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The gens de couleur libres of New Orleans occupied a unique position as worldly practitioners of the arts. This situation was created by social, legal and cultural circumstances. Louisiana, as a French colony, implemented the "Code Noir," to control the large population of free people of color. These laws, although designed to control, granted opportunities for free people of color. This led to a three-caste social system with the gens de couleur libres occupying the central position, between whites and enslaved peoples.

Restrictions forbidding the marriage of free people of color to whites, or enslaved blacks, combined with the fact that free women of color outnumbered free men of color, led to the system of placage, an extralegal system of common-law marriage between white men and women of color. When children resulted from placage unions, additional laws sought to hinder those children from obtaining an education. This was remedied by the custom of wealthy white fathers sending their sons to Paris for schooling. This education frequently concentrated on the fine arts.
New Orleans was a rapidly growing city, eager to prove its sophistication and dispel any reputation as a backwater colony. The newly French-educated artists were eagerly received by Francophile New Orleans patrons keen for the newest demonstration of the superior culture of their motherland.

This thesis explores the work of these artists, while focusing upon the rise and fall of the tri-caste system that created a positive environment for artists of color when most free blacks faced open hostility elsewhere.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: ARTISTS OF COLOR IN THE TRI-CASTE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS

The antebellum period in the American South is often associated with racism and the subhuman treatment of people of African descent. In New Orleans, another situation existed simultaneously. Although a large percentage of the black population was enslaved, another sizable class, referred to as free people of color, lived and thrived. Louisiana’s free Negro population greatly outnumbered the free Negro population of other states in the Deep South. For example, in 1860 the free Negro population of Louisiana consisted of almost 3,000 more people than Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama combined.\(^1\) The majority of these free people of color resided in New Orleans; the 1860 city directory lists 10,000 free people of color.\(^2\) Circumstances unique in the American South had created a distinctive three-caste social class in New Orleans: white, free people of color and enslaved blacks. This thesis will focus on the artistic endeavors of the free people of color in order to reveal the valuable contribution they made to the arts.

Although the *gens de couleur libres* of New Orleans have been researched, much of this research focuses upon the gender issues of placage (arranged legal unions between white men and free women of color) or on the prosperity and sophistication of people of color. Joan Martin has written about the social phenomenon of placage in her essay for the book *Creole*, while Monique Guillory has concentrated her research on the

\(^1\) U.S. Bureau of the Census, Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915 (Washington, 1918), p.57. In 1860 there were 18,647 free Negros in Louisiana, 9,914 in South Carolina, 3,500 in Georgia, 2,690 in Alabama, and 773 in Mississippi.

Quadroon Balls. Much of the work centered upon the differences in sophistication between free people of color and enslaved people centers upon the fact that free people of color often owned slaves themselves. Patricia Brady, an independent historian and the founder and director of the publications department at the Historic New Orleans Collection for twenty years, has written extensively on the creoles of color, including research on the artists I have focused upon in this work. This thesis endeavors to explore the artwork more deeply while focusing on the manner in which a combination of legal, social and cultural circumstances, for a short period, provided a perfect environment for the cultivation of sophisticated artists of color in a country where most people of African ancestry faced a hostile environment. In Antebellum New Orleans it was not race, but culture, that determined class and social status. Francophile culture served as a unifying factor, effectively uniting people of mixed racial backgrounds. Part of this cultural bond was an appreciation of the arts and of artists, particularly of French arts and of artists that had been educated in France. This thesis will demonstrate how the gens de couleur libres artists of New Orleans thrived in their esteemed position as worldly practitioners of the arts.

This thesis is divided into three sections. Section I sets the stage for the discussion of the artists by providing a background explanation of the gens de couleur libres and the unique position they held in society. Chapter 1 introduces the topic and discusses the organization of the material, methodology and resources used. Chapter 2 analyzes the combination of legal, social and cultural circumstances that led to the

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3 The Quadroon Balls were the equivalent of debutant balls, the social "coming out" ceremonies for young women being initiated into the social phenomenon of placage.
formation of a tripartite caste system as well as the manner in which this system allowed the *gens de couleur libres* to find success in artistic endeavors.

Section II focuses on the artists and their works. Chapter 3 covers two-dimensional arts such as painting, printmaking and photography, while Chapter 4 discusses three-dimensional artists, specifically sculptors and tomb-cutters. Chapter 5 explores the contributions of artists of color to literature and music, and Chapter 6 concentrates on architecture, ironwork, and furniture design. These chapters will note changes in the artistic and economic status of these artists due to the influx of Americans to New Orleans and the consequential rise of racial tension thereafter.

Section III describes the end of an era. Chapter 7 further explores changes in the social status of the *gens de couleur libres* up to and during the Civil War. Chapter 8 addresses changes taking place during the Reconstruction period that fracture the tripartite caste system that allowed this unique artistic flowering to occur. A conclusion sums up the research.

The encroaching racism designed to restrict the *gens de couleur libres* ironically forced them to return to France for a superior artistic education. Racist restrictions required all people of color to be registered periodically according to race, thus creating numerous documents for use as primary research sources. As a result, these primary sources include original manuscripts such as the New Orleans City Directory and census, legal briefs and business documents collected by families of color that owned properties and businesses. The resources available in the city of New Orleans have been invaluable to my research, especially those in the Williams Research Center and
its New Orleans artist collection. A serendipitous contribution to my work was an exhibition, sponsored by the Historic New Orleans Collection, which brought together many works by artists of color from diverse public and private collections. A symposium organized to coincide with the exhibition brought together scholars to address the subject. Not only were works of art housed in collections and museums pertinent to my research, but the extensive tombs of the "cities of the dead" of New Orleans also provided examples of signed stone carvings created by sculptors central to my research.

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4 Fortunately, these institutions are mostly located on high ground and so survived the flooding of hurricane Katrina.
CHAPTER 2
SETTING THE STAGE: CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO A UNIQUE SITUATION

Amid the history of people of color in America, one can find a distinctive exception from typical convention in the Southern United States. That exception was the gens de couleur libres (free people of color) of antebellum New Orleans. These people occupied a unique position as sophisticated connoisseurs of the arts as well as producers of arts and crafts. This high status was obtained due to a unique set of circumstances.

New Orleans, in Spanish and French Colonial periods as well as in the American antebellum period, was a city eager to prove its sophistication and to dispel any reputation it may have had as a backwater colony. Geographic circumstances had placed the port of New Orleans, and thus its French colonists, far from Paris in a fetid swampland teeming with disease. The city, however, soon developed into a lively model of commerce and wealth capable of supporting a semblance of the highly esteemed culture of France. The first opera presented New Orleans took place at the Théâtre St. Pierre in 1796, and the first ballet was performed in 1799. In 1815 the Théâtre d’Orléans opened, providing a semblance of French culture in the new American Era. The Théâtre d’Orléans faced competition from the St. Charles Theater when it opened in 1835.¹ The French Opera House was the meeting place of choice for the antebellum upper classes. Newspapers enthusiastically announced plays, musical and dance productions, soirees, balls and art exhibitions. The seasonal arrival of iterant European artists, such as Italian miniaturist Antonio Meucci, was of great interest to the citizens of New Orleans, who desired to negotiate the services of such artists for themselves.

The Creole artisans of color were often French educated, and as such, had obtained the savoir-faire of the European fine arts tradition the colonists so desired. Francophile New Orleans patrons, keen to sample the latest in the culture of the motherland, eagerly embraced these well-trained artists.

Many talented *gens de couleur libres* experienced successful artistic careers with positive interaction between blacks and whites (both artists and patrons) that was unusual for the antebellum United States. Painters, sculptors, printmakers, and photographers flourished and thrived. Musicians, composers, poets and writers performed and published their work. Artisans such as furniture makers and ironworkers produced high quality products much appreciated by a society that wished to improve the city's quality of life. Regardless of this evidence of lack of prejudice between races, no records exist of women of color employed as artists. Prejudice against women artists may have existed. Since many of these women were financially comfortable because of the tradition of placage, it is probable that they drew or painted for enjoyment or as a demonstration of their ladylike accomplishments.  

This acceptance of Creoles of color was not limited to artists and artisans, although that will be the focus of this study. Free people of color prospered in many trades, businesses and professions. Historian Joseph Tregle has noted that the *gens de couleur libres* of New Orleans "enjoyed a status... probably unequaled in any other part

---

of the South.\textsuperscript{3} Only ten percent of the free black population of New Orleans was classified as common laborers in 1860.\textsuperscript{4}

A listing of occupations, included in the census of 1850, shows that among the cities of America, New Orleans had the highest percentage of free men of color employed as artisans, entrepreneurs and professionals. Of the 15th largest cities in the United States, New Orleans contained more than a quarter of all free men of color employed as scientists, clerks, managers and artisans.\textsuperscript{5} Within ten years of the 1850 census, half of the ten wealthiest free men of color in the South were residents of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{6} The sizable and prosperous percentage of free blacks in New Orleans allowed this middle caste to play an important role in the social and economic hierarchy of the city.\textsuperscript{7}

In Antebellum New Orleans it was not race, but class, that determined social status. Privileged social status, combined with an artistic sophistication brought about through European training, enabled artists of color to prosper. The unique situation that developed in New Orleans was created by a combination of legal, social and cultural circumstances. I will first discuss the legal ramifications.


\textsuperscript{7}Justin A. Nystrom, \textit{New Orleans After the Civil War} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 19.
Louisiana was a French colony in 1724 when the governor Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, implemented the "Code Noir". Although the “Code Noir” or “Black Code” served the primary purpose of controlling the enslaved population of the French colonies, all people of color were affected. No matter how great the restrictions placed on people of color by the “Code Noir,” their position was still much better than that of people of African descent in the Anglo-governed colonies. Free people of color in Louisiana were afforded many rights: they were allowed to conduct business, to make contracts, to own property, and even to testify against whites in court.\(^8\)

In the second half of the eighteenth century, insurrections by enslaved peoples in the Caribbean brought about a number of changes. After the 1791 slave revolts in Saint-Domingue and the consequent influx of free people of color to New Orleans, fear of similar uprisings resulted in additional laws restricting the rights of people of color. In addition to the fear of uprisings among slaves, whites feared that white rule would be toppled by the presence of so many mixed-blood free men. One such law, passed in 1830, which required free persons of color to register by name with a judge of their parish, was contrived to help determine which people could be legally labeled as black.\(^9\)

The 1850 census additionally required people to be registered according to the headings "Black" or "Mulatto." According to the 1850 census, 1 architect, 1 lithographer, 8

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5 musicians and 30 painters of black or mulatto blood resided in New Orleans. Of the painters, only 4 or the 30 total were listed as "black," while 26 were listed as "mulatto."¹⁰

The *genes de couleur libres* are specifically named in the Code Noir, and this legal document effectively demonstrates the establishment of a tripartite caste system in Louisiana. In time, the “Code Noir” and other subsequent legal restrictions against people of color led to significant social consequences, the most notable being a tripartite caste system. Multiracial, three caste social systems are found in most of the slave societies of the New World.¹¹ The United States incorporated a distinctive two level caste system based on black and white. The most notable exception (besides New Orleans) to this rigid system in the United States was developed in Charleston, South Carolina.¹² To a far lesser extent, the cities of Mobile and Pensacola briefly had free people of mixed racial heritage who attempted to model their place in society according to the three-caste system model.¹³

This tripartite caste system in Louisiana, and especially in New Orleans, draws distinctive lines between whites (with a preference in colonial times to those of recent French or Spanish descent), free mixed-blood people of color and enslaved people of African descent. It was not race, however, but class that determined social status. Thus, the three-caste system had significant effect on how patrons responded to the arts created by people of African descent. Artwork produced by black enslaved people,

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¹⁰ Statistical View of the United States. A Compendium of the Seventh Census (1850) 80,81. These laws, and the records provided because of them, are a valuable aid in the research of free artisans of color.


¹² Hirsch, 191.

given their place in the caste system, would have been considered less sophisticated than that produced by *gens de couleur libres*.

The Code Noir granted many more rights to free people of color than to enslaved people but also reflected concern about relationships, both marital and extra-marital, between whites and blacks. Whites were forbidden to marry blacks, and freeborn blacks were forbidden to live with slaves.\textsuperscript{14} The status of children of forbidden unions was also an issue addressed by the Code Noir. If a child were born of an enslaved mother and a free father, the child would be a slave unless the father married the mother. However, the children of a free woman of color would be declared free, no matter the class or race of the father.

The many legal restrictions regarding marriage, combined with the reality that men in colonial Louisiana greatly outnumbered women, led to the social system of placage. Placage was an arranged union between a mixed-blood woman and a white gentleman, which was negotiated by the mother of the young woman. The negotiations were sometimes quite specific and stipulated the extent to which the man would provide for the woman and her offspring. In exchange, the young woman would commit herself to the gentleman until he married, although sometimes unions continued until death.\textsuperscript{15} A wealthy man, when he chose to marry, had the option of leaving his placage partner and allowing her to pursue another liaison, or he could choose to have two families, one

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\textsuperscript{14} Donald Edward Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans" (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1952), 13.

\textsuperscript{15} Monique Guillory, "Some Enchanted Evening on the Auction Block; The Cultural Legacy of the New Orleans Quadroon Balls" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 1999), ix.
with a white wife and one with a wife of mixed ancestry. By 1788, about 1,500 *gens de couleur libres* and black women were so supported by white men.\textsuperscript{16}

Placage contracts often specified that the children of these unions would assume the surnames of the father and that the children would be provided for. The fact that the man legally acknowledged the children gave such offspring legal protection. Such legal protection provided a distinctively rare advantage unheard of in other areas of the antebellum South. Although some men abandoned their placage partners and families, others specified in their wills that these children should be their heirs. If the man died before legally providing for his second family in his will, the placage family nevertheless could expect, in court, to receive up to one third of his estate. The provisions made for a placage family could be quite lavish and specific, including a house, allowance, linens and servants. Notorious generosity of provision for his placage family was considered a status symbol for a wealthy man.\textsuperscript{17}

It was not unusual for the fathers in placage unions to be involved in the education and upbringing of their children. Although Louisiana French-based laws protected the children of these unions more than laws in Anglo-settled areas of the Atlantic seaboard did, laws were eventually passed to hinder the success of such children by making it difficult for them to obtain an education in the United States. Few, if any, schools were available to teach mixed-race children. It became common practice for wealthy *gens de couleur libres* families or for wealthy white fathers of placage children to send their


children, especially the boys, to Paris for their educations. While girls were often expected to continue the tradition of their mothers in finding supportive men through the placage system, boys were more privileged. Not only were the boys educated in France, but upon their return to New Orleans, they continued to profit from the influence and wealth of their fathers. Upon their return from France, the fathers usually gave these cherished sons of placage unions a plot of land to develop, and many were thus able to create a comfortable income for their futures.

In 1832, however, American laws were passed to override the French laws and to restrict the amounts placage children could inherit from their fathers. The legal restrictions placed upon the education of Creoles of Color were created in an attempt to control the race over time. Wealthy Louisiana fathers remedied this restriction with the solution of a French education. The oppressive intentions of the law had thus backfired, the result being that a number of people of color were well schooled in various disciplines. These European educations took different directions, but because they were educations tailored to produce sophisticated young gentlemen, they often concentrated on the arts.

Cultural circumstances also played a role in the number of black artisans in Louisiana. Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, was a Francophile society. The term Creole can have many meanings. It can refer to people of "white" Spanish or French descent as well as to racially mixed people of the same descent. Both white

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18 Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, "The Passing of a People: Creoles of Color in Mid-Nineteenth Century New Orleans" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2001) 81.


20 Martin, 68.
Creoles and Creoles of color identified strongly with the French language, French customs and French cuisine. The Creoles of Louisiana wanted to disassociate themselves from the Anglo "American" peoples moving to Louisiana after the Louisiana Purchase and to remain a "French" culture. Creoles, no matter what their racial mix, were strongly united in their disregard for "American" or "Anglo" culture.

The Creoles immersed themselves in French culture, speaking the language, enjoying imported French wines, reading French literature, wearing French fashions and purchasing French furniture. Craftspeople able to replicate French styles enjoyed thriving businesses. In the period after American statehood some Creoles refused to sell land to Americans, and the common New Orleans term "neutral ground," which today refers to a median between roads, originally was the name for the dividing line between Creole and "American" "faubourgs" or neighborhoods. To this very day people of different cultural heritage pronounce the very name of the city New Orleans differently, and a strong Gallic cultural imprint remains intact.

In the American period, French immigrants were highly regarded and helped serve the purpose of allowing the Creole to continue to belong to a larger Francophile world. European immigrants were less racist than Americans, and many black artists were employed or apprenticed to Italian, French and German-Jewish artists who had come to New Orleans. European immigrant artists also taught their trade and were happy to give lessons to people of mixed color. European artists and gens de couleur libre enjoyed considerable interactions and collaborations as partners, students and teachers.21 Such interaction helped create the distinctly European style of art created

by the successful Creoles of color of the antebellum period, this led to a thriving artistic community.

An appreciation of the arts further united the Francophile culture of New Orleans. Visual art, music, theater, and literature written in French or created by French-speaking people were considered to be vastly superior to that of Americans by all Creoles. The accomplishments of all Creoles, or any Francophile people in general, no matter their racial makeup, were relished as evidence of the superior cultural abilities of the French.

Religion was yet another important factor that spurred unification of Creole peoples. Religion not only unified the Creoles, but also contributed to their separation from "Anglo" culture. The Creoles, both white and Creoles of color were predominantly of the Catholic faith. "American" or "Anglo" culture was associated with Protestant religions. Thus Catholicism served as a unifying factor in Creole culture.

Frequent migration between Paris and New Orleans, well documented by ship's registers and legal transactions, was commonplace. Although it is impossible to determine how many gens de couleur libre were educated in France, what is known is that many of the best known professionals and artists did travel to France for their artistic training. In fact, some successful men of color made second homes in Europe, almost certainly because of the less oppressive racial attitudes.22

Strong ties between Paris and New Orleans continued after the American Civil War. A good example of both the connections between the two cities as well as the connections between white Creoles and Creoles of color can be evidenced in the 1872

22 Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, 82.
visit of Edgar Degas to New Orleans. Degas traveled to New Orleans to visit relatives, the Musson family. Degas’ mother was born in New Orleans and many of her relations had remained there.

At the time of Degas' visit, the Musson family resided on Esplanade Avenue, in the French Creole section of New Orleans. Degas’ grandmother’s surname was Rillieux, a Creole name that is also prominent among the New Orleans Creoles of Color. Vincent Rillieux, the great uncle of Edgar Degas, was in a placage relationship resulting in a quadroon (or one quarter black) son, Norbert Rilleux. Norbert Rilleux, the first cousin of Degas’ mother, was born in 1806. Norbert was sent to France at an early age where he showed an aptitude for engineering. He became an instructor at the Ecole Centrale in Paris by the age of twenty-four. One year later Norbert Rillieux made an engineering discovery pertaining to sugar engineering comparable in impact to Eli Whitney’s cotton gin’s impact on the textile industry. The invention transformed the process of refining sugar and helped to create the sugar boom in Louisiana.23

The unique cultural circumstances of the gens de couleur libre in the Francophile society of antebellum Louisiana greatly contributed to the acceptance and success of Norbert Rilleux. Those same circumstances, legal, social and especially cultural, contributed to the acceptance and success of many black artists and artisans in antebellum Louisiana.

Comments

A unique set of circumstances, legal, social and especially cultural, contributed to the acceptance and success of many black artists and artisans in antebellum Louisiana.

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23 Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997) 124,125,126.
Laws such as the Code Noir had created a three caste social system that allowed the *gens de couleur libre* many privileges not granted to enslaved people of African descent. Over time, as racist attitudes invaded Louisiana, additional legal restrictions were placed upon the *gens de couleur libre*, including educational restrictions designed to control them over time. Wealthy fathers of *gens de couleur libre* children remedied this restriction with the solution of a French education. The intentions of the law had thus backfired, the result being that a number of people of color received sophisticated European training in the arts. It was class, not race, that determined social status in New Orleans, and for the Creoles a person's social class was determined by their culture. Francophile culture served as a unifying factor, melding together all peoples joined in their mutual disregard for "Anglo" culture. Sophisticated *gens de couleur libre* artists, au courant and knowledgeable of the newest trends from Paris, provided additional proof of the superior cultural abilities of the French motherland.
CHAPTER 3
TWO-DIMENSIONAL ARTS: PAINTING, PRINTMAKING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

In this chapter I will discuss the artists Louis Pepite, Julien Hudson, Jules Lion and Louis Lucien Pessou. These two-dimensional artists worked in a variety of media, as opposed to the three-dimensional artists covered in this research, who all worked in stone. Because of the variety of media used by these artists I have devoted an entire chapter to them.

Louis Pepite and Julien Hudson were both painters. Louis Pepite worked as a scenery painter for the New Orleans theaters that played such an important role in French Creole society. It is not surprising that no examples of Pepite's work survive, theater scenery being characteristically fleeting and impermanent. Julien Hudson was a portrait painter and enough examples of his work survive to bear testament to the technical evolution of Hudson's artistic abilities. I will discuss the events that created the impetus for Hudson's technical refinement as well as the European teachers that provided his training.

Both Jules Lion and Louis Lucien Pessou devoted their art to more technically modern media methods. Pessou was an accomplished lithographer who implemented innovative new techniques in color lithography. Jules Lion was a versatile artist who also used lithography as his primary medium and was particularly gifted in portraiture. Lion, however, also played an important role in the history of photography, being the first photographer to bring daguerreotype to New Orleans. Lion's lithographic work shows evidence of the use of photography as a tool toward obtaining a naturalistic style. The fact that Lion also worked in additional media is evidenced by the existence of a
pastel portrait attributed to him and a document to the St. Louis Cathedral in which he requests permission to decorate the church ceiling, pendentives and altar.

All of these artists provide good examples of the advantages possessed by the gens de couleur libre. These four artists will be introduced sequentially according to the period that they were actively working in New Orleans.

Louis Pepite

The New Orleans city directory of 1826 lists the first incidence of a "free colored male" listed as an artist. This painter was Louis Pepite, who was born after 1805 and lived in the French Quarter.\(^1\) Pepite was an apprentice and student of Jean Baptiste Fogliardi, an Italian scenery painter and the owner of the Louisiana Drawing Academy.

In colonial and antebellum New Orleans great effort was put into the establishment of a reputation of sophistication comparable to that of Europe. Rivalries developed between theaters over the opulence of the interiors. The Orleans Theater lauded itself in newspaper advertisements as comparable to a European opera house and bestowed praise on its new scenery. The depiction of strange and exotic locations through elaborate sets was an important factor in the overall appeal of the show. The decor and sets were on equal footing with those in the finest French opera theaters, providing an additional draw for enticing patrons.

In 1824 Fogliardi was employed to redecorate and embellish the Orleans Theater. The Courier, a local New Orleans newspaper, enticed the patrons with descriptions of

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\(^1\) New Orleans City Directory (hereafter cited as NOCD) 1827, 1832, 1834-35; U.S. Census, Louisiana (1830), roll 45.
Fogliardi’s gold ornamental arabesques and beautiful paintings of birds. The following year, on the occasion of a visit from General Lafayette, Fogliardi completed paintings on the triumphant arch in the town square, or Place d’Armes. The triumphant arch completed by Fogliardi (and perhaps Pepite) for the visit of General Lafayette is depicted in an illustration, which shows it to be grandiose and stylized, much like an example of theater scenery itself. The sixty-foot temporary arch was constructed of faux-painted canvas over wood and was painted to resemble Italian marble embellished with patriotic banners--a grandiose theatrical prop outside of the theater. It is believed that Pepite assisted his teacher in these jobs but evidence for this is slim since Pepite was merely an apprentice and would not have been mentioned.

In 1826, Fogliardi left New Orleans, and Pepite helped fill the void he left by working as a scenery painter at the Orleans Theater. A commission for the scenery for the vaudeville show La Villageoise Somnambule, ou Les Deux Fiancées is recorded in 1828. Pepite continued to work painting for the theater until 1834 after which he is mentioned no more. In a city frequented by outbreaks of pestilent diseases, the disappearance of a young man from the historical record is not unusual. None of Pepite’s known work exists today.

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4 Louisiana Courier, March 14, April 18, 1828.

Julien Hudson

The portrait painter Julien Hudson was called “the earliest documented professional Afro-American painter in the South” by Regina Perry in a catalogue for the 1976 Metropolitan Museum of Art show Selections of Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Art. (fig.1) ⁶ However, evidence shows Hudson was actually the second documented artist of African heritage in the United States, after Joshua Johnson, (c.1763-c.1824) a mixed-race painter hailing from Baltimore. (fig.2) ⁷

Hudson is especially fascinating because his scant and elusive, but interesting history helps us to understand the connections between the art of Europe and the new country of America, as well as the complicated ties between black and white Francophile cultures. Of all the free black artists that I will discuss, Julien Hudson is the one man whose mother, as far as we know, fits the romanticized stereotype of a elegant quadroon. The fascination with this social phenomenon, romanticized in pop novels and film, has dominated much of the research dedicated to the free people of color, sometimes to the detriment of other research.⁸

Hudson was the son of a free quadroon woman of New Orleans, Suzanne Desiree Marcos, and a white merchant and ironmonger from London named John Thomas Hudson.⁹ Julien Hudson's father was absent for the majority of his life, and his

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⁸ Some examples of the popular romanticized depictions of placage are: The Feast of All Saints, novel and miniseries by Anne Rice and Frankly, My Dear a romance novel by Sandra Hill.

⁹ Baptisms of Negros, 1811-1815, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.
mother had relationships with many white men while Hudson was alive. Hudson's mother and grandmother were both financially savvy (as demonstrated by numerous business transaction records) and literate matriarchs who provided strong financial and educational support for their family. The importance of education and the literacy of the Hudson siblings are evidenced by legal documents such as the succession papers of Hudson's grandmother Francoise Leclerc, that feature elegant penmanship. Hudson was born in New Orleans in 1811 and died in 1844 at the young age of 33.

Hudson began his studies in portraiture with the miniaturist Antonio Meucci, an Italian who was in New Orleans in 1826. Meucci was an itinerant artist who also supplemented his income with scenery painting and art restoration. Meucci was prolific, and quite a few miniatures painted by him on ivory survive. (figs. 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7) His style shows a talent in rendering a facial likeness, which unfortunately combines with an ineffective handling of anatomy and proportion. Hudson's work shows remarkable similarities. (figs. 3, 15 & 19) Meucci's instruction of Hudson could only have continued until 1827, when Meucci moved to Havana. Meucci's body of work serves as an indicator of his previous successful interactions with people of color. While in New York, he painted three exquisitely detailed miniature portraits in watercolor on ivory for the Toussaint family, free people of color originally from St. Domingue. (figs. 4, 5 & 6)

References:

10 Contract of Indenture between Erasme Legoaster and Julien Hudson, 22 November 1824, Records of the Mayor's Office, vol. 4:93.City Archives of the New Orleans Public Library.

11 P.M. Bertin, The General Index of all Successions, Opened in the Parish of Orleans, From the Year 1805, to the Year 1846 (New Orleans: Yeomans & Finch, 1849), 110.


demonstrates the cordial interaction between European immigrants and the *gens de couleur libre*.

Miniature portrait painting was a European tradition that had become very popular in America. The tiny likenesses were usually in an oval format and mounted into a gold frame. Often they were incorporated into jewelry such as brooches, lockets or bracelets. The creation of a miniature requires a delicate touch and tedious attention to minute detail.

A signed work by Meucci from around 1830, a portrait of Pascualala Concepcion Muñoz Castrillon, (fig.7) is similar to a *Portrait Miniature of a Creole Lady*, (fig.8) recently attributed to Hudson. Both portraits present their female subjects seated in three-quarters views with hands folded in the lap. Each is wrapped in a shawl and placed next to a window, outside of which is a landscape that includes a body of water. 14

The similarities between the signed Meucci miniature and the *Portrait Miniature of a Creole Lady* attributed to Hudson demonstrate the stylistic influence of the teacher upon the pupil. Perhaps more interesting are the strong similarities in facial features between the attributed *Portrait Miniature of a Creole Lady*, the attributed *Portrait of a Creole Gentleman* (fig.9) and the signed *Portrait of a Man, Called a Self-Portrait*, dated 1839. (fig.1) 15 All three of these portraits feature subjects with ling thin noses and full lips.

By June of 1831, advertisements appear that document the beginning of Hudson’s professional career as a miniaturist. Advertisements from the from the June 6,1831,

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edition of the *New Orleans Bee* as well as the Dec. 3, 1831 edition of the *Louisiana Courier* offer Hudson's services while noting that he had recently returned from Paris. \(^{16}\)

Hudson's first trip to Paris was preceded by the death of his grandmother in 1829. His grandmother, Francoise Leclerc, was the family matriarch and a successful Creole mulatto landlady, property owner and businesswoman.\(^ {17}\) Her bequests to the family are probably what allowed Hudson to make his first sojourn to Paris, as this trip was immediately after her death and evidenced by her will.\(^ {18}\) Hudson returned to New Orleans in the spring of 1831 after which the advertisements began announcing his studio opening and noting his newly acquired Parisian refinement with the announcement "récemment de retour de Paris."\(^ {19}\)

These advertisements offer Hudson's services as a miniature painter. The fact that Paris is mentioned serves to emphasize the importance placed by Louisianans on the Paris connection. Educational opportunities for persons of color were extremely limited in New Orleans, which led families who were able to send their young men abroad for a more extensive, broader education. However, education was not the only Parisian draw. In the book *Our People and Our History*, (fig.10) Rudolph Lucien Desdunnes describes the journey to Paris as a rite of passage for the Creole gentleman, its completion considered a badge of sophistication in the Creole community.\(^ {20}\)

\(^{16}\) *New Orleans Bee*, June 6, 1831, *Louisiana Courier*, 3 December 1831, 3,c. 4.

\(^{17}\) Vieux Carre Survey, Square 68, Historic New Orleans Collection.

\(^{18}\) Louisiana Division, City Archives of the New Orleans Public Library.

\(^{19}\) *Louisiana Courier*, 3 December 1831, 3,c. 4.

During his short career, Hudson also supplemented his income by teaching at least one known student. This student has had a significant impact upon research into Julien Hudson. On March 4, 1901, this pupil, the French-born American painter George David Coulon, at the age of seventy-nine, wrote a short autobiographical manuscript.21 One of the first written accounts of artists who visited or lived in New Orleans, the Coulon manuscript notes that Hudson, a native of New Orleans, was Coulon’s teacher in 1840, that Hudson was instructed by Abel de Pujol in Paris in 1837, and that Hudson died in New Orleans in 1844.22

The importance of Parisian sophistication would continue to grow to New Orleanians. By 1830, New Orleans had become one of America’s metropolitan hubs, with a bustling port and an influx of people and wealth. These wealthy arrivals and upwardly mobile fortune seekers did not want to dwell in a backwater dive but wanted to own and display the luxuries of Europe that they associated with success. Wealth and sophistication meant the possibility of clients, but these new sophisticated clients wanted sophisticated art. Grand homes should be filled with fashionable furniture and sculpture, and of course regal portraits were tangible evidence of importance and greatness.

On January 18, 1832, a ship arrived from Le Havre, France, that carried a passenger who would radically change the expectations of art patrons in Louisiana. The passenger, Jean-Joseph Vaudechamp, was a classically trained portraitist whose ambitious endeavors raised the bar for the technical ability expected for a successful

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22 George D. Coulon Manuscript, scrapbook 100, Louisiana State Museum.
portraitist. (figs.11,12 & 13) 23 Vaudechamp’s large impressive canvases are executed in a extremely realistic manner by a confident and accomplished hand.

Naïve, or technically unsophisticated painting, no matter how charming, was no longer acceptable to these patrons after seeing the work of Vaudechamp. Technical accomplishment and a believable degree of realism were desired. Successful artists were now expected to use varied poses and more natural postures. Patrons also began to demand larger canvases that would show more detail and include settings and elements designed to demonstrate further the wealth and position of the subject. As a result, a miniaturist such as Hudson would have found the demand for his art reduced, and he would have seen that he needed to be able to work in a larger, more ambitious style on canvas.

Between his first arrival in 1832 and his last departure in 1839 Vaudechamp found great success during his winter seasons in New Orleans. 24 Vaudechamp consequently urged his classmates of the Parisian studio of Anne-Louis Girodet-Trioson to voyage to Louisiana and take advantage of the eager, wealthy, art-loving patrons waiting there. This resulted in an influx of classically trained talent, including Francois Fleischbein, Aimable-Desire Lansot and Jacques Amans. 25 The European artistic tradition birthed out of Neoclassicism was now the ideal. 26


26 William Keyse Rudolph, Vaudechamp in New Orleans, 44, 64.
The expectations of New Orleanians in regard to art were irrevocably changed due to the arrival of Vaudechamp. The largest numbers of Louisiana antebellum portraits were created in the period from 1830s and 1840s. All this portrait work was on a larger scale than previous portraiture of the region. The number of classically trained portrait painters increased because the pre-1830s artists who wanted success realized that they must, out of necessity, change from miniaturists to easel painters.

Hudson was likely impressed by the change in the art derived and produced in his home city. However, he must have felt discouraged at his prospects in the face of such impressive competition. Perhaps it was in an attempt to make the necessary transformation that Hudson chose Francois Fleischbein as his next teacher. Fleischbein was a German who had trained in Paris with Girodet and came to New Orleans in 1833.27 Fleischbein, upon his arrival chose to emphasize his French connections by changing his name from the original German (Franz) to French (Francois,) thereby taking advantage of the allegiance to Francophile culture that was so effective in the success of artists.28 Although classically trained, Fleischbein was, out of the group of artists trained by Girodet, the closest in style to the naïveté' evident in the early work of Hudson. His work shows a lack of proficiency in anatomy that makes him most successful with bust-length portraits. Fleischbein's 1837 painting Portrait of Betsy also demonstrates the fact that Fleischbein had positive interactions with both black and white sitters. (fig.14)

27 George D. Coulon Manscript, scrapbook 100, Louisiana State Museum.
As with the earlier comparisons between the work of Meucci and Hudson, striking connections can be found in the work of the new teacher and his pupil. Fleischbein’s portrait of his wife, Marie Louise Têtu (fig. 15) and the signed Hudson painting Portrait of a Young Girl with a Rose (fig. 16) provide a prime comparison. Each portrait has a comparable landscape background featuring a soft horizon with trees and a body of water. The pose of the subject is also similar with one bent and one straight arm. Hudson’s signed 1835 portrait Creole Boy with a Moth (fig. 17) also demonstrates obvious similarities in pose and background to the Fleischbein, with a softened verdant horizon line just below the subject's shoulders and one arm in a bent position.29

Hudson’s determination to rise to the classical expectations of the wealthy new art patrons of antebellum Louisiana must have driven him to acquire even more sophisticated training. Hudson returned to Paris to study with Alexandre Denis Abel de Pujol in 1837.30 Pujol was a painter of historical and religious subjects who had once been a student of Neoclassical painting icon Jacques-Louis David. (fig. 18)31 Pujol’s large, realistic canvases rival those of Vaudechamp. Hudson’s choice of Pujol seems to have been a sensible way to complete with the rival artists such as Vaudechamp as well as a way to acquire the additional caché of Parisian study.

Ship records placed Hudson back in New Orleans in August 16, 1837.32 His return may have been connected to the Panic of 1837, a four-year depression that affected

29 William Keyse Rudolph, "Searching for Julien Hudson" 42.
30 Coulon Masuscript.
New Orleans especially badly.\textsuperscript{33} It was during this period that Hudson took on Coulon as a pupil, which corresponds to the Coulon manuscript notation noting the study with Alexandre Denis Abel de Pujol. \textsuperscript{34} A Coulon portrait from 1842, titled Boy With a Rose, (fig.19) shows a striking resemblance between his work and that of his teacher, Hudson. \textit{Boy With a Rose} is similar in pose to Hudson's \textit{Young Girl with a Rose} (fig.16) and \textit{Creole Boy With a Moth} featuring the subject from the hip up and one bent arm. (fig.17)

The bleak economy that existed and persisted because of the Panic of 1837 may help to explain the lack of Hudson paintings after Hudson's return to New Orleans in 1837 and many months thereafter. Two 1839 paintings exist, both of which are in the collection of the Louisiana State Museum. The painting that most shows the results of his Parisian training is the portrait of Jean Michel Fortier III, signed by Hudson and dated 1839. (fig.20)

Fortier was the son of the colonel who, in the Battle of New Orleans, commanded the black troops.\textsuperscript{35} The Fortier painting shows stylistic connections to the classical portraiture of Vaudechamp and his compatriots. The subject is finely detailed and portrayed in a realistic manner on a large canvas. The Fortier portrait (measuring 30" x 35") is the largest of all of Hudson's works. The initial reaction upon seeing this portrait is that it was not by the hand of Julien Hudson. Not only is the portrait large, but also the recurrent landscape background is gone, replaced by solid black. Fortier's figure is more finely detailed and crisp than figures in previous work by Hudson. Unfortunately,

\textsuperscript{33} Brady "In Search of Julien Hudson," 13.

\textsuperscript{34} Coulon Manuscript.

the only reminiscence of Hudson’s earlier work is an indication that this is the work of an artist with an incomplete knowledge of anatomy. An awkward handling of the proportions of a hand is the only evidence of an artist who paints with a more naïve style. This struggle with the challenges of anatomy is consistent in all of Hudson’s known work.

The other signed 1839 painting is titled *Portrait of a Man, Called a Self-Portrait*. (fig.1) In this painting we see the development of a personal style, the combination of the influence of miniature painting and the misty background influenced by Fleischbein, combined with the realistic modeling of the subject resulting from academic European training. Regenia Perry’s description of this painting for her catalogue for *Selections of Nineteenth Century Afro-American Art* identifies the painting as a self-portrait as well as the earliest known self-portrait of an Afro-American artist.36 Although the signed and dated portrait is authenticated as a Hudson, proof that the painting is a self-portrait is tenuous at best, mostly due to assumptions and repeated lore.

At this point the historical record of Julien Hudson becomes even more obscure. Coulon writes that Hudson died in 1844,37 but Hudon’s death is not recorded with a death certificate or obituary. Historian Patrica Brady has speculated that Hudson took his own life, a grievous sin in Catholic New Orleans. The fact that some deaths, such as suicides and homicides, were not listed in regular the death register of New Orleans supports Brady’s claim, as does an entry in *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire* about a

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36 Regenia Perry, *Selections of Afro-American Art*; catalogue.

37 Coulon Manuscript.
painter of color (believed to be Hudson) who died between 1840 and 1850 after “disillusionment cast a cloud of despair over his whole life.”  

Written documentation of Hudson’s presence in New Orleans and the progression of his short career make no reference to his race. Only legal documents such as Baptismal records attest to this fact. The alleged “Self-Portrait” which was included in the 1976 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, Selections of Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Art, provides no clear proof that the person portrayed was a person of color. This small oval “Self-Portrait,” signed by Hudson and dated 1839, is rigid and naïve in style and shows a young blue-eyed man with a long aquiline nose whose racial heritage is unclear. If Hudson’s mother was a quadroon, Hudson would have been an octoroon and his dominant features could have been black or white. No matter what the racial heritage of the subject might be, there is no documentation whatsoever that the painting is a self-portrait, which makes the physical characteristics of the sitter irrelevant to the racial background of the painter. 

It is possible that Hudson passed as white, and, because he lived in the cosmopolitan environment of French New Orleans, he saw no need to assert his racial heritage. It is also possible to interpret this lack of racial description as a sign that race was not an especially important issue at the time. It is interesting to note that many of the European artists that Hudson associated with made their livings as itinerant artists, traveling to other parts of the South. Would such a situation, one that involved traveling outside of South Louisiana, have been dangerous for a Creole of color such as

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38 Desdunnes, 71.
39 Baptisms of Negros, 1811-1815, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.
Hudson? Clearly, it would have been a difficult thing to do, with the Creole artist clearly marked by his French language as well as his race.

Written records about Hudson’s professional career may not note Hudson’s race; however, Hudson’s body of known work does provide strong evidence that he was an artist of color. Five signed and dated portraits along with three unsigned portraits that are attributed to Hudson exist. Of these works, five are definitely portrayals of people of color.\(^{40}\) This places Hudson’s paintings as a part of a small, but important group of portraits of people of color that were also created by a person of color. One of the artists in this group, Joshua Johnson, takes on a particularly important relevance as the first documented black American painter. Julien Hudson is now recognized as the second documented black American painter.\(^{41}\)

Much evidence provided by the racial characteristics of the sitters reinforces the theory that Hudson was working in an atmosphere conducive to success for people of color and proved mutually satisfactory for both black and white patrons and artists. The portrait of Jean Michel Fortier by Hudson was a posthumous portrait, commissioned by Fortier’s family. Fortier, although legally a bachelor, had an established relationship and acknowledged children with a free woman of color.\(^{42}\)

Hudson’s work has also been associated with the Metoyer family of Melrose plantation. The Metoyers are one of the most fascinating families of color in Louisiana, with a legend of a freed woman of color steadily buying her children out of slavery while


\(^{41}\) William Keyse Rudolph, "Searching for Julien Hudson" 80.

\(^{42}\) Brady, "Mixed Palette," 8.
creating a powerful plantation dynasty. A 1925 scrapbook includes photographs of
paintings at Melrose that include the signed Hudson portrait “Creole Boy with a Moth”,
along with “Portrait of a Woman: Thought to be Marie Agnes Poissot Metoyer.” “Creole
Boy with a Moth” (fig.17) incorporates a style easily associated with Hudson. A misty, soft
landscape provides a background behind a young boy posed with one bent and one
straight arm. The portrait is not full length, but ends at the hip, with the boy’s left hand
cropped out of the picture. The other painting, called "portrait of a Woman," and
believed to be of Marie Agnes Poissot Metoyer is badly damaged and unsigned. The
scrapbook photograph that includes the painting shows it before this damage occurred.
In the scrapbook photograph the paintings are the same size and are framed identically.
All of these connections seem to indicate a connection between the two paintings,
Julien Hudson and the Metoyer family. Some of the Metoyer family lived in New Orleans
in the 1830s where they may have met Hudson.43

The signed Hudson painting entitled “Portrait of a Free Man of Color” (fig.21) is
dated 1835, the same year as “Creole Boy with a Moth.” “Portrait of a Free Man of
Color” is a Hudson work more recently discovered.44 This fascinating painting portrays a
dark skinned man exotically turbaned in red and yellow, wearing a formal coat,
waistcoat and cravat. William Keye Rudolph speculates that this portrait is also affiliated
with Melrose Plantation and that Hudson was employed by one of the wealthiest black
families in the country. This connection continues to build upon the unique importance

44 In Search of Julien Hudson: Free Artist of Color in Pre-Civil War New Orleans: display information .
Exhibit of the Historic New Orleans Collection, 2011.
of Julien Hudson within the history of art as a very early artist of color who also created portraits of people of color.\textsuperscript{45}

Hudson’s subjects indicate that he worked with both white and black clients, which indicates an acceptance of and appreciation for artists of color. It must be noted, however, that white artists made portraits of people of color as well.\textsuperscript{46} This free interaction between artists and clients is evidence of an acceptance of people of mixed racial backgrounds. An important factor in this social situation was the primary importance of French influences above all other factors. The milieu of Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, was filled with persons from diverse racial backgrounds, including white European artists. The predominant cultural attitude was Gallic and laissez-faire. Hudson is certainly an example of a man of color being accepted and appreciated as an artist, but perhaps it is also an example of a Francophile allegiance being more important than race.

**Jules Lion**

Without doubt, one of the most prolific and successful of the free artists of color was Jules Lion. Lion’s career is testament to the degree of success that was possible for a free artist of color in New Orleans. The existing authenticated works of Lion consist of many exquisite lithographs and one pastel portrait on canvas. The lithographic portraits are considered to be some of the most intriguing to have been created in nineteenth-century America.\textsuperscript{47} These beautifully detailed and realistic portraits give us a


\textsuperscript{46} William Keyse Rudolph, “Searching for Julien Hudson,” 80.

vivid illustration of the personalities of the people portrayed as well as the nature of antebellum life.

In addition to his skills as a lithographer, Lion is also an extremely important character in the history of photography. Not only was Lion one of the first daguerreotypists in America, he was the first to bring the process to New Orleans. According to the manuscript of George Coulon, Lion brought the first daguerreotype camera to New Orleans from Paris in 1839.48

Lion was born in Paris but little is known of his parentage. The dates of his birth conflict in various sources, but his obituary notice of January 10, 1866, listing his age as fifty-six, would make his birth year 1809 or 1810.49 Lion must have obtained his artistic training as a lithographer in Paris, where many established firms such as Lasteyrie and Engelmann were known for their high quality work.50

Between 1831 and 1836, the young Lion exhibited his work in the Paris Salon and received an honorable mention at the Paris Exposition for his lithograph “Affut aux Canards” (The Duck Blind.) Additionally, his lithographic illustrations were published in the journal L’Artiste, a highly regarded publication that provided review on artists, exhibitions and styles.51

48 Coulon Manuscript.

49 The New Orleans Bee, 10 January, 1866.


Lion arrived in the boomtown of New Orleans in 1836 or 1837. Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the city had become a thriving melting pot of people, many of whom were seeking their fortunes. The predominantly Francophile culture made it a popular destination for frenchmen, and it may have been particularly attractive for a free man of color for the opportunities the bustling city afforded.

The printing process of lithography was incorporated earlier in New Orleans than in other city in the United States. By 1837, the French/English newspaper *L’Abeille* (The New Orleans Bee) had opened a lithographic printing shop within its offices. The *Bee* lauded the superior advantages of the new technology of lithography over engraving due to the lithographs ability to produce large editions incorporating minute detail. In April 1837, the *Bee* announced the availability of Jules Lion and J.B. Pointel (both from France) to produce lithographs of “distinguished men, and of cherished friends.”

While in Paris, Lion had contributed to a large body of portraits included in *Biographie des hommes du jour* published by Henri Krabe. This publication presented biographies of celebrated individuals of the day accompanied by their lithographic portraits. The portraits were printed on separate sheets of paper and placed within the volume with a notation of the book title on the corner. The collectable book was

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52 Charles East, "Jules Lion," 913.
54 *The New Orleans Bee*, 5 April, 1837.
doubly useful because the portraits could be removed and framed or otherwise displayed.

The Historic New Orleans Collection contains one of Lion’s beautifully and delicately rendered portraits from *Biographie des hommes du jour*, inscribed as a portrait of W. de Potter.\textsuperscript{56} This earlier Parisian portrait demonstrates Lion’s abilities and the lucrative possibilities of quality lithographic publication. Two suppositions spring to mind: first of all, that Lion’s participation in this lucrative publishing endeavor inspired him to launch his own version of this concept in America; secondly, that Lion, as a well-trained and gifted lithographer, may have been actively recruited by *The Bee* for its new lithographic business.

*The Bee*, having been founded in 1827 by a refugee from St. Domingue, was the newspaper that naturally supported the free people of color.\textsuperscript{57} At this time, New Orleans was being “Americanized” very rapidly, and even though the *Bee* office was located in the Creole sector of the city many of the prospective customers of the lithographic shop would have been Americans, due to the large influx of Americans involved in business ventures in the late 1830s. Did the proprietor of the *Bee* consider the reaction of these Americans when hiring Lion? In the cultural climate of antebellum New Orleans, the hiring of a free man of color as an artist may not have been a significant issue. Lion was talented, skilled and above all French. Although city directories listed Lion as a free man of color,\textsuperscript{58} the press, delighted with his talent, avoided the mention of this fact and


\textsuperscript{58} N.O.C.D., 1837-1866.
instead chose to emphasize that Lion was a Frenchman. For example, the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, in an article about the *L’Abeille* lithography business, gushes that "Mr. Lion is a young French gentleman, after saying which we need not add that he is pleasing, courteous, and polite."\(^{59}\)

Lion was extremely prolific, creating in 1837 many (nearly forty still in existence) portraits for the *L’Abeille* studio. Sometime during the year of 1837 his portraits no longer include the notation “lith. Dr l’Abeille” on the image. Lion may have ventured out as an independent artist at this time. Lion’s portraits from 1837 to the spring of 1839, mostly of powerful men such as Andrew Jackson, are signed and dated; sometimes also including the place the portrait was drawn.\(^{60}\) Lion’s portrait of Charles Gayarré demonstrates the enormous amount of detail Lion was able to convey in his portraiture, along with the photographic quality of naturalism depicted. (fig.22)

In 1839, Lion returned to France to visit his brother and business partner, the dentist, Achille Lion. (fig.23)\(^ {61}\) While in Paris, Lion made a wonderful discovery. On August 21, 1839, a fellow lithographer named Louis Jacques Daguerre released a pamphlet explaining the new invention of the Daguerreotype process of photography. Margaret Denton Smith, in *Photography in New Orleans*, raises the possibility that Achille Lion, as a dentist, may have helped his brother with the chemical problems Lion may have had to overcome to master the new art of photography.\(^ {62}\)

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\(^{59}\) *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 20 March, 1840.

\(^{60}\) Brady, "Jules Lion, F.M.C.: Lithographer Extraordinaire." 165.


A little over a month later, Lion was already back in Louisiana, practicing his new
miracle of technology, creating photographic images of the landmarks of New Orleans.
In the September 27, 1839, edition of The Bee, Lion announces his return to the city.

George Coulon noted in his manuscript that Jules Lion “brought from France the first
Daguerreotype Instrument here, it required then half an hour in the sun to take a
view!” Before long Lion began an advertising campaign to generate interest in the
new medium, lauding the realism and wonder of the Daguerreotype.

On March 15, 1840, he showed the first public photographic exhibition in New Orleans
in the St. Charles Museum. The advertisement in the Bee the previous day reads:

Daguerreotype. - Mr. J. Lion, Painter and Lithographer, Royal Street.
No.10-To comply with the wishes of his friends and acquaintances, has the
honor to announce to the public, that on Sunday next, 15th March, at 11
o’clock precisely, he will give, in the hall of the St, Charles museum,
opposite the St. Charles hotel, a public exhibition, in which shall be seen
the likeness of the most remarkable monuments and landscapes existing in
New Orleans, viz: -the Cathedral, Exchange, St. Charles hotel, Royal
Street, Town house, etc., all made by means of the Daguerreotype. Mr. J.
Lyon [sic] will, during the exhibition, make a drawing, which shall be put up
at lottery. -There shall be as many chances as persons present. The price
of the lottery tickets is $1. Said tickets delivered at the entrance.

The event proved a great success for Lion. The public was amazed at the detail of
the photographs. The photograph seemed no less than miraculous to them; re-creating
reality with more minute detail and clarity than ever thought possible. The Creoles
especially delighted in the fact that the daguerreotype was a French invention and, of

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63 The New Orleans Bee, 27 September, 1839.
64 The Coulon Manuscript.
65 Deborah Willis, Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to Present. (New York:
66 The New Orleans Bee, 14 March, 1840.
course, that Lion himself was a Frenchman.\textsuperscript{67} Within a month, Lion had given four presentations and two more exhibitions, one at a Creole festival that included dinner, dancing and fireworks,\textsuperscript{68} and another intended for ladies, that was held at the Orleans Ballroom.\textsuperscript{69}

Lion’s early photographic work was limited to views of buildings and landmark and no evidence indicates when he began to make portraits. Early methods required a subject to sit still for up to half an hour while the chemically treated photographic plate reacted to the available light. This great length of time required for exposure made portraits a special challenge, and Lion, as the perfectionist he shows himself to be in his lithography, would not have produced inferior quality photographic work.

By 1842 he ventured into portraiture as technical advances made exposure time shorter. He also capitalized on the common practice of the time of making “death portraits” of the many victims of yellow fever and other epidemics of the day.\textsuperscript{70} He was one of the first to experiment with hand-coloring daguerreotypes and in fact, claimed to be the only studio in New Orleans offering colored portraits.\textsuperscript{71} No known Lion daguerreotypes exist today but a portrait of a young girl of color from 1845-1850 is attributed to him. (fig.24) The \textit{Daguerreotype of a Young Woman} shows a solemn young woman of color in the fashionable dress and hairstyle of a young lady of the 1840’s. The

\textsuperscript{67} Denton Smith, \textit{Photography in New Orleans}, 3.

\textsuperscript{68} Denton Smith, \textit{Photography in New Orleans}, 19.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{The New Orleans Bee}, 28 March, 1840.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{The New Orleans Bee}, 13 December, 1843.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{The New Orleans Bee} 24 November, 1843.
Sixth-plate daguerreotype is believed to be a member of the Lion family, although no definite evidence exists to prove this to be true.\textsuperscript{72}

Within a few years, New Orleans, like many other American cities, was inundated with inexpensive photographic studios, many of them providing poor quality products. This invasion of cheap knock-off photographs took a heavy toll on the business of artistic photographers like Lion. In 1844 and beyond, Lion Studios advertisements no longer mention daguerreotypes, only painting and lithography.\textsuperscript{73}

Although Lion may not have been selling daguerreotypes professionally, evidence suggests that he continued to make them. The previously mentioned portrait of “A Young Girl” of 1845-1850, because it is not authenticated, does not supply proof of Lion’s continued involvement with photography. Lion’s lithographs, however, have an intricate photographic detail that strongly suggests the use of photography as a tool.

Lion’s lithograph, \textit{Cathédral de la Nouvelle Orleans}, (fig.25) dated 1842, is a good example of the use of photography, or at least its influence, in his work. The lithograph shows the cathedral from the side with the street fronting the building, Royal Street, depicted in extreme depth. His exacting optically correct perspective and minute detail can be described as nineteenth-century photo-realism. That the fine detail witnessed in early daguerreotypes carried over into Lions' lithographic creations was apparent to others. In fact, a lithographic portrait of General Taylor was noted in \textit{The Bee} on April 7, 1848, to have the fidelity of a Daguerreotype.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{72} Denton Smith, \textit{Photography in New Orleans}, 48.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Le Courier de la Louisianne}, 5 March, 28 October, 1844.

\textsuperscript{74} Denton Smith, \textit{Photography in New Orleans}, 49.
A double pastel portrait drawing from this time period is surrounded by more mystery than any other work attributed to Jules Lion. This pastel on canvas was featured on the cover of the catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 1976 show titled “Selections of Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Art.” The double portrait is of two men: an older white gentleman and a young light skinned black man, both very well dressed and embracing each other in a most tender, affectionate manner. (fig.26)

According to Regina Perry, who wrote the catalogue, the rare double portrait portrays Ashur Moses Nathan, a prosperous Jewish merchant of South Louisiana, and his mulatto son, Achille Lion. Records show that Nathan indeed left his fortune to his son Achille, whom he adopted after his wife’s death.75

This portrait, as powerful and lovely as it is, is problematic for many reasons. It is attributed to Jules Lion, but the signature in box letters is unlike the flowing calligraphic script of the Lion lithographs. Understandably, pastel is a different medium than lithography, capable of much less in the way of detail. As such, it would require a different signature method. However, the subjects are posed straightforward in the manner that Lion frequently used in his lithographic portraits, but the fact that there are no other known incidences of Lion using pastel creates questions of authenticity.

Still, there is evidence that Lion must have worked in various media. In a letter addressed to the churchwardens and building committee of the Cathedral of St. Louis, Lion requests the commission for permission to decorate the ceiling, pendentives and

75 Perry, Selections of Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Art, catalogue.
altar. Lion’s enthusiasm and assurance indicate a confidence in his painting ability as a compliment to his lithographic and photographic accomplishments.\(^{76}\)

Regina Perry, in the Metropolitan show catalogue, raises the argument that the wife of Jules Lion, before their marriage, had been in a placage union with Ashur Moses Nathan and so Achille Lion is the stepson of Jules Lion and the natural son of Ashur Nathan. Art historian Judith Wilson supports this theory and suggests that Jules Lion, with this portrait, is documenting Achilles’ paternity while making a statement about his own personal mixed-race heritage.\(^{77}\)

The speculation by Perry that the young man is the stepson of Jules Lion is clearly and easily proven incorrect by checking historical records of births, baptisms, deaths and marriages.\(^{78}\) Ashur Nathan and Achille Lion, however, are well-documented individuals in Louisiana history. The portrait may very well be of Ashur Nathan and Achille Lion but the provenance of this pastel portrait is uncertain and speculative, making its authenticity impossible to prove.\(^{79}\) Unfortunately, speculative information, such as the romantic genealogical lineage of Achille Lion, especially when it is found in a catalogue for an exhibition at one of the most respected museums in this country, tends to be accepted as factual. The information has been repeated and used, as a reference, in subsequent articles. The romantic lure attached to this enchanting

\(^{76}\) Samuel Wilson, Jr., trans., *Collection of St. Louis Cathedral Papers, 1808-1854*. The Historic New Orleans Collection.


\(^{78}\) Brady, “Jules Lion, F.M.C.: Lithographer Extraordinaire,” 170.

depiction of two men has proven difficult to resist. A loving father supporting his child against the odds and conventions of the time is a wonderful image to see.

Lion returned to his earlier venture of lithographic portraits of individuals after 1844, but he changed the emphasis to celebrities in 1848. (fig.27) His original intent had been to produce a book that would include many of his earlier portraits, titled Notabilities de la Louisiane, but the popularity of lithographic renderings of notable leaders had waned. In the true pop-culture manner, pictures of well-known characters were the rage. The Van Buren image lacks the naturalism of some of Lion's earlier portraits, perhaps due to the fact that Lion was constructing his lithograph working from the renderings of other artists. In 1848, Lion sold portraits of presidential candidates, such as Martin van Buren and Zachary Taylor as well as war heroes.80

These business ventures probably were not very successful because in 1848 Lion began a teaching career, first by opening an art school with Dominique Canova, an Italian artist specializing in miniatures, followed by a stint teaching drawing at the esteemed Louisiana College. Once again his race seems to have had no detrimental effect upon his new teaching career.81

Through it all, Lion never relinquished his dream of publishing a volume of lithographic portraits; in fact he expanded his original idea to a book of biographical essays, similar to the Biographie des hommes du jour that he worked on as a young man in Paris. He wanted to include biographies and portraits of great men important to the history of Louisiana. Ironically, he received support from the Daily Delta an

80 Brady, "Jules Lion, F.M.C.: Lithographer Extraordinaire." 171.

extremely racist newspaper active in the pre-Civil War fervor. Unfortunately, Lion's book, like many dreams, never materialized, probably due to the war. 82

Jules Lion's most frequently noted contribution to the history of art and particularly the history of black artists is the introduction of the new medium of photography to New Orleans. To Lion himself, however, photography was secondary in importance to his primary career as a lithographer and painter. His venture into photography was merely a financial undertaking that later became a useful tool towards creating naturalistic lithographic portraits. It is ironic that the invention was the very thing that endangered his craft and his livelihood. 83

Lion's greatest artistic achievement exists, but is less well known. This achievement is the body of lithographic portraits, highly photographic in nature, that Lion produced of important figures from Louisiana history. A bound body of more than 150 of these wonderful portraits was acquired in 1970 by the Historic New Orleans Collection, which also owns additional unbound Lion lithographic portraits. These lithographs effectively portray the personality and individualism of the sitter.

Jules Lion has given us, through these remaining prints, a window through which we can visualize the character of the individuals and of the era. His work is a testament to the high degree of achievement and dedication accomplished by a talented, ambitious free man of color in the antebellum period in Louisiana. 84

82 East, “Jules Lion,” 918.
83 East, “Jules Lion,” 917.
84 East, “Jules Lion,” 919.
Louis Lucien Pessou

The lithographer Lois Lucien Pessou was born in New Orleans in 1825. Pessou's parents were part of the migration of free people of color to New Orleans following the Haitian Revolution of 1791. By 1808, when Pessou's parents arrived in New Orleans, the migration had doubled the population of the city's free people of color.

Pessou's mother, Maria Magdalens Hernandez of Cuba, and his father, Joseph Alphonse Pessou of Saint Domingue, were married in St. Louis Cathedral. Maria died when Pessou was 17, but his father continued to live with his son until Joseph's death. The degree of support Joseph gave to his son in his chosen career of art is not known.

The influx of blacks -- and especially the increase of free people of color -- led to uneasiness among whites due to the fear of a revolt similar to that which occurred in Haiti. New restrictions and controls were imposed upon free people of color, and their freedom began to be restricted. Restrictions varied from the closing of schools of free people of color to the disbanding of literary, charitable, scientific or religious societies to the prohibition of any assembly of people of color. How ironic that a free man of color, regardless of the additional prejudices placed upon him by the circumstances of his birth, could accomplish all that Pessou did. Pessou is noted as the first New Orleanian

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85 The New Orleans Bee, (obituary p1,c2) 9 December, 1886.
88 Brady, "Mixed Palette," 54.
89 Laura Foner, 421-423.
90 Foner, 428.
of African descent to be actively involved in the printmaking industry of that city,\textsuperscript{91} as well as the first native-born lithographer in the crescent city.\textsuperscript{92}

Pessou’s death certificate of December 18, 1886, which lists his race as “colored” is the only reference to be found regarding his race.\textsuperscript{93} Can the lack of documentation of Pessou's African heritage be seen as evidence that his success was related to the fact that he was assumed to be white? Is it possible that as far as business relationships Pessou chose simply not to publicize his racial heritage? Pessou lived in the Faubourg Marigny, a Creole neighborhood,\textsuperscript{94} and attended a church popular with free people of color, St. Augustine Catholic Church, so he certainly was not hiding his racial heritage.\textsuperscript{95} For such a prosperous businessman and, later, public servant, it is unusual to find so little information about his private life. This curious situation leads one to infer a custom of business people of color working as “whites” while living their private lives amongst their own people. It also leads to speculation about the ability of individuals to be exempt from racial bias toward an individual who possesses something that they consider to be of value.

It is unknown where Pessou received his lithographic training, and there are no records to show that he received his artistic education in France. Pessou probably served as an apprentice and later as an assistant to a master lithographer. He is first


\textsuperscript{92} Pricilla Lawrence, "A New Plane-Pre-Civil War Lithography in New Orleans," in \textit{Printmaking in New Orleans},133.

\textsuperscript{93} New Orleans Death Certificate (1885,) XC, 486.

\textsuperscript{94} United States Census, Free inhabitants in the fourth ward in the City of New Orleans, June 7, 1860.

listed as a lithographer in the 1853 city directory. As mentioned previously, the printing process of lithography was incorporated earlier in New Orleans than in other cities in the United States. Thus, it is logical to conclude that he received his training in printmaking before 1853.

In New Orleans, Germans dominated the lithographic industry, thus it comes as no surprise that Pessou started a printing company with a young German immigrant, Benedict Simon, in 1854. This partnership, whose offices were located in the central business area at 116 Exchange Alley, resulted in the most professional art firm in the city. Pessou and Simon were innovators in their field, becoming pioneers in color lithography. By 1855, this new printing firm, called Pessou and Simon, created a large monochrome map of their city. The lithograph was 2’by 3’ and identified important buildings in New Orleans. Pessou and Simon published a print in the same year of their extremely detailed, delicately colored interpretation of the renovation of Jackson Square, which had been under construction for many years. (fig.28) The perfectly symmetrical composition of the square uses deep perspective and minute detail, showing the architecture of the cathedral, Cabildo and Presbytere buildings as

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96 N.O.C.D., 1853.
97 Lawrence, 133.
98 N.O.C.D., 1855.
102 Florence Jumonville, 85.
103 The Daily True Delta, 7 February, 1855. Page 1, col.2.
well as the flanking Pontalba residences. The landscaping of the square, including the
equestrian monument of Andrew Jackson is carefully detailed, as well as the cotton
bales awaiting shipment at the riverbank. The bustling activity of pedestrians, horses
and carriages complete the spectacle.

The firm established by Pessou and Simon played an important role in the
lithographic industry for the next twelve years, producing book illustrations, maps, plans,
and city views that combined aesthetics with precision. (fig.29)\textsuperscript{104} The maps are
particularly beautiful, delicately colored as well as accurate as described in the \textit{Daily
Crescent}, “being all laid down with great distinctness and accuracy.”\textsuperscript{105} Ironically, the
\textit{Daily Crescent} was the most fanatically anti-negro newspaper in New Orleans at the
time when they gave this enthusiastic description of Pessou's work.\textsuperscript{106} This is one of the
many coincidences that lead to the conclusion that Pessou passed for white.

The United States Census of 1860 can perhaps answer the question as to how
Pessou and Simon became pioneers of new techniques in color lithography. This
census lists two young lithographers, August Bercoli and Henri Flicon, both from Baden,
Germany, living in the Simon home. Lithography had been invented in Germany, and
technical innovations in the industry often arrived from Germany.\textsuperscript{107} The visitors may
have brought the newest technology with them to Louisiana and shared it with Simon
and Pessou.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{104} Brady, ”Mixed Palette,” 54.

\textsuperscript{105} \textit{The Daily Crescent}, 17 October, 1861. Page 2, col.1.

\textsuperscript{106} Nelson, 63.

\textsuperscript{107} United States Census1860: Free Inhabitants in the Fourth Ward in the City of New Orleans, June 7,
1860.
\end{footnotesize}
As the Civil War approached, the firm acquired more work, including a commission from the Confederate States of America for a reproduction of the Confederate Ordinance of Secession, the sale of which was announced by the newspaper *The Daily Crescent* on February 26, 1861. Work for the Confederacy continued, including currency and views of the Confederate Camps Moore (fig.30) and Walker.108 The lithograph of Camp Moore, like the Jackson Square view, uses pleasing symmetry to create a pleasing composition while at the same time imparting a great deal of information. The camp, located a piney wood, is an exciting scene of teeming activity. Visitors chat with soldiers while horsemen train between neatly organized tents. The fact that a free man of color produced this body of work for the Confederacy inspires many questions. What were Pessou’s feelings regarding the creation of work for such a cause? Were the Confederates aware that Pessou was a man of color?

The Southern economy was decimated by the Civil War. After the war, a series of agricultural fairs hosted by the Mechanics’ and Agricultural Fair Association were held to stimulate the economy and to help restore agricultural endeavors. Such agricultural fairs required the services of printmakers to publicize the events and also provided an opportunity for printers, including lithographers, to exhibit their work. Successful businessmen such as Pessou and Simon could have capitalized upon these opportunities.109

Pessou’s career, however, took a different course. After the war, he split from his business partner Simon and became involved in the politics of reconstruction.110

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110 Kellye M. Rosenheim, 178.
1868, Pessou was appointed by the Reconstruction government to the position of births and deaths, quite unexpected for a man who had no previous experience as a bureaucrat or a politician.\textsuperscript{111} His support of the Republican governor, Henry Warmoth, was probably responsible for the appointment.\textsuperscript{112} At the end of his term, the \textit{New Orleans Republican} enthusiastically lauded his accomplishments.\textsuperscript{113} Pessou continued his Republican Reconstruction political career with a position as the ward superintendent of streets. After the Civil War, Pessou changed his allegiances. Whereas before the war French cultural allegiances had been more important to him than his racial heritage, after the war his political involvements demonstrate the important role race had taken in his life. Pessou finally returned to his art near the end of his life, creating lithographs in his home after Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{114} He died on December 18, 1886.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{Comments}

All of these \textit{gens de couleur libre} two-dimensional artists benefitted from their uncommon social situations. Creoles of color had the freedom to train in the arts as well as having access to European philosophies and ideals in art. European artists and the \textit{gens de couleur libre} enjoyed considerable collaborations as partners, students and teachers. The knowledge of European immigrants, typically less racist than Americans, was advantageous to both Louis Pepite and Louis Lucien Pessou. Louis Pepite

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[111]{Edwin L. Jewell, Jewell's Crescent City Illustrated (New Orleans: Edwin Jewell, 1873) xiii.}
\footnotetext[112]{Nystrom, 69.}
\footnotetext[113]{The \textit{New Orleans Republican}, 12 March, 1872.}
\footnotetext[114]{N.O.C.D., 1873-1875, 1879.}
\footnotetext[115]{New Orleans Death Certificate (1886,) XC, 486.}
\end{footnotes}
benefitted from his apprenticeship to Italian scenery painter Jean Baptiste Fogliardi. Louis Lucien Pessou, although not educated in France, did still, as a French-speaking free man of color in New Orleans, have many European influences. He developed strong connections with European artists like his German business partner, Benedict Simon. Pessou also interacted with lithographers such as August Bercoli and Henri Flicon from Baden, Germany, the source of innovative new lithographic techniques. Julien Hudson apprenticed with Italian artist Antonio Meucci, as well as the German-born and Paris-trained artist Francois Fleischbein. Hudson trained in Paris twice, the last time with neoclassicist painter Alexandre Denis Abel de Pujol, in order to stay in touch with current Parisian trends. Jules Lion was born, trained and exhibited in Paris and returned to France periodically to visit his family and to remain au courant. It was on one such visit to his brother in 1839, that Lion was exposed to the new process of the daguerreotype, which he brought back to Louisiana the same year. European sensibilities and Francophile culture served as a unifying factor among artists, patrons and collaborators, with the success of each individual serving as evidence of the superior cultural accomplishments of the entire group.
New Orleans is known for its many above-ground tombs, with cemeteries arranged in a facsimile of a city, complete with streets, alleys and neighborhoods. The tombs are a visual symbol to many of the exotic European nature of the city, but they are actually practical in purpose. The high water table combined with the shortage of dry land in the city proper made above-ground tomb burials a necessity.

Tombs were also used as indicators of social status, symbols of prestige for the oldest and wealthiest families. Large tombs with many interments signified a family well established in the community. Many families with European backgrounds, now finding themselves living in a new country, longed for monuments similar to what they were accustomed to in order to establish themselves solidly in their new home. Tombs also demonstrate cultural heritage. Inscriptions were carved into French Creole tombs in French, with much Gothic inspiration. Cemeteries, like neighborhoods, tend to be segregated by heritage, and most definitely by religion. As the port became more important and the city prospered, the tomb became more impressive. Funerary arts take on a great importance in New Orleans, especially because of the high mortality rates brought about by epidemics of yellow fever and cholera.

The cities of the dead created an industry that provided a livelihood for many stonecutters and a steady income for those who aspired to the title of sculptor. These aspiring sculptors, or "marbriers," worked as marble-cutters for tombs. Their connections with the funerary arts industry provided such sculptors many advantages. Among these were the opportunity for training and practical experience, the availability of the proper tools, and a supply of a variety of imported stone close at hand. Another
important factor was the positive and open interaction between the free men of color and Europeans, especially European artists.

In the Antebellum period the tomb industry was dominated by European stonecutters, especially those trained in Italy and France. Once again, the Francophile cultural allegiance was a factor in the opportunities available for free Creoles of color in the arts. Several of the successful sculptors of color enjoyed the financial benefits provided by their association with a respected family well established in the community.¹

In this chapter I will explore the work of Florville Foy, Eugene Warburg and his brother Daniel Warburg.

**Florville Foy**

Florville Foy was a "marbrier," or marble sculptor of color who achieved remarkable success for his stonework. His death notice states that he died on March 16, 1903, aged 83 years, which would place his birth year as 1820.² Foy’s mother was a free woman of color named Azelie Aubrey. His father, Rene Prosper Foy, was a popular and flamboyant Frenchman who had come to New Orleans via Saint-Domingue. Foy’s, parents, although forbidden by miscegenation laws to marry, had a life-long relationship that produced several children. They were living together at the time of Rene’s death in 1854.

In various years, Rene is listed in city records as a marble cutter, sculptor, gilder, engraver or art and architecture teacher.³ In addition to these many occupations, Rene

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² The *Daily Picyune*, 17 March, 1903. Page 6, col.5.

³ John A. Mahe, 143.
Prosper Foy owned a working plantation in St. James Parish and wrote historical articles for local newspapers. The elder Foy was a Napoleonic war veteran who also served so bravely in the Battle of New Orleans that he was presented a dagger by Andrew Jackson, which remains in the Louisiana State museum today. Clearly, Rene Foy was an accomplished man.

The children of Rene Foy and Azelie Aubrey were all well educated, and Florville, the eldest son, was sent to France to study following the tradition for placage unions. White fathers who were barred by law from getting a quality education for their sons in Louisiana did something better: they sent their son's abroad for the official French badge of sophistication described by Desdunes. When Florville returned to New Orleans in 1836, he apprenticed with his father, a highly skilled marble cutter that the son would soon surpass. Ambition, combined with talent, enabled Florville Foy to remain at the top of his trade for over fifty years. After two years working under his father's tutelage, Foy's father, Rene, left the marble cutting business, spending most of his time at his plantation while financing the workshop of his eighteen-year-old son in 1838.

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7 Desdunnes, 13.

The French architect Jacques Nicolas Bussiere de Pouilly, arrived in New Orleans in 1833. A student of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, de Pouilly brought the grand monumental idealism of neoclassicism to Louisiana. In addition to his classical architecture, such as the St. Louis Hotel, he applied his idealism to monumental tomb design inspired by the famous Parisian cemetery, Pére Lachaise. Pére Lachaise is a cemetery laid out with avenues like a city, and although a large number of the tomb designs are inspired by neoclassicism, many tombs strive to portray the individuality of the deceased through personalized design. Florville Foy, who may also have been inspired by Pére Lachaise while he was in France, executed many of de Pouilly's designs.⁹

The French were uncontested in nineteenth century Europe in their artistic supremacy. The influence of the École des Beaux Arts was especially strong in architecture. By being École des Beaux Arts trained, de Pouilly came to New Orleans with a respected pedigree, one that allowed his French clients to revel in their cultured origins through his sophisticated neoclassical designs. De Pouilly and Foy also shared strong Francophile cultural bonds. The mutually respectful working relationship between the two men must have been advantageous to Foy's reputation.¹⁰

In addition to his execution of the designs of others, such as those of de Pouilly, Foy also created his own designs and built tombs on speculation.¹¹ De Pouilly must have influenced the more ambitious tombs that Foy began to design on his own, as

⁹ Looney, 7.


¹¹ The Louisiana Courier, 6 September, 1851, Page 2, col.5.
evidenced by his growing confidence and mastery of his craft. The fact that de Pouilly clearly appreciated Foy’s work in turn is apparent, as Foy is responsible for the execution of de Pouilly’s own tomb in St. Louis cemetery.\footnote{Brady, "Florville Foy, F.M.C.," 12.}

Funerary stonework did not only entail tomb enclosures and their decorative relief carving, but also required three-dimensional sculpture as well. The Louisiana State museum contains an early Florville Foy marble sculpture entitled \textit{Child With a Drum} from the demolished Girod Street Cemetery. (fig.31)\footnote{Louisiana State Museum Listings.} This sculpture portrays a young boy reclining upon a drum and holding a drumstick. The child is reclining, with one arm propped upon a drum and a drumstick in the other hand. The child has finely detailed ringlets and in one hand holds the drums strap, which is carved as a rippling ribbon that drapes across his thighs. The sculpture is damaged, with the area below the shin missing, probably due to it being forcibly broken off of the tomb, but still beautifully executed. Since the depiction of a child with a drum is not associated with conventional funerary symbolism, it must have been associated with the memory of a specific child.

The tomb-building business continued to flourish, and in 1848 Foy bought property near the two St. Louis cemeteries, flanking the church of St. Anthony, which served as a mortuary chapel. Within eight years, he bought an adjacent lot and the next year more property on Rampart Street.\footnote{Brady, "Florville Foy, F.M.C." 13.} Intricately detailed advertisements for "Florville Foy Marble Cutter and Sculptor" laud the sculptor’s abilities. One advertisement describes the variety of carving skills possessed by Foy and emphasizes the fact that Foy is capable of producing works "of all descriptions, executed and made to order," while
showing illustrations of some of the possible monuments, gravestones and benches. (fig.32) As his business grew he needed more area for the storage of large pieces of marble. The growth continued, and by 1882 his business is listed in a directory as “Florville Foy-- Marble Works, Nos. 83,84,85 and 87 Rampart Street.”  

This location was particularly advantageous because in addition to its proximity to the cemeteries, it was close to the business district, the streetcar lines and a canal by which Foy's imported marble was delivered.

The same trade directory stated that, in the year 1882, Foy's annual business transactions reached $20,000. The Foy Marble Works, which employed eight full-time artisans and a manager, was lauded as "perhaps, one of the oldest and most reliable establishments in the South." Intricately detailed advertisements for "Florville Foy Marble Works" continued throughout the 1850s. (fig.32)

Foy lived very comfortably in the upper floors of his three-story business buildings, and he was known to have a least two slaves living at his residence. He lived with a white woman named Louisa Whittaker from 1850 on, eventually marrying her in 1885. The date of this marriage would correspond to the Reconstruction laws that

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16 The 2010 equivalent of this amount is $446.079 according to *The Inflation Calculator*, accessed 4/23/12, www.westegg.com/inflation.


18 N.O.C.D., 1852, 1858-59.

19 United States Census, Louisiana, 1850.

20 Register of Marriages New Orleans Health Department, 1885-1886.

67
would allow people of different races to marry. The inventories contained in the wills of Florville and Louisa Foy demonstrate the prosperity they enjoyed.  

Foy’s abilities are especially apparent in many of the more elaborate tombs in St. Louis Cemetery II. The majority of Foy’s work is found in St. Louis cemeteries I, II, and III, Odd Fellows Rest, Lafayette I and II, as well as in Cypress Grove and Greenwood, all located in New Orleans. Examples of his work can also be found outside the city, in Biloxi, Mississippi, and Pensacola, Florida, among other places, which testifies to the fame and reach of his establishment.

A plethora of Foy’s work is found throughout the cemeteries of New Orleans. Elegant and often austere works in marble, they have a distinctive European feel, probably due to the influence of de Pouilly and the Pére Lachaise. Gothic style, complete with delicate tracery relief featuring pointed arches and quartafolies, is a frequent motif (figs. 33 & 34) as are classically pedimented temples of the neoclassical style (fig.35) adorned with finely carved symbolic subjects from the large visual vocabulary used for funerary monuments. (figs.37 & 39)

Foy usually signed his work with only his first name, Florville. Occasionally this signature varies to the name of his business, Florville Foy. (figs.36 & 38) This discrepancy may indicate works that were created by other artisans at the atelier or that some tombs were a group effort by Foy and his employees.

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21 Brady, "Florville Foy, F.M.C." 13.
23 Encyclopaedia, 142.
24 Brady, "Florville Foy, F.M.C." 14.
Because Foy’s work is not always dated, it is not possible to note his stylistic evolution beyond the dramatic changes that occurred after his encounter with J.N.B. de Pouilly. Dates of burials on individual tombs may have been changed, especially in the case of the Louisiana “oven vault” tombs, in which families would add additional family members over time. These changes make it difficult to document the actual dates that many tombs were constructed.  

In tomb design, the wishes of the client are the deciding factor in the architectural style. This also makes it difficult to discern the preferred styles of Foy as an artist. Foy’s work is distinctive however, as it is often characterized by fine relief carving, including the aforementioned Gothic tracery (figs. 33 & 34,) as well as rib and flambeau moldings. The flambeau motif was frequently found in New Orleans nineteenth century cemeteries. (fig.39) When the flambeau was inverted it was symbolic of the ending of a life.  

A good deal of his finest relief carving features recurring symbolic flower designs. (fig.37) A broken flower connotes a life ended, a daisy symbolizes innocence, such as would be used on the grave of a child, while the pansy stood for remembrance.  

As with many other artists of the gens de couleur libre, many of Foy’s friends and associates were Europeans. The Italian sculptor, Achille Perelli, was close to Foy and was said to have sculpted a bust of Foy that he treasured all his life. The present location of the bust is unknown. Other close friends included the painter Paul Poincy,  

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26 Christovich, 129. 
27 Christovich, 135. 
who, like Foy, studied in Paris. Another was the poet Camille Thierry, a mulatto poet who contributed many works to literary reviews as well as to Les Cenelles, the first book of poetry published in America by people of color.29

Once again, European connections, in particular French connections, are most important to the identity of gens de couleur libre and perhaps one of the reasons that a free man of color such as Foy would continue to succeed in a growing environment of racism preceding and following the Civil War.

Florville Foy, through ambition, perseverance, and talent had managed to remain one of the most esteemed tomb builders in the South for nearly seventy years. Through shrewd business management, he kept his reputation and business intact even through the changes in the monument industry brought by post-Civil War capitalism and the emergence of steam-powered equipment. That a man of color could hold strong against the onslaught of large monument companies by the quality of his artistry is an impressive feat.

When Foy became too old to work, one of his former slaves, Jules, adopted the name Jules Foy and continued to run the business. Jules had lived with Foy, who had instructed Jules in marble cutting, since Jules' childhood. In 1903, Florville Foy died in his home, a widower with no surviving children. His servant, Jules, whom Foy provided for in his will, tended him.30

Foy is buried in the St. Louis Cemetery III, ironically, in a simple tomb.31 Much of Florville Foy’s legacy, built to last, remains in cemeteries today. Although admired for

29 Brady, "Florville Foy, F.M.C." 16.
30 The New Orleans Picayune, obituary, 17 March, 1903.
their craftsmanship and design, his tombs actually symbolize a greater accomplishment than most viewers can imagine. Although the unifying factor of French cultural allegiance helped Foy in his success, the fact that he was providing a well-respected skill and quality results was also an important factor. Foy was a good businessman, but it was the social system that he was a product of that provided him with the opportunity to become established in business. His French connections also provided lucrative professional collaborations, such as his partnerships with de Pouilly.

The Warburg Brothers (Eugene and Daniel)

The lives and artistic accomplishments of the Warburg brothers, Eugene and Daniel, are particularly interesting for several reasons. Both brothers began their careers in the 1850s, a time of unrest and change in New Orleans, especially for people of color. At this time, New Orleans as a busy port was inundated with “Americans” who brought with them a hate-based preoccupation with race.

The Warburg brothers each reacted to this prejudice in different ways. The eldest brother, Eugene, had aspirations to break completely away from the funerary industry and to specialize in fine arts sculpture. Frustrated with the increased hostility directed against him because of his race, Eugene chose to leave Louisiana to live in Europe. Daniel, the younger brother, was also a talented sculptor as well as a businessman. Remaining in New Orleans, Daniel owned a large, independent monument company for over three decades and continued a successful independent career until his death. Daniel Warburg overcame many of the obstacles of race from which his brother had fled.

32 Desdunnes, 70.
The Warburg brothers had the advantage of strong and stable family support. Their father was Daniel Samuel Warburg, a German immigrant from a notable old Jewish family who came to New Orleans in 1821 as a commission merchant, buying or selling products for clients. The elder Warburg was highly successful, wealthy, eccentric, and well educated. In the 1830s, his wealth increased greatly through land speculation. Even after losses incurred at the end of that decade, he was able to support his family comfortably.33

The elder Warburg was an important man who was trusted with many civic positions, but who also surrounded himself with foreigners, who like himself, were more racially tolerant, politically radical, and better educated than most Louisiana natives. Upon his arrival from Hamburg in 1821, Warburg obtained a Cuban mulatto slave named Marie-Rose Blondeau with whom he had five children. After the birth of the eldest son, Eugene, in 1825, all of the remaining children were born free, indicating that Warburg had emancipated Marie-Rose. Eugene himself was legally emancipated at the age of four.34

Although Warburg and Marie-Rose were not allowed to marry legally, in her business transactions, Marie-Rose referred to herself as Warburg. She died in 1837, and her tomb is inscribed as Marie Rose Warburg alias Blondeau. In 1830, well before Marie-Rose's death, the elder Warburg and his friend and lawyer, Pierre Soulé had each posted a $500 bond with a declaration to have Eugene educated and provided

33 Brady, "Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders," 480.
34 Charles Edwards O'Neill, "Fine Arts and literature; Nineteenth Century Louisiana Black Artists and Authors," in Louisiana's Black Heritage (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1979) 74.
Pierre Soulé was a Frenchman and associate of Alexandre Dumas. Soulé had, upon his arrival in New Orleans in 1825, married into a distinguished and cultured Creole family. In addition to having a dedicated father, Eugene Warburg was blessed with an enlightened and dedicated godfather, Pierre Soulé, who was to nurture his career his entire life. Few details are known of the early education of the Warburg children, but examples of Eugene’s writing show the refined calligraphy and proper usage of French grammar of a well-educated man. Meanwhile, Daniel’s records show that he had an acumen in business and mathematics.

In 1841, the French sculptor, Philippe Garbeille, arrived in New Orleans. Garbeille, who had studied with Bertel Thorvaldsen, was a prestigious sculptor who worked in the city until he was asked to go to Havana in 1848 to complete a sculpture of the Queen of Spain. Garbeille’s specialty was the portrait bust, particularly those of famous or esteemed persons, such as Zachary Taylor, whom he depicted in plaster in 1850. Garbeille was to become Eugene Warburg’s teacher. In his book *Our People and Our History*, Desdunes lauds Garbeille as “a very generous person, because he braved prejudice” in taking Eugene as a student.

Another factor, in addition to generosity and bravery, may be indicated by the fact that one of Garbeille’s first patrons in New Orleans was none other than Pierre Soulé, Eugene’s godfather, who probably was instrumental in the arrangement to take Eugene

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35 Brady, "Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders," 481.
36 Charles Janin, New Orleans Notarial Archives, February 9, 1830.
38 Desdunnes, 69.
as a student.\textsuperscript{39} During this time Garbeille executed commissions for the St. Louis cathedral, including two marble sculptures, a “Virgin and Child’ and “St. Francis and the Virgin” in 1846.\textsuperscript{40} It is likely that Eugene, as Garbeille's apprentice; assisted with these sculptures and that they are part of the group of “magnificent works” in the cathedral attributed by Desdunes to Warburg.\textsuperscript{41}

In 1849, after Garbeille’s departure for Havana, Eugene Warburg began working as a marble cutter and by 1850 had opened an atelier with his younger brother, Daniel. The location on St. Louis Street was close to the St. Louis Cemetery in an area crowded with funerary-arts studios. As Eugene and Daniel both still lived with their father, it is probable that the elder Warburg was financially involved in the establishment of his sons' business.\textsuperscript{42} In this studio, with the help of his apprentice and bother, Daniel, Eugene carved the funerary pieces typical of a New Orleans stonecutter, while working independently on the more ambitious undertakings of an independent sculptor.

In 1849 Warburg created an important sculpture entitled \textit{Ganymede Offering a Cup of Nectar to Jupiter}. An announcement in \textit{The New Orleans Bee} noted that the sculptor, “the pupil of Garbeille” was exhibiting the sculpture at Hall’s Gilding establishment on Canal Street. A raffle was to be held, with the winner taking home the sculpture, valued at $500. The newspaper review describes the sculpture positively; “the design is beautiful, and the execution reflects infinite credit upon the taste and

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{39} Brady, "Mixed Palette," 13.
\bibitem{40} Brady, "Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders," 482.
\bibitem{41} Desdunnes, 69.
\bibitem{42} N.O.C.D., 1850-1853.
\end{thebibliography}
talent of our townsmen." Unfortunately, no detailed description or illustration of the sculpture remains, and its location, if indeed the sculpture still exists, is unknown.

Although Desdunes claims that the old cemeteries are filled with masterpieces from Eugene Warburg's hands, there are few authenticated examples, and Desdunes is probably referring to the work of Daniel. Desdunes describes a particularly delicate undertaking, two angels, each holding a chalice, carved from a solid block of marble. As to Desdunes's claims that St. Louis Cathedral is filled with the works of Eugene Warburg, Eugene submitted a detailed proposal for the marble flooring installed in the 1851 reconstruction. Although no documentation exists that Eugene received the commission, the resemblance between the drawing submitted by Warburg and the existing central aisle of black and white marble make it likely that it is indeed his work.

Two sculptures repeatedly attributed to Eugene Warburg are “Le Pécheur” (the Fisherman) and “Le Premier Baiser” (The First Kiss.) In 1936, Frederic Fairchild Sherman noted in "Art In America" that these sculptures were completed before Warburg left America and may still remain in New Orleans. An additional contract

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43 *The New Orleans Bee*, 13 December, 1850, Page 1, col.1.

44 Desdunnes, 69.


indicates that Warburg was engaged to complete a work for the Hotel Grunewald-Herman. The location of these works, including their existence, is now unknown.

These and other works are reputed to have incited the jealousy and racial hostility that encouraged Warburg to leave New Orleans for Europe. Canvassers for the city directory of 1852 noted that Warburg was “uncivil” to them and expressed dissatisfaction with New Orleans. Eugene departed in 1852, leaving the St. Louis atelier to his younger brother and pupil, Daniel.

It is ironic indeed that Eugene Warburg’s escape from racial prejudice and voyage to creative opportunity was financed by the sale of slaves. The sale of the slaves, inherited from his mother Marie-Rose, was legally complicated, requiring a lawsuit between Eugene and his father as well as a family meeting in the presence of a notary. At the end of November 1852, Eugene Warburg set out for Paris, in search of culture, opportunity and equality, following the tradition provided by previous Louisiana free men of color. For four years, Eugene Warburg refined his art and studied in Paris. He attended classes at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts under the tutelage of Francois Jouffroy. Four of his sculptures from this period were accepted into the Salon de Paris in 1855. Two of these works were in plaster: Un jeune pêcheur jouant avec un crabe (A Young Fisherman Playing with a Crab) and Un portrait. The other two were marble.

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49 Perry, catalogue.

50 N.O.C.D., 1854.


52 O’Neill, 75.
portrait busts, one simply titled *Un portrait* and the other *Portrait de S.E. le minister des États-Unis a Paris*, sometimes called *Portrait of John Young Mason*. (fig. 40)  

This last carving, *Portrait of John Young Mason* was to become Warburg’s only known surviving work, which is now located in Virginia. (fig. 39) Pierre Soulé, the old friend of the elder Warburg and Eugene’s mentor, had become the United States Minister to Spain. Soulé was in Paris in the fall of 1853 and 1854, and provided a valuable introductory letter for Eugene. The letter, probably aided by the influence of Soulé, led to an introduction to John Young Mason. Mason and Soulé worked on the Ostend Manifesto (a document rationalizing the purchase of Cuba) in 1854, and were in close contact.  

The close connection between Mason and Soulé almost certainly led to the commission of the bust. By 1855, the bust of Mason, then the United States Minister to France, was completed. The marble bust, decidedly Neoclassical in style, portrays Mason in a naturalistic, yet idealized manner reminiscent of a Roman senator. The sculpture is currently in the collection of the Virginia Historical Society and is Eugene Warburg’s most familiar and only known, surviving sculpture.  

Completing the bust of such an important individual as Mason had a great impact on Warburg’s status and success as a sculptor. Warburg had accomplished what he had hoped for by going to Europe— he had begun to acquire a European reputation as a

53 Theresa Leininger-Miller, 4-5.  
54 Brady, ”Black Artist in Antebellum New Orleans,” 23.  
respected artist, the equivalent of what his fellow Creole, Victor Sejour, had accomplished as a playwright.\textsuperscript{56}

Warburg traveled to London in 1856, where he met the Duchess of Southerland, who headed a humanitarian abolitionist society. The Duchess commissioned Warburg to create bas-relief scenes from Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe.\textsuperscript{57} Warburg worked on the reliefs for a year. During this time as the Duchess' protégée, he met Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was visiting the Duchess. As with most of Warburg's work, the location of the bas-relief sculptures, if they still exist, is unknown. No known illustrations or written descriptions of the sculptures remain.\textsuperscript{58}

Now equipped with letters of reference from both the Duchess of Sutherland, Harriet Beecher Stowe, as well as Pierre Soulé, Warburg traveled to Florence, the city that he intended to make his home. When he arrived in Florence in the fall of 1857 he was an important enough artist for his presence to be noted by an Italian correspondent to a Northern U.S. paper. This short notice was then picked up by the New Orleans papers \textit{The Daily Picayune} and \textit{The Daily Crescent}. Racial relations had worsened in New Orleans during the five years Eugene had been in Europe, and the \textit{Daily Crescent} was the most notoriously racist of publications.\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{Picayune} simply noted that a “Mulatto Sculptor from New Orleans” had received commendations and “gives some promise of respectable attainments.”\textsuperscript{60} \textit{The Daily Crescent} reacted quite differently,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Porter, "Versatile Interests of the Early Negro Artist,"21.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Perry, catalogue.
\item \textsuperscript{58} O'Neil, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Brady, "Black Artist in Antebellum New Orleans," 23.
\item \textsuperscript{60} \textit{The New Orleans Daily Picayune}, 26 December, 1857, Page 1, col.5.
\end{itemize}
writing “A Colored Artist-- We find the following in a Northern paper, but know nothing in regard to its truth” then noting the commendations, included one from Pierre Soulé, and concluding sarcastically, “We congratulate Mr. Soulé upon his good fortune in being placed in such distinguished juxtaposition.”

Within a short time, Warburg had left Florence for Rome. Florence had become known for its expatriate American colony of sculptors and so would have appeared to be a good location for Warburg. Although the reason for Warburg's decision to leave Florence quickly is unclear, Dusdunes has claimed additional racist experiences to be the cause.

When he arrived in Rome, Warburg settled near the Spanish Steps with his wife, Louise Ernestine Warburg, whom he had married during his European travels. At that time, more than thirty American expatriate artists were working in Rome, and he would have had an established, comfortable community in which to reside. The majority of sculptors within this artists’ community were clay modelers, and as a stone cutter, Warburg must have been a strong addition to their group. James Porter has recorded that Eugene Warburg represented Louisiana at the Paris Exposition of 1867 with work from this period. The contentment that Desdunes claimed that Warburg was to finally have found was not to last, however, as Warburg died within two years of settling in Rome, on January 12, 1859, at the age of thirty-three. His funeral mass was celebrated

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62 Dusdunes p 69
64 O’Neill, 76.
in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, and he was buried in the cemetery of Campo Verano of St. Lawrence.⁶⁶

Warburg’s obituary in *The New Orleans Bee* claimed, “Death has struck one of the most promising sons of Louisiana,” and lauded Warburg as one among the stars of American artists to cast a brilliant light for their country." ⁶⁷ Without the structure provided by his French cultural connections, it is extremely unlikely that Eugene Warburg could have reached such promise.

The history and accomplishments of Daniel Warburg are especially interesting when contrasted with those of his older brother, Eugene. While Eugene rebelled against the prejudice that was increasingly apparent in America, Daniel strove to overcome it. While Eugene aspired to be a sculptor who gained acclaim in Europe as well as in America, Daniel led a long, productive, and respected career in the more traditional New Orleans occupation of a funerary arts sculptor. Stone cutting was a traditionally acceptable craft for a *gens de couleur libre*, and exceptional artistic skills led to many business opportunities. A talented stonecutter had the opportunity to cross over into the realm of fine arts sculptor, while providing a regular income on less ambitious and challenging commissions in the funerary arts.

When Eugene Warburg left New Orleans for Paris in 1852, his seventeen-year old, younger brother, Daniel, remained in charge of the St. Louis street workshop.⁶⁸ Although it is sometimes noted that Daniel also received training from Philippe

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⁶⁷ The *New Orleans Bee*, 9 March, 1859, Page 1, col.1.

⁶⁸ N.O.C.D., 1854.
Garbeille, most of his training came from his talented elder brother. The skills that he acquired provided him with a long and successful career; it was one that survived the dismal fate of many free artists of color throughout the reconstruction period and beyond.

A good example of the type of steady stone work that was commissioned of Daniel were the simple marble tablets mounted on the wall vaults of the St. Louis cemeteries. Austere, but well-made, these tablets were sometimes embellished with wreaths, crosses or ornamental borders. Simple oven-vault or mausoleum enclosure tablets signed by Warburg can be found throughout New Orleans cemeteries, dating from 1852 to 1889.

Daniel Warburg's versatility was an important factor in the longevity of his career. Many researchers have noted that Daniel worked as an engraver as well as a stonecutter, although no known examples of his engravings exist. He also was versatile in his ability to carve both marble (the more common medium in his earlier career,) and granite, a harder material to cut. As newer cemeteries were built, such as the Metairie Cemetery, granite became the more popular stone. This versatility increased Warburg's value in his field.

Whereas he may have lacked the confidence and ambition that led his brother Eugene to attain acclaim abroad, Daniel possessed a steadfast dedication to his family.

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69 Gehman, 221.
70 Brady, "Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders," 486-87.
72 Brady, "Free Men of Color," 487.
Daniel married, produced several children, and cared for his aging father, the elder Daniel Warburg, until his father's death in 1860. The fact that the family kept a live-in Irish maidservant implies a comfortable, middle class lifestyle.

In *Our People and Our History*, Desdunes had claimed that the cemeteries of New Orleans were filled with the works of Eugene Warburg. However, many of these Warburg examples are probably the work of Eugene's younger brother, Daniel. An additional complication is created by the fact that Daniel Warburg had a son, also a stonemason, named Joseph Daniel Warburg, Jr. The youngest Joseph Daniel Warburg, died in 1921 in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he had resided and worked for four years, making the identification of possible Warburg work more complex.

For close to two decades, Daniel Warburg was able to retain his own independent studio, transcending the changes in status brought on by Reconstruction. No longer did free people of color enjoy the benefits of the old caste system that put them above other people of color in station. The many opportunities previously provided to the *gens de couleur libre* due to their European connections had disintegrated, and resentment, from both white and black, towards their past position may have increased their predicament. In 1871, Warburg was forced to give up his business and to work for a larger monument company. Post- Civil War capitalism was flourishing, and large monument companies could afford new steam-powered equipment as well as large

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75 Brady, "Free Men of Color," 486.
76 *The Times Picayune*, 6 August, 1921, Page 2, col.8.
77 Theresa Leininger-Miller, 5.
quantities of varied stone. A large number of employees with varied specialties provided fast and efficient services. One advantage that Warburg had was his ability to cut granite, which had become the fashionable medium for tombs. Warburg worked for many companies in his later years, including that of Florville Foy, who was struggling with the same types of financial problems.78

Until his death in 1911, Daniel Warburg continued to carve stone and garner respect for his work. His beautifully cut and well-finished carvings are still admired today. A lovely example, the Holcombe-Aiken column, remains in the Metairie Cemetery. (fig.41) Simple and austere, the tall, unfluted column is entwined with a morning glory vine, a recurring motif of Warburg, symbolic of the Resurrection. The entwining blossoms also symbolize the bonds of love, but for the critical viewer the carvings clearly demonstrate the skill of the sculptor. (figs.42 & 43) The capital of the column is crested with a cross of faith and an anchor of hope, complete with a delicately carved linked chain. The column has many historical associations, mostly related to war memorials and soldiers.79 The design was an appropriate choice for Aiken, a man who died in Italy in 1904 on an American battleship. The Holcombe-Aiken memorial is the best-known example of Daniel Warburg's outstanding abilities.80 Understated and skillfully conceived, the monument reflects the character of the quiet and accomplished artist who created it.

The Lob family tomb, located in Metairie Cemetery also exhibits the morning-glory motif. (fig.44) Name plaques on family tombs usually had the first interment dates carved

78 Brady, “Free Men of Color,” 487.

79 Mary Louise Christovich, 92-93.

by the tomb's creator, who then left spaces for the notations regarding future internments. The name plaque is carved to resemble a delicately carved scroll unrolling at the base. The background employs a rusticated granite effect with visible chisel marks. (fig. 45) The McLean monument, also located in Metairie cemetery, shows a distinctive contrast between the smooth, polished marble of the name plaque and morning-glory vine and the rusticated background. (figs. 46 & 47) Both monuments incorporate asymmetrical decorative design in the intricately carved floral vines. Warburg's work has the quality of the original, combining unique design with skillful craftsmanship. Daniel Warburg himself is buried in a simple marble wall vault in St. Louis Cemetery II. 81

Comments

The three-dimensional *gens de couleur libre* artists that I have included in this study all benefitted from their privileged place within the three caste social system and the prominent French culture of New Orleans. Florville Foy had many advantages: a French education, an apprenticeship with a highly skilled marble cutter and the strong social and financial structure provided by an affluent family. Foy was greatly influenced by his collaborations with French architect Jacques Nicolas Bussiere de Pouilly. It was the tri-caste social system, combined with the unifying influence of French culture that made such mutually beneficial collaborations possible. The relative advantages enjoyed by the *gens de couleur libre* were not enough for the ambitious Eugene Warburg, who aspired to achieve more acclaim than what he could ever receive in New Orleans. The hostile reaction of the New Orleans press to his success in Europe served as proof that

81 Brady, "Free Men of Color," 487.
Eugene was correct. The advantages of his social position enabled him to thrive in Europe though the financial means at his disposal and the important political and social connections of family friends. These advantages led to his being accepted into the École des Beaux Arts, as well as important commissions with prominent patrons. Daniel Warburg's career also provides an example of how the circumstances leading to the three-caste social system created a unique opportunity for a sculptor to thrive. Daniel's career however, continued after the system disappeared. Upon the demise of that three-caste social system, the former opportunities provided by it had changed, leaving an accomplished artist such as Daniel Warburg, to rely upon the strength of his abilities alone.
CHAPTER 5
CREATIVE ENDEAVORS: LITERATURE AND MUSIC

The visual arts were not the only avenue for aesthetic exploration by free people of color in New Orleans. A number of individuals are recognized for their accomplishments and contributions in the fields of literature and music. The dissatisfaction expressed by Eugene Warburg with the situation in Louisiana—the new era of American control and the growing racial intolerance he experienced—is also expressed in the works of writers such as Camille Thierry, Pierre Dalcour, B. Valcour and Victor Séjour. In general, the Gens de Couleur Libre who settled abroad, especially to Paris, achieved the greatest success. The greater opportunities available to them in France, paired with less racial discrimination, help to explain these accomplishments. Perhaps, however, other important factors towards achieving success have been overshadowed by the race of these artists. A person who is so driven by his creative calling that he willingly leaves his home and family in order to pursue that calling is far more likely to succeed.

In this chapter I will introduce the literature of B. Valcour and Victor Séjour as well as the musical accomplishments of Edmond Dédé, Lucien and Sidney Lambert and Victor-Eugene Macarty.

The Written Word

Literature, in particular, is rich with the contributions of the Gens de Couleur Libre. Edward Larocque Tinker’s Les Écrits de langue francaise en Louisiane (a compilation of French-language authors of nineteenth-century Louisiana) lists twenty-seven such writers.¹ In the early 1840s a small group of intellectuals, both white and black, began meeting to share their appreciation of the French written word. The unifying factor

¹ O’Neill, 63.
among members of this group was a French classical education. Poetry and prose that closely followed the French model were recited in the salons of New Orleans. In 1843 members of this group founded a literary journal, L’Album Litteraire des Jeunes Gens, Amateurs de Litterature, in which to publish their own work.\(^2\)

By 1845, this blossoming of the written and spoken word led to an enormous accomplishment. Les Cenelles, (The Mayhaws) a volume of poetry completely written by seventeen free men of color, was published that year. (fig. 48) Les Cenelles is notable as the first anthology of poetry by Americans of color. A respected teacher, Armand Lanusse, was the editor of the collection as well as a major contributor. Other prominent contributors include Camille Thierry and Pierre Dalcour. One particular contributor to Les Cenelles who later received the most widespread acclaim was Victor Séjour.\(^3\)

Thierry, Dalcour, and Séjour all left New Orleans and returned to France, where they had previously been educated. Thierry, whose family owned a liquor business in New Orleans, had been published in Louisiana newspapers, but yearned for the freedom France could provide.\(^4\) Dalcour was said to have found the racism he encountered in America unbearable. Séjour’s disdain for America was so strong that he


\(^3\) Porter, 9.

briefly returned to Louisiana, married a New Orleans octoroon, and then moved his new
wife and parents to Paris as well.  

*Les Cenelles* imitated the work of French Romantic poets in content, form and
style. In particular, *Les Cenelles* shared similarities with Beranger, Lamartine and
Hugo. The poems could just as easily have been written about places in France as in
Louisiana, with Lanusse making reference to the New Orleans system of placage.
Otherwise, little reference is made to New Orleans with the majority of the poems rather
focusing on the beauty of the Creole women. The fact that Lanusse chose the Séjour
poem "Le Retour de Napoleon," about the internment of Napoleon in Les Invalides for
this American publication helps to define the Francophile theme of the volume.

**B. Valcour**

Perhaps the contributions of the poet B. Valcour best explain the precarious social
position of the well-educated and creative *Gens de Couleur Libre* in New Orleans. In
*Les Cenelles* we find a Valcour poem entitled "The Louisiana Laborer," patterned after
the romantic style of the popular French poet Beranger. Valcour eloquently describes
the experience of being stifled and unappreciated in the land he considered to be his
home. After proclaiming his identification with the common people, a sentiment popular
in the literary circles of France at the time, Valcour then expresses his identification with

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6 Guillaume, 127.

7 O'Neill, 66.

8 Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 12.
Creole culture and Louisiana.\textsuperscript{9} A clear dual identification is heard through the lines, a love for a homeland in which the writer's place is precarious and uncertain.

Puis ils m'ont dit: vous devez vous render à la France, 
À voir son peuple, enseigner vous même leurs chansons. 
Pour alléger les souffrances de ses frères 
Ne jamais a-t-on besoin de chercher instruction, 
Mal compris fils de la Nouvelle-Orléans, 
Malgré ses nombreux défauts que j'aime-la toujours. 
Fidèle à mes terre je veux rester.

Then they said to me: you must go to France, 
To see her people, teach yourself their songs. 
To lighten the sufferings of one's brothers 
Never does one need to seek instruction, 
Misunderstood sons of New Orleans, 
Despite her many faults I love her still. 
Faithful to my land I want to remain.\textsuperscript{10}

Victor Séjour

Victor Séjour, the most important French language playwright ever to emerge from Louisiana, recalled his experiences of mixed racial heritage in his work. (fig. 49) Séjour was born in New Orleans to Heloise-Phillippe Ferrand, a Mulatto woman from New Orleans, and Juan Francisco Victor Séjour a free man of color from St. Domingue.\textsuperscript{11} His novelette, \textit{Le Mulâtre (The Mulatto)} is a tragedy involving a slave who murders his master, later realizing he was his father. \textit{Le Mulâtre} is the first published short story by an author of African ancestry born in the United States.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11} Werner Sollers, \textit{neither black nor white yet both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature}, (Cambridge: First Harvard University Press, 1997) 164.

\textsuperscript{12} Sollers,164.
Séjour became a well-known poet and playwright in France, a contemporary and associate of Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas père.\textsuperscript{13} Dumas, being the grandson of a French nobleman and a Haitian slave, provided a role model of a talented man of color who had experienced censorship and prejudice in his rise to fame. \textit{(fig. 50)} Having overcome these obstacles, Dumas naturally identified with the same challenges that Séjour now faced.\textsuperscript{14} Séjour benefitted greatly from this support, as well as from his association with Dumas. Séjour's play \textit{Le fils de la nuit}, which opened in Paris in 1856, was dedicated to Alexandre Dumas thereby making the connection (and mutual support) between the two publicly known.\textsuperscript{15}(\textit{fig. 51}) Some of Séjour's most famous plays are \textit{Les Noces Vénitienne}, (\textit{The Outlaw of the Adriatic}) 1855, and \textit{La Tireuse de Cartes}, (The Card Shark) 1859. Twenty-one of his plays were performed in Paris between 1844 and 1870.\textsuperscript{16} Séjour's twenty-five year playwriting career was exceptional, enjoying long runs and full houses as well as critical and popular success. He died in 1874 and is buried in Pére Lachaise cemetery.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Music}

The city of New Orleans is closely associated with music, but what springs to mind for the most part are the Nineteenth and Twentieth century styles of ragtime and jazz. That people of color made the majority of contributions to those musical styles is common knowledge. However, the contributions of Creoles to the classical music of the

\textsuperscript{13} Sollers, 164.
\textsuperscript{15} Michel Fabre, "New Orleans Creole Expatriates in France," in \textit{Creole}, 186.
\textsuperscript{16} O'Neill, 70.
\textsuperscript{17} Fabre, \textit{New Orleans Creole Expatriates in France}, 187.
nineteenth-century are less well known. As with the writers of the *Gens de Couleur Libre*, the individuals who went abroad achieved greater success than those who remained in New Orleans.

**Edmond Dédé**

Edmond Dédé was a New Orleans-born violin prodigy. (fig.52) He was born in 1829 of parents who had arrived in 1809 from the West Indies, specifically St. Domingue by way of Cuba.¹⁸ Whereas many mixed-blood Creoles could easily pass as white, Dédé was a dark man with distinctly African features.¹⁹ Thus it cannot be assumed that his success was due to his ability to "pass" as white. His father, Bazile Dédé, was the *chef de musique* of a local military unit and also his son's first teacher. It was soon apparent that young Edmond was a very special violin pupil indeed.

Both black and white teachers provided Edmond advanced instruction. Ludovico Gabici and Constantin Debergue were his early violin teachers. Gabici was the Italian-born orchestra leader of the St. Charles Theater, and Debergue was the free man of color who was the conductor of the local Philharmonic Society.²⁰ The Philharmonic Society conducted by Edmond's teacher Debergue is of particular interest because it was founded and staffed by Creoles of color, but included white musicians as well. These musicians were united by their educations and European cultural influences. Active in the late antebellum period, this large (one-hundred musicians), nontheatrical orchestra helped define the degree of influence of Creoles of color upon the culture of antebellum New Orleans. Another conductor of this orchestra, a free man of color

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¹⁸ Robert MacDonald, "Nineteenth Century Black Artists and Authors," *Louisiana's Black Heritage*, 79.


named Charles Richard Lambert, instructed Dédé in harmony and counterpoint, along with a white Frenchman named Eugene Prevost. Prevost worked as a conductor at the New Orleans French Opera and the Theatre d'Orleans, and was a winner of the 1831 Prix de Rome.²¹

The Dédé family must have had a simple and unassuming lifestyle. The father was a military band director, and the son, Edmond, when not taking music lessons, was a cigar maker. With such well-educated and respected advisors to influence him, it is no wonder that Bazille Dédé was persuaded to send his son Edmond abroad to reach his musical potential.

Deteriorating race relations in New Orleans may also have played a role in sending Edmond to Mexico in 1848. Forced by illness to return home three years later, Edmond published Mon pauvre Coeur, the first piece of sheet music to be published in New Orleans by a man of color.²²

By 1857, Edmond saved enough money to book his passage to Europe by working as a cigar maker, a job many local musicians used to pay the bills. His triumphs began almost immediately. According to Desdunes, Dédé was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire through the intervention of new friends in Paris.²³ These “friends” have been identified as his teachers Jean-Delphin Alard and Jacques-Francois Fromental Halevy, both Conservatoire members.²⁴ By 1859, Dédé moved to Bordeaux where an

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²¹ Sullivan, 75.
²² Fabre, Orleans Creole Expatriates in France, 76.
²³ Desdunes, 85.
²⁴ Sullivan, 76.
expatriate community of Louisiana Gens de Couleur Libre had settled. In 1864 he married Sylvie Anne Leflat, a Caucasian Frenchwoman. A long, productive career followed as the conductor of the Grand Theatre of Bordeaux, violinist and director at Rouen, and traveling stints to Algiers, Marseilles, and Paris. His ventures into the popular café-concert genre resulted in jobs as a theater-orchestra conductor for both the Alcazar and the Folies Bordelaises.

Apart from an American concert tour during the winter of 1893-94 that included a return appearance in New Orleans, Edmond spent the last years of his life in France. Edmond Dédé died in Paris in 1901. His prolific compositions include over two hundred and fifty songs and dances, ballets, ballets-divertissements, overtures, operettas, comic operas and a cantata. His talent and many accomplishments aside, the ease with which Dédé integrated himself into French life serves as another example of how the Francophile culture of New Orleans forged a camaraderie in France that overcame racial bias.

The Lambert brothers

The Lambert brothers, Lucien and Sidney, were Louisiana Creoles who also enjoyed thriving musical careers abroad. Their father was Richard Lambert, previously

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25 MacDonald, 79.
26 Fabre, New Orleans Expatriates in France, 191.
27 Sullivan, 76.
28 MacDonald, 80.
29 Fabre, New Orleans Expatriates in France, 194.
30 Sullivan, 77.
mentioned as one of Edmond Dede's early teachers in New Orleans, and a conductor of the multi-racial Philharmonic Society.  

Lucien, the older brother was the most prolific of the two, with at least forty published compositions listed by the Bibliothéque collection in Paris. He is documented to have moved to France by 1854, when his presence is noted in the magazine *L'Illustration*. At that time, he would have been in his mid-twenties. Although Edmonde Dede was the better-known musician, Lucien Lambert's compositions had a better rate of publication in Paris. Lucien's career as a composer and music teacher flourished, not only in France, but also in Brazil.  

Sidney Lambert, the younger brother, although less productive and innovative than Lucien, also enjoyed a prosperous career in both Paris and Portugal. Sidney Lambert served as the pianist for the royal court of Portugal and was decorated by the Portuguese king himself.  

**Victor-Eugene Macarty**  

Victor-Eugene Macarty was another musician of color who traveled to Paris to further his education. Victor-Eugene enjoyed the advantages of wealth and a good education. He was the son of Eulalie de Mandeville, a successful and wealthy octoroon woman who was the daughter of Count Pierre Philippe Mandeville de Marigny and Eugéne Macarty, a professional broker and businessman. Another advantage provided to Victor-Eugene was a stable family unit. Macarty's parents had a long-lasting

31  Leininger-Miller, 3.  
33  Sullivan, 83.  
34  Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*, 17.
relationship and were officially married in St. Augustine Catholic Church in 1845, regardless of the fact that mixed-race marriages were then illegal.\textsuperscript{35} He was admitted to the Imperial Conservatoire around 1840 through the intervention of Pierre Soule, the former New Orleans citizen and the United States ambassador to Spain. (This was not the only time Soule was to use his influences to improve the prospects of a Louisiana artist of color, he was later a vital force in the success of sculptor Eugene Warburg, discussed previously.) After his studies in composition, voice and harmony in Paris, Macarty returned to his home in New Orleans. There he demonstrated his versatility by embarking on a brief career as an actor, appearing in the plays \textit{Anthony} and \textit{La Tour de Nesle} by Alexandre Dumas père.\textsuperscript{36} His scant publications of sheet music following his return (only two self-published compositions) may serve as evidence of the few opportunities available for musicians and composers of color in New Orleans, if not all of America, in contrast to the opportunities that existed abroad.\textsuperscript{37} Macarty became a businessman, and following Reconstruction worked towards fighting discrimination in theatres in New Orleans.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Comments}

Francophile culture was the most important factor in the achievements of the \textit{gens de couleur libre} in literature and in classical music. In the early 1840s a group of New Orleans writers, both black and white, began meeting to share an appreciation of the French written word, united by their French classical education. Works from the


\textsuperscript{36} Fabre, \textit{From Harlem to Paris}, 17.

\textsuperscript{37} Sullivan, 84, Desdunnes, \textit{Nos homes}, 115.

\textsuperscript{38} Fabre, \textit{From Harlem to Paris}, 17.
resulting literary journal *L’Album Litteraire des Jeunes Gens, Amateurs de Litterature* and the all-*gens de couleur libre* publication *Les Cenelles* both closely followed French literary models.

The accomplishments of the musicians I have included were, once again were greatly aided by the strength of Francophile cultural alliances as well as from the favors of family friends with important social connections. As with the European accomplishments of Eugene Warbug, the musicians (such as Edmond Dédé and the Lambert brothers) who remained in France achieved greater success than those who returned to New Orleans, once again demonstrating the tendency to joyfully celebrate the accomplishments of a Frenchman rather than resent the accomplishments of a person of color. These talented *gens de couleur libre* had to choose between allegiance to Louisiana, the land of their birth, or the possibility of acceptance, critical acclaim and financial success in France.
CHAPTER 6
ARCHITECTURE AND THE DECORATIVE ARTS

Antebellum artisans in America were fulfilling the demand for quality goods. Louisiana in particular, as a major port city, attracted entrepreneurs from Europe and the northeast United States. These entrepreneurs were either sophisticated and affluent or aspired to be so. Clients wished to hire artists with good taste in order to produce possessions that would demonstrate not only their wealth but also their refinement and good taste. Furniture, in particular, was considered a notable indicator of social status, prosperity and refinement. As the port and surrounding city became more important, economic growth and its associated wealth increased the demand for fine furniture and decoration.¹

The extent of the role that black artisans played in the production of decorative arts in America is extremely difficult to gauge. Some examples of Louisiana architecture have traditionally been attributed to people of African descent, such as the "African House" (1735) found on Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches (fig.53) and the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans. Lack of documentation regarding these claims of the designers and builders responsible has led to speculation. Some architects, such as Joseph Abeilard, who was responsible for the design of riverfront buildings in the French Market, were not given credit for their accomplishments.² Research of furniture design and craftsmanship has been more fruitful. Although the majority of existing furniture is unsigned, research of the last three decades has begun to shed light upon a number of documented artisans in the antebellum period. The


² Mary Gehman, in Creole, 220.
creations of free men of color, especially those who owned furniture workshops or whose work was esteemed, were far more likely to have been signed or documented than the work of slaves.

Architectural

Economic growth created a demand for skilled architects. The antebellum period is considered to be a golden age for architecture in New Orleans. Joseph Abeilard, a free man of color, is noted as a valuable contributor to this pre-eminence, engaged in both architectural design and building for over forty years.\(^3\) Desdunes lists the \textit{Marché Bazaar} and the Sugar Sheds on the Mississippi riverfront as some of Abeilard's accomplishments. The \textit{Marché Bazaar} (or Bazaar Market) was designed by Abeilard and built by Wells and Company in 1870. The building was distinctively different from the other market buildings, being 180 by 88 feet of ironwork topped by decorative ventilation cupolas. A hurricane damaged the building so badly in 1915 it had to be demolished.\(^4\)

Desdunes praises the versatility and skills possessed by Abeilard, claiming that "he could create a plan as though he were an educated architect, select the correct materials as though he were a stonemason, and draw up an agreement as though he truly were a contractor. Next, he could execute these plans with the professional skill of a master builder." Desdunes also comments on the abuse Abeilard received from white builders who exploited him for his talents while taking credit for his works.\(^5\) Abeilard seems to have been well respected in his field, regardless of Desdunes' claims of others.

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\(^5\) Desdunes, 71-72.
taking credit for his work.\textsuperscript{6} Joseph Abeilard's brother Jules is also mentioned by Desdunes as a talented artist that assisted him in his designs and their execution. Desdunes notes that Jules left New Orleans for Panama and died there. Desdunes does not note the date of his death.\textsuperscript{7}

**Ironworking**

One traditional craft among the Creoles of color was ironworking.\textsuperscript{8} Like the many sculptors who paid the bills with utilitarian tomb building when not undertaking more ambitious sculptural commissions, iron workers could work on carriages, cookware or horseshoes when not undertaking the beautiful decorative ironwork New Orleans architecture is famous for. (Fig. 54) The balconies of many buildings feature complex and ornate examples of the ironworkers craft. The cemeteries also provided an opportunity for ironworkers to demonstrate their abilities. The St. Louis Cemetery No. II contains particularly fine examples of both cast and wrought iron work.\textsuperscript{9} Imaginative and intricate, this work could include gates, fences, plot borders and delicate wrought iron memorial wreaths.

In a cast iron creation the metal is cast in a mold that was formed around an original woodcarving. This type of ironwork is mass-produced in a foundry and leaves little opportunity for a skilled ironworker to express his creative abilities. Wrought iron, however allows a skilled metal worker to create a unique creation while exhibiting the degree of skill he possessed in his craft. Some of the oldest and finest examples of New

\textsuperscript{6} Mary Gehman, in *Creole*, 220.
\textsuperscript{7} Desdunes, 72.
\textsuperscript{8} Mary Gehman, in *Creole*, 220.
\textsuperscript{9} Wilson, 34.
Orleans wrought iron balcony work are found on the Cabildo (on Jackson Square) and
the Bosque House (617 Chartres St.,) both forged in the 1790's. The intricacy of the
work emulates the Rococo style, further evidence that the residents of the colony tried
to imitate the styles then popular in France.\textsuperscript{10}

In the book by Marcus Christian, \textit{Negro Ironworkers in Louisiana, 1718-1900}, the
contributions of these artisans, both free and slave, are chronicled. Christian notes the
high degree of skill possessed by the West Africans that made up much of the slave
population of Louisiana, as well as the influence of this knowledge upon the wrought
and cast iron trade of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{Furniture}

In furniture making, as in painting, the model New Orleans emulated was that
created in Europe- the more contemporary and current the style, the better. Southern
Louisiana was an especially good location for furniture makers. Property taxes on
residences were calculated according to the number of closets, which made armoires
even more desirable. Homes, especially those on plantations, featured large rooms with
soaring ceilings. Townhouses also featured very high ceilings in order to circulate air
and dispel heat. Rooms built on a large scale require large furniture, and artisans, many
of them people of color, possessed the necessary skills to provide such furniture.\textsuperscript{12}

As with the black Creole painters and sculptors, the many privileges of the three-
caste system, coupled with a strong Francophile identification, gave these black

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Raised to the Trade: Creole Building Arts of New Orleans}, The New Orleans Museum of Art,


\textsuperscript{12} Sharon Patton, "Antebellum Louisiana Artisans; The Black Furniture Makers," The International
craftsmen a greater opportunity to learn and develop fine decorative skills. Many Creoles may have apprenticed under Europeans, as they had in the fine arts. Their race was not a handicap when it came to those wishing to commission their services. Most furniture was unsigned, but the City Directory and the laws that required people of color to list their race along with their profession provide evidence of the plethora of black furniture makers.

Celestin Glapion is one such documented Creole furniture maker. A signed armoire attributed to him is constructed out of American black walnut and cypress, native woods that help to verify that the armoire was created locally. (fig. 55) Cypress was plentiful in Louisiana and had the added advantage of being water and rot resistant. When cypress was used it was often "faux grained" in order to resemble another, more exotic wood. Nails were not used and the furniture pieces were joined with wooden joints. The delicate rococo and Louis XV characteristics date this Celestin Glapion armoire around 1810-1815. The "feet" found on the delicate legs are called pieds de biche and are meant to resemble cloven animal hoofs. Many listings referring to an entire family of black furniture makers named Glapion can be found in the New Orleans City Directories for 1838, 1846, 1851 and 1852.

Most artisans in New Orleans learned their trades under a program of apprenticeship with a master craftsman. One of the best-known Creole furniture makers (meneusiers, or cabinet makers) in south Louisiana was Dutreuil Barjon, who operated

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13 Indenture contracts provide documentation of the common custom of apprenticeship, The Louisiana Division, City Archives of the New Orleans Public Library.

14 N.O.C.D.

15 Sharon Patton, 20.
from 1822-1843. Barjon apprenticed under another black cabinet maker, Jean Rousseu, who is recorded to have taken on thirty apprentices of color over fifteen years. Barjon in turn, sponsored nine apprentices over a period of seven years. Although most apprentices of color worked for master craftsmen of color, it was not always the case, and races often interacted freely throughout the furniture trade.\textsuperscript{16}

Prior to 1803, the majority of the furniture produced in Louisiana followed West Indies styles. After the Louisiana Purchase more Anglo American influences are apparent. What is referred to as "Louisiana Style" is a blending of Caribbean, European and Anglo styles. Above all, French styles prevailed.

Advertisements, complete with illustrations of furniture, show that Dutreuil Barjon followed the neoclassical design fashionable on the Continent. This mahogany armoire from 1840 is in the neoclassical, or empire style. (figs. 56 & 57) It is fashioned with a mahogany veneer over local yellow pine. Mahogany was imported from the West Indies. Large, imposing but restrained mahogany furniture was extremely fashionable in New Orleans from 1815-1848. Records also indicate that the Barjon family, like the Glapion family, passed the tradition of furniture making from one generation to the next.\textsuperscript{17} Records also record business alliances between white Europeans and \textit{gens de couleur libre} such as that between Christophe Voigt, a German furniture maker, and Dutreuil Barjon.\textsuperscript{18}

Little is known of the personal lives of these almost anonymous artisans, but what information exists shows fairly large numbers of them working in the antebellum period.

\textsuperscript{17} Sharon Patton, 20, 21.
It should be noted that the total number of antebellum furniture makers, both white and black, increased due to the economic expansion that was taking place in New Orleans during at this time. Starting in the 1850s, the number of Gens de Couleur Libre furniture makers began to decline. This decline in south Louisiana paralleled a similar decline of skilled black craftsmen in other parts of the South. The flood of mass-produced furniture was a factor, but certainly not the main cause. This diminishing number of Gens de Couleur Libre furniture makers was caused by increased hostility against free blacks, the passage of laws specifically designed to restrict their social privileges, and competition from an increasing immigration of whites.

Comments

Gens de Couleur Libre architects, furniture makers and ironworkers possessed a valuable skill greatly in demand. Many Creole artisans apprenticed under Europeans. Gens de Couleur Libre interacted freely with European artisans who were willing to engage them as apprentices to their trade. As with the Creole artists of color, the many privileges of the three-caste system coupled with a strong Francophile identification gave these black craftsmen a greater opportunity to learn fine decorative skills. The privileged social position of the gens de Couleur Libre helped them to obtain wealthy patrons but it was the high level of their skills that had a far greater impact on their success. In the mid-nineteenth century, the numbers of Gens de Couleur Libre furniture makers started to decline, a consequence of increased antagonism against free blacks.

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20 Sharon Patton, 59.
CHAPTER 7
THE INCREASE OF RACIAL TENSION AND THE CIVIL WAR

With the increased influx of Americans into the city, hostilities towards free people of color increased. Until the late 1830s, the large numbers of free people of color had made them a majority whose rights were largely uncontested, especially because of their financial importance in the community.¹ In the 1840s and 1850s, New Orleans was inundated with unskilled Irish and German immigrants. This immigration changed the Creole majority, while at the same time it fanned the flames of resentment that these whites harbored against the skilled black Creoles who had until then monopolized the market of skilled trades.² The black Creoles experienced particularly strong mistreatment as racial resentment increased. Because they comprised the largest, wealthiest and most articulate free black community in the South, the Creoles of color posed a powerful threat to the incoming Irish, Germans and Americans.³ Their perceived power was partly brought about because of the superior education of members of the elite free persons of color, along with the cultural sophistication and European connections they had forged.

Such a large number of free people of color led to increased uneasiness among whites because of the fear of revolt in addition to the disruption of the status quo between white and black. Many of these people were descendants of the influx of free people of color that arrived from Saint-Domingue after the 1792 slave revolts and this association fueled the fear of an uprising. Legal discrimination increased, with new

¹ Hirsh, 152.
² Foner,427.
³ Bell, 2.
restrictions consistently placed upon free people of color, including the disbanding of any black Creole societies, closure of free black schools and eventually any assembly of people of color.\textsuperscript{4} Manumission (the right of a slave owner to free a slave) was completely outlawed 1857. Many free people of color who could afford to do so left Louisiana for France or Haiti, where their rights as free men were uncontested and their Francophile culture was revered. \textsuperscript{5} Desdunes writes extensively about the indignities placed upon free people of color and subsequent voluntary exiles. \textsuperscript{6} The 1852 exodus of sculptor Eugene Warburg to Paris is one such example.\textsuperscript{7}

By the time Louisiana had seceded from the union in January of 1861, racial tensions ran high in New Orleans. The city teetered economically as well. Trade dwindled, imports declined, inflation rose and banks refused to loan money. On May 26, 1861, the Confederate States of America were informed that the port of New Orleans was blockaded from the sea. The trade that provided the life-blood of the city was terminated. Federal troops captured New Orleans on April 25, 1862.\textsuperscript{8}

The three-tiered caste system was now facing the threat of a quick decline. The free black Creole in New Orleans was now confronted with life in a society that was not receptive to his existence.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{4} Foner, 427.
\textsuperscript{5} Nystrom,19.
\textsuperscript{6} Desdunes, \textit{Nos hommes}, 109-112.
\textsuperscript{7} N.O.C.D., 1854, O’Neil, 75.
\textsuperscript{8} Reinders, 243,245.
\textsuperscript{9} Nystrom, 65.
The Union occupation of New Orleans established leaders such as Major General Benjamin Butler who was insensitive to, and perhaps even unaware of, the unique position Creoles of color had until then held in New Orleans society. This was not surprising since the three-caste social phenomenon was rare in the United States, with the exception of that in Charleston, South Carolina.¹⁰ Not only had the Creoles of color been toppled from their privileged, if tenuous, position but they now had to face the challenge of re-defining their very identity. The Creoles had always linked their identity to their cultural, rather than biological identification. Now they were occupied by an entity that did not acknowledge their French cultural heritage and which only recognized the biological fact that the Creoles, like the slaves the Union hoped to emancipate, had African blood in their veins.

The looming reality of emancipation of slaves if the war was lost by the Confederacy made the situation even more complex. Non-Creole free blacks, as well as slaves, were often deeply resentful of free Creoles of color. These diverse groups of blacks were deeply divided: by culture, class, occupations, education and even language. Rather than recognize their shared racial interests, they saw their differences as insurmountable obstacles.

In March 1907 the Creole New Orleans historian, Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes published a pamphlet entitled *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois "With Malice toward None."* Dr. W.E.B. DuBois was a northern black academic who had made, erroneous and in Desdunes judgement, general statements about Negros with disregard to history,

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¹⁰ Hirsh, 191.
culture and education.\textsuperscript{11} Desdunes addressed the quest for identity and the philosophical differences between these men of color, divided by so many factors brought about by the circumstances of their birth, "One aspires to equality, the other to identity, one hope, and the other doubts."\textsuperscript{12}

The lack of identity in a rapidly changing political situation, combined with a determination to maintain a semblance of the old tradition, led to seemingly contradictory allegiances among Creoles of color. Not only were there differences in idealism among the Creoles themselves, but evidence also shows that the Creoles swore allegiance to either side, according to what they considered to be most advantageous at the time. \textsuperscript{13}

At the start of the Civil War, many of the elite free people of color sympathized with the Confederate cause. Many black Creoles were slaveholders, so it is natural that they would want to protect their economic interests. In rural areas outside of New Orleans, free-black slaveholders organized militias to subdue slave uprisings.\textsuperscript{14} With this approach, by enforcing the control over enslaved blacks, some of the free people of color endeavored to keep their places in the system intact. Some scholars, notably historian Donald E. Everett, believe that this response was inspired by a hope that the Union military would establish Creoles of color as a political ruling class over the emancipated blacks. This argument is supported by the opportunistic nature of the

\textsuperscript{11} Desdunnes, \textit{Nos homes}, xvii-xix.

\textsuperscript{12} Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, a Few Words to Dr. DuBois: "With Malice Toward None" (New Orleans, 1907), 13.

\textsuperscript{13} Bell, 2-6.

support of the Creoles, who changed their allegiance from the Confederate to the Union cause.\textsuperscript{15} Another point of view differing from Everett’s is provided by Desdunes, who lauds the idealism of the free Creoles of color as idealistic patriots both before and during the reconstruction period.\textsuperscript{16}

Both arguments are challenged by the opinions of David Rankin. Rankin continues the stereotype of the elitist, Catholic, French-speaking and literate Creole of color, but he argues that these men were not trying to dominate whites in Louisiana. He states that it was their idealistic struggle for human rights that made it necessary for them to switch allegiance, aligning it with former slaves when their support was needed for the advancement of the cause.\textsuperscript{17}

A romanticized revolutionary fervor among the Creoles was fueled by the ideals of the French and Haitian Revolutions. This idealized political radicalism by Afro-Creole peoples is demonstrated in writings found in \textit{L’Union}, a French-language newspaper that began its publication in 1862. \textit{L’Union} expressed a radical republican vision of equality among the diverse racial and cultural groups in Louisiana.\textsuperscript{18} Now politics took on a dominant role for the free man of color in the Civil War and in the reconstruction period. Divided by their differences and motivated by their own agenda, elitist black creoles and emancipated slaves were united in their new mutual interests and concerns.\textsuperscript{19} As the most literate members of the black community, often having already

\textsuperscript{15} Everett, 64.

\textsuperscript{16} Desdunes, \textit{Nos hommes}, 121-123.

\textsuperscript{17} Bell, 5-6.

\textsuperscript{18} Bell, 8.

\textsuperscript{19} Hirsh, 190.
established mutually respectable relationships through business with whites, the Creoles of color where the natural choice for representatives of the black community.

Racial tensions increased in the period preceding the civil War. The large number of free people of color living in New Orleans created uneasiness among whites because of the fear of revolts by enslaved peoples encouraged by free people of color. Hostilities toward free people of color increased dramatically, with discriminations being legally implemented through increasingly harsh restrictions. The three-caste social system began its swift demise, leaving the *gens de couleur libre* at a loss as to their place in a new world. The Creoles had always linked their identity to their culture rather than race. By 1861 they were occupied by an entity that did not even acknowledge their French cultural heritage and which only recognized the biological fact that they, like the slaves to be emancipated, were people of African descent. Toppled from their always-nebulous position, the *gens de couleur libre* faced the challenge of re-defining their place in a new world.
The New Identity of Creole Artists of Color: the Effect of the Upheaval of the Three-Caste System

The many changes, "political, social and philosophical" from 1862 onward quickly and effectively disrupted the privileged and unique position of Creole free artists of color in New Orleans. Some changes were due to the loss of the Creole’s former cultural status; however, some changes, such as that made by printmaker Lois Lucien Pessou, were the result of his personal choice to follow a different path, namely, the art of the politics of Reconstruction. Whatever the reason, listings of artists of color all but disappear during the Reconstruction period.

I will now follow the antebellum artists I have previously discussed that survived into the reconstruction period, charting their courses through the momentous changes they experienced after the Civil War.

Jules Lion died in 1866, not very long after the end of the war. His hope for the publication of a book of lithographic portraits including the great men of Louisiana never materialized, a casualty of war. ¹

The three artists that I have included who were still working in New Orleans after the war are lithographer Lois Lucien Pessou, who died in 1886, and tomb sculptors Florville Foy and Daniel Warburg, who died, respectively, in 1903 and 1911.

Lois Lucien Pessou envisioned a greater purpose for himself after the Civil War. The politics of Reconstruction had created a need for literate, well-educated people of color to power the machine of the Reconstruction era Republican vision of Louisiana.

¹ East, "Jules Lion," 918.
Pessou left his position as senior partner in the *Pessou and Simon* printing company at the end of the war. The split from his business partner, Benedict Simon, was brought about because of Pessou’s intentions to become actively involved in reconstruction politics.\(^2\) Pessou's support of the Republican governor, Henry Warmoth, was probably responsible for his appointment to the "Position of births and deaths" in 1868, although he seems to have had no previous political or bureaucratic experience.\(^3\) A positive article in the *New Orleans Republican* praising his professional handling of this position followed the completion of his term. Another political appointment as "Ward Superintendent of Streets" quickly followed for Pessou. However, after the elections of 1868, when the French-speaking communities supported ex-slaveholders for political office, alliances between elite black Creoles and the Republicans collapsed, causing the Creoles to lose yet another esteemed position of power.\(^4\)

Pessou did finally return to lithography late in life, although examples of his later work are not to be found. The New Orleans City Directory of 1879 lists his occupation as "artist," and his place of business as his home.\(^5\) His choice to leave his art temporarily was not something forced upon him, but was rather a conscious choice related to his search for identity in the new post-Civil War world that he inhabited. He died on December 18, 1886.\(^6\)

\(^2\) Kellye M. Rosenheim, 178.

\(^3\) Nystrom, 69. *Jewell's Crescent City Illustrated*, xiii.

\(^4\) Bell, 5.

\(^5\) N.O.C.D., 1873-1875, 1879.

\(^6\) New Orleans Death Certificate (1886,) XC, 486.
Sculptors Florville Foy and Daniel Warburg both continued their work into the early twentieth century. These men and the probability for success differed from that of the other artists because they were craftsmen who possessed a valuable skill much esteemed in New Orleans. In post Civil War New Orleans, the cities of the dead became even more grand and opulent. Affluent families, many more of them now Americans, demonstrated their prosperity and importance in society with ostentatious tombs. The necessity of aboveground burials turned into an inspiration for creative artistic expression through the funerary arts. As the city grew, established cemeteries became crowded, and so the need for new cemeteries grew.

New Orleans cemeteries serve as physical, comprehensive examples of its cultural and social history. "American" New Orleanians, many of them Irish, Italian and German immigrants, desired cemeteries patterned after those found in the northeastern United States, with the green space of a garden. The monument industry flourished, with the opening of Cypress Grove in 1840 and Greenwood Cemetery in 1852. These cemeteries were upstaged in 1872 with the establishment of Metairie Cemetery, a grandiose undertaking incorporating 150 acres. Eighty acres of the cemetery were situated upon the site of the circular track of the former Metairie Race Track, a popular track for the indulgence of the Creole passion of horse racing. Metairie Cemetery exemplifies the fanciful and extravagant grandeur of the post-Civil War funerary arts, in which some of the tombs border on ostentatious displays of wealth. 

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8 Florence, 127, 137,163.
The success of sculptors Florville Foy and Daniel Warburg was apparently not affected by their race, but it was eventually thwarted by the advent of thriving capitalism in the monument industry. Because large companies could offer lower prices, they put smaller ateliers out of business. The advent of steam-operated machinery meant that work could be accomplished more quickly and the ability to import large quantities of stone meant lower prices. Independent firms, such as those of Foy and Warburg now had to struggle to compete. In addition, with the arrival of large corporate firms came generic, formulaic tomb design, with cookie-cutter results that were apparently satisfactory to many. However, one advantage that Foy and Warburg had was the fact that they remained artists. The enduring quality of their fine designs and the execution of their carving make this very apparent.

Florville Foy's business continued to succeed following the Civil War, even being listed prominently in a 1884-85 World's Fair publication. Foy owned a good deal of property, much of which he collected rent. This income must have been helpful in the support of his marble yard. Foy managed, against the odds of the large and aggressively competitive companies, to keep his sculpture company open until his death. Legal records testify to twenty years of Foy's financial finesse in mortgaging and transferring property in order to keep his business afloat through troubled times. These ploys were successful: in 1882, Foy still employed eight sculptors and a full-time

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9 Brady, Florville Foy, F.M.C., 17, Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders, 487.

10 Brady, Florville Foy, F.M.C., 17.

11 Brady, Florville Foy, F.M.C., 17.
manager, showing a record of $20,000 in transactions. \(^{12}\) The *Pen Illustrations of New Orleans, Trade, Commerce and Manufactures* list describes Foy’s marble works as one of the oldest and most reliable establishments in the South.

Documentation of other artists of color are difficult to find in the Reconstruction era of New Orleans, because of the insurmountable obstacles they faced. Florville Foy managed to overcome these obstacles through the quality of his work and his financial acumen. In a time when many Creoles of color failed in their endeavors for identity, Foy thrived due to the demand for his particular skill and his reputation for quality work.

Daniel Warburg also managed to continue working into the twentieth century, dying in 1911. Warburg managed to keep his artistic reputation intact, even as his business deteriorated. When large monument companies became impossible to compete with, many independent ateliers were forced to close, and in 1871 Daniel Warburg’s own workshop succumbed. Warburg was in the employ of Florville Foy for one year, and thereafter he moved from one monument company to another, as is documented by his signed tombs located throughout the cemeteries of New Orleans. \(^{13}\)

One advantage that Warburg had over other sculptors was that he was proficient in carving both marble and granite and granite had become the more fashionable material entering into the twentieth century. Many of Warburg’s later works in Metairie Cemetery were executed in granite and were completed while Warburg was in the employ of Albert Weiblen, who owned a large monument company. \(^{14}\) The quality and unique

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\(^{12}\) John Land, *Pen Illustrations of New Orleans, Trade, Commerce and Manufactures*, 1881-82. (This amount would be worth $446,000 in 2010 according to *The Inflation Calculator @ www.westegg.com*).

\(^{13}\) Survey of Historic New Orleans Cemeteries.

\(^{14}\) Brady, *Free Men of Color as Tomb Builders*, 487.
design of these granite tombs testify both to the skill of the sculptor as well as the to the existence of customers who preferred the exceptional creation of an artist to the uninspired conventional work typical of the large company. Warburg continued sculpting until shortly before his death, receiving acclaim for the quality of his work. The industrial boom in post-Civil War New Orleans may have destroyed Warburg’s own business, but race was not a factor. Warburg, like Foy, managed to continue to support his family with his craft until his death.

**The Slow Revival of Artists of Color in New Orleans**

Records of new artists of color in New Orleans after the Civil War dwindle to almost nothing. Jewell’s *Crescent City Illustrated* of 1873, in its “General Strangers’ Guide,” has no listings of artists at all, and only one commercial lithographer is included. The *Encyclopaedia of New Orleans Artists*, 1718-1918 lists a very few, but any existing record of their work or descriptive documentation of their work is scant. Most information is compiled by a comparison of census records, which list race, with the New Orleans city directory, which lists occupation. The majority of these people are listed as sculptors. Jacob Questy was active in 1880, listed in the directory as a "sculptor" and "marble cutter," which could signify that he did tomb-cutting work as well as fine arts sculptures. Henry J. Elliot was listed in the directory as a "sculptor" in

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15 Jewell’s *Crescent City, Illustrated.*

16 Encyclopaedia, 316. NOCD 1871-1875-77, 1880-83; U.S. Census (1870), roll 521.
1879. Also, in 1879, a listing is found for Moses Dunbar, "wood-carver," suggesting an artist, but not one necessarily working in funerary arts or tomb construction. 

A small flurry of artistic activity occurred in 1869, as is indicated by with an article about a work by Jean Baptiste Godfroi. Godfroi is officially listed as a painter, but the article describes a work of art that is far different from a typical two-dimensional work. Godfroi’s work is first described in the New Orleans Republican (sometimes listed by the title The Black Republican), a publication that would have been receptive to a black artist. The subject is of the invasion of the Union fleet into New Orleans, a subject that also would have been popular with the Republican party of the reconstruction period.

The short article reads:

We witnessed last month at the home of a humble colored man living in the Second District of this city, Jean Baptiste Godfroi by name, the most surprising piece of art and . . . which ever came to our notice. The work consists of a painting as perfect almost as a photographic view representing the sugar mart on the levee at the first time of the passing of the fleet, under Admiral Farregut, in front of the city. The whole scene is made singularly life-like by means of machinery, moving not only the ships in the water but many of the figures in the vast crowd assembled upon the levee who are seen hard at work removing and destroying the sugar. We understand the work is soon to be placed on exhibition, and we shall take the occasion to allude to it again . . . in detail . . ..

In November of the same year, an announcement that describes the same painting is published in the New Orleans Bee, perhaps on the occasion of the promised exhibition, although no venue is listed in the announcement. The article, titled "Automatic Panorama of the Capture of New Orleans," hails the piece as being true to

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17 Encyclopaedia, 126. NOCD 1866,1868,1870-80, 1882-86.
18 Encyclopaedia, 119. NOCD 1867,1871-74, 1876-79.
reality, depicting the movements of artillery, vessels and men, "about one hundred and fifty figures which seem to stand out in relief on a vast canvas, which is brilliantly lighted." 21

After these two newspaper notices, no further documentation is found of the work or whereabouts of Jean Baptiste Godfroi. The fact that Godfroi is no longer listed in the census or New Orleans City Directory after 1869, combined with a lack of a death certificate, suggests that Godfroi left the city. In his brief time in New Orleans, Jean Baptiste Godfroi received acclaim for his painting, but the work itself is described more as a fantastic "automated" attraction than as a serious work of fine art.

By 1872, the black painter Edward P. Cleary is documented to be working in the city. Much more documentation exists, Cleary being listed in the N.O.C.D. for twenty-nine years, from 1872-1901. In the directories, Cleary is usually classified as a painter, but sometimes is defined as: portrait painter, still life painter, sign and ornamental painter and an artist specializing in "japanning" and "ornamentation of objects." Cleary is documented as working at multiple business locations for different employers and was obviously an accomplished and multi-talented artist. 22

Most significantly, Edward Cleary exhibited his work to the public. He participated in the "Colored People’s Exhibit" of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition of 1884-85. Although no catalogue including names and titles was printed for the inauguration, Cleary’s paintings are specifically noted in the 1885 Daily Picayune article "Public Inauguration of the Colored People’s Exhibit." The article notes that "E.P.

21 The New Orleans Bee, November 30, 1869, p.1, col. 2.

22 Encyclopaedia, 80, NOCD 1872-1901, U.S. Census (1900), roll 575.
Cleary, of New Orleans, sends several good paintings, including a fruit and flower scene, an oil painting portrait of Louis Dubois, and a portrait of President Arthur."\(^{23}\)

Another publication from the fair titled *Practical Common Sense Guide Book through the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition at New Orleans*, while not lauding Cleary's work specifically, notes that the work of the artists of Louisiana are "quite remarkable," and worthy of special attention.\(^{24}\) The *Daily Picayune* states their opinion that the exhibits of colored people of the Southern States were superior to those from the North, and points out that people of both races viewed the works.\(^ {25}\)

While it is true that the "Colored People's Exhibit" at the Cotton Exhibition gave blacks, including black artists, an opportunity to showcase their skills, the overall attitude of the press was extremely condescending to people of color. The Cotton Exhibition claimed that a separate department for blacks was designed in order to "give the colored people an opportunity to show what progress they are making in the arts and sciences."\(^ {26}\) However, every accolade was combined with condescending commentary noting great surprise that people of color were even capable of creating such a "creditable presentation" and reporting with astonishment the "amazing evidence" of the progress of blacks.\(^ {27}\)

\(^{23}\) *The Daily Picayune*, February 24, 1885, p.3, col. 1-3.

\(^{24}\) Lane S. Hart, *Practical Common Sense Guide Book through the World's Industrial & Cotton Exhibition at New Orleans* (Harrisburg: Lane Hart,1885), 44.


\(^{27}\) Lane S. Hart, *Practical Common Sense Guide Book through the World's Industrial & Cotton Exhibition at New Orleans* (Harrisburg: Lane Hart,1885), 44.
The *Daily Picayune* was especially offensive in its coverage, delivering an insult with every compliment. The newspaper reported that the work of the colored people in many instances vied with the work of whites, while noting poetically how the colored race had progressed from a "little toddling dependant child" to the present time when people of color realized that they "might help themselves to talents, arts, industries and professions, that were before totally new to them."\(^{28}\)

The Colored People's Exhibit featured a marble sculpture by Edmonia Lewis titled "Hiawatha's Wooing." (fig.58) This sculpture, also called "The Old Arrow Maker and His Daughter," was inspired by Longfellow's poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. The sculpture features two full figures of Native Americans on a single base, with realistic native clothing and facial features. At this time, in 1884, Edmonia Lewis was probably the most distinguished black woman alive, and her sculpture played an important role in establishing the prestige of the exhibit. Ironically however, Lewis had left America, choosing to live in Europe to practice her art, settling in Rome in 1866, just as Daniel Warburg had previously done.\(^{29}\) While the *Picayune* grudgingly described the sculpture, which was located in the center of the pavilion, as "graceful" and acknowledged Lewis' talent, it chose to focus attention on the photograph of Lewis next to the sculpture. The photograph was described in the article as "an odd, not satisfactory Roman photograph of the sculptress," while Lewis herself was described as "small, slight, bright coffee-colored and most amiable in her manner, devoted to her art, and yet without being what

\(^{28}\) *The Daily Picayune*, February 24, 1885, p.3, col. 1-3.

one would call a cultivated woman."\textsuperscript{30} As was the habit of the time, Lewis was slighted as a person and her art was given only begrudging praise.

The "Colored People's Exhibit" of the World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition of 1884-85 represented a turning point for recognition of the accomplishments of people of color. Reviews of the publications regarding the event, however, are astonishing in the degree of prejudice demonstrated. Any advancement of people of color in the arts (as well as other endeavors) was hard won, with praise grudgingly given, to say the least. Obviously, a dramatic change had taken place since the days in which the New Orleans newspapers waxed eloquent over the accomplishments of free people of color.

\section*{Comments}

The demise of the three-caste social system of the \textit{gens de couleur libres} forced free people of color to re-identify themselves and their place in a society that no longer acknowledged their existence. Of the artists addressed in this study who outlived the reconstruction period, those to survive were the ones that provided a valued and needed skill, namely the funerary sculptors. The revival of artists of color after the Civil War was slow and nearly non-existent. The World's Industrial and Cotton Exposition's "Colored People's Exhibit" provided the first strong evidence of change, but the journalistic coverage was discouraging. Whereas the \textit{gens de couleur libres} had faced by this time a kind of reverse prejudice, a resentment of their "privileged" position in society and anger directed at their pretentious attitudes about the vastly superior cultural abilities of the French, the post Civil-War Negro now faced a smirking,
condescending prejudice that marveled at any accomplishment made by people of African descent as "amazing evidence" of their evolution. Any previous unification of people of mixed racial heritage through identification with French cultural heritage had been lost in the continued influx of other, non-French European immigrants and pro-American sentiment.

**Conclusion**

The tri-caste social system and predominant Francophile culture of antebellum New Orleans provided a fertile ground for the development of the accomplishments of *gens de couleur libres* artists. The cultural and political changes leading up to, and then halted by, the Civil War shattered the privileged position of Creoles of color, virtually obliterating their identity within New Orleans society.

During the antebellum period, Creoles of color, by their devotion to superior French culture and worldly education, had compelled respect. Tragically, after the war, they were included by default in the invisible, powerless cultural class of the newly emancipated slave. All of the artists covered in this research benefitted from the consequences of the tripartite caste system and allegiance to Gallic culture- either from a French education, from apprenticeships and business interactions with European immigrant artists (Italian, French and German-Jewish,) from strong Francophile alliances that led to commissions, and from a foundation of a well-established and sometimes wealthy family that allowed them to follow a career in the arts.

The few documented artists who kept their positions as respected artists intact after the Civil War were those such as tomb sculptors and lithographers who possessed skills that were in demand. The eventual decline in their success was due to factors
other than their racial heritage, such as career choices brought about by racially motivated political changes or the influx of large corporations into the funerary industry.

For a short period of time a unique set of circumstances provided a perfect environment for the cultivation of these artists among the *gens de couleur libres* in a country where most people of African ancestry faced a hostile environment. A unique flowering of creativity occurred, inspiring admiration for artists of color not to be found again in America until the Harlem Renaissance.
Figure A-1. Portrait of a Man, Called a Self-Portrait by Julien Hudson: 1839, oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Collections of Louisiana State Museum 07526B

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Figure A-9. William Charles Cole Claiborne II By Jean Joseph Vaudechamp, 1831, oil on canvas Accessed 2/12/12, http://louisdl.louislibraries.org
Figure A-10. Madame Clara Durel Forstal and Eugène Forstall By Jean Joseph Vaudechamp, 1836, oil on canvas Accessed 2/12/12, http://louisdl.louislibraries.org
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Figure A-21. Achille Lion By Jules Lion, between 1837 and 1847, lithograph, courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum, accessed 2/12/12, http://www.worcesterart.org
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Figure A-23. The Cathedral of New Orleans By Jules Lion, 1842, lithograph, courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum
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Figure A-33. Adam Tomb By Florville Foy, 1866, marble (St. Louis I Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
Figure A-34. Abat Tomb, Detail By Florville Foy, 1851, marble (St. Louis II Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker

Figure A-35. Fernandez Tomb, Detail By Florville Foy, Date unknown, marble (St. Louis II Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
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Figure A-41. Holcombe-Aiken Column, Detail By Daniel Warburg, 1904, marble (Metairie Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
Figure A-42. Lob Family Monument By Daniel Warburg, 1905, granite (Metairie Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
Figure A-43. Lob Family Monument, Detail By Daniel Warburg, 1905, granite (Metairie Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
Figure A-44. McLean Monument By Daniel Warburg, 1905, granite (Metairie Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
Figure A-45. McLean Monument, Detail By Daniel Warburg, 1905, granite (Metairie Cemetery). Photograph courtesy of Walter Coker
LES
CENELLES.

Choix de Poésies indigènes.

Et de ces fruits qu’un Dieu prodigue dans nos bois
Heureux, si j’en ai su faire un aimable choix!

A. MERCIER.

NOUVELLE ORLEANS.
Imprimé par H. Lauve et Compagnie.

1845.

Figure A-46. Les Cenelles, Choix de Poésies indigènes, (title page) 1845. Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. ID# 1169589. Accessed 4/20/12 http://www.inmotionaame.org
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Karen Burt Coker attended Louisiana State University where she received a BFA in printmaking in 1979. She continued her studies at the University of Florida where she received a BFA in photography and a Master of Arts in Art Education in 1990. Since that time, she has taught both secondary and post-secondary classes in both public and private schools in Florida.