sold to Massa Lewis. I know my pappy was lots older than my mother and he had a wife and five chillen back in Virginny and had been sold away from them out here. Then he and my mother started a family out here. I don' know what become of his family back in Virginny, 'cause when we was freed he stayed with us.

When I got old enough I was housegirl and used to carry notes for Miss Mary to the neighbors and bring back answers. Miss Mary would say, 'Now, Virginny, you take this note to sech and sech place and be sure and be back in sech and sech time,' and I allus was.

Massa Lewis had four or five families of us slaves, but we used to have some fun after work and us young folks would skip rope and play ring games. Durin' week days the field hands would work till the sun was jus' goin' down and then the overseer would holler 'all right' and that was the signal to quit. All hands knocked off Sat'day noon.

We didn' have no schoolin' or preachin'. Only the white folks had them, but sometimes on Sundays we'd go up to the house and listen to the white folks singin'.

Iffen any of the slave hands wanted to git married, Massa Lewis would git them up to the house after supper time, have the man and woman jine hands and then read to them outen a book. I guess it was the Scriptures. Then he'd tell 'em they was married but to be ready for work in the mornin'. Massa Lewis married us 'cordin' to Gospel.

Massa used to feed us good, too, and we had plenty clothes. Iffen we got took sick, we had doctor treatment, too. Iffen a hand took sick in the field with a misery, they was carried to their quarters and Massa or Miss Mary would give them a dose of epecac and make them vomit and would sen' for the doctor. They wouldn' fool none iffen one of us took sick, but would clean us out and take care of us till we was well.

There was mighty little whippin' goin' on at our place, 'cause Massa Lewis and Miss Mary treated us good. They wasn't no overseer goin' to whip, 'cause Massa wouldn' 'low him to. Le's see, I don' rec'lec' more than two whippin's I see anyone git from Massa, and that has been so long ago I don' rec'lec' what they was for.

When the War done come 'long it sho' changed things, and we heerd this and that, but we didn' know much what it was about. Then one day Massa Lewis had all the wagons loaded with food and chairs and beds and other things from the house and our quarters, and I heerd him say we was movin' to Polk County, way over in Texas. I know it took us a long time to git there, and when we did I never see so much woods. It sho' was diff'rent from the plantation.

I had to work in the fields, same as the res', and we stayed there three years and made three crops of cotton, but not so much as on our old place, 'cause there wasn't so much clearin'. Then one day Massa Lewis tol' us we was free, jus' as free as he was—jus' like you take the bridle offen a hoss and turn him loose. We jus' looked 'roun as iffen we hadn' good sense. We didn' have nothin' nor nowhere to go, and Massa Lewis say iffen we finish makin' de crop, he would take us back to Opelousas and give us a place to stay and feed us. So after pickin' we goes back and when we git there we sees where those rascal Yankees 'stroyed everything—houses burned, sugar kettles broke up. It looked mighty bad.

Massa Lewis hadn' no money, but he fixed us up a place to stay and give us what he could to eat, but things was mighty hard for a while. I know pappy used to catch rabbits and take them to town and sell them or trade them for somethin' to eat, and you know that wasn't much, 'cause you can't git much for a little ol' rabbit.

Then the Provo' Marshal, that was his name, give us a order for things to put in a crop with and to live till we made the crop. 'Course, I guess we wasn' as bad off as some, 'cause white folks knew we was Massa Lewis' folks and didn' bother us none.

Then I got married to John Bell, and it was a scripture weddin', too. He died 28 years ago, but I has stayed married to him ever since. We had thirteen chillen, but they is all dead now 'cept four, but they was raised up right and they is mighty good to they ol' mammy."



Plaquemines Brûlées, Acadia Parish  
Ex-slave of William LYONS

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Clara Bihm, slave of William Lyons of Branch, Louisiana, now lives in Beaumont, Texas. The town of Branch was known in slave days as Plaquemine Bouley<sup>59</sup>. Clara estimates her age to be 100 or 102, and from various facts known to her and her family, this would seem to be correct." - Interviewer

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<sup>59</sup> Plaquemines Brûlées or Plaquemine Brûlée

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ld massa's name was William Lyons. I didn't have no old missus, 'cause he was a bachelor. He had a big plantation. I don't know how big but dey somethin' like twenty fam'lies of slaves and some dem fam'lies had plenty in dem. My ma was Becky Brim and pa, he name Louis Brim. She come from Old Viriginny. Dey work in de field. I had two sister name Cass and Donnie and a brudder name Washington. He went off to de war. When it break out dey come and take him off to work in de army. He lost in dat war. He didn't come back. Nobody ever know what happen to him.

"Some de houses log house and some plank, but dey all good. Dey well built and had brick chimneys. Dey houses what de wind didn't blow in. Us had beds, too, not dem built in de wall. Us sho' treat good in slavery times, yes, suh. Old massa give us plenty clothes to keep us good and warm. He sho' did.

"Old massa, he wasn't marry and eat de same things de slaves eat. He didn't work dem in de heat of de day. 'Bout eleven o'clock, when dat sun git hot, he call dem out de field. He give dem till it git kind of cool befo' he make dem go back in de field. He didn't have no overseer. He seed 'bout de plantation hisself. He raise cotton and corn and sweet 'taters and peas and cane, didn't fool with rice. He didn't go in for oats, neither.[Pg 148]

"When Sunday come Old Massa ask who want to go to church. Dem what wants could ride hoss-back or walk. Us go to de white folks church. Dey sot in front and us sot in back. Us had prayer meetin', too, reg'lar every week. One old cullud man a sort of preacher. He de leader in 'ligion.

"When de slaves go to work he give dem de task. Dat so much work, so many rows cotton to chop or corn to hoe. When dey git through dey can do what dey want. He task dem on Monday. Some dem git through Thursday night. Den dey can hire out to somebody and git pay for it.

"Old Massa even git de preacher for marryin' de slaves. And when a slave die, he git de preacher and have Bible readin' and prayin'. Mostest de massas didn't do dat-a-way.

"I as big in war time as I is now. I used to do anything in de field what de men done. I plow and pull fodder and pick cotton. But de hardes' work I ever done am since I free. Old Massa, he didn't work us hard, noway.

"He allus give us de pass, so dem patterrollers not cotch us. Dey 'bout six men on hoss-back, ridin' de roads to cotch niggers what out without de pass. Iffen dey cotch him it am de whippin'. But de niggers on us place was good and civ'lized folks. Dey didn't have no fuss. Old Massa allus let dem have de garden and dey can raise things to eat and sell. Sometime dey have some pig and chickens.

"I been marry his' one time and he been dead 'bout forty-one years now. I stay with Old Massa long time after freedom. In 1913 I come live with my youngest girl here in Beaumont. You see, I can't 'member so much. I has lived so long my 'membrance ain't so good now.

 *mos Lincoln*


Plaquemines Parish<sup>60</sup>  
Ex-slave of Ulger GUIDRY

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<sup>60</sup> Amos LINCOLN is enumerated in Plaquemines Parish, located south of Orleans Parish, in the 1870 U.S. Federal Census. There is one family of GUIDRYs in the entire civil Parish.



"Amos Lincoln, 85, was born a slave of Elshay<sup>61</sup> Guidry, whose plantation was in the lower delta country of Louisiana, about fifty miles south of New Orleans. His memories of slave days are somewhat vague. He has lived in Beaumont fifty-two years." - Interviewer

"  y tongue's right smart I think. I's ten year old when they blew up that fort. I mean Fort Jackson. Grandpa was cookin'. They wouldn't let him fight. The fort was in New Orleans. They kilt lots of people. They bore holes in the ground and blow it up. A square hole, you know, a machine went in there. A man could crawl in the hole, yes, yes, sho'. The fort was long side the river. They bore holes from the river bank. They had a white paper, a order for 'em not to come to New Orleans. They drag cannon in the hole and shoot up the fort.

Soon's freedom come my pa and ma was squatters on gov'ment land. It was good land and high land. My pa had 'bout 100 acres. One night somebody come shoot him. Shoot him in the back. Ma took the chillen to Shady Bayou to grandpa.

My grandpa come from Africy. I never see my other people 'cause dey 'longs to other masters. My grandpa die when he 115 year old.

Elisha Guidry he my master in slavery. He had lots of slaves. He whip my pa lots of times. He was unwillin' to work. He whip my ma, too. One time he cut her with the whip and cut one her big toes right off. Ma come up on the gallery and wrap it up in a piece of rag.

Us have a dirt house. The chimney made with mud. It's a good house. It hot in summer. The beds made with moss and shucks and the big old ticks made at the big house. Us didn't have no chairs. Jes' benches. In the room's a big trough. Us sit 'round the trough and eat clabber and bread with big, wood spoon. I eat many a meal that way myself.

Dem's moral times. A gal's 21 'fore she marry. They didn't go wanderin' 'round all hours. They mammies knowed where they was. Folks nowadays is wild and weak. The gals dress up come Sunday. All week they wear they hair all roll up with cotton they unfold from the cotton boll. Sunday come they comb the hair out fine. No grease on it. They want it natural curly.

Us have good food most time. Steel and log traps fo' big game. Pit traps in the woods 'bout so long and so deep, and kivered with bresh and leaves. That cotch possum and coon and other things what come 'long in the night. Us lace willow twigs and strings and put a cross piece on top and bottom, and little piece of wood on top edge. The trap 'bout two feet off the ground to cotch the birds. Doves, blackbirds, any kind birds you can eat. Us clean them li'l birds good and rub 'em down in lard. After they set awhile us broil 'em with plenty black pepper and salt. Us shoot plenty ducks with musket, too.

Greens was good, too. Us eat parsley greens and shuglar weed. That big, two foot plant what have red flower on it. Us git lots of 'em in Wade's Bayou. Us put li'l bit flour in ashes and make ashcake. Us cook pumpkin in ashes, too.

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<sup>61</sup> Likely an English approximation for the creole forename Ulger, pronounced a number of ways in Louisiana languages, including /eelzhay/.

After slavery I hoe cotton. No money at first, jes' work on halves. The trouble that there no equal halves. The white folks pay jes' like they wants. A man couldn't work that way no time. I had to come over to Texas 'cause a man what want my land say I stoled a barrel from he house. He try arres' my old woman 'cause she say she find the barrel. Now, I never have the case in lawsuit and I 'spect to die that way. But I has to stay 'way from Mauriceville for three year 'cause that man say I thieved he barrel.

Things was bad after us come to Texas for a time. That Lizal Scizche, he sho' rough man. Us cropped on the share and he take the crop and the money and lef' fast. Us didn't have a mess of nothin' left.

I manages to live by croppin'. I been here 52 year now. My first wife name Massanne Florshann, that the French. My wife what I got now name Annie. Massanne she give me six chillen and Annie four."



Franklin, St. Mary Parish  
Ex-slave of Donaldson CAFFERY

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

"Louis Love, 91, was born in Franklin, Louisiana, a slave of Donaltron Cafrey, whom Louis describes as a "leadin' lawyer and once United States Senator." At the start of the Civil War, Louis was sent to Texas with about 300 other slaves to escape the "Yankee invaders." Louis now lives in Orange, Texas, and says he spends most of his time sitting on the gallery. One hand shakes constantly and his reedy voice is tremulous." - Interviewer

"



ell, I guess I's 'bout 91 year old. I 'member when freedom come. I goes up to reg'stration de year I gits free. I walks up to old Doc Young and say, 'I come reg'ster for de vote.' He say, 'You too young to vote. You ask your missus.' Missus git de big book 'bout six inch thick where she got all de births and deaths on dat place since she been missus and she give me a letter sayin' I nineteen year old. I kep' dat letter till not so long ago and burns it by mistake, 'cause I can't read.

"Dave Love he was my daddy and Tildy Love was my mama. My grandmama raise me, though. My massa's name Donaltron Cafrey<sup>62</sup> and he statue stand in de court house square now. He was a leadin' lawyer and a United States senator. When Senator Gibson die massa he serve out he term. Young massa name Donaltron Cafrey, junior, and he keep de big bank in New Orleans now.

"I never was sold to nobody. I heard folks say my folks come from Kentucky, but my mama born on Massa Cafrey's place. He have de big house, fine old house with galleries all 'round and big lawns. It's far back from de road, pushin' clost to a mile, I guess. He have seven sugar plantation and after freedom come dey rents it out at \$3.00 a acre to raise 'taters in.

"Us live in shacks 'bout like dese 'round here. Dese times am better'n slavery times, 'cause den you couldn't go nowheres 'thout de pass or de patterrollers git you. Dat mean 25 lashes and more when you gits home.

"My missus took us chillen to de Baptis' church and de white preacher he preach. De cullud folks could have church demselves iffen dey have de manager of 'ligion to kinder preach. Course he couldn't read, he jus' talk what he done heard de white preachers say.

"I git ship one time. Dat time de overseer give me de breakin'. Dey have stocks dey put a man in. Dey put de man leg through de holes and shut it down. De man jus' lay dere and bawl.

"De clothes us wore was shirts and us didn't git no britches till us big. I's wearin' britches a good many year 'fore freedom, though. Dey give us two suit de year and us have beefhide shoes what us call moc'sins.

"Dey wasn't no better people dan my white folks. Dey didn't 'low us to be brutalize', but dey didn't 'low us to be sassy, neither. I holp my grandma milk de cows.

"When de Yankees come to New Orleans dey go on to Port Hudson and have de big fight dere. Massa order everybody be ready to travel nex' mornin'. Dey 'bout 300 peoples in dat travel wagon and dey camps dat night at Camp Fusilier, where de 'federates have de camp. Dey make only five

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<sup>62</sup> Donaldson CAFFREY

mile dat day. Dey stops one night at Pin Hook, in Vermilionville. My brudder die dere. Dey kep' on dat way till dey come to Trinity River. I stay dere five year.

"De overseer on de new plantation name Smoot. I wait on de table and grandma she cook for Smoot. Dey raise sugar cane and corn and peas and sich like. Dey have lots of pork meat. Dey have stock and one time a calf git eat by a panther. Massa hunt dat panther and shoot him in a tree.

"One day Smoot tell me to bring all de hands to de house when dey blows de horn at noon. When dey gits dere old massa say dey's free as he was. If dey stays he say he give 'em half de crop, but didn't one stay. Six or seven what wants go back to de old home massa done give teams to and it take dem 'bout six week comin' home. I's glad to git dere. I couldn't see free meant no better. Missus plantation seem mighty pleasant.

"I been marry twict. Fust time a gal name Celeste, but she 'fuse to come to Texas with me and dat 'solve de marriage. I marry dis wife, Sarah, 'bout a few year ago. Us been marry 'bout 22 year."



Vermilionville<sup>63</sup>, Lafayette Parish  
Ex-slave of Duncan GREGG

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<sup>63</sup> Original name of the city of Lafayette

"John Moore, 84, was born a slave to Duncan Gregg, in Vermillionville, La., where he lived until he was freed. In 1876 he came to Texas and now lives in Beaumont." - Interviewer

"



I was twelve year old when freedom broke up. I lives 'tween Vermillionville and Lafayette in Louisiana and my massa's name Duncan Greggs and he have purty big farm and lots of cullud people. His house was two, three hun'erd yard from de nigger quarters. De old grammas, dey took care of de chillen when dere mothers was in de fields and took dem up to de big house so de white folks could see 'em play.

We chillens was dress in a shirt and we was barefoot. Sometime dey make what dey call moccasin out of rawhide. Shoes was skeerce.

Dey raise de food and have grits ground in de grits mill. Dey raise hawgs and make syrup and farm and raise chickens. Marster didn' 'low de niggers to have big garden patch but sometime he 'low 'em have place raise watermillion.

Marster have purty good house, a box-house, and have good furniture in it. De cullud folks have house with chimbly in de middle of two rooms and one fambly live on one side de chimbly and 'nother fambly on de other side de chimbly. De chillen have pallets on de floor.

After freedom my daddy die with cholera. I don' know how many chillen in us fambly. My daddy's name Valmore Moore and mamma's name Silliman.

Dey have niggers in de fields in different squads, a hoe squad and a plow squad, and de overseer was pretty rapid. Iffen dey don' do de work dey buck dem down and whip dem. Dey tie dey hands and feet togedder and make 'em put de hands 'tween de knees, and put a long stick 'tween de hands to dey can't pull 'em out, and den dey whip dem in good fashion.

When war starts, dey have a fight at Penock Bridge, not far from a place dey call La'fette. Dey burn de bridge and keep de Yankees from takin' de town. But de Yankees gits floatin' bridges and gits 'cross de bayou dat way. De Yankees comes to our place and dey go to de sugarhouse and takes barrels of sugar and syrup, and corn and meat and de white folks hides de chickens under de bed, but de old rooster crow and den de Yankees hear dem.

Young marster say he gwine to war to kill a Yankee and bring he head back and he take a servant 'long. He didn' bring no Yankee head back but he brung a shot up arm, but dat purty soon git well.

Iffen us sick dey make med'cine out of weeds, mos' bitter weed, boneset dey calls it. Dey bile Jerusalem oak and give it to us.

We has dances sometimes and sings

*Run, nigger, run,  
De patterroles git you;  
Run, nigger run,  
It almos' day.*

Or we sings

*My old missus promise me  
Shoo a la a day,  
When she die she set me free  
Shoo a la a day.  
She live so long her head git bald,  
Shoo a la a day.  
She give up de idea of dyin' a-tall  
Shoo a la a day.*

"Sometimes we hollers de corn hollers. One was somethin' like this: 'Rabbit gittin' up in a holler for niggers kotch for breakfast.' Sometimes my mudder jump up in de air and sing,

*Sugar in de gourd,  
Sugar in de gourd,  
Iffen you wanten git  
De sugar out--  
R-o-o-l-l de gourd over.*

And all de time she shoutin' dat, she jumpin' right straight up in de air.

I heered lots about de Klu Klux. Sometimes dey want a nigger's place and dey put up notice he better sell out and leave. Iffen he go see a lawyer, de lawyer wouldn' take de case, 'cause mos' dem in with de Klux. He tell de nigger he better sell.

I come to Texas in '76 and been here ever since. I's had 13 chillen. I owns eight acres in dis place now and I got de purties' corn in de country but de insecks give it de blues."



 illiam Matthews

Near Monroe<sup>64</sup>, Franklin Parish  
Ex-slave of Buck & Mary ADAMS

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<sup>64</sup> Monroe is located in Ouachita Parish, bordering Franklin Parish

"William Mathews, 89, was born a slave on the Adams plantation, in Franklin Parish, Louisiana. He was driver of the family carriage. After William was freed he supported himself by hiring out as a field hand and by making and selling baskets. Since 1931 he has lived with his daughter, Sarah Colburn, at 812-½ 41st St., Galveston, Texas." - Interviewer

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course I can 'lect 'bout slavery. I is old and my eyesight am gone, but I can still 'lect. I ain't never forgit it.

"My massa, old Buck Adams, could out-mean de debbil heself. He sho' hard--hard and sneaky as slippery ellum. Old Mary Adams, he wife, was 'most as hard as he was. Sometimes I used to wonder how dere chillen ever stood 'em. Old Buck Adams brung my mammy and daddy from South Car'lina to work in de fields and my daddy's name was Economy Mathews and my mammy's name Phoebe. Simmons was her name 'fore she marry. I is born on old Buck's place, on December 25th, in 1848. Dat plantation was in Franklin Parish, somewhere round Monroe, in Louisiana.

Me and Bill Adams raised together. When he shoot a deer I run home like greased lightnin' and git de hoss. Sometimes he'd shoot a big hawg and I'd skin him.

When I got big 'nough I'd drive dere carriage. I was what dey calls de 'waitin' boy.' I sot in dat buggy and wait till dey come out of where dey was, and den driv 'em off. I wasn't 'lowed to git out and visit round with de other slaves. No, suh, I had to set dere and wait.

De slaves git out in de fields 'fore sun-up and work till black dark. Den dey come home and have to feel dere way in de house, with no light. My mammy and daddy field hands. My grandma was cook, and have to git in de cook pot 'bout four o'clock to git breakfas' by daylight. Dey et by candles or pine torches. One de black boys stand behin' 'em and hold it while dey et.

De clothes we wore was made out of dyed 'lows.' Dat de stuff dey makes sackin' out of. Summer time us go barefoot but winter time come, dey give you shoes with heels on 'em big as biscuits.

De quarters is back of de big house and didn't have no floors. Dey sot plumb on de ground and build like a hawg pen. Dey cut down timber and stake it up at de corners and fill it in with timber with de bark on it. Dere was split log houses and round log houses and all sech like dat. Dey have only fifty slaves on dat place, and it a big place, big 'nough for a hundred. But what dey do? Dey take de good slaves and sell 'em. Dat what dey do. Den dey make de ones what am left do all de work. Sell, sell, all de time, and never buy nobody. Dat was dem.

Every Sat'day evenin' us go to de pitcher poke. Dat what dey calls it when dey issues de rations. You go to de smokehouse and dey weigh out some big, thick rounds of white pork meat and give it to you. De syrup weighed out. De meal weighed out. Dey never give us no sugar or coffee. You want coffee, you put de skillet on de fire and put de meal in it and parch it till it most black, and put water on it. Mammy make salt water bread out of a li'l flour and salt and water.

Sometimes, dey make de slaves go to church. De white folks sot up fine in dere carriage and drive up to de door and git de slaves out of one cabin, den git de slaves out of de nex' cabin, and keep it up till dey gits dem all. Den all de slaves walks front de carriage till dey gits to church. De slaves sit outside under de shade trees. If de preacher talk real loud, you can hear him out de window.

If a cullud man take de notion to preach, he couldn't preach 'bout de Gospel. Dey didn't 'low him do dat. All he could preach 'bout was obey de massa, obey de overseer, obey dis, obey dat. Dey didn't make no passel of fuss 'bout prayin' den. Sometimes dey have prayin' meetin' in a cabin at night. Each one bring de pot and put dere head in it to keep de echoes from gittin' back. Den dey pray in de pot. Dat de Gawd's truth!

Like I done said, massa sol' de good slaves in Monroe. Nobody marry in dem days. A gal go out and take de notion for some buck and dey make de 'greement to live together. Course, if a unhealthy buck take up with a portly gal, de white folks sep'rate 'em. If a man a big, stout man, good breed, dey gives him four, five women.

Sometimes dey run 'way. It ain't done dem no good, for de dawgs am put on dey trail. If you climb de tree, dem dogs hold you dere till de white folks comes, and den dey let de dogs git you. Sometimes de dogs tore all dey clothes off, and dey ain't got nary a rag on 'em when dey git home. If dey run in de stream of water, de dogs gits after 'em and drowns 'em. Den Nick, de overseer, he whop 'em. He drive down four stakes for de feets and hands and tie 'em up. Den he whop 'em from head to feets. De whip make out a hide, cut in strips, with holes punch in 'em. When dey hits de skin it make blisters.

All kind of war talk floatin' round 'fore de Yankees come. Some say de Yankees fight for freedom and some say dey'll kill all de slaves. Seems like it must have been in de middle of de war dat de Yankees come by. We hears somebody holler for us to come out one night and seed de place on fire. 'Time we git out dere, de Yankees gone. We fit de fire but we had to tote water in buckets, and de fire burn up de gin house full of cotton and de cotton house, too, and de corn crib.

De Yankees allus come through at night and done what dey gwine to do, and den wait for more night 'fore dey go 'bout dere business. Only one time dey come in daylight, and some de slaves jine dem and go to war.

All de talk 'bout freedom git so bad on de plantation de massa make me put de men in a big wagon and drive 'em to Winfield. He say in Texas dere never be no freedom. I driv 'em fast till night and it take 'bout two days. But dey come back home, but massa say if he cotch any of 'em he gwine shoot 'em. Dey hang round de woods and dodge round and round till de freedom man come by.

We went right on workin' after freedom. Old Buck Adams wouldn't let us go. It was way after freedom dat de freedom man come and read de paper, and tell us not to work no more 'less us git pay for it. When he gone, old Mary Adams, she come out. I 'lect what she say as if I jes' hear her say it. She say, 'Ten years from today I'll have you all back 'gain.' Dat ten years been over a mighty long time and she ain't git us back yit and she dead and gone.

Dey makes us git right off de place, jes' like you take a old hoss and turn it loose. Dat how us was. No money, no nothin'. I git a job workin' for a white man on he farm, but he couldn't pay much. He didn't have nothin'. He give me jes' 'nough to git a peck or two of meal and a li'l syrup.

I allus works in de fields and makes baskets, big old cotton baskets and bow baskets make out of white oak. I work down de oak to make de splits and make de bow basket to tote de lunch. Den I make trays and mix bowls. I go out and cut down de big poplar and bust off de big block and sit down 'straddle, and holler it out big as I wants it, and make de bread tray. I make collars for hosses and ox whops and quirts out of beef hide. But I looses my eyesight a couple years back and I can't do nothin' no more. My gal takes care of me.

I come here in 1931. Dat de first time I'm out of Franklin Parish. I allus git along some way till I'm blind. My gal am good to me, but de days am passin' and soon I'll be gone, too."

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas

irginia Newman

Née Georgia TURNER  
Near Franklin, St. Mary Parish  
Born free

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Virginia Newman was freeborn, the daughter of a Negro boat captain and a part Negro, part Indian mother. When a young girl, Virginia apprenticed herself, and says she was nurse-girl in the family of Gov. Foster, of Louisiana. She does not know her age, but says she saw the "Stars fall" in 1833. She has the appearance of extreme old age, and is generally conceded to be 100 years old or more. She now lives in Beaumont, Texas." - Interviewer

"



hen de stars fall I's 'bout six year old. They didn' fall on de grou'. They cross de sky like a millions of firebugs.

"My fus' name Georgia Turner, 'cause my pappy's name George Turner, and he a freeborn nigger man. He's captain of a boat, but they call 'em vessels them days. It have livin' quarters in it and go back and forth 'tween dis place and dat and go back to Africy, too.

My grandmudder, she an Africy woman. They brung her freeborn from Africy and some people what knowed things one time tol' us we too proud but us had reason to be proud. My grandmudder's fambly in Africy was a African prince of de rulin' people. My udder grandmudder was a pure bred Indian woman and she raise all my mudder's chillen. My mudder name Eli Chivers.

When I's small I live with my grandmudder in a old log cabin on the ribber, 'way out in de bresh jus' like de udder Indians live. I's born on my fadder's big boat, 'way below Grades Island, close by Franklin, in Louisiana. They tells me he carry cargo of cotton in de hull of de boat, and when I's still l'il they puts out to sea, and grandmudder, Sarah Turner her name, tuk us and kep' us with her in de cabin.

Us didn' have stick of furniture in de house, no bed, no chair, no nothin'. Us cut saplings boughs for bed, with green moss over 'em. Us was happy, though. Us climb trees and play. It was hard sometime to git things to eat so far in de woods and us eat mos' everything what run or crawl or fly outdoors. Us eat many rattlesnake and them's fine eatin'. We shoot de snake and skin him and cut him in l'il dices. Den us stew him slow with lots of brown gravy.

They allus askin' me now make hoe-cake like we et. Jus' take de cornmeal and salt and water and make patties with de hands and wrop de sof' patties in cabbage leaves, stir out de ashes and put de patties in de hot ashes. Dat was good.

One my grandfadders a old Mexican man call Old Man Caesar. All de grandfolks was freeborn and raise de chillen de same, but when us gits big they tell us do what we wants. Us could stay in de woods and be free or go up to live with de white folks. I's a purty big gal when I goes up to de big house and 'prentice myself to work for de Fosters. Dey have big plantation at Franklin and lots of slaves. One time de Governor cripple in de leg and I do nothin' but nuss him.

I's been so long in de woods and don' see nobody much dat I love it up with de white folks. Dey 'lowed us have dances and when dat old 'cordion starts to play, iffen I ain't git my hair comb yit, it don't git comb. De boss man like to see de niggers 'joy demselves. Us dance de quadrille.

Us have 'ceptional marsters. My fadder sick on Marster Lewis' plantation and can't walk and de marster brung him a 'spensive reclinin' chair. Old Judge Lewis was his marster.

I git marry from de plantation and my husban' he name Beverly Newman and he from de Lewis plantation in Opelousas. They read out'n de Book and after de readin' us have lots of white folks to come and watch us have big dance.

When a nigger do wrong den, they didn' send him to de pen. They put him 'cross a barrel and strop him behin'.

When fightin' 'gin, all our white folks and us slaves have to go 'way from Louisiana. Opelousas and them place was free long time 'fore de udders. Us strike out for Texas and it took mos' a year to walk from de Bayou la Fouché to de Brazos bottoms. I have to tote my two li'l boys, dat was Jonah and Simon. They couldn' neither walk yit. Us have de luggage in de ox cart and us have to walk. Dey was some mo' cullud people and white and de mud drag de feetses and stick up de wheels so dey couldn' even move. Us all walk barefeets and our feets break and run they so sore, and blister for months. It cold and hot sometime and rain and us got no house or no tent.

De white folks settles in Jasper county, on a plantation dere. After while freedom come to Texas, too, but mos' de slaves stay round de old marsters. I's de only one what go back to Louisiana. After de war my fambly git broke up and my three oldes' chillen never see de li'l ones. Dose later chillen, dey's eight livin' now out'n nine what was born since slavery and my fourth chile die seven year ago when she 75 year old.

When I git back to Louisiana I come to be a midwife and I brung so many babies here I can't count. De old priest say I ought to have a big book with all their names to 'member by.

It were 'bout dis time I have my fur' bought dress and it was blue guinea with yaller spots. It were long at de ankle and make with a body wais'. Us wore lots of unnerwear and I ain't take 'em off yit.

I never been sick, I's jus' weak. I almos' go blin' some time back but now I git my secon' sight and I sees well 'nough to sew."





Morgan City, St. Mary Parish  
Ex-slave of Alfred WILLIAMS

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"John Ogee, 96 years old, was born in Morgan City, La., in 1841, the property of Alfred Williams. John ran away to join the Union Army and served three years. He recalls Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina and the siege of Vicksburg. He came to Jefferson County in 1870, and has lived there since." - Interviewer

"



was born near Morgan City, Louisiana in a old log cabin with a dirt floor, one big room was all, suh. My mother and father and four chillen lived in that room.

"The marster, he live in a big, old house near us. I 'member it was a big house and my mudder done the cleanin' and work for them. I jus' played round when I's growin' and the fus' work I done, they start me to plowin'.

I haven't got 'lection like I used to, but I 'members when I's in the army. Long 'bout '63 I go to the army and there was four of us who run away from home, me and my father and 'nother man named Emanuel Young and 'nother man, but I disremember his name now. The Yankees comed 'bout a mile from us and they took every ear of corn, kilt every head of stock and thirteen hawgs and 'bout fifteen beeves, and feed their teams and themselves. They pay the old lady in Confed'rate money, but it weren't long 'fore that was no money at all. When we think of all that good food the Yankees done got, we jus' up and jine up with them. We figger we git lots to eat and the res' we jus' didn't figger. When they lef' we lef'. My father got kilt from an ambush, in Miss'ippi--I think it was Jackson.

We went to Miss'ippi, then to South Carolina. I went through Georgia and South Carolina with Sherman's army. The fus' battle lasts two days and nights and they was 'bout 800 men kilt, near's I kin 'member. Some of 'em you could find the head and not the body. That was the battle of Vicksburg. After the battle it took three days to bury them what got kilt and they had eight mule throw big furrows back this way, and put 'em in and cover 'em up. In that town was a well 'bout 75 or 80 feet deep and they put 19 dead bodies in that well and fill her up.

After the war we went through to Atlanta, in Georgia and stay 'bout three weeks. Finally we come back to Miss'ippi when surrender come. The nigger troops was mix with the others but they wasn't no nigger officers.

After the war I come home and the old marster he didn' fuss at me about going to war and for long time I work on the old plantation for wages. I 'member then the Klu Klux come and when that happen I come to Texas. They never did git me but some they got and kilt. I knowed several men they whip purty bad. I know Narcisse Young, they tell him they was comin'. He hid in the woods, in the trees and he open fire and kilt seven of them. They was a cullud man with them and after they goes, he comes back and asks can he git them dead bodies. Narcisse let him and then Narcisse he lef' and goes to New Orleans.

I thinks it great to be with the Yankees, but I wishes I hadn't after I got there. When you see 1,000 guns point at you I knows you wishes you'd stayed in the woods.

The way they did was put 100 men in front and they git shoot and fall down, and then 100 men behin' git up and shoot over 'em and that the way they goes forward. They wasn't no goin' back, 'cause them men behin' you would shoot you. I seed 'em fightin' close 'nough to knock one 'nother with a bay'net. I didn' see no breech loaders guns, they was all muskets, muzzle loaders, and they shoot a ball 'bout big as your finger, what you calls a minnie-ball.

I come to Taylor's Bayou in '70 and rid stock long time for Mister Arceneaux and Mister Moise Broussard and farms some too. Then I comes to Beaumont when I's too old to work no more, and lives with one of my girls."

 *ohn S. Miranda Price*

Morgan City, St. Mary Parish  
Ex-slave of Charles BRYAN

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Price, nearing 80, was born a slave of Charles Bryan, in Morgan City, Louisiana. The Bryans brought him to Texas about 1861, and he now lives in Liberty. Mirandy, his wife, was also a slave, but has had a paralytic stroke and speaks with such difficulty that she cannot tell the story of her life. Their little home and yard are well cared for." - Interviewer

" 's five year old when de Lincoln war broke up and my papa was name George Bryan in slavery time and he come from St. Louis, what am in Missouri. After freedom de old boss he call up de hands and say, 'Iffen you wants to wear my name you can, but take 'nother one iffен you wants to.' So my daddy he change he name to George Price and dat why my name John Price.

My old massa name George Bryan and he wife name Felice. Dey buy my papa when he 18 year old boy and dey take him and raise him and put all dey trust in him and he run de place when de old man gone. Dat in Morgan City, in Louisiana on de Berwick side.

De year I's one year old us come to Texas and settle in Liberty. I wes a-layin' in my mammy's arms and her name Lizette but dey call her Lisbeth. She mos'ly French. I got three sister, Sally Hughes and Liza Jonas and Celina, and two brothers, Pat Whitehouse and Jim Price.

De white folks have a tol'able fair house one mile down south of Raywood and it were a long, frame house and a pretty good farm. Us quarters was log houses built out of li'l pine poles pile one top de other. Dey have nail up log, country beds and home-made tables and rawhide bottom chairs and benches. Dem chair have de better weight dan de chair today. Iffen you rare back now, de chair gone, but de rawhide stay with you.

De old massa pretty fair to us all. Iffen my papa whip me I slips out de house and runs to de big house and crawls under de old massa's bed. Sometime he wake up in de middle de night and say, 'Boy,' and I not answer. Den he say 'gain, 'Boy, I know you under dat bed. You done been afoul your papa 'gain,' and he act awful mad. Den he throw he old sojer coat under de bed for to make me a pallet and I sleep dere all night.

Us chillen have lots of time to play and not much time to work. Us allus ridin' old stick hosses and tie a rope to de stick and call it a martingale. Us make marbles out of clay and dry 'em and play with 'em. De old boss wouldn't 'low us have no knife, for fear us cut each other. Us never sick much dem days, but us have de toothache. Dey take white tree bark what taste like peppermint and stew it up with honey and cure de toothache.

Us never go to church. Some my wife's people say dey used to have a church in de hollow and dey have runners for to watch for de old boss man and tell 'em de massa comin'.

Us old massa say Christmas Day am he day to treat and he tell us 'bout Santy Claus. Us taken us socks up to he house and hang dem 'round de big fireplace and den in de mornin' us find candy and cake and fruit and have de big time. New Year Day was old missy time. She fix de big dinner on dat day and nobody have to work.

When de war is breakin' old massa come by ship to Galveston up de Trinity River to Liberty by boat to try to save he niggers, but it wasn't no use. Us see lots of tents out by Liberty and dey say it sojers. I tag long with de big boys, dey sneaks out de spades and digs holes in de prairie in de knolls. Us plannin' to live in dem holes in de knolls. When dey say de Yankees is comin' I sho' is 'fraid and I hear de cannon say, 'Boom, boom,' from Galveston to Louisiana. De young white missy, she allus sing de song dat go:

*We are a band of brothers, native to de soil,  
 Fightin' for our liberty with treasure, blood and toil,  
 And when us rights was threaten', de cry rise far and near,  
 Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag what bears a single star.*

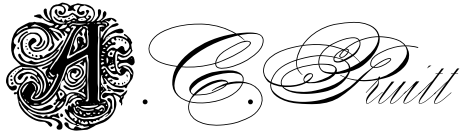
After freedom my papa move away but de old massa come after him and worry him till he 'most have to come back. When my li'l sister have de whoopin' cough, old massa come down in a hurry and say, 'You gwineter kill dem chillen,' and he puts my sister and brother on de hoss in front of him and takes 'em home and cures 'em hisself. It were years after dat 'fore my papa leave him 'gain.

Dey driv beefs and have two rivers to cross to git dere, de Sabine and de Neches. Dey 'liver 'em by so many head and iffen dey ain't have 'nough, other mens on de prairie help 'em fill out de number what dey needs. I's rid many a wild hoss in my day and dat's where I make my first money for myself.

I's workin' in Hyatt when I 'cide to git marry and I marry dis gal, Mirandy, 'bout 52 year ago and us still been together. Us marry in Moss Bluff and Sam Harris, he a cullud man, he de preacher what marry us. I have on pretty fair suit of clothes but one thing I 'member, de gal I marry, she have \$5.00 pair of shoes on her feet what I buys for her.

Us done have five sons and three daughters and I been a pretty 'fluential man 'round Liberty. One time dey a man name Ed Pickett what was runnin' for Clerk of de Court in Liberty County and he come 'round my place 'lectioneering, 'cause he say whatever way I votes, dey votes.

Did you ever hear a old coon dog? Old coon dog, he got a big, deep voice what go, 'A-woo-o-o, a-woo-o-o.' You can hear him a mile. Well, dat Ed Pickett he say to me, 'John Price, you know what I wants you to do? I wants you put dat other feller up a tree. I wants you put him so fur up a tree he can't even hear dat coon dog beller.' And I does it, 'cause I's pretty 'fluential 'round here."




St. Martinville, St. Martin Parish  
Ex-slave of David & Frances MAGILL

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"A.C. Pruitt was born about 1861, a slave of the Magill family, in St. Martinville, La. He lives in a settlement of Negroes, on the road leading from Monroe City to Anahuac, in a shanty made of flattened tin cans, odd pieces of corrugated iron and scrap lumber, held together with rope, nails and tar paper. Pruitt migrated from Beaumont to Monroe City when the oil boom came and eked out an existence doing odd jobs in the fields. He is a small, muscular man, dressed in faded work clothes and heavy brogans, laced with string." - Interviewer

" really does live in Beaumont, but when dey start dat talk 'bout makin' sich good money in de oil fields I done move out here to git some of dat. It ain't work so good, though, and I been tearin' down part my house dis week and plannin' to move back.

I ain't 'lect much 'bout slavery time, 'cause I jes' too li'l but I can tell some things my mama and granmma done told me.

I's born in St. Martinville, over in Louisiana. I done go back to de old plantation onct but it start to change den. Dave Magill he was de old massa and Miss Frances de missy. My mama name Rachel Smith and she born and raise right dere, and my daddy I ain't never seed, but mama say he name Bruford Pruitt. Dey brudders and sisters but only one livin' and dat Clementine James in Beaumont.

Jes' 'fore freedom us done move to Snowball, Texas, what was somewheres clost to Cold Springs. Dey told us dey tryin' keep us slaves 'way from de Yankees. Dey everywhere, jes' like dem li'l black ants what gits in de sugar, only dey blue. I's jes' de li'l chile den, runnin' 'round in my split shirt tail. Dem was sho' fancy shirt tails dey make us wore in dem days. Dey make 'em on de loom, jes' in two pieces, with a hole to put de head through and 'nother hole at de bottom to put de legs through. Den dey split 'em up de side, so's us could run and play without dem tyin' us 'round de knees and throw us down. Even at dat, dey sho' wasn't no good to do no tree climbin', less'n you pull dem mos' up over you head.

Us chillen run down to de rail gate when us see dus' clouds comin' and watch de sojers ridin' and marchin' by. Dey ain't never do no fightin' 'round us, but dey's gunboats down de bayous a ways and us could hear de big guns from de other fights. Us li'l niggers sho' like to wave to dem sojers, and when de men on hosses go by, dey seem like dey more enjoyin' deyselves dan de others.

I have de old gramma what come from Virginny. Her name Mandy Brown. Dey 'low her hire her own time out. She wasn't freeborn but dey give her dat much freedom. She could go git her a job anywhere jes' as long as she brung de old missy half what she done make. Iffen she make \$5.00, she give Miss Frances \$2.50 and like dat.

De old massa he plumb good to he slaves. He have a good many but I ain't knowed of but one dem mens what he ever whip. He have a church right on de place and cullud preachers. Dey old Peter Green and every evenin' us chillen have to go to he cabin and he teach us prayers. He teach us to count, too. He de shoemaker on de plantation.

My mama done told me 'bout de dances dey have in de quarters. Dey take de big sugar hogshead and stretch rawhide over de top. Den de man straddle de barrel and beat on de top for de drum. Dat de onlies' music dey have.

Us allus have good things to eat, cabbage greens and cornbread and bacon. Jes' good, plain food. Dey have a sugarhouse and a old man call de sugar boiler. He give us de cane juice out de kittles and 'low us tote off lots dem cane jints to eat. Dat in June.

De field hands stay up in de big barn and shuck corn on rainy days. Dey shuck corn and sing. Us chillen keep de yard clean and tie weeds together to make brooms for de sweepin'. Us sep'rate de seed from de cotton and a old woman do de cardin'. Dey have 'nother old woman what do nothin' on de scene but weave on de loom.

One old, old lady what am mos' too old to git 'round, she take care de chillen and cook dere food sep'rate. She take big, black iron washpots and cook dem plumb full of victuals. Come five in de evenin' us have de bigges' meal, dat sho' seem long time 'cause dey ain't feed us but two meal a day, not countin' de eatin' us do durin' de day.

After freedom come us leave Snowball and go back to Louisiana. Old massa ain't give us nothin'. I marry purty soon. I never go to school but one month in my life and dat in New Iberia. I can sign my name and read it, but dat all.

I works fust for Mr. William Weeks as de yardboy and he pay me \$7.00 de month. De fust money I gits I's so glad I runned and take it to my mama. I have de step-pa and he nearly die of de yellow fever. I's hardly able wait till I's 21 and can vote. Dat my idea of somethin', mos' as good as de fust time I wears pants.

I tries farmin awhile but dat ain't suit me so good. Den I gits me de job firin' a steamboat on de Miss'sip River, de steamer Mattie. She go from New Orleans through Morgan City. I fire in de sawmills, too.

My fust wife name Liny and us marry and live together 43 year and den she die. In 1932 I marry a gal call Zellee what live in Beaumont and she still dere. I ain't never have no chile in dis world.

I larns all dese things 'bout slavery from my mama and gramma, 'cause I allus ask questions and dey talks to me lots. Dat's 'cause dey's nobody but me and I allus under dey feets."

 illie Randall

Bayou Jacques near Big Cane, St. Landry Parish  
Ex-slave of Dan McMILLAN

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Millie Randall, was born in Mississippi, but spent most of her slavery days on the Dan McMillan farm, near Big Cane, Louisiana. She is about 80 years old, though her estimate of her actual age is vague. She now lives in Beaumont, Texas." - Interviewer

"



was jes' 'bout six year old when peace was 'clared and I done been born in Mississippi, but us move to Bayou Jacques, tother side of Big Cane, in Louisiana. I mus' be purty old now.

My name' Millie Randall and my mammy, she call' Rose, but I don't know nothin' 'bout my paw. My old massa name' Dan McMillan and he wife she name' Laura. It were a old wood country where my white folks was and us live way out. Dey raise de corn and de cotton and when dey wasn't workin' in de field, dey diggin' out stumps and movin' logs and clearin' up new ground. Dey have lots of goats and sheep, too, and raises dey own rice.

Dey give us cullud folks de ration in a sack right reg'lar. It have jes' plain food in it, but plenty for everybody.

Missy have de big plank house and us have de little log house. Us have jes' old plank beds and no furniture. Us clothes make out good, strong cloth, but dey was plain make.

All us white folks was mean, I tells you de truf. Yes, Lawd, I seed dem beat and almost kilt on us own place. What dey beat dem for? 'Cause dey couldn't he'p demselves, I guess. De white folks have de niggers like dey want dem and dey treat dem bad. It were de old, bully, mean overseers what was doin' de beatin' up with de niggers and I guess dey would have kilt me, but I's too little to beat much.

I heered 'bout dem Yankees drivin' dey hosses in de white folks' house and makin' dem let dem eat offen de table. Another time, dey come to de plantation and all de niggers locked in de barn. Dose soldiers go in de house and find de white boss man hidin' in 'tween de mattresses and dey stick swords through de mattress and kilt him.

Some de white folks hides dey silver and other things that worth lots of money and hang dem down in de well, so de Yankees not find dem. But dey find dem anyway. Dey breaks open a store what was lock up and told de niggers to git all dey wants. De women ketches up de bottom of dey skirt round de waist and fill dem up with everything dey wants.

After freedom old massa not 'low my mammy have us chillen. He takes me and my brother, Benny, in de wagon and druv us round and round so dey couldn't find us. My mammy has to git de Jestice of de Peace to go make him turn us a-loose. He brung us to our mammy and was we glad to see her.

I don't 'member 'xactly when I git marry. It was at Big Cane and when I git marry I jes' git marry, dat's all. Dey was three chillen but dey all dead now and so my husban'."

A decorative initial letter 'M' with intricate scrollwork and flourishes. To its right, the name 'ary Reynolds' is written in a flowing, cursive script.

Née Mary VAUGHN  
Black River, Ouachita Parish  
Ex-slave of Dr. KILPATRICK

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Mary Reynolds claims to be more than a hundred years old. She was born in slavery to the Kilpatrick family, in Black River, Louisiana. Mary now lives at the Dallas County Convalescent Home. She has been blind for five years and is very feeble." - Interviewer

" **M**y paw's name was Tom Vaughn and he was from the north, born free man and lived and died free to the end of his days. He wasn't no eddicated man, but he was what he calls himself a piano man. He told me once he lived in New York and Chicago and he built the insides of pianos and knew how to make them play in tune. He said some white folks from the south told he if he'd come with them to the south he'd find a lot of work to do with pianos in them parts, and he come off with them.

He saw my maw on the Kilpatrick place and her man was dead. He told Dr. Kilpatrick, my massa, he'd buy my maw and her three chillun with all the money he had, iffen he'd sell her. But Dr. Kilpatrick was never one to sell any but the old niggers who was past workin' in the fields and past their breedin' times. So my paw marries my maw and works the fields, same as any other nigger. They had six gals: Martha and Pamela and Josephine and Ellen and Katherine and me.

I was born same time as Miss Sara Kilpatrick. Dr. Kilpatrick's first wife and my maw come to their time right together. Miss Sara's maw died and they brung Miss Sara to suck with me. It's a thing we ain't never forgot. My maw's name was Sallie and Miss Sara allus looked with kindness on my maw. We sucked till we was a fair size and played together, which wasn't no common thing. None the other li'l niggers played with the white chillun. But Miss Sara loved me so good.

I was jus' 'bout big 'nough to start playin' with a broom to go 'bout sweepin' up and not even half doin' it when Dr. Kilpatrick sold me. They was a old white man in Trinity and his wife died and he didn't have chick or child or slave or nothin'. Massa sold me cheap, 'cause he didn't want Miss Sara to play with no nigger young'un. That old man bought me a big doll and went off and left me all day, with the door open. I jus' sot on the floor and played with that doll. I used to cry. He'd come home and give me somethin' to eat and then go to bed, and I slep' on the foot of the bed with him. I was scart all the time in the dark. He never did close the door.

Miss Sara pined and sickened. Massa done what he could, but they wasn't no pertness in her. She got sicker and sicker, and massa brung 'nother doctor. He say, 'You li'l gal is grievin' the life out her body and she sho' gwine die iffen you don't do somethin' 'bout it.' Miss Sara says over and over, 'I wants Mary.' Massa say to the doctor, 'That a li'l nigger young'un I done sold.' The doctor tells him he better git me back iffen he wants to save the life of his child. Dr. Kilpatrick has to give a big plenty more to git me back than what he sold me for, but Miss Sara plumps up right off and grows into fine health.

Then massa marries a rich lady from Mississippi and they has chillun for company to Miss Sara and seem like for a time she forgits me.

Massa Kilpatrick wasn't no piddlin' man. He was a man of plenty. He had a big house with no more style to it than a crib, but it could room plenty people. He was a medicine doctor and they was rooms in the second story for sick folks what come to lay in. It would take two days to go all over the land he owned. He had cattle and stock and sheep and more'n a hundred slaves and more besides. He bought the bes' of niggers near every time the spec'lators come that way. He'd make a swap of the old ones and give money for young ones what could work.



He raised corn and cotton and cane and 'taters and goobers, 'sides the peas and other feedin' for the niggers. I 'member I helt a hoe handle mighty onsteady when they put a old woman to larn me and some other chillun to scrape the fields. That old woman would be in a frantic. She'd show me and then turn 'bout to show some other li'l nigger, and I'd have the young corn cut clean as the grass. She say, 'For the love of Gawd, you better larn it right, or Solomon will beat the breath out you body.' Old man Solomon was the nigger driver.

Slavery was the worst days was ever seed in the world. They was things past tellin', but I got the scars on my old body to show to this day. I seed worse than what happened to me. I seed them put the men and women in the stock with they hands screwed down through holes in the board and they feets tied together and they naked behinds to the world. Solomon the overseer beat them with a big whip and massa look on. The niggers better not stop in the fields when they hear them yellin'. They cut the flesh most to the bones and some they was when they taken them out of stock and put them on the beds, they never got up again.

When a nigger died they let his folks come out the fields to see him afore he died. They buried him the same day, take a big plank and bust it with a ax in the middle 'nough to bend it back, and put the dead nigger in betwixt it. They'd cart them down to the graveyard on the place and not bury them deep 'nough that buzzards wouldn't come circlin' round. Niggers mourns now, but in them days they wasn't no time for mournin'.

The conch shell blowed afore daylight and all hands better git out for roll call or Solomon bust the door down and git them out. It was work hard, git beatin's and half fed. They brung the victuals and water to the fields on a slide pulled by a old mule. Plenty times they was only a half barrel water and it stale and hot, for all us niggers on the hottes' days. Mostly we ate pickled pork and corn bread and peas and beans and 'taters. They never was as much as we needed.

The times I hated most was pickin' cotton when the frost was on the bolls. My hands git sore and crack open and bleed. We'd have a li'l fire in the fields and iffen the ones with tender hands couldn't stand it no longer, we'd run and warm our hands a li'l bit. When I could steal a 'tater, I used to slip it in the ashes and when I'd run to the fire I'd take it out and eat it on the sly.

In the cabins it was nice and warm. They was built of pine boardin' and they was one long row of them up the hill back of the big house. Near one side of the cabins was a fireplace. They'd bring in two, three big logs and put on the fire and they'd last near a week. The beds was made out of puncheons fitted in holes bored in the wall, and planks laid 'cross them poles. We had tickin' mattresses filled with corn shucks. Sometimes the men build chairs at night. We didn't know much 'bout havin' nothin', though.

Sometimes massa let niggers have a li'l patch. They'd raise 'taters or goobers. They liked to have them to help fill out on the victuals. 'Taters roasted in the ashes was the best tastin' eatin' I ever had. I could die better satisfied to have jus' one more 'tater roasted in hot ashes. The niggers had to work the patches at night and dig the 'taters and goobers at night. Then if they wanted to sell any in town they'd have to git a pass to go. They had to go at night, 'cause they couldn't ever spare a hand from the fields.

Once in a while they'd give us a li'l piece of Sat'day evenin' to wash out clothes in the branch. We hanged them on the ground in the woods to dry. They was a place to wash clothes from the well, but they was so many niggers all couldn't git round to it on Sundays. When they'd git through with the clothes on Sat'day evenin's the niggers which sold they goobers and 'taters brung fiddles and guitars and come out and play. The others clap they hands and stomp they feet and we young'uns cut a step round. I was plenty biggity and liked to cut a step.

We was scart of Solomon and his whip, though, and he didn't like frolickin'. He didn't like for us niggers to pray, either. We never heard of no church, but us have prayin' in the cabins. We'd set on the floor and pray with our heads down low and sing low, but if Solomon heard he'd come and beat on the wall with the stock of his whip. He'd say, 'I'll come in there and tear the hide off you backs.' But some the old niggers tell us we got to pray to Gawd that he don't think different of the blacks and the whites. I know that Solomon is burnin' in hell today, and it pleasures me to know it.

Once my maw and paw taken me and Katherine after night to slip to 'nother place to a prayin' and singin'. A nigger man with white beard told us a day am comin' when niggers only be slaves of Gawd. We prays for the end of Trib'litation and the end of beatin's and for shoes that fit our feet. We prayed that us niggers could have all we wanted to eat and special for fresh meat. Some the old ones say we have to bear all, 'cause that all we can do. Some say they was glad to the time they's dead, 'cause they'd rather rot in the ground than have the beatin's. What I hated most was when they'd beat me and I didn't know what they beat me for, and I hated them strippin' me naked as the day I was born.

When we's comin' back from that prayin', I think I heard the nigger dogs and somebody on horseback. I say, 'Maw, its them nigger hounds and they'll eat us up.' You could hear them old hounds and sluts abayin'. Maw listens and say, 'Sho 'nough, them dogs am runnin' and Gawd help us!' Then she and paw talk and they take us to a fence corner and stands us up 'gainst the rails and say don't move and if anyone comes near, don't breathe loud. They went to the woods, so the hounds chase them and not git us. Me and Katherine stand there, holdin' hands, shakin' so we can hardly stand. We hears the hounds come nearer, but we don't move. They goes after paw and maw, but they circles round to the cabins and gits in. Maw say its the power of Gawd.

In them days I weared shirts, like all the young'uns. They had collars and come below the knees and was split up the sides. That's all we weared in hot weather. The men weared jeans and the women gingham. Shoes was the worstes' trouble. We weared rough russets when it got cold, and it seem powerful strange they'd never git them to fit. Once when I was a young gal, they got me a new pair and all brass studs in the toes. They was too li'l for me, but I had to wear them. The brass trimmin's cut into my ankles and them places got mis'ble bad. I rubs tallow in them sore places and wrops rags round them and my sores got worser and worser. The scars are there to this day.

I wasn't sick much, though. Some the niggers had chills and fever a lot, but they hadn't discovered so many diseases then as now. Dr. Kilpatrick give sick niggers ipecac and asafoetida and oil and turpentine and black fever pills.

They was a cabin called the spinnin' house and two looms and two spinnin' wheels goin' all the time, and two nigger women sewing all the time. It took plenty sewin' to make all the things for a place so big. Once massa goes to Baton Rouge and brung back a yaller gal dressed in fine style. She was a seamster nigger. He builds her a house 'way from the quarters and she done fine sewin' for the whites. Us niggers knowed the doctor took a black woman quick as he did a white and took any on his place he wanted, and he took them often. But mostly the chillun born on the place looked like

niggers. Aunt Cheyney allus say four of hers was massa's, but he didn't give them no mind. But this yaller gal breeds so fast and gits a mess of white young'uns. She larnt them fine manners and combs out they hair.

Onct two of them goes down the hill to the doll house where the Kilpatrick chillun am playin'. They wants to go in the doll house and one the Kilpatrick boys say, 'That's for white chillun.' They say, 'We ain't no niggers, 'cause we got the same daddy you has, and he comes to see us near every day and fetches us clothes and things from town.' They is fussin' and Missy Kilpatrick is listenin' out her chamber window. She heard them white niggers say, 'He is our daddy and we call him daddy when he comes to our house to see our mama.'

When massa come home that evenin' his wife hardly say nothin' to him, and he ask her what the matter and she tells him, 'Since you asks me, I'm studyin' in my mind 'bout them white young'uns of that yaller nigger wench from Baton Rouge.' He say, 'Now, honey, I fotches that gal jus' for you, 'cause she a fine seamster.' She say, 'It look kind of funny they got the same kind of hair and eyes as my chillun and they got a nose looks like yours.' He say, 'Honey, you jus' payin' 'tention to talk of li'l chillun that ain't got no mind to what they say.' She say, 'Over in Mississippi I got a home and plenty with my daddy and I got that in my mind.'

Well, she didn't never leave and massa bought her a fine, new span of surrey hosses. But she don't never have no more chillun and she ain't so cordial with the massa. Margaret, that yallow gal, has more white young'uns, but they don't never go down the hill no more to the big house.

Aunt Cheyney was jus' out of bed with a sucklin' baby one time, and she run away. Some say that was 'nother baby of massa's breedin'. She don't come to the house to nurse her baby, so they misses her and old Solomon gits the nigger hounds and takes her trail. They gits near her and she grabs a limb and tries to hist herself in a tree, but them dogs grab her and pull her down. The men hollers them onto her, and the dogs tore her naked and et the breasts plumb off her body. She got well and lived to be a old woman, but 'nother woman has to suck her baby and she ain't got no sign of breasts no more.

They give all the niggers fresh meat on Christmas and a plug tobacco all round. The highes' cotton picker gits a suit of clothes and all the women what had twins that year gits a outfittin' of clothes for the twins and a double, warm blanket.

Seems like after I got bigger, I 'member more'n more niggers run away. They's most allus cotched. Massa used to hire out his niggers for wage hands. One time he hired me and a nigger boy, Turner, to work for some ornery white trash name of Kidd. One day Turner goes off and don't come back. Old man Kidd say I knowed 'bout it, and he tied my wrists together and stripped me. He hanged me by the wrists from a limb on a tree and spraddled my legs round the trunk and tied my feet together. Then he beat me. He beat me worser than I ever been beat before and I faints dead away. When I come to I'm in bed. I didn't care so much iffen I died.

I didn't know 'bout the passin' of time, but Miss Sara come to me. Some white folks done git word to her. Mr. Kidd tries to talk hisself out of it, but Miss Sara fotches me home when I'm well 'nough to move. She took me in a cart and my maw takes care of me. Massa looks me over good and says I'll git well, but I'm ruint for breedin' chillun.

After while I taken a notion to marry and massa and missy marries us same as all the niggers. They stands inside the house with a broom held crosswise of the door and we stands outside. Missy puts a li'l wreath on my head they kept there and we steps over the broom into the house. Now, that's all they was to the marryin'. After freedom I gits married and has it put in the book by a preacher.

One day we was workin' in the fields and hears the conch shell blow, so we all goes to the back gate of the big house. Massa am there. He say, 'Call the roll for every nigger big 'nough to walk, and I wants them to go to the river and wait there. They's gwine be a show and I wants you to see it.' They was a big boat down there, done built up on the sides with boards and holes in the boards and a big gun barrel stickin' through every hole. We ain't never seed nothin' like that. Massa goes up the plank onto the boat and comes out on the boat porch. He say, 'This am a Yankee boat.' He goes inside and the water wheels starts movin' and that boat goes movin' up the river and they says it goes to Natches.

The boat wasn't more'n out of sight when a big drove of sojers comes into town. They say they's Fed'ral's. More'n half the niggers goes off with them sojers, but I goes on back home 'cause of my old mammy.

Next day them Yankees is swarmin' the place. Some the niggers wants to show them somethin'. I follows to the woods. The niggers shows them sojers a big pit in the ground, bigger'n a big house. It is got wooden doors that lifts up, but the top am sodded and grass growin' on it, so you couldn't tell it. In that pit is stock, hosses and cows and mules and money and chinaware and silver and a mess of stuff them sojers takes.

We jus' sot on the place doin' nothin' till the white folks comes home. Miss Sara come out to the cabin and say she wants to read a letter to my mammy. It come from Louis Carter, which is brother to my mammy, and he done follow the Fed'ral's to Galveston. A white man done write the letter for him. It am tored in half and massa done that. The letter say Louis am workin' in Galveston and wants mammy to come with us, and he'll pay our way. Miss Sara say massa swear, 'Damn Louis Carter. I ain't gwine tell Sallie nothin',' and he starts to tear the letter up. But she won't let him, and she reads it to mammy.

After a time massa takes all his niggers what wants to Texas with him and mammy gits to Galveston and dies there. I goes with massa to the Tennessee Colony and then to Navasota. Miss Sara marries Mr. T. Coleman and goes to El Paso. She wrote and told me to come to her and I allus meant to go.

My husband and me farmed round for times, and then I done housework and cookin' for many years. I come to Dallas and cooked seven year for one white family. My husband died years ago. I guess Miss Sara been dead these long years. I allus kep' my years by Miss Sara's years, 'count we is born so close.

I been blind and mos' helpless for five year. I'm gittin' mighty enfeeblin' and I ain't walked outside the door for a long time back. I sets and 'members the times in the world. I 'members now clear as yesterday things I forgot for a long time. I 'members 'bout the days of slavery and I don't 'lieve they ever gwine have slaves no more on this earth. I think Gawd done took that burden offen his black chillun and I'm aimin' to praise him for it to his face in the days of Glory what ain't so far off."


aron Russel

Near Monroe, Ouachita Parish  
Ex-slave of William PATRICK

Louisiana Historic & Cultural Vistas



"Aaron Russel, 82, was born a slave of William Patrick, who owned Aaron's parents, a hundred other slaves, and a large plantation in Ouachita Parish, near Monroe, Louisiana. Aaron remained with the Patrick family until he was 26, then moved to Texas. He farmed all his life, until old age forced him to stop work. He then moved to a suburb of Fort Worth, to be near his children." - Interviewer

"  assa William Patrick give my mammy de statement. It say I's borned in 1855 and dat make me 82 year old. Massa Patrick, he own de big plantation clost to Monroe, over in Louisiana. Dat de big place, with over a hunerd niggers.

When de war start I's 'bout six year old, but I has de good mem'ry of dem times. Massa have no chillen so nobody goes from dat place, but lots de neighbor boys us knows goes to de army.

At first everything go good after war start, but de last end am not so good. De trouble am de Yanks come and takes de rations from massa. Dey takes corn and meat and kilt several hawgs and takes two yearlin's. Dey sho' makes massa mad. Him git so mad him cry. If massa hadn't 'spect sich and hide de rations, us sho' suffer, but back of de cotton field massa done have us dig de pit. In de pit us put de hay and lay de rations in dere, sich as corn and smoke' meat and 'taters. De Yanks don't find dat stuff. But what de sojers takes make it nip and tuck to git by.

All us niggers 'cited when de sojers takes de rations. De older ones wants to fight dem Yanks. Dere'd been trouble iffen massa didn't say to dem to keep 'way. All us like massa, him treat us fine, and us willin' fight for him.

De sojers come back after dat and use one massa's buildin's for headquarters, for long time. Dat befo' de battle at Vicksburg. At first us young'uns scart of dem, but after while us play with them. After de Vicksburg battle dey goes off and us sorry, 'cause dey treat us with candy and things. But massa glad git shet of dem.

Us young'uns have de fun with de old niggers. Massa know and sho' have de good laugh. I'll tell you 'bout it:

'Twas dis-away. De old niggers scart of hants. Us young'uns takes de long rawhide string and makes de tick-tack on de cabin roof where Tom and Mandy 'livin'. I climbs de tree 'bout 50 foot high back de cabin and holds de string. It go thump on de roof, 'bout darktime. Tom and Mandy settin' in dere, talkin' with some folks. Us keep thumpin' de tick-tack. Tom say, 'What dat on de roof?' Dey stops talkin'. I thumps it 'gain. Mandy say, 'Gosh for mighty! What am it?' One nigger say, 'De hants, it de hants,' and dem cullud folks come 'way from dere right now. I hears de massa laugh for to split de sides. And Tom and Mandy, dey wouldn't stay in de cabin dat night, no, sir, dey sleeps in de yard.

De bell ring 'fore daylight and de work start. When de cullud folks starts out in de mornin' it like de army. Some goes to de fields, some to de spinnin', some to de shoeshop, and so on. De hours am long, but massa am good. No overseer, but de leader for each crew.

I 'member when Massa call us and say, 'You's free.' Us didn't 'lieve him at first. He say he put each fam'ly on de piece of land and us work it on shares. Him have lots of married couples on he place. I knows most plantations de cullud folks treated like cattle, but massa different. Him have de reg'lations. If dey wants to marry dey asks him and dey has de cer'mony, what am step over de broom laid on de floor.

My pappy stay with massa and farm on shares. I stays till I's 26 year old and den gits de piece of land for myself. Us gits 'long good, 'cause us stay on massa's place and he 'structs us what to do. He say to stay out of de mess and keep workin'. For long time us never leave de place, after de war, 'cause of trouble gwine on. Dere am times it wasn't safe for no cullud person to go off de plantation. Some foolish niggers what listen to some foolish white folks gits de wrong 'structions. Dey comes to think dey can run de white folks. Now, when dey starts sich, 'course de white folks don't 'low sich. Some of dem stubborn niggers has to be edumacated by de Ku Klux Klan. Dat am de tough edumacation and some dem niggers never gits over de lesson. Dem dat do never forgit it!

I never hears dat any cullud folks gits de land offen dere massa. I heared some old cullud folks say dey told it to be sich. Sho', de igno'mus fools think de gov'ment gwine take land from de massas and give it to dem! Massa Patrick tell us all 'bout sich. Like niggers votin'. I's been asked to vote but I knows it wasn't for de good. What does I know 'bout votin'? So I follows massa's 'structions and stays 'way from sich. If de cullud folks can do de readin' and knows what dey do, maybe it all right for dem to vote. De way 'twas after surrender, 'twas foolishment for niggers to try votin' and run de gov'ment. I wants to go some other place iffen dey do. De young'uns now gittin' edumacated and iffen dey larn de right way, den dey have right to vote. I Jus' farms and makes de livin' for my family. My first wife dies in 1896 and I marries in 1907 to Elsie Johnson. She here with me.

"My life after freedom ain't so bad, 'cept de last few years. 'Times lately I's wish I's back with de massa, 'cause I has plenty rations dere. It hard to be hongry and dat I's been many times lately. I's old now and can't work much, so dere 'tis. I has to 'pend on my chillen and dey have de hard time, too. I don't know what wrong, I guess de Lawd punish de folks for somethin'. I jus' have trust till he call me to Judgment."