

Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana

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Schweninger, L. "Antebellum Free Persons of Color in Postbellum Louisiana," *Louisiana History* 30 (Fall 1989):345-64.

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It all seemed as if it were a dream, the arrival of the sheriff, the gathering of friends and neighbors, the high pitched voice of the auctioneer, the shouts and greedy excitement of the bidders. But for Josephine Decuir it was not a dream, but a harsh reality. Only a decade before she and her husband, Antoine Decuir, Jr., had been among the wealthiest free people of color in the South. They had owned more than a thousand acres of fertile land along a river in Pointe Coupée Parish, raised sugarcane, corn, and rice, and produced wool and molasses. Their total estate, including real property, machinery, livestock, and 112 slaves, had been worth in excess of \$150,000.¹ After Antoine had died during the last year of the Civil War, Josephine had taken over as mistress of this once great plantation. But now, at dusk on the second day of spring in 1871, she listened as the final bids were recorded for her plantation house, stables, cabins, machinery, sugar- house, and the remaining 840 acres of her plantation. In a single day the accumulations of a lifetime had disappeared before the auctioneer's gavel. When the final tally was made, she received only \$25,752 for her land and other holdings, an amount which failed even to cover the estate's outstanding debts.²

The difficulties experienced by Josephine Decuir were by no means unique. During the first fifteen years after the Civil War the landholdings of former free persons of color in Louisiana virtually disappeared. While historians have long shown an interest in the economic activities of Louisiana's free people of color during the prewar era, they have been less concerned with the fate of this group during the postwar period. Nor have they compared this decline to the changes in black wealth-holding patterns in other Southern states. This is perhaps understandable, since tracing a small group of fewer than 4,000 families following the emancipation of more than 330,000 slaves presents unique problems. Yet in some ways an analysis of the difficulties they confronted after the Civil War shows more clearly their unique and privileged prewar status than does an examination of the antebellum period. This essay seeks to examine the remarkable economic ascent of Louisiana's free people of color, the problems they confronted before and

* The author wishes to thank several funding agencies which provided travel and research assistance: The American Philosophical Society, American Association for State and Local History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro's Research Council and Academic Computer Center, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

¹ Records of the Parish Probate Court (hereafter RPPC), Pointe Coule Parish, La., Successions, #203, July 11, 1865. In this and subsequent succession citations, I have used the filing date, although packets pertaining to an estate usually contain documents post-dating the original probate entry date.

² United States Manuscript Agricultural Census (hereafter USMSAC), Pointe Coule Parish, La., 1850, p. 579; Joseph Karl Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana, 1860* (New Orleans, 1964), p. 316; United States Manuscript Population Census (hereafter USMSPC), Pointe Coule Parish, La., 1850, p. 40; *ibid.*, 1860, p. 796; *ibid.*, 1870, p. 324. See Appendixes for page number citation procedure for USMSPC.

during the war, and their precipitous decline during the postwar era. It does so by focusing on property ownership, a key variable to understanding relative economic condition, and by comparing the wealth holdings of free blacks and former free blacks with whites. It also attempts to unravel the complex social and cultural changes which occurred as a result of emancipation and connect them with the economic changes which took place.³

The origin of the state's free colored population dated back to the colonial era when some French and Spanish settlers took black women as their wives and mistresses. Despite the strictures of the Catholic church against whites marrying slaves, many men lived openly with Negro women, often recognizing their mulatto children as their own and providing them with land and financial assistance. In addition, the free Negro population was augmented by a stream of emigres from the Caribbean, first from Saint Domingue following the Haitian Revolution in the 1790s, then from Cuba, following the Spanish persecution of the French during the early 1800s. By the time of statehood in 1812, the free black population in the state had swelled to 7,585, with nearly one out of five blacks claiming the status of freeman. Often literate, possessing skills as artisans and farmers, they had already established themselves as part of the economic life of the state.⁴

One of the most important traditions emerging from the colonial to the American periods was the ability of free persons of color to enjoy the same rights and privileges as whites with regard to ownership of property. In their possession of real estate and slaves, one law stated, they could not be molested, injured, or ill-treated "under the penalties provided by laws for the safety and security of the property of white persons." In addition, free blacks could petition the government for redress of grievances, sue and be sued, testify in court against whites, be baptized, married, and buried with the sacraments of the Roman Catholic church, secure an education, and enter any occupation or business. While these privileges came under attack during the post-1820 period, the state's unusual customs with regard to free people of color contrasted sharply with the proscriptive laws, mores, and institutions confronting blacks in other regions of the South.⁵

As a result, Louisiana's free persons of color emerged as the most prosperous group of blacks in the South. By the 1830s, in New Orleans and smaller towns and cities, they owned mercantile

³ David Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War on the Free Colored Community of New Orleans," *Perspectives in American History*, XI (1977-1978), 379-416; David Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans During Reconstruction," *Journal of Southern History*, XL (1974), 417-440. See also David O. Whitten, *Andrew Durnford: A Black Sugar Planter in Antebellum Louisiana* (Natchitoches, La., 1981); Herbert E. Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-bellum Louisiana* (Rutherford, N. J., 1972); Donald Everett, "Free Persons of Color in Colonial Louisiana," *Louisiana History*, VII (1966), 38, 45, 48-49; Gary Mills, *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge, 1977); Robert Reinders, "The Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro in the Decade Before the Civil War," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XXIV (1962), 88-98; and Robert Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850-1860," *Louisiana History*, VI (1965), 273-285.

⁴ Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies," *Journal of Social History*, III (1970), 408-411; James Robertson, ed., *Louisiana Under the Rule of Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807; Social, Economic, and Political Conditions of the Territory Represented in the Louisiana Purchase*, 2 vols. (1910-1911; reprint ed., Freeport, N. Y., 1969), I, 218-219; P. M. Benin, comp., *General Index of All Successions, Opened in the Parish of Orleans, From the Year 1805, to the Year 1846* (New Orleans, 1849), *passim*; Sterkx, *Free Negro*, pp. 91-92, 204; Donald Everett, "Emigres and Militiamen: Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1815," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (1953), 377-380.

⁵ Everett, "Free Persons of Color," 49.

stores, grocery stores, and tailoring shops. They also worked as brickmasons, carpenters, coopers, stonemasons, mechanics, shoemakers, cigar makers, and in other capacities as skilled artisans. In rural parishes, Creoles of color⁶ managed productive farms and plantations, raising cotton, sugar, rice, and corn, and owning herds of cattle, sheep, and horses. One of the most successful planters was Jean-Baptiste Meullion of St. Landry Parish, who farmed 1,240 acres along Bayou Teche, but in each of a half-dozen other parishes prosperous planters and farmers had emerged: Plaquemines Parish sugar planters Andrew Durnford, Louise Oliver, and Adolphe Reggio; St. John the Baptist Parish slaveowner Louisa Ponis; Pointe Coupée Parish cotton planter Zacharie Honoré; Iberville Parish plantation owners George Deslone, Antoine Dubuclet, and Cyprien Ricard; and Natchitoches slave masters Nicholas Augustin Metoyer, Marie Suzanne Metoyer, and Dominique Metoyer.⁷

To maintain their businesses and agricultural enterprises free persons of color purchased increasing numbers of slave laborers. By 1830 slave ownership had become widespread among free blacks in Louisiana. In New Orleans, 753 free persons of color were members of the slaveholding class, including twenty-five who owned at least ten bondsmen and women, and 126 who owned between five and ten slaves. Business woman Eulalie de Mandeville Macarty, who owned a wholesale mercantile and dry goods store, distributed her commodities to retail outlets with a large slave labor force. She owned a total of thirty-two blacks. In eight rural Louisiana sugar and cotton parishes, forty-three Creoles of color (1.2 percent of the total number of free black masters in the country) owned a total of 1,327 blacks, or nearly one out of nine slaves owned by Negroes in the United States. In St. John the Baptist Parish, three plantation owners held 139 blacks in bondage—an average of 46 slaves each; in Pointe Coupée Parish, eight planters owned 297 slaves, an average of 37 slaves each; and in Iberville Parish, six planters owned 184 bondsmen and women—an average of 31 slaves each. In all, in 1830, 965 Negro slaveowners owned 4,206 bondpeople. These were the highest totals in the South; nearly one of three free Negro families in the state was a slaveholder.⁸

Like their white neighbors, some were benevolent masters, granting their blacks special privileges, emancipating especially loyal servants, respecting the sanctity of slave families. But most considered their blacks as chattel property. They bought, sold, mortgaged, willed, traded, and transferred fellow Negroes, demanded long hours in the fields, and severely disciplined

⁶ Creoles of color were persons of French or Spanish and Negro descent born in the Americas. In Louisiana, the term "Creole" was also applied to whites culturally related to the original French settlers. See Ira Berlin, "Time, Space, and the Evolution of Afro-American Society on British Mainland North America," *American Historical Review*, LXXXV (1980), 45.

⁷ RPPC, Plaquemines Parish, La., Inventories, vol. 1846-1858 (May 6, 1857), pp. 404-409; *ibid.*, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., Successions, #176, April 5, 1839; *ibid.*, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., Conveyances, #1192, October 22, 1822; and #4312, January 23, 1832; *ibid.*, St. Landry Parish, La., Successions, #1544, February 1, 1851; and #1700, February 28, 1853; *ibid.*, Wills, bk. L-1 (September 2, 1847), pp. 75-76; *ibid.*, Natchitoches Parish, La., Successions, #375, July 26, 1839; *ibid.*, #362, December 15, 1838; *ibid.*, #193-1, July 6, 1833; *ibid.*, #355, September 7, 1838; *ibid.*, #606, October 14, 1847; Sterkx, *Free Negro*, pp. 204-207; Mills, *Forgotten People*, pp. 74-76.

⁸ Helen Catterall, ed., *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, 5 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1932), III, 392, 589, 611; Carter G. Woodson, ed., *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (Washington, D. C., 1924), p. 11, *passim*. The general statistics are calculated from Woodson's listing. While most of the forty-three large slave owners mentioned have *been* verified in parish records, Woodson's list contains a few free blacks who did not own the slaves listed in their households. See R. Halliburton, Jr., "Free Black Owners of Slaves: A Reappraisal of the Woodson Thesis," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXXVI (1976), 129-142.

recalcitrant blacks. A few seemed as callous as the most profit-minded whites, selling children away from parents, mothers away from husbands, and brutally whipping slaves who ignored plantation rules. On sugar estates, where the harvesting and pressing of the cane demanded, as it did in the Caribbean, sixteen- and eighteen-hour workdays, mulatto owners pushed their slaves incessantly; and, when women were unable to work such long hours, they stocked their plantations with young men. Among the twenty- eight field hands on Louise Oliver's estate, the men outnumbered the women three to one; in the age group fifteen to thirty-six, the ratio was four to one; only two women had any children?⁹ "You might think, master, dat day would be good to dar own nation," one anonymous slave told a white traveller, "but dey is not. I will tell you de truth, massa; I know I'se got to answer; and it's a fact, dey is very bad masters, sar." He would rather "be a servant to any man in de world, dan to a brack man." "Dey was a big diff'ence mek between de slave niggers and de owner niggers," one freeborn black said describing St. Mary Parish planter Romaine Verdun, "as much diff'ence between dem as between de white folks and culled folks."¹⁰

During the 1840s and 1850s, as in other states, free blacks came under increasing attacks from dominant whites. One 1843 law allowed New Orleans police to arrest "alien" (those not born in Louisiana) free black residents and incarcerate them until it could be determined whether or not they posed any threat to peace. As several observers pointed out some of those arrested were long-time residents who had owned property for many years. Nine years later the state legislature adopted a "passport" system which authorized the mayor to issue documents of temporary residency for "out-of-state" free blacks. At the same time, several anti-free Negro delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1852 attempted, unsuccessfully, to introduce a proposition to prohibit free blacks from acquiring real estate by inheritance or purchase, and in 1859, a group of St. Landry Parish planters, also without success, urged the legislature to forbid free persons of color from owning "beings of their own color, flesh and blood," a practice, they said, which was "repugnant to the laws of good society, good government, Nature and Nature's God."¹¹

Despite these laws and the increasingly hostile racial climate, free people of color generally maintained their high economic standing during the late antebellum period. The pre-1840 expansion rate, however, slowed considerably, and the 1840s and 1850s could best be described as a levelling off period. Although precise statistics on slave ownership are not available for these two decades the decline among free black slave owners in the Crescent City was probably offset by an increase in some rural parishes, at least as reflected in a rise in the total estates (real and personal property holdings) of some planters and large farmers. Similarly, the 1850s drop among relatively prosperous real-estate owners (those with at least \$2,000 in realty) in some parishes—in New Orleans from 311 to 263; in Jefferson Parish from 25 to 8; in Natchitoches from 41 to 27; and in St. John the Baptist from six to four—was offset to some extent by rises in St. Landry Parish from 8 to 25, in St. Mary Parish from 8 to 13, in St. Martin Parish from 4 to 15,

⁹ RPPC, Natchitoches Parish, La., Successions, #375, July 26, 1839; *ibid.*, Plaquemines Parish, La., Inventories, vol. 1846-1858 (May 6, 1857), pp. 404-409; *ibid.*, St. Landry Parish, La., Successions, #2256, September 9, 1859; *ibid.*, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., Successions, #176, April 5, 1839, and #355, January 31, 1844.

¹⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York, 1953), p. 262; George Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols. (Westport, Ct., 1972), V, pt. 4, 4838.

¹¹ Richard Tansey, "Out-of-State Free Blacks in Late Antebellum New Orleans," *Louisiana History*, XXII (1981), 373, 378; Sterkx, *Free Negro*, pp. 172-173, 197.

and in East Baton Rouge from 6 to 13. While it was true that some "literate and respectable free colored people," as one newspaper called them, emigrated from New Orleans in 1859 and early 1860 bound for the Negro republic of Haiti, between 1850 and 1860 the number of prosperous free blacks in the state declined only slightly, from 504 to 472, and the value of their real-estate holdings, while not keeping pace with rising land values, increased from \$3,992,500 to \$4,867,000.¹²

Thus, while some free people of color experienced losses, others purchased new lands, acquired additional slaves, or started new businesses. If whites made inroads into some skilled occupations, blacks still maintained profitable businesses, especially as tailors, dry goods merchants, and cotton brokers. During the pre-Civil War decade, Louisiana's free people of color remained, by far, the most prosperous group of African descent in the United States, controlling substantially more property than free Negroes in any other state. In fact, in 1850, with 7 percent of the South's free black population, they controlled 59 percent of the region's free black real-estate holdings. A decade later, with the same proportion of the population, they still controlled 43 percent of the real estate, nearly five times the total of the next highest state. The proportional drop from 59 percent to 43 percent was more a reflection of the significant rise of free black property ownership in the Upper South than any precipitous decline in Louisiana.

Several of the state's Creoles of color substantially expanded their wealth during the decade of the 1850s. Pierre Casenave, a New Orleans undertaker who invented a secret embalming process, increased his annual income from \$10,000 to \$40,000; merchant and real-estate broker Bernard Soulié doubled the estimated value of his real-estate possessions, from \$50,000 to \$100,000; tailor François Lacroix, who speculated in city properties, acquired an estate of \$242,600 (one of the largest for a free Negro in the South); and Iberville plantation owners Madame and Pierre Ricard increased their holdings from \$80,000 to \$200,000 during the 1850s. In 1859, one observer described the Ricard family as "doubtless the richest black family in this or any other country."¹³

¹² Computed from USMSPC, Louisiana, 1850, 1860. Wealth estimates for nine property owners were taken from the USMSAC, 1850; Reinders, "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy," 273-285; Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership," 417-440; and Sterkx, *Free Negro*, p. 216. See also USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 1st Mun., 7th Ward, 1850, pp. 376, 396; Reinders, "The Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro," 9596.

¹³ Comparative data computed from USMSPC, 1850, 1860; Juliet E. K. Walker, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise: Black Entrepreneurship in the United States Before the Civil War," *Business History Review*, LX (1986), 354, 361-362; USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 1st Mun., 7th Ward, 1850, p. 396; *ibid.*, New Orleans, 3rd Ward, 1860, p. 257; *ibid.*, 4th Ward, p. 82; *ibid.*, 5th Ward, p. 729; RPPC, New Orleans, La., Successions, #38,677, May 27, 1876, in New Orleans Public Library (hereafter NOPL); Leonard Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago, 1981), p. 42; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War," 396, 402; USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 1st Mun., 4th Ward, 1850, p. 150; *ibid.*, 1st Mun., 7th Ward, 1850, p. 376; RRPC, New Orleans, La., Successions, #41,626, November 19, 1879, in NOPL; Tax Receipts, no. C-530, 1845-1847, in *ibid.*; USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 3rd Mun., 2nd Ward, 1850, p. 119; USMSAC, Natchitoches Parish, La., 1850, p. 425; *ibid.*, Plaquemines Parish, La., 1850, pp. 485, 549; *ibid.*, Pointe Coupe Parish, La., 1850, p. 569; *ibid.*, St. John the Baptist Parish, La., p. 661; *ibid.*, St. Landry Parish, La., 1850, p. 695; *ibid.*, St. Mary Parish, La., 1850, pp. 727-729; *ibid.*, Iberville Parish, La., 1850, p. 81; USMSPC, Iberville Parish, La., 1850, p. 329; David O. Whitten, "Rural Life Along the Mississippi: Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, 1830-1850," *Agricultural History*, LVIII (1984), 484; James Freeman Clarke, *Present Condition of Free Colored People of the United States* (New York, 1859), p. 13.

In all, despite a brief recession in 1857-1858, fluctuations in the price of cotton and sugar, and political turmoil, the number of property owners in the state between 1850 and 1860 remained almost exactly the same (1,244 compared with 1,262), while the total value of their landholdings went from \$4,535,900 to \$5,514,500, and their mean holdings from \$3,646 to \$4,370. Some of the real estate valuations included "slave property," which was listed in some parishes under "real" rather than "personal" property. Nevertheless, the average real-estate holdings of \$1,479 (including propertyless family heads) compared favorably with the average of \$1,492 for white males in the nation as a whole. Though they were less likely to own at least some real estate than whites in the nation (34 percent to 43 percent), and though they owned less realty on average than other Southerners, free colored people in the state were slightly better off in economic terms than whites in the Northeast (mean real estate = \$1,461) and the Northwest (\$1,284) and nearly twice as well off as foreign-born Americans (\$833). Thus, by the eve of the Civil War, the small group of free blacks in the state, now representing only 5 percent of the black population, had made substantial economic progress.¹⁴

They had achieved their high economic standing in part by adopting a unique set of social and cultural values. To maintain their property holdings, they formed small, tightly knit communities. They lived on the same streets, or nearby plantations, socialized with one another, attended church together, provided an education for one another's children, and arranged for the marriage of their children with children of free blacks of the same relative economic standing. Among prosperous Creoles of color in Louisiana, endogamous marriages were almost universal. Antoine Decuir and Antoine Dubuclet, the richest blacks in Pointe Coupée Parish, signed formal contracts concerning their children. In the case of Decuir's son, Antoine, Jr., and Dubuclet's daughter, Josephine, they drew up a four-page document (in French) specifying the date of the wedding, the size of the dowry, and arrangements for the distribution of property. Decuir contracted for his second son Augustin to marry the granddaughter of Iberville Parish planter Cyprien Ricard, at the time the wealthiest free person of color in Louisiana. Similar arrangements were made by the Donato, Meullion, Simien, Guillory, and Lemelle families in St. Landry; the Conant, Metoyer, Rocques, and Llorens families in Natchitoches; the Reggio, Oliver, and Leonard families in Plaquemines; the Bienville, Ricard, Turpin families in East Baton Rouge; and the Honoré and Decuir families in West Baton Rouge. By forming these family networks free persons of color sought to separate themselves from the dominant whites as well as from the masses of their brethren in bondage.¹⁵

¹⁴ Lee Soltow, *Men and Wealth in the United States, 1850-1870* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 64, 76, 81, 186. These, of course, are rough estimates based on an estimated 3,729 free Negro families (approximately one-fifth of the total 18,647 free black population). See Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974), p. 136.

¹⁵ "A Contract of Marriage Between Joseph Metoyer and Marie Lodoiska Llorens," January 28, 1840, Cane River Collection, The Historic New Orleans Collection; RPPC, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., Marriage Contract, February 26, 1835. In 1860, in St. Landry Parish census takers often included the maiden name of women listed as "keeping house" in each household. Partners were usually members of either one or another among seventeen families. USMSPC, St. Landry Parish, La., 1860, *passim*; RPPC, St. Landry Parish, La., Successions, #1544-1545, February 1, 1851; RPPC, Natchitoches Parish, La., Successions, #344, September 7, 1838; *ibid.*, Successions, #375, July 27, 1839; *ibid.*, Successions, #606, October 14, 1847; *ibid.*, Plaquemines Parish, La., Successions, #167, May 12, 1840 *ibid.*, East Baton Rouge Parish, La., Successions, #640, August 14, 1855; *ibid.*, West Baton Rouge Parish, La., Successions, #176, July 18, 1829; *ibid.*, New Orleans, La., Successions, #361, April 19, 1879, in NOPL.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, most free persons of color in Louisiana supported the Confederacy. In 1861, they organized two splendidly equipped battalions, modeled after the French Chasseurs d'Afrique, to fight for the South. In all, more than three thousand Louisiana free Negroes—three out of four adult free men of color in the state—joined colored military or militia units. Some of them, one observer recalled, were as strongly in favor of the rebellion "as the veriest fire-eater [from] South Carolina." As slave owners and property owners, they looked with "sorrow and sadness" at the intrusion of Union gunboats and the occupation of New Orleans early in the war, and even as some of them were adjusting to the presence of Northern soldiers, a few others, including St. Landry Parish's Charles Lutz, Jean-Baptiste Pierre-Auguste, and Leufroy Pierre-Auguste, were fighting as regulars in the Confederate army, seeing action at Shiloh, Fredericksburg, and Vicksburg. Still others supported the Southern cause by donating slave laborers to work on fortifications, purchasing Confederate bonds, or providing food and supplies for the army.¹⁶

When it became clear that a Union victory was imminent, however, they quickly changed their stance. Those who had served in the home guard or professed loyalty to Jefferson Davis now asserted that they had acted out of fear of retaliation. How could any black, one of them queried, support a government set up for the distinctly avowed purpose of keeping his brethren and kindred in eternal slavery. Louis Roudanez, owner of the first black daily newspaper in America, the New Orleans Tribune, urged freemen and freedmen to work together for "the common cause of black equality." This avowed support of the Union by those who had previously been willing to shed their blood in defense of their native land was vividly revealed by a postwar claims investigator in Pointe Coupée Parish. Taking testimony from those who said they had lost property during the war but had been loyal Unionists and deserved to receive compensation from the government under an act passed by Congress, agent C. B. Hauk explained that he had closely compared the list of postwar claimants with "the [antebellum] Muster Roll of a Company of free colored persons who served as Home Guard & offered their services to the Rebel Government." He found "a great many" of the names were identical.¹⁷

Despite their professed willingness to join in a "common cause" with their black brethren, the war and its aftermath spelled disaster for the great majority of the state's property owning free persons of color. "When war commence it purty hard on folks," a free Negro in St. Mary Parish recalled. First came the Confederates who swept up the slaves, including those owned by blacks,

¹⁶ Nathan Willey, "Education of the Colored Population of Louisiana," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, XXXIII (1866), 247; U. S., War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1880-1901), ser. 1, XV, 556; Mary Berry, "Negro Troops in Blue and Gray: The Louisiana Native Guards, 1861-1863," *Louisiana History*, VIII (1967), 167; Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., "Free Men of Color in Grey," *Civil War History*, XXXII (1986), 248; John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1963), p. 21; Rodolphe Desdunes, *Our People and Our History*, trans. Dorothea McCants (Baton Rouge, 1973), p. 22; George S. Denison to Salmon P. Chase, August 26, 1862, in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1902*, 2 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1903), II, 311; Joseph T. Wilson, *The Black Phalanx: A History of the Negro Soldiers of the United States in the Wars of 1775-1812, 1861-'65* (Hartford, Ct., 1897), pp. 481-483.

¹⁷ G. B. Hauk to Charles F. Benjamin, February 28, 1874, Records of the Claims Commission, Records, of the Treasury Department, Record Group 56, reel 11, National Archives; George Tucker to Charles F. Benjamin, February 28, 1874, in *ibid.*; Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Tour of the Southern States, 1865-1866*, ed. by C. Vann Woodward (1866; reprint ed., New York, 1965), p. 244; Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans," 433.

and took them away to build fortifications. "Dey line my daddy up with de others, but a white man from town say, Dat a good old man. He part Indian and he free.' . . . So dey didn't take him." Then Yankee raiding parties rode through, burning, pillaging, and looting. "Dey take a whole year crop of sugar and corn and hosses." Everywhere the Union army advanced free blacks told of death and destruction. "The road all the way to Natchitoches," one observer said, describing the region where some of the wealthiest free persons of color in America owned their plantations, "was a solid flame." His heart was "filled with sadness" at the sight of those lovely plantations being burned to the ground. In St. Landry Parish, despite declarations of loyalty to the United States, Antoine Meullion lost 30 head of cattle, 150 sheep, 26 hogs, and 5,000 fence rails to a band of Union soldiers under the command of Nathaniel Banks. Pierre and Cyprien Ricard, descendants of the wealthiest free person of color in the state, lost virtually everything during the war. In 1868, a final 161 acres was seized by the Iberville Parish sheriff for non-payment of debts and sold at public auction. Similarly, the Ponis family in St. John the Baptist Parish, the Verdun family in St. Mary Parish, the Deslonde family in Iberville Parish, and the Porche family in Pointe Coupée Parish witnessed the disintegration of their antebellum fortunes during the war.¹⁸

Those who somehow sustained themselves, and, still possessing large tracts of fertile soil, hoped to rebuild, discovered that the wartime destruction was only a harbinger of things to come. The problems in securing farmhands, the flooding and crop failures in 1866 and 1867, the difficulties in obtaining credit, forced many black landholders off the land, while pushing others to the brink of disaster. Within a few years after the war the vast majority of the wealthiest rural Negroes in antebellum America—Louisiana's Creoles of color—had not only lost their slaves, farm machinery, livestock, buildings, and personal possessions, but their land as well. During the war, Antoine and Josephine Decuir were forced to mortgage their house, the adjoining land, even their crops. The Metoyer family in Natchitoches Parish, declining since the 1850s, experienced a final economic disaster during the depression of the 1870s. In the first year of the depression, 1873, forty-four members of the family were listed as having had their land sold at "tax sales." Often these sales were conducted for nonpayment of assessments amounting to only a few dollars. Following the death of their mother in 1866, Andrew Durnford, Jr., and his sister Rosema Durnford struggled desperately to regain the antebellum production of sugar that had made their father one of the richest free Negroes in the United States, but in 1874, besieged by creditors, they were forced to sell St. Rosalie Plantation for a few thousand dollars. In St. Mary Parish, once affluent mulattoes eked out a subsistence on small plots of their old plantations. During the 1860s the mean value of real estate held by black planters in the state dropped from nearly \$10,000 to under \$2,000, a decline greater than the general depreciation in postwar property values.¹⁹

¹⁸ Rawick, ed., *The American Slave*, V, pt. 4, p. 158; quoted in Mills, *Forgotten People*, p. 237; Petition for Relief of Antoine Meullion, December 1889, #8090, in Meullion Family Papers, Louisiana State University; RPPC, St. Landry Parish, La., Successions, #5040, October 14, 1890; USMSPC, St. Landry Parish, La., 1860, pp. 886-887; RPPC, Iberville Parish, La., Deeds, bk. 9, (July 15, 1868), pp. 221-223; J. Ward Gurley, Jr., to Charles Benjamin, May 18, 1875, Records of the Claims Commission, Records of the Treasury Department, Record Group 56, reel 6, National Archives; Joseph Tournoir to J. Ward Gurley, Jr., September 5, 1874, in *ibid.*; USMSPC, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., 1870, pp. 324, 333, 396, 398.

¹⁹ Computed from USMSPC, 1860, 1870.

The decline of antebellum free persons of color during the postwar era was also apparent in the decreased value of the holdings among blacks in skilled occupations. Between 1860 and 1870, the mean value of real-estate owning black bricklayers dropped from \$2,888 to \$1,022; among carpenters from \$1,406 to \$948; among merchants from \$10,925 to \$6,925; among grocers from \$10,480 to \$3,067; among shoemakers from \$1,972 to \$804; among cigar makers from \$1,780 to \$1,403; and among boardinghouse keepers from \$2,794 to \$2,243. Part of this decline was due to small numbers of former slaves entering these occupations, and the depreciation in some urban property values, though the latter was far less precipitous than in rural areas. The drops in the average wealth holdings generally reflected an economic decline among former free Negroes. So too did the drop in the proportion of free women of color who owned real estate, from 28.4 percent in 1860 to 13.5 a decade later. In addition, at least as roughly gauged by the United States census, only about one out of five former free Negroes survived the war as property owners. Some, like Antoine Decuir, died during the 1860s; others left the state; some of the women married and took new surnames. While little is known about the "persistence rate" among white property owners in Louisiana during the Civil War period, compared to other sections of the South where fighting occurred this was a relatively low persistence.²⁰

Only a few former free persons of color escaped the war years unscathed. Those who did had usually invested heavily in urban real estate (rather than slaves) and maintained profitable businesses. In New Orleans, land speculator Thomy Lafon, who became a large contributor to various black charities, increased his wealth from \$10,000 to \$55,000 by speculating in swamplands during the Union occupation. Money broker John Racquet Clay added \$16,500 to his estate during the 1860s, and another broker, Drauzin Barthélémy Macarty, increased his fortune from \$45,000 to \$77,300 during the same period. Between 1860 and 1870, real-estate dealer Aristide Mary acquired \$70,000 worth of property, while antebellum plasterer Oscar James Dunn, builder Jean-Baptiste Roudanez, and tailor Sidney Thezan entered various professional and business fields to enhance their wealth holdings. Several other prosperous free persons of color in the city, while not increasing their wealth, maintained their high prewar economic standing: merchant Bernard Soulié, who had loaned the Confederate government \$10,000, kept the bulk of his \$100,000 estate, as did landlord Edmond Dupuy, whose \$200,000 worth of real estate in 1870 made him the second wealthiest Negro in the South.²¹

But those who survived the war in such a manner represented only a small proportion of prewar wealthholders. A close study of Creoles of color in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth wards, the heart of the free mulatto community, reveals a marked decline. Among the 98 free persons of color

²⁰ RPPC, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., Successions, #203, July 11, 1865; USMSPC, Pointe Coupée Parish, La., 1860, p. 796; RPPC, Natchitoches Parish, La., Conveyances, vol. 69 (December 20, 1873), pp. 601-604, 637-639; Mills, *Forgotten People*, pp. 218-219; RPPC, Plaquemines Parish, La., Successions, #252, April 27, 1867; *ibid.*, Conveyances, bk. K (May 5, 1874), pp. 791-793; USMSPC, St. Mary Parish, La., 1870, p. 574. See Jonathan M. Wiener, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge, 1978).

²¹ USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 1st Mun., 7th Ward, 1850, p. 396; *ibid.*, 1870, 5th Ward, pp. 73, 216; *ibid.*, 1870, 7th Ward, p. 549; RPPC, New Orleans, La., Successions, #35,055, December 2, 1871, NOPL; *ibid.*, New Orleans, La., Successions, #41,616, November 19, 1879, NOPL; *ibid.*, New Orleans, La., Successions, #37, 326, July 28, 1874, in Louisiana Papers, 65-2, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D. C.; *ibid.*, New Orleans, La., Successions, #37,326, July 28, 1874, in *ibid.*; Rankin, "The Origins of Black Leadership in New Orleans," pp. 431-432; Charles E. Wynes, "Thorny Lafon: Black Philanthropist," *Midwest Quarterly*, XXII (1981), 105-109; John Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago, 1973), pp. 57, 144, 213; Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America*, p. 42.

listed in the 1860 and 1870 census returns, nearly half experienced losses, only one of four kept their holdings intact, and only 23 expanded their wealth. Musician Nicholas Dalmon saw his real estate drop from \$11,000 to \$4,150, grocer Felix Roberts from \$5,600 to \$1,000, and carpenter Casimir Labat, from \$3,000 to no wealth at all in 1870. Labat was joined by 31 other propertied antebellum men and women in the three wards who had lost everything.²²

But the war caused more than economic decline among former free persons of color. Having lost their unique standing, they were now forced to compete with ex-slaves. While some attempted to maintain their separate family and social values this became increasingly difficult during a period of rapid social and political change. Most looked back longingly and nostalgically on the antebellum period. Several former free persons of color who had survived the war with their estates intact found it impossible to adjust to the rapid changes occurring in the wake of emancipation. Saddened by the passing of the old regime, disheartened by their loss of status, and angered at being mistaken for ex-bondsmen, they ignored their business obligations and allowed their real-estate holdings to evaporate. François Lacroix seemed not to care about the disintegration of his fortune. Even after the war, Lacroix, a tailor and realtor, maintained control over 198 separate pieces of real estate in the Crescent City and surrounding areas. Nor was he without funds to pay the taxes which he ignored until the sheriff confiscated his property. In 1874, the once vibrant Lacroix, wearing a vacant smile, stood silently as the "splendid creation of his industry" crumbled before the auctioneer's gavel. According to one witness, Lacroix seemed "forlorn and sorrowful." Two years later he was dead. Three other rich Creoles of color, Aristide Mary, John Racquet Clay, and Jean-Baptiste Jourdain, men who had not only distinguished themselves in various business ventures but also had gained stature as the most "intelligent and well educated" colored Creoles in the Crescent City, suffered similar financial reversals. Depressed and unable to cope, one by one each of them ended his own life, Clay by putting a pistol to his temple and pulling the trigger.²³

Such extreme responses were rare, but few free persons of color escaped the postwar years unscathed. Within a generation they were truly "a forgotten people." By the dawn of the twentieth century there were only 124 landowning Negro farmers in Pointe Coupe Parish, compared to 1,145 black cash tenants and 1,566 share tenants. The total value of black-owned property in the parish was substantially below what it had been on the eve of the Civil War, despite the huge population increases. In Natchitoches, Plaquemines, and Iberville parishes, where once prosperous families controlled thriving farms and vast plantations, black tenant farmers and sharecroppers toiled on small plots averaging fewer than twenty-five acres. The total black-wealth holdings in rural areas of the state did not rise above the 1860 figure until 1901-1903, and even at a high watermark in 1907, despite nearly a hundredfold increase in the free rural black population (from approximately 5,441 in 1860 to 553,029 in 1910) the total wealth of

²² USMSPC, New Orleans, La., 6th Ward, 1860, p. 170; *ibid.*, 1870, p. 235; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War," 396-398.

²³ New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, September 9, 1874; RPPC, New Orleans, La., Successions, #38,677, May 27, 1876; Rankin, "The Impact of the Civil War," 403-406.

former slaves and their children had not yet doubled the 1860 wealth holdings of free persons of color.²⁴

An analysis of the plight of antebellum free persons of color during the postwar era reveals a great deal about the unique and privileged position of free blacks before the war. However much historians have focused on the anti-free Negro laws and attitudes during the 1840s and 1850s, the economic standing of the group remained strong. This was due in some measure to their significant property accumulations, but it was also due to their skills, business acumen, industrious work habits, and their social and cultural values. Moreover, even in the midst of the political turmoil on the eve of secession, they were defended by some whites. "They are an industrious and honest people, respected generally by the white population," one white planter in St. Landry Parish noted during the postwar era, describing the "free born colored population." Before the war they had owned land, livestock, and slaves. Even during 1858-1859, he and others had defended them and voted down anti-free Negro legislation. During the postwar era, however, former free people of color were unable to adjust to new conditions. The war not only diminished much of their property holdings but destroyed their privileged position. "The war levelled the old barriers," one late nineteenth-century observer explained, and former free Creoles of color "lost their individuality." Thrown together with the masses of their brethren, they quickly discovered that they had little in common with freedmen.²⁵

Illustrating their loss of prestige, self-esteem, and economic standing was the career of Adolphe Donato (Donatto), a member of one of the richest black slave-owning families in the South. In 1883, Donato was working as a body servant to a white man. Accompanying his employer on a trip to the nation's capital, he saw streets "as smooth as glass" and buildings "more magnificent than I ever dreamed of." "My room is small but I have a good bed and a stove and, what is better than any thing else, a servant comes in every morning to make my fire." Just think, he explained to a friend in Opelousas, how much of a luxury it was to be waited on "but then you know 'folks of fashion are bound to put on airs." Dressing in the latest styles, strolling along Pennsylvania Avenue, window-shopping at the downtown stores, he feigned being a "distinguished colored gentleman." Each morning, however, he was expected to serve his employer coffee and then wash the cups and saucers. "But I do this so quietly," he noted, "that the servant never supposes for a moment that I am other than a 'gentleman of leisure."²⁶

Like the seizure and sale of Josephine Decuir's plantation, the confession of Adolphe Donato symbolized the end of an era. The economic rise of free people of color in the state had been a gradual process. With each passing decade prior to 1840 they had substantially expanded their wealth holdings. Even during the late antebellum period they had been able to maintain their high economic standing. On the eve of the war, Louisiana's free Creoles of color were the richest group of blacks in the country. They had risen to an economic level equal to that of the average white American. But they had done so like their white Southern counterparts with the labor of

²⁴ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, part 1, Agriculture*, vol. 1, pp. 88-89; *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D. C., 1864), p. 195; *Negro Population 1790-1915* (Washington, D. C., 1918), p. 92.

²⁵ Adolphe Garrigues to Charles F. Benjamin, January 28, 1876, Records of the Claims Commission, Records of the Treasury Department, Record Group 56, National Archives; P. F. de Goumay, "The F. M. C.'s of Louisiana," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, LIII (1894), 517.

²⁶ Adolphe Donato to Jules Perrodin, December 16, 1883, Miscellaneous Letters, #2946, Louisiana State University.

slaves. And like the white slave-owning class they discovered conditions during the postwar period were much different. With their unique and privileged status now gone they struggled to maintain their old ways and regain their former economic standing. In the end, they failed. Looking longingly toward the past they had to content themselves with memories of their former wealth and prestige. Within a generation even those memories seemed like a long forgotten dream.

Appendices

In the wealth estimates for 1850-1870, I have relied primarily on the United States Population Census. During these decades, census takers were instructed to inquire of each household head the estimated true value of his or her real (1850-1870) and personal (1860-1870) property. While this type of inquiry has its limitations, respondents were generally fairly accurate in their estimates. According to Louisiana law, however, slaves were supposed to be listed as real, rather than personal property. This rule was ignored as much as it was applied. In 1860, in thirty-four of fifty-three parishes, census takers included the value of slaves under personal holdings. For some property owners this inconsistency will inflate the estimated value of their realty holdings. Nevertheless, I have decided to leave the original census estimates for real property.²⁷ Census takers were also instructed to include only property owners with at least \$100 in real and/or personal holdings. I have excluded those listed with less than \$100. In citing individual property owners, I have used the numbers in the upper right-hand corner of the right-hand page. These were often hand written, but when printed I have cited the printed page number for both the page on which the printed number appears and the facing page. I have also made a determination with regard to family heads, or what might be termed independent property owners, excluding children listed with small amounts of property under their names, spouses in the same category, or free women of color living with white male property owners. Several other criteria were followed with regard to determining black wealth: those listed as being born in Ireland, Spain, Italy, France, Hanover and other German states were most often excluded unless other indications pointed to state of birth being in error; those listed as white in one census and free Negro in another were most often included when other indications pointed to their being Negro; and property estimates were rounded off to the nearest hundredth (i. e., \$775 = \$800). A few property owners were listed as mulatto but were actually white. Thus, I have excluded, among others, Pierre LaCour of Natchitoches Parish, who was incorrectly listed in 1850 as a free person of color with real estate worth \$50,000.²⁸ To complete my data lists for 1850, 1860, and 1870, I have checked the names of black property owners cited in various primary and secondary sources. Thus, in 1860, among the 1,262 realty owners, I have included 53 property owners found in local parish records (4), H. E. Sterkx's *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana* (1), Mary Berry's "Negro Troops" (1), David Rankin's "Black Leadership" (40), and the Louisiana Papers at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University (7).²⁹ For property owners in 1870 who owned less than \$1,000 in total property, I have drawn a sample from every twentieth printed page of the manuscript census and considered them to be 5 percent of the property owners. I have checked this sample against the findings of Lee Soltow, who used a

²⁷ See Joseph Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana, 1860* (New Orleans, 1964), pp. 79, 92-93.

²⁸ See Mills, *Forgotten People*, p. 213.

²⁹ See footnotes above for complete citations. ³⁰Tansey, "Out-of-State Free Blacks," 384.

random sampling technique, and found them generally compatible, but the 1870 data as cited in Appendix 3 are rough estimates and for individual parishes could be as much as 15 percent more or less than the actual total value of property owned by blacks. Even so, the obvious precipitous downward trend in most parishes is obvious.

The post-1893 total black wealth-holding estimates from the Louisiana tax assessment lists in Appendix 3 are probably more precise than the census estimates. But in the post-1893 assessments there is no racial breakdown for Orleans Parish. The earlier assessments for the Crescent City are so uneven as to be virtually useless except for certain individual assessments. In 1856, the assessments listed 179 free persons of color who owned property; the next year, the number jumped 100 percent to 357, at a time when the emigration movement was gaining strength in the Crescent City.³⁰ There were also some parish boundary changes and the formation of new parishes which make comparisons more difficult. Despite these problems, the statistical evidence presented in the following appendices strongly supports the general thesis set forth in this essay.

³⁰ Tansey, "Out-of -State Free Blacks," 384.

Appendix 1
Black Real Estate Owners in Louisiana, 1850

parish	total value	average value	owners
Avoyelles	\$2,900	\$967	3
Bienville	2,300	767	3
Caddo	1,200	1,200	1
Calcasieu	3,300	825	4
Catahoula	3,000	3,000	1
East Baton Rouge	40,400	1,554	26
East Feliciana	700	350	2
Franklin	1,000	500	2
Iberville	271,900	30,311	9
Jefferson	166,200	1,955	85
Lafayette	5,700	407	14
Lafourche	6,000	6,000	1
Livingston	8,400	8,400	1
Natchitoches	386,200	4,291	90
Orleans	2,465,000	3,840	642
Ouachita	1,900	950	2
Plaquemines	305,600	5,992	51
Pointe Coupée	428,700	6,213	69
Rapides	4,100	820	5
St. Bernard	26,800	5,360	5
St. Charles	4,000	4,000	1
St. Helena	500	500	1
St. James	1500	750	2
St. John the Baptist	132,600	13,260	10
St. Landry	87,800	915	96
St. Martin	34,100	1,066	32
St. Mary	64,700	1,961	33
St. Tammany	48,500	1,865	26
Terrebonne	4,800	1,600	3
Vermilion	300	300	1
Washington	200	200	1
West Baton Rouge	18,600	1,240	15
West Feliciana	<u>7,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>7</u>
total	\$4,535,900	\$3,646	1,244

Appendix 2
Black Real Estate Owners in Louisiana, 1860

parish	total value	average value	owners
Ascension	\$1,400	\$1,400	1
Assumption	3,300	825	4
Avoyelles	6,000	1,200	5
Caddo	8,500	2,833	3
Calcasieu	13,700	806	17
Carroll	400	400	1
Catahoula	3,600	720	5
East Baton Rouge	100,800	2,016	50
Iberville	651,800	46,557	14
Jefferson	80,900	3,677	22
Lafayette	10,500	618	17
Lafourche	16,900	939	18
Natchitoches	253,700	2,371	107
Orleans	2,628,200	4,524	581
Plaquemines	181,500	3,490	52
Pointe Coupée	770,000	9,390	82
Rapides	90,600	3,485	26
St. Bernard	600	600	1
St. Charles	41,500	8,300	5
St. John the Baptist	77,000	6,417	12
St. Landry	170,400	1,852	92
St. Martin	150,000	2,542	59
St. Mary	118,900	5,170	23
St. Tammany	28,700	844	34
Terrebonne	17,800	2,967	6
Vermilion	1,300	650	2
Washington	900	450	2
West Baton Rouge	77,100	6,425	12
West Feliciana	7,200	1,029	7
Winn	<u>1,300</u>	<u>650</u>	<u>2</u>
total	\$5,514,500	\$4,370	1,262

Appendix 3
Total Black Property Holding in Selected Rural Parishes, 1860-1913

	1860	1870	1893	1901/ 1903	1907	1913
Bienville		\$65,200	\$79,470	\$198,800 ^a	\$278,610	\$162,570
Bossier		175,500	233,143	344,530	348,854	272,530
Caddo	\$13,200	229,900	n.d.	505,960	696,520	889,000
Claiborne	300	115,100	159,296	206,375	342,195	291,870
Concordia	100	68,000	109,581	196,746	251,869	80,695
De Soto		62,000	225,455	297,690	n.d.	448,700
East Carroll ^b			96,835	155,080	267,020	223,980
East Feliciana		118,000	124,975	187,735	364,460	181,905
Iberia		162,700	207,482	320,080	491,740	411,670
Iberville	665,100	104,600	196,315	158,910	193,325	169,490
Jefferson	129,400	129,000	130,190	118,725	133,870	107,700
Lafayette	33,400	93,400	129,005	169,898	307,478	325,796
Natchitoches	739,700	370,800	397,480	455,160	534,287	437,670 ^c
Ouachita		68,800	n.d.	220,570	288,180	277,066
Plaquemines	379,700	341,000	173,545	n.d.	168,770 ^d	144,208 ^e
Pointe Coupée	796,000	259,600	173,005	133,765	327,465	122,327
Rapides	113,200	101,300	62,060	101,415	192,150	309,710
St. John	214,100	49,700	49,880	54,395 ^f	120,170 ^g	121,045
St. Landry	609,900	236,200	n.d.	371,960 ^h	734,470	530,870
St. Martin	188,700	140,900	197,670	310,320	335,580	332,270
St. Mary	228,700	83,100	240,296	315,046 ⁱ	390,050 ^j	434,630
St. Tammany	85,800	29,000	82,804	101,902	88,304	137,628
Tensas	100	205,600	161,840	179,770	237,560	177,810
Webster ^k			110,070	138,685	229,570	216,780
W. B. Rouge	88,500	20,800	89,080	103,430	133,922	82,028
W. Feliciana	15,200	22,900	177,864	216,733	227,620	132,700 ^l

^a The data for Bienville are for 1892.
^b East Carroll was formed out of Carroll Parish in 1877.
^c The data for Natchitoches are for 1911.
^d The data for Plaquemines are for 1911.
^e The data for Plaquemines are for 1916.
^f The data for St. John are for 1899.
^g The data for St. John are for 1908.
^h The data for St. Landry are for 1900.
ⁱ The data for St. Mary are for 1902.
^j The data for St. Mary are for 1905.
^k Webster Parish was created from portions of Bienville, Bossier, and Claiborne parishes in 1871.
^l The data for West Feliciana are for 1915.

(Source: Computed from *USMSPC*, 1850, 1860, 1870; Assessment Rolls, Louisiana parishes, 1893-1916, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Assessors were instructed to list the actual value of land and personal holdings. Postwar land values in the state dropped 70 percent. See U. S. Department of Agriculture, *Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture for the Year 1867*, 12 vols. (Washington, D. C., 1867), pp. 102-119; Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, *One Kind of Freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation* (London, 1977), p. 51.)