Still Rising:

Free People of Color

in St. Landry Parish

Lesson Plan:
Grades 7-12

Image Credit: Alex Genealogy

OPELOUSAS MUSEUM
& Interpretive Center
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ST. LANDRY PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

"Still Rising: Free People of Color in St. Landry Parish from 1700-1865"

Lesson Overview

Grades 7-12

Free People of Color in the pre-Civil War Era made important contributions to our culture, economy, and government policy. Through images, text, and maps, The Opelousas Museum and Interpretive Center provides the unique opportunity to explore the lifestyle, trades, and heritage of Free People of Color from our very own St. Landry Parish. During their visit, students will engage with primary and secondary sources to build understanding of how despite precarious conditions-- freedom with limited rights--Free People of Color thrived, leaving important legacies that influenced lives and helped establish our local identity.

Students will complete the first instructional task prior to visiting the museum's exhibit. The 2nd lesson will serve as an extension task allowing them to reflect on their learning after delving deeply into the content. The goal is for students to be able to develop and support claims regarding the legacy of free black communities in St. Landry Parish and their influence in understanding both the past and the present.

Instructional Task #1: Free People of Color in Louisiana (Day 1)

- Restrictions and Privileges (Jigsaw Activity)
    - Social, Political, and Economic aspects

Instructional Task #2: St. Landry Parish Free People of Color Extension Task (Day 2-post visit)

- Source Analysis (Gallery Walk)
    - Compare/contrast previous learning with new knowledge gained from museum visit
- Extended Response Writing Task

Day 1

***OPTIONAL Reference for Teachers**: Teachers may refer to *Free People of Color from the Early American Period to the Civil War* by Elizabeth Clark Neidenbach (64 Parishes.org) to provide background knowledge prior to teaching the lesson.

1. Write the words *Free People of Color* on the board and read or project the following definition: *Free People of Color constituted a diverse segment of Louisiana's population and included people that were born free or enslaved, were of African or mixed racial ancestry, and were French-or English-speaking.* (*64 Parishes.org*). OPTIONAL: Have students annotate the definition with a partner. Each partner group should rewrite the definition in his or her own words and be prepared to share with the class.
2. After students have shared partner definitions, explain that you will be focusing on the Free People of Color in the South (Louisiana—St. Landry Parish) from the French colonial period through the Civil War. During this task, students will examine the legal and social restrictions, as well as the freedoms afforded to Free People of Color throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

***Key Terms: *manumission, "gens de couleur libres", coartacion*

3. Provide students with access to *Free People of Color* by Elizabeth Clark Neidenbach (64 Parishes.org) on pages 3-8. Students should engage in partner reading of the first 3 paragraphs. Then, using Think-Pair-Share strategy, have them respond to the following discussion questions:
    A. Describe the various jobs Free People of Color had at this time. What does this reveal about this diverse segment of Louisiana's population?
    B. What does the author mean by "radicalized status" in the 3rd paragraph?
    C. Explain what is meant by the following statement, "Most of Louisiana's free people of color were French-speaking, and many of them referred to themselves as Creoles."
    ***Refer to "Creoles", by Shane K. Bernard (64Parishes.org) for clarity regarding the evolution of this term's meaning.
4. Discuss responses in a whole class setting, then use the Jigsaw strategy to group students (home groups of 4). 1 student from each home group will join an expert group to read and annotate a section of this document (Jigsaw Strategy guidelines located at the end of the lesson plan).
    Group 1: read and annotate French Colonial Period section
    Group 2: read and annotate Spanish Colonial Period section
    Group 3: read and annotate Early American Period section
    Group 4: read and annotate Pre-Civil War Period section
5. SUGGESTION: Annotation strategy--direct students to read with a purpose using *Text Coding*: **P**-privilege, **R**-restriction. While working in expert groups, students should indicate key information on their group's section of the graphic organizer (Page 9).
6. Privileges and Restrictions should be organized by the following key theme connections on the graphic organizer: **Economic**, **Political**, or **Social**.
7. Students then return to their home groups and share content they've gleaned from their expert groups' sections of the document with the other students in their home groups. Students will complete the entire graphic organizer after learning new information from their peers.

Day 1 Exit Ticket: **How did restrictions and freedoms of Free People of Color change over time?** ***Answers should mention that cultural and class differences remained even after the passage of the 13th Amendment. Free men of color led the struggle for racial equality and fought for voting rights for all black men. Evidence such as political activism, serving in the Union Army, and the fight for rights as American citizens should also be discussed.

Free People of Color

Free people of color constituted a diverse segment of Louisiana's population and included people that were born free or enslaved, were of African or mixed racial ancestry, and were French- or English-speaking

BY ELIZABETH CLARK NEIDENBACH

COURTESY OF THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION.
Portrait of a Free Woman of Color by François Jacques Fleischbein.

Free people of color formed a distinctive segment of Louisiana's population from the French colonial period through the Civil War. By the mid-nineteenth century, the state had the largest number of free Black people in the Deep South as well as some of the wealthiest. The majority of free people of color resided in New Orleans and spoke French as their first language. French-speaking free people of color (*gens de couleur libres* in French) also lived in rural areas, especially in St. Landry, Natchitoches, Pointe Coupee, and St. Martin Parishes. By the Civil War free Louisianans of color had developed thriving and visible communities that included planters, poets, artisans, musicians, teachers, farmers, entrepreneurs, landlords, retailers, clerks, and nuns.

Within Louisiana's slave society, free Black people inhabited a middle stratum between enslaved people of African descent and free white people. Their freedom was accompanied by a set of privileges denied to enslaved people, including property ownership, education, freedom of movement, and use of the legal system. Yet, white lawmakers denied free people of color political participation and subjected them to legal restrictions and discriminatory treatment based on their race. Laws governing the rights and behaviors of free people of color varied over time, becoming more restrictive during the nineteenth century after Louisiana became part of the United States.

The term "free person of color" was a legal category indicating a racialized status. The individuals to whom this label applied were diverse. Free people of color in Louisiana could be African-born or born in the Americas. They could be formerly enslaved or born free. They may

have been of only African ancestry or of mixed racial ancestry—African, European, and/or Native American. Most of Louisiana's free people of color were French-speaking, and many of them referred to themselves as Creoles. A smaller proportion of free people of color spoke English as their first language; they were often referred to as "Americans" and likely came to Louisiana from another state.

French Colonial Period: 1718–1769

Louisiana's free people of color population originated in the colonial era. The earliest record of a free Black person in New Orleans dates from 1722, three years after the first ship arrived with enslaved Africans to French Louisiana. The *Code Noir*, a set of laws enacted in 1685 for the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue (Haiti) and adapted to Louisiana in 1724, recognized the category "free person of color." Louisiana's version included measures meant to discourage the development of a large free Black population. Manumission—when an enslaver legally freed an enslaved person—required approval from the Superior Council, Louisiana's judicial body. The code prohibited marriages and "other" relationships between white and Black people. Records from the period indicate, however, that such relationships did occur and that colonial authorities had difficulty enforcing this law. In addition free people of color could be re-enslaved if found assisting enslaved individuals who freed themselves by running away.

Despite *Code Noir* restrictions, a slow growth in the numbers of free people of color in New Orleans and the surrounding area resulted from manumissions, natural increase, and immigration. Some of the earliest free Black inhabitants came to Louisiana as free people. Marie Baude, for example, traveled to New Orleans from Senegal in 1728 to reunite with her French husband. Yet, most free people of color during the French colonial period experienced enslavement. Louis Connard, his wife Catherine, and their four children were owned by Jacques Coustilhas, who manumitted the enslaved family in his will. Following the death of Coustilhas, Connard successfully petitioned Governor Bienville to approve his family's freedom in 1739.

Manumission records indicate that enslaved women and children gained their freedom more often than enslaved men. In some cases, a relationship existed between the male enslaver and the manumitted woman and children. French men frequently had coercive contact with enslaved women. This could develop into long- or short-term relationships, and sometimes the enslaver freed his relationship partner and/or their children. Because the status of children followed that of their mother, the free Black population grew as enslaved women gained their freedom and had children.

Some enslaved men received their freedom for performing necessary services for the government. Louis Congo negotiated for his freedom in exchange for serving as the colony's executioner. François Tiocou gained freedom for militia service with the French in retaliation for the 1729 Natchez Revolt.

Spanish Colonial Period: 1769–1803

The number of free people of color increased significantly in Spanish Louisiana. Scholar Shannon Dawdy estimates that by the end of the French period there were 400 to 800 free people of color in New Orleans and the surrounding area. Forty years later this number reached more than fifteen hundred. Frontier regions like Attakapas, Opelousas, and Natchitoches also saw small, growing numbers of free Black people during the Spanish period.

This dramatic growth was due to Spanish policies that encouraged the development of a free Black population in the colony. Compared to the French, the Spanish made it easier for enslavers to manumit an enslaved person. No longer requiring government approval, freedom could be granted through notary acts or wills. Some enslavers voluntarily manumitted their bondspeople without any compensation. Others required additional service before freedom was fully granted.

Under Spanish law, enslaved people had the right to initiate their own manumissions through a self-purchase process known as *coartación*. The Spanish, unlike the French, also allowed enslaved men and women to own personal property, including money made from selling goods or services performed on their own time. Working as a cooper, Noel Carriere purchased his freedom in 1771. Margarita Trudeau, who retailed goods, bought her son's freedom in 1782.

Through hard work and determination, enslaved people used these laws to their advantage. Between 1771 and 1803, 1,921 men, women, and children gained their freedom through voluntary manumissions and self-purchase in New Orleans. *Coartación* accounted for most of these emancipations.

More women than men gained their freedom through all manumission methods. In New Orleans free women of color outnumbered free men of color throughout the colonial era and into the nineteenth century. This demographic situation contributed to the regular occurrence of relationships between white men and women of African descent. In some cases, these relationships lasted years and functioned much like marriages.

Partnerships between men and women of color were also common. In the Spanish period increasing numbers of free Black partners began to marry in the Catholic Church, a trend that was widespread by 1830. In 1778 Marianne Thomas, the daughter and granddaughter of free people of color, married Noel Carriere, a captain in the free Black militia. The free status of the couple's ten children was built on three generations of freedom in Louisiana.

Free people of color in Spanish New Orleans were often skilled property owners. Common professions for men included carpentry, construction, ironworking, and making furniture, shoes, and clothes. Women worked as seamstresses, laundresses, midwives, tavern keepers, boardinghouse keepers, and retailers, among other jobs. They commonly invested the income from these occupations in property, owning land, homes, and sometimes enslaved people. Property ownership provided free Black people financial security and a way to build multigenerational wealth. When free Black baker Francisca Montreuil died in 1803, her children and grandchildren inherited five enslaved people, a house in New Orleans, two plantations, farm animals, and furniture.

In addition to property ownership, free people of color used the militia and the Catholic Church to strengthen their family ties and social connections to each other. The Spanish enlarged the free Black militia in New Orleans to include more than 450 members by 1801. Militia members defended the colony, assisted in emergencies, and pursued enslaved people who found freedom by running away. Militia membership enabled a group identity and social networks to develop, which were bolstered through business partnerships, marriages, and godparentage.

Marriages and baptisms were the domain of the Catholic Church, an institution in which enslaved and free women of African descent found influence and empowerment in the colonial period, participating as parishioners, having their children baptized, and serving as godmothers. Baptism and marriage rituals reinforced the friendship and kinship ties forged by free people of color among themselves and with white and enslaved people.

Early American Period: 1803–1820

When American officials arrived in New Orleans in 1803, they found a sizeable French-speaking free Black community with rights and customs uncommon in other parts of the United States. Anglo-Americans viewed free people of color with suspicion, especially companies of armed militiamen. They feared the possibility of enslaved and free people of African descent joining together in rebellion, like in the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).

In 1806 and 1808 white lawmakers passed the first of numerous legal restrictions enacted against free people of color under American rule. These laws made manumissions more difficult; attempted to bar free Black people from moving to Louisiana; ended the free Black militia; limited how much the children of unmarried parents could inherit; and required the description “free man/woman of color” be included in all official documents.

A challenge to American officials’ efforts to limit the free Black population occurred from 1809 to 1810. More than 10,000 refugees from Saint-Domingue relocated to New Orleans from Cuba, doubling the city’s total population. Approximately 3,000 free Black Saint-Dominguans, mostly women and children, tripled the free people of color population. In 1810 New Orleans contained almost 5,000 free people of color, making up close to twenty-nine percent of the city’s total population, a far higher proportion than any other city in the South.

Lawmakers also reconsidered their dissolution of the free Black militia. Following the German Coast insurrection led by enslaved plantation workers in 1811, the militia was reinstated the next year. During the War of 1812, free men of color were called upon to defend New Orleans against the British. Two free Black battalions, which included 353 New Orleanians and 256 Saint-Dominguans, fought for the United States in the 1815 Battle of New Orleans.

Pre-Civil War Period: 1820–1862

In the years after the Battle of New Orleans Louisiana experienced tremendous economic growth, underpinned by the expansion of slavery. This rapid development during the first half of the nineteenth century provided free people of color opportunities to increase their assets. Most individuals owned small amounts of property, but some became quite wealthy. In 1861 merchant tailor François Lacroix had a real estate portfolio worth more than $200,000 (over six million dollars in 2022). Andrew Durnford enslaved seventy men, women, and children on a large plantation in Plaquemines Parish valued at $161,000 in 1850 (about five million dollars today).

This period also saw major demographic changes. Large numbers of Anglo-Americans from other states and immigrants from Europe relocated to Louisiana while the domestic slave trade forced the movement of enslaved men, women, and children from the Upper South to Louisiana to labor on a growing number of plantations. These changes negatively impacted free men and women of color. As the number of free people of color in Louisiana continued to grow, reaching its peak in 1840, local and state lawmakers passed additional measures to limit the population and create more racial boundaries.

Faced with increasing discrimination, free people of color began to develop their own institutions in the 1830s and 1840s. In New Orleans French-speaking free people of color created religious organizations, literary societies, mutual aid organizations, and schools. Henriette Delille founded the Sisters of the Holy Family, a Catholic order of nuns between 1836 and 1852. Free men of color formed mutual aid societies, including the *Société des Artisans* (1834) and the *Société d'Economie* (1836). In 1847 a group of men led by François Lacroix founded *L'Institution Catholique des Orphelins Indigents*, a school created in fulfilment of a bequest by Marie Couvent. With their family connections and social networks, these collective institutions further strengthened associations among Francophone free people of color.

The nineteenth century also saw the development of an English-speaking population of free people of color in New Orleans, consisting of formerly enslaved people who arrived through the domestic slave trade as well as free Black migrants. These men and women also created institutions, including Protestant churches and Masonic lodges. They remained mostly separate from the larger French-speaking, Catholic free Black community.

Outside of New Orleans, St. Landry and Natchitoches Parish had the largest numbers of free people of color. Rural free Black populations originated in the Spanish period. The first generations were often the children of formerly enslaved women and white men. Their descendants usually married other free people of color, forming extended family units that owned farms and plantations. The Isle Brevelle community in Natchitoches is one notable example. Founded by the children of Marie Thérèse CoinCoin and Frenchman Claude Pierre Metoyer, Isle Brevelle contained eighty-nine families in 1860. They owned thousands of acres and hundreds of enslaved people. Rural free people of color also built their own spaces of worship and education. Augustin Metoyer, the son of CoinCoin and Metoyer, erected a Catholic church in Isle Brevelle in 1829. Free children of color in St. Landry Parish attended the Grimble Bell School.

In the decade before the Civil War, free Louisianans of color experienced repressive laws, racially motivated violence, and vilification by the media. In the southwestern parishes, white "vigilante committees" shut down the Grimble Bell School and used violence to force free Black residents to leave. In addition to laws that circumscribed their rights, free men and women of African descent in New Orleans faced competition in the labor market from the influx of European immigrants to the city. Some families left Louisiana for better treatment and opportunities in places like Mexico, Haiti, and France.

Conclusion

The Civil War radically changed the social, political, and economic conditions of free people of color in Louisiana. The passage of the 13th Amendment dissolved the categories of "slave" and "free person of color," but cultural and class differences remained. During the Civil War and Reconstruction, free men of color led the struggle for Black civil rights and racial equality. Following federal occupation of New Orleans in 1862, free men of color successfully pressed to serve in the Union Army, established newspapers to espouse their political views, and fought for the right to vote for all Black men. Their political activism continued after the war. Men like French-speaking Louis Charles Roudanez and English-speaking Oscar J. Dunn sought to ensure that all Black Louisianans enjoyed their rights as American citizens in what can be considered the first civil rights movement.

Author

Elizabeth Clark Neidenbach

Jigsaw Graphic Organizer

Expert Groups	Privileges	Restrictions
French Colonial Period	Economic— Political— Social--	Economic— Political— Social--
Spanish Colonial Period	Economic— Political— Social--	Economic— Political— Social--
Early American Period	Economic— Political— Social--	Economic— Political— Social--
Pre-Civil War Period	Economic— Political— Social--	Economic— Political— Social--

Jigsaw Graphic Organizer-Answer Key (answers may vary)

Expert Groups	Privileges	Restrictions
French Colonial Period	Economic—Some free people of color received freedom in exchange for performing services Political— Despite Code Noir restrictions, there was a slow growth of free people of color in New Orleans and surrounding area during this period Social—enslaved women and children gained their freedom more often than enslaved men	Economic—Most free people of color during the French colonial period experienced enslavement which prohibited economic advancement Political— Freeing an enslaved person required approval from Superior Council/Code Noir Social—marriages between white and black people were prohibited
Spanish Colonial Period	Economic—They could earn money made from selling goods and own personal property Political— Enslaved people had to right to initiate manumission through self-purchase. Freedom could be granted through wills or notary acts Social—free people of color used the Catholic church to strengthen family times and social connections	Economic—Even though some enslavers voluntarily manumitted their bondspeople without compensation, many others required additional service before they'd consider granting freedom Political—Fewer men gained their freedom through manumission methods than women Social—Militia members had to pursue enslaved people seeking freedom by running away
Early American Period	Economic—Free people of color made up close to 29% of the total population of New Orleans in 1810—a higher proportion than any other city in the South Political—Following the German Coast Insurrection, the militia was reinstated and free men of color fought for the U.S. in the Battle of New Orleans Social—Approximately 3000 free Black Saint-Dominguans, mostly women and children, tripled the free people of color population	Economic—The laws limited how much children of unmarried parents could inherit Political—White lawmakers passed numerous legal restrictions enacted against free people of color in 1806 & 1808 Social—Anglo-Amerians viewed free people of color with suspicio, especially companies of armed militiamen
Pre-Civil War Period	Economic—Most individuals owned small amounts of property and some became quite wealthy Political—Free people of color developed their own institutions, mutual aid organizations, and societies that strengthened their assiciations Social—Creation of Protestant churches, Catholic churches, schools, and masonic lodges	Economic—Domestic slave trade forced enslaved men, women, and children to labor on plantations Political—Local & state lawmakers passed additional measures to limit population and create more racial boundaries Social—White "vigilante committees" shut down the Grimble Bell School and used violence to force free Black residents to leave

Day 2:

8. Quick write: Based on your visit to the museum, how has your perspective on Free People of Color changed? Explain your answer.
9. Have students access Sources A-F.
10. Gallery Walk: Using this discussion technique will allow students to actively engage with primary sources as they move about the classroom in small groups sharing ideas and responding to meaningful questions. As students visit each station, they will add to peers' thoughts providing their own insight while initiating new questions/ideas. (Gallery Walk strategy steps located at the end of the lesson plan for teacher support)
    1. Station 1—Source A, "Free Man of Color" Passport from the Historic New Orleans Collection. Students will respond to the following questions:
        A. Why was this "passport" carried by a Free Man of Color?
        B. What might happen if a free person of color did not have his or her "passport" on hand when asked to produce it?

    2. Station 2—Source B, Bellazaire Meullion receipt for shares
        A. Students provide a one sentence summary for Source B (#hashtag).
        B. Based on what you've learned about racial boundaries created during the Pre-Civil War Period, what does this source reveal about free people communities in St. Landry Parish during this time? (*Students may want to refer back to the source from Day 1 from 64Parishes.org)

    3. Station 3—Source C, Sambo Mellestre Manumission Paper
        A. Paraphrase--in your own words, what content is revealed in Source D?
        B. How does this source differ from Sources A & B in terms of social and political freedoms and restrictions?

    4. Station 4—Source D, Bellazaire Meuillion Amnesty Oath
        A. Why would Meullion sign this loyalty oath?
        B. How would this impact involvement in Reconstruction-era politics?

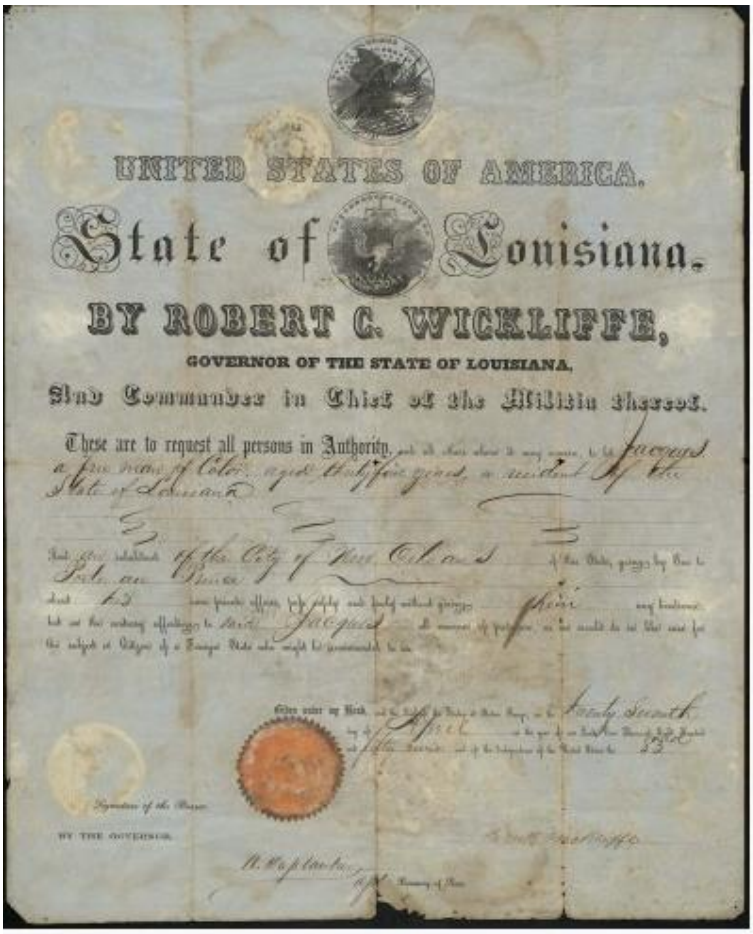
    5. Station 5—Source E, Jean Baptiste Meullion wagon and harness sale
        A. What is significant about Meullon's purchase?
        B. What does this source reveal about his economic standing as opposed to other regions at this time?

    6. Station 6—Source F-Donatto House 1921/today
        A. Study the image of Dr. B. D. Donatto's dentist office (1921) and the photo of this building in Opelousas, Louisiana, today. How have free persons of color's prosperity and persistence impacted St. Landry Parish's identity today?

11. Extended Response Writing Task: Refer back to the source entitled, *Free People of Color* from Day 1 instructional task, as well as Sources A-F for appropriate evidence. Respond to the following: *Based on the sources examined in class and during the museum visit, explain how free people of color influenced the social, economic, and political changes that impacted the community of St. Landry Parish over time.*

Source A: Jacques, Free Man of Color Passport, 1858 April 27

Partially printed passport, with handwritten entry for "Jacaues," a free man of color, issued by the State of Louisiana for a trip to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, inludes embossed red seal and signatures of Governer Robert C. Wickliffe and Assistant Secretary of State A. Duplantier.



Jacques, Free Man of Color passport, 95-28-L, Williams Research Center, The Historic New Orleans Collection. Free people of color had to carry such documentation as evidence of their free status.

Transcribtion of the Passport provided by Sarah Senette:

State of Louisiana

by Robert C. Wickliffe

Governor of the State of Louisiana

and Commander in Chief of the Militia in thereof

These are two request all persons in authority and all others to it may concern, to let Jacquez a free man

of color aged 35 years, a resident of the state of Louisiana and an inhabitant of the city of New Orleans

of this state Going by sea to Port-au-Prince About his private affairs safely and freely without giving him

any hindrance but On the contrary affording to said Jacquez all manner of protection as we would do in like case for the subject of a citizen of a foreign state who might be recommended to us given under my hand the seal of the state and Baton Rouge on the 27th day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand, eight hundred, and fifty nine, and the independence of the United states the 83 rd.

Signature of the bearer

by the Governor

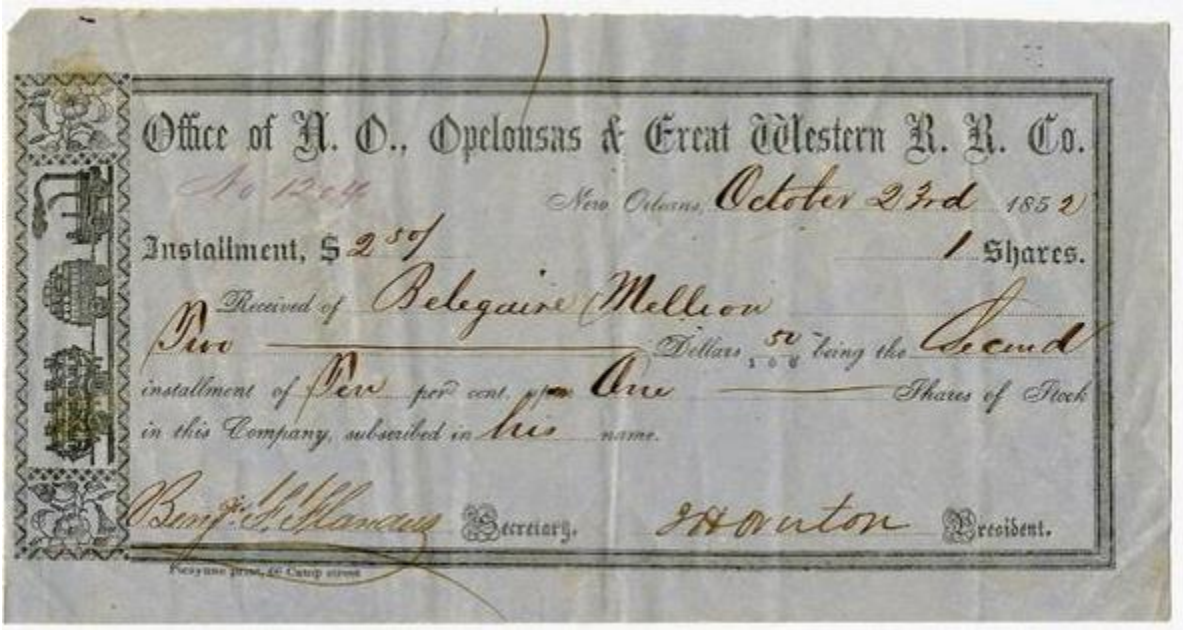
A. Duplantis

apt. Secretary of State

Source B:

Bellazaire Meullion receipt for shares in New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Co., 1852 October 23

Louisiana State University Libraries, Special Collections, Hill Memorial Library, Baton Rouge, LA


Office of N. O., Opelousas & Great Western R. R. Co.
No 1264
New Orleans, October 23rd 1852
Installment, $2 50/100 1 Shares.
Received of Belegaire Mellion
Two Dollars 50/100 being the Second
installment of Two per cent. on One Shares of Stock
in this Company, subscribed in Her name.
Benj. E. Flanders Secretary. H Morton President.

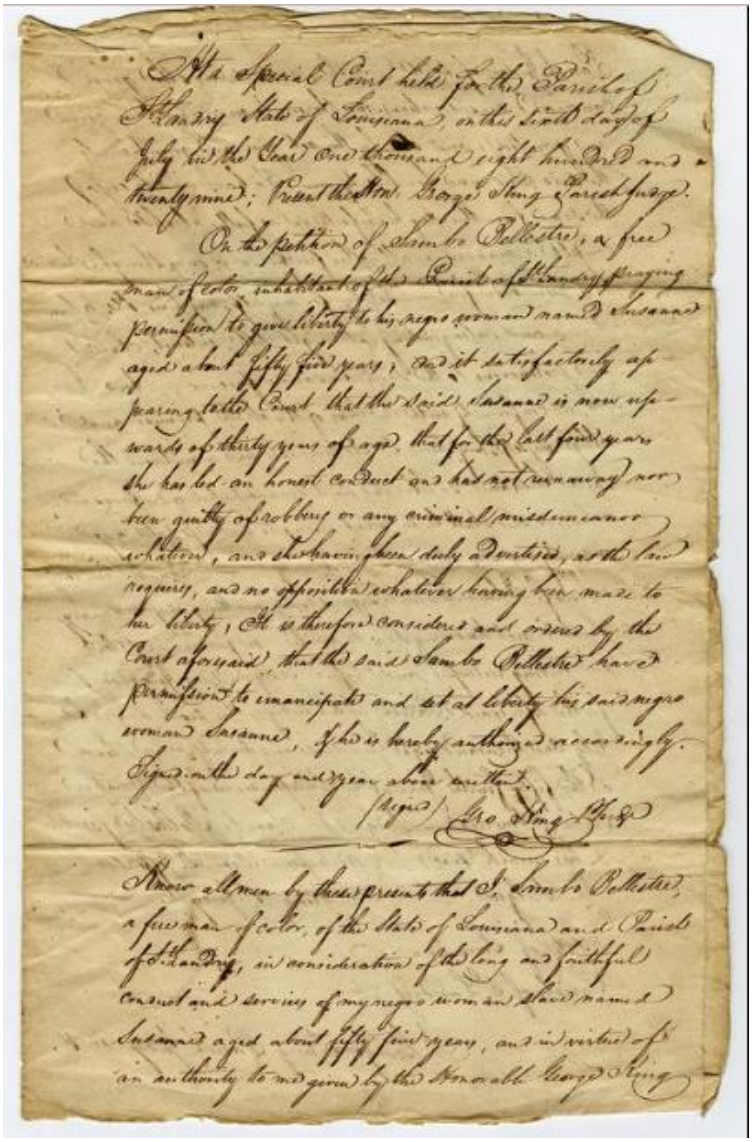
Meullion Family Papers, Mss. 243, 294, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

Bellazaire Meullion was a free woman of color and plantation owner of St. Landry Parish. She was the daughter of a formerly enslaved son of a French officer and a slave woman. She operated a plantation on Bayou Teche and filed claims against the U.S. government for property seized during the Civil War. Her brother Donat and other male family members became active in Republican state politics almost immediately after blacks gained the vote.

Source C: Sambo Bellestre Manumission Paper, 1829 July 6.

Manumission paper granting freedom to Susanne, an enslaved person of about fifty-five years of age, by Sambo Bellestre, a free man of color.

Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, La., https://library.tulane.edu/tusc



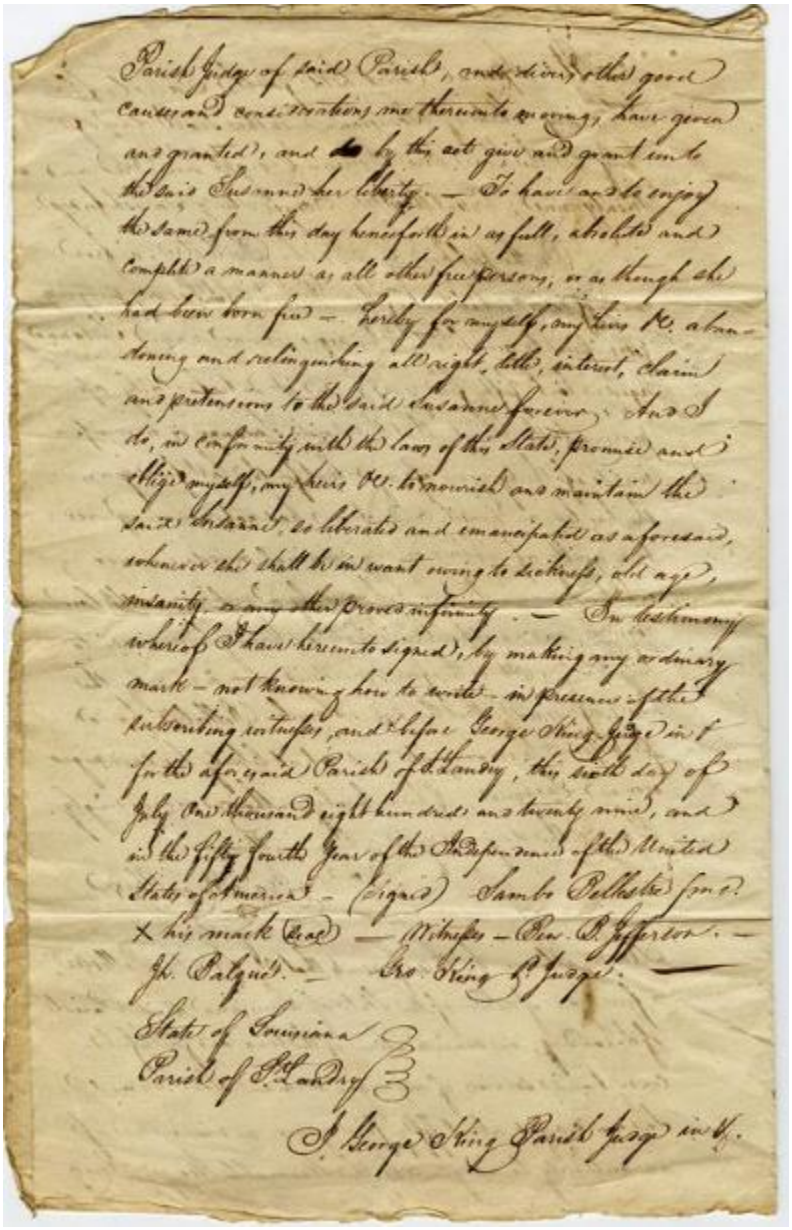
At a special Court held for the Parish of St Landry State of Louisiana on the sixth day of July in the Year one thousand eight hundred and twenty nine; Present the Hon. Geo. King Parish Judge.

On the petition of Sambo Bellestre, a free man of color inhabitant of the Parish aforesaid praying permission to give liberty to his negro woman named Susanne aged about fifty five years; and it satisfactorily appearing to the Court that the said Susanne is now upwards of thirty years of age that for the last four years she has led an honest conduct and has not run away nor been guilty of robbery or any criminal misdemeanor whatever, and she having been duly advertised, on the last requiry, and no opposition whatever having been made to her liberty, It is therefore considered and ordered by the Court aforesaid, that the said Sambo Bellestre have permission to emancipate and set at liberty his said negro woman Susanne, & he is hereby authorized accordingly. Given in the day and year above written.

(Signed) Geo King Pres.

Know all men by these presents that I Sambo Bellestre a free man of color of the State of Louisiana and Parish of St Landry, in consideration of the long and faithful conduct and service of my negro woman slave named Susanne aged about fifty five years, and in virtue of an authority to me given by the Honorable Geo. King

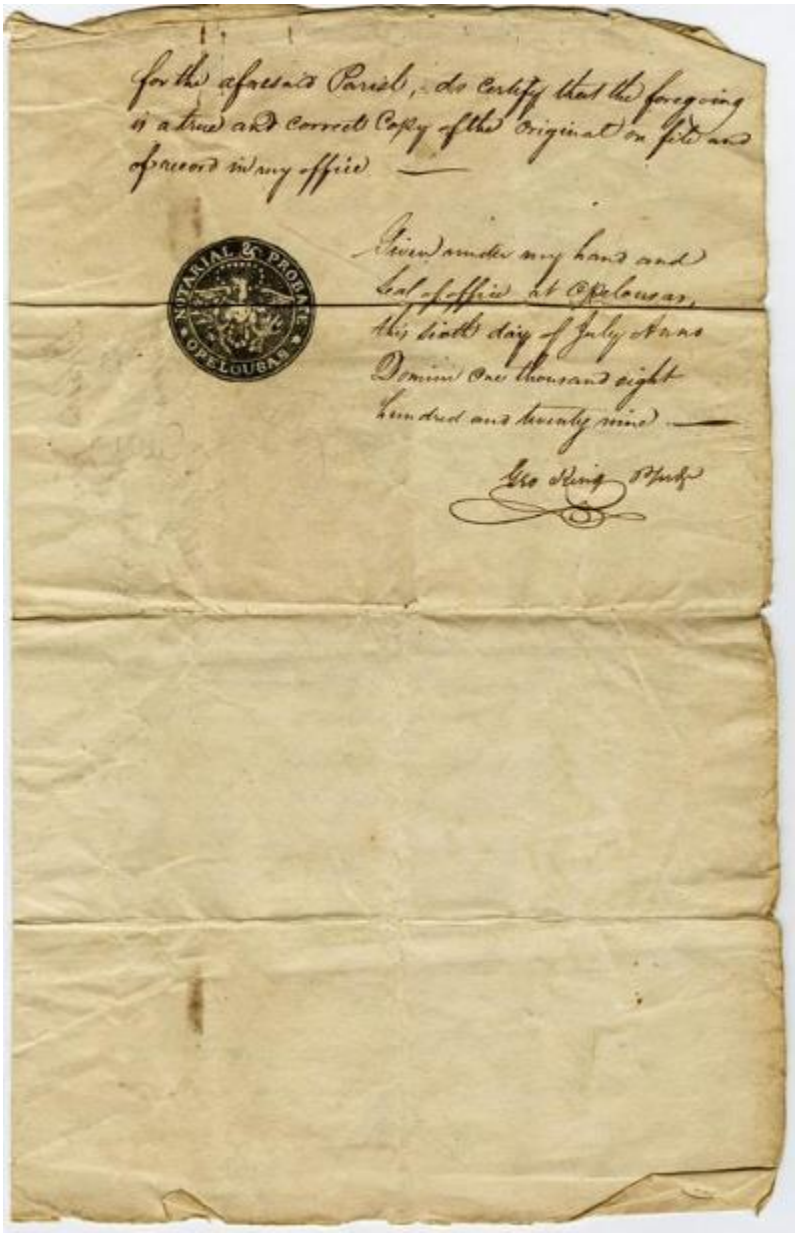
Jean Baptiste Meuillion (1763) also known as “Baptiste” and “Juan Bautista” was a free man of color and a propertied slaveholder, who operated a cotton and sugar plantation on Bayou Teche. Though born an enslaved person to Francois Cheval of St. Charles Parish and the slave Maria Juana (also known as Marie Ann Meuillion), he and his mother were freed in 1776 by Luis Augustin Meuillion, a white slaveholder. Jean Baptiste married Celeste Donoto, and the couple had four children: Francois, Antoine Donot, Marie Denise, and Suzanne Bellazaire, who also went by “Bellazaire”. Christoval Toledano and R.P. Gaillard were white merchants and partners in the trading firm Toledano and Gaillard located in New Orleans, LA. Marie Jeanne Lemelle (active 1785-1833) was a free woman of color and propertied slave holder in Bayou Teche and Bayou Courtableau. She was manumitted in New Orleans in 1772 along with her two daughters, Jacqueline and Julie. She inherited land, cattle, and slaves from her paramour, Francois Lemelle, son of a prominent St. Charles Parish planter. The couple’s children were Jacques, Louis, Marie Louise, Francois, and Francois Denis.



Parish Judge of said Parish, and doing other good
Customs and Ordinances me thereunto moving, have given
and granted, and by this act give and grant unto
the said Susanna her liberty. — To have and to enjoy
the same from this day henceforth in as full, absolute and
complete a manner as all other free persons, or as though she
had been born free — Hereby for myself, my heirs &c. aban-
doning and relinquishing all right, title, interest, claim
and pretensions to the said Susanna forever. And I
do, in conformity with the laws of the State, promise and
oblige myself, my heirs &c. to warrant and maintain the
said Susanna, so liberated and emancipated as aforesaid,
whenever she shall be in want owing to sickness, old age,
infancy, or any other proved infirmity. — In testimony
whereof I have hereunto signed, by making my ordinary
mark — not knowing how to write — in presence of the
subscribing witnesses, and before George King Judge of
for the aforesaid Parish of St Landry, this tenth day of
July One thousand eight hundred and twenty nine, and
in the fifty fourth year of the Independence of the United
States of America — (signed) Samb Pellerin for
X his mark (seal) — Witness — Ben. B. Jefferson. —
Jh. Palgnd. — Geo. King P. Judge. —

State of Louisiana
Parish of St Landry

I George King Parish Judge in &.



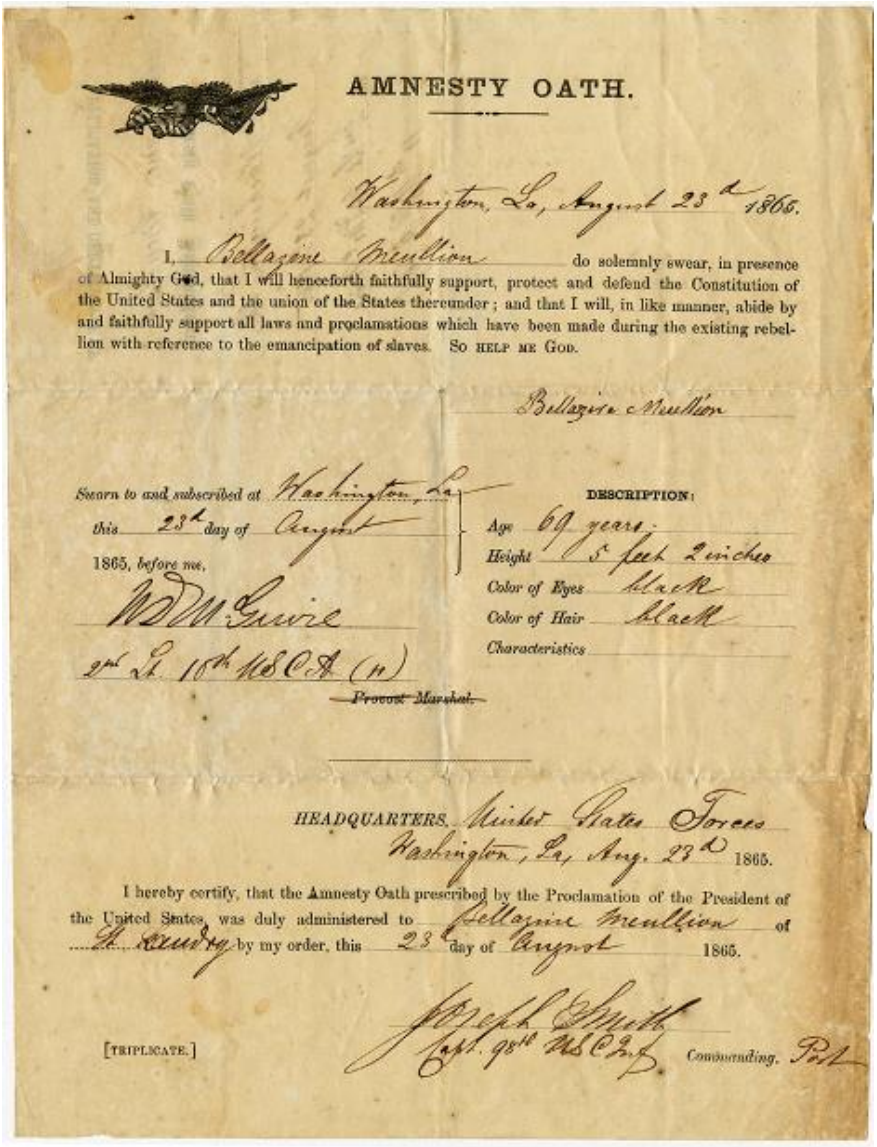
for the aforesaid Parish, do Certify that the foregoing is a true and Correct Copy of the Original on file and of record in my office.

Given under my hand and Seal of office at Opelousas, this sixth day of July Anno Domini One thousand eight hundred and twenty nine.

Geo King Parish

NOTARIAL & PROBATE
OPELOUSAS

Source D: Bellazaire Meullion amnesty oath, 1865 August 23



AMNESTY OATH.

Washington, La, August 23d 1865.

I, Bellazaire Meullion do solemnly swear, in presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves. So HELP ME GOD.

Bellazire Meullion

Sworn to and subscribed at Washington, La this 23d day of August 1865, before me.

W M Guire
2nd Lt 18th USCA (n)
~~Provost Marshal~~

DESCRIPTION:
Age 69 years;
Height 5 feet 2 inches
Color of Eyes black
Color of Hair black
Characteristics

HEADQUARTERS Militet States Forces
Washington, La, Aug. 23d 1865.

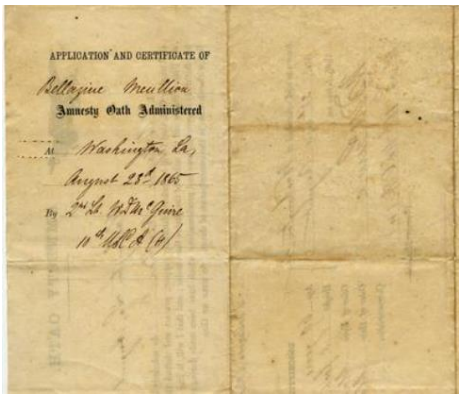
I hereby certify, that the Amnesty Oath prescribed by the Proclamation of the President of the United States was duly administered to Bellazaire Meullion of St Landry by my order, this 23 day of August 1865.

Joseph E Smith
Capt. 90th USCT Commanding. Post

[TRIPLICATE.]

Bellazaire Meullion, amnesty oath, Meullion Family Papers, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Bellazaire Meullion was a free woman of color and plantation owner of St. Landry Parish. She was the daughter of a formerly enslaved son of a French officer and a slave woman. She operated a plantation on Bayou Teche and filed claims against the U.S. government for property seized during the Civil War. Her brother Donat and other male family members became active in Republican state politics almost immediately after blacks gained the vote. She signed this loyalty oath to the U.S. soon after the end of the Civil War.

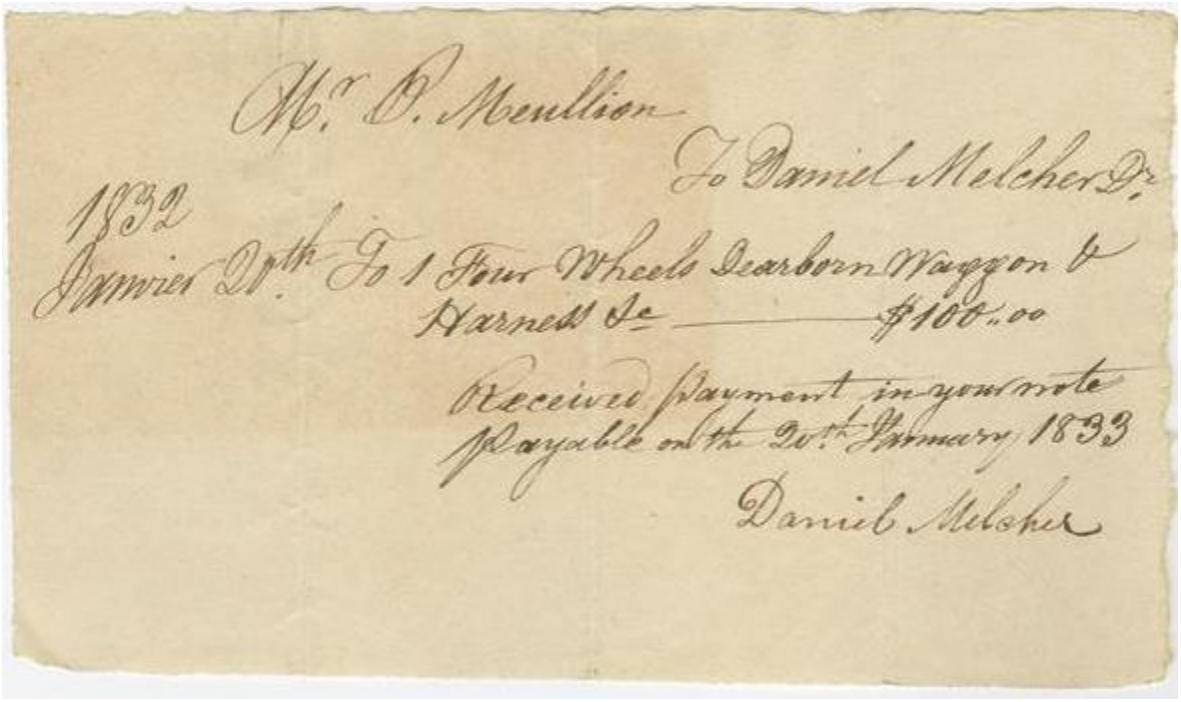


APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATE OF
Bellazaire Meullion
Amnesty Oath Administered
At Washington La,
August 23d 1865
By 2nd Lt W M Guire
18th USC A (n)

Source E: Jean Baptiste Meullion Papers, 1833

Receipt from Daniel Melcher to Baptiste for the purchase of a wagon and harness:

Louisiana Research Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA


Mr. B. Meullion

To Daniel Melcher Dr.

1832

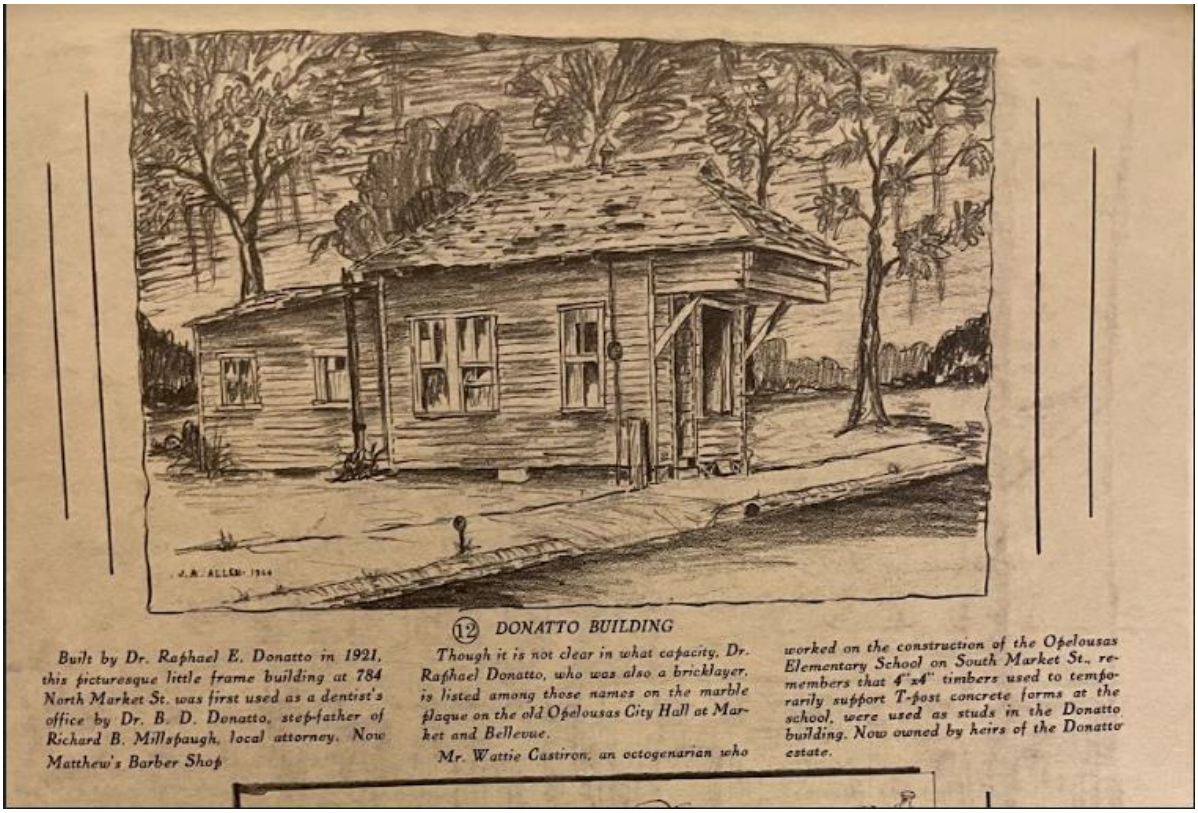
January 20th To 1 Four Wheels Dearborn Waggon &
Harness &c ——— $100.00

Received payment in your note
payable on the 20th February 1833

Daniel Melcher

Jean Baptiste Meullion (1763 or 4-1840), also known as “Baptiste” and “Juan Bautista,” was a free man of color and a propertied slaveholder, who operated a cotton and sugar plantation on Bayou Teche. Though born an enslaved person to Francois Cheval of St. Charles Parish and the slave Maria Juana (also known as Marie Anne Meullion), he and his mother were freed in 1776 by Luis Augustin Meullion, a white slaveholder. Jean Baptiste married Celeste Donoto, and the couple had four children: Francois, Antoine Donot, Marie Denise, and Suzanne Bellazaire, who also went by “Bellazaire.”

Source F: Donatto building in 1921—images provided by Etha Amling



(12) DONATTO BUILDING

Built by Dr. Raphael E. Donatto in 1921, this picturesque little frame building at 784 North Market St. was first used as a dentist's office by Dr. B. D. Donatto, step-father of Richard B. Millspaugh, local attorney. Now Matthew's Barber Shop

Though it is not clear in what capacity, Dr. Raphael Donatto, who was also a bricklayer, is listed among those names on the marble plaque on the old Opelousas City Hall at Market and Bellevue.

Mr. Wattie Castiron, an octogenarian who worked on the construction of the Opelousas Elementary School on South Market St., remembers that 4"x4" timbers used to temporarily support T-post concrete forms at the school, were used as studs in the Donatto building. Now owned by heirs of the Donatto estate.

Donatto-Millspaugh House today:

Gallery Walk Note Catcher

Source A	Source B	Source C
Source D	**Source E**	**Source F**

Teacher Support/Resources

Think-Pair-Share (see link to Teacher Toolkit for support)

- Decide upon the text to be read and develop the set of questions or prompts that target key content concepts.
- Describe the purpose of the strategy and provide guidelines for discussions.
- Model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.
- Monitor and support students as they work through the following:

T : (Think) Teachers begin by asking a specific question about the text. Students "think" about what they know or have learned about the topic.

P : (Pair) Each student should be paired with another student or a small group.

S : (Share) Students share their thinking with their partner. Teachers expand the "share" into a whole-class discussion.

Gallery Walk Strategy (see link to Teacher Toolkit for additional support)

This discussion technique allows students to be actively engaged as they walk throughout the classroom. They work together in small groups to share ideas and respond to meaningful questions, documents, images, problem-solving situations or texts.

1. Write
Create six questions or prompts about the current topic of study, and write each one on a piece of chart paper or on a white board. Hang or place the questions or prompts in various places around the classroom to create six stations. Images, documents, problems, or quotes may also be used.

2. Group
Group students into teams of three to five students, depending on the size of the class. Each group should start at a different station.

3. Begin
At their first station, groups will read what is posted and one recorder should write the group's responses, thoughts, and comments on the chart paper or white board. For individual student accountability, you may also have the students record their own responses on a worksheet (see template below), or put their initials below what they wrote. Having different colored markers for each student is also an option.

4. Rotate

After three to five minutes, have the groups rotate to the next station. Students read and discuss the previous group's response and add content of their own. Repeat until all groups have visited each station. To involve all group members, you can have groups switch recorders at each station.

5. Monitor

As the teacher, it is important to monitor the stations while the students participate. You may also need to clarify or provide hints if students don't understand or misinterpret what is posted at their station.

6. Reflect

Have students go back to their first station to read all that was added to their first response. Bring the class back together to discuss what was learned and make final conclusions about what they saw and discussed.

The Teacher Toolkit

Jigsaw Strategy **(see link to Teacher Toolkit for additional support)**

1. Prepare

Divide the reading selection into four segments, or prepare four separate reading selections on the content you are teaching (Ex. 4 different sources). Put students into groups of four. These groups will be the "home groups" of the Jigsaw. Prepare a direction sheet to help students answer guiding questions and gather information on each segment or selection.

2. Introduce the Home Groups

Divide the class into their home groups. Explain the strategy and topic of study. Tell students that they are going to be responsible for teaching one segment or selection to the group they are sitting with now.

3. Break into Expert Groups

Now students will leave their home groups to sit with a group of students assigned to the same reading segment or selection, their "expert group." Ask students to begin reading independently, or have them engage in shared reading aloud. When students are finished reading, the group should discuss their segment, respond to guiding questions, complete the direction sheet or organizer, and decide what and how they should present to their home groups.

4. Regroup with "Home Groups"

Students regroup with their home groups. Each student is responsible for teaching their reading segment or selection to their home groups. All students are responsible for learning all material. Determine how you would like students to organize and summarize all the information they've learned (Ex. Graphic organizer or poster).

The Teacher Toolkit