The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly

VOLUME XXXIX
NUMBER 3

SUMMER 2022

SECRET IDENTITY: A Rare Portrait's Saga of Stewardship

EVENT CALENDAR

The ever-changing landscape of the pandemic can result in adjustments to the programming schedule. We strongly encourage visitors to visit www.hnoc.org for regular updates. For additional information, please email events@hnoc.org.

"Celebrating the Swedish Nightingale"

Swedish singer Jenny Lind was one of the most popular entertainers of the mid-19th century, and this concert—presented in collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden in Washington, DC, and the Honorary Consulate of Sweden in New Orleans—will pay homage to her legacy and repertoire. The program will feature soprano Tessan-Maria Lehmussaari and pianist Silja Levander.

Saturday, June 18, 2 p.m.
410 Chartres Street
Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Food Forum: Celebrating the Seasons—Summer

Beating the heat with cold treats has been a summer pastime practically since New Orleans's founding. This installment of THNOC's Food Forum will take the form of a dinner party, with cool refreshment as the theme.

Late August 2022
$65; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Chess Fest

THNOC's education department invites chess lovers of all ages to the inaugural Historic New Orleans Collection Chess Fest. Guests will be able to craft DIY chessboards, play chess puzzle games, play "human chess" on a giant chessboard, and join a friendly fast-chess tournament.

Saturday, July 9, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.
410 Chartres Street
Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Sensory-Friendly Saturday

Sensory-Friendly Saturdays are mornings of exploration and hands-on learning for neurodiverse guests and their families. We welcome participants of all ages and abilities to join us for the theme "Mini City," to build a town out of magnetic tiles, Legos, and more!

Saturday, July 30, 9–10:30 a.m.
520 Royal Street
Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

New Orleans Antiques Forum

The Collection's well-loved celebration of decorative arts returns from its pandemic hiatus with "The Spanish South," focusing on the colorful Spanish era in Louisiana and the surrounding Gulf region.

Thursday–Sunday, August 4–7
Hotel Monteleone, 214 Royal Street
Pricing varies; registration required. For more information, visit www.hnoc.org/noaf.

Southern Decadence Lecture

Today, the month of June is recognized around the world as Pride Month, a celebration of LGBTQ communities and cultures. Before Fortune 500 companies were advertising for Pride, however, New Orleans had Southern Decadence, held annually on Labor Day weekend. Historian and author Frank Perez will speak about the event's origins and the evolution of gay pride over the decades.

Wednesday, August 24, 6:30 p.m.
410 Chartres Street
Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

TOURS

Virtual Field Trips

THNOC's education department works with teachers to create custom virtual presentations on a variety of topics including Reconstruction, Louisiana Indigenous History, Exploring the Archive, and more. All student programs are free. ASL interpretation is available. More information can be found at www.hnoc.org/programs/virtual-field-trips.

Self-Guided Courtyard Tours and French Quarter Tours App

THNOC's three French Quarter courtyards are currently open to the public. Visitors can learn about the architecture and history of the spaces, then head out for a self-guided tour of the French Quarter using THNOC's French Quarter Tours app. With the app, users can build a custom walking tour or take one of the themed tours to see significant sites in the historic city center.

533 Royal Street, 520 Royal Street, and 722 Toulouse Street
App available for download on the Apple App Store and Google Play

EXHIBITIONS

All are free unless otherwise noted. Check www.hnoc.org for updates on gallery openings and closures.

CURRENT

Backstage at "A Streetcar Named Desire"
Through July 3, 2022
520 Royal Street

***Making Mardi Gras* (condensed version)**
Through August 7, 2022
520 Royal Street

Robert Tannen's "Jackson Square"
Through August 28, 2022
520 Royal Street

French Quarter Life: People and Places of the Vieux Carré
Through February 2023
520 Royal Street

UPCOMING

Spanish New Orleans and the Caribbean / La Nueva Orleans y el Caribe españoles
October 20, 2022–January 22, 2023
520 Royal Street

Notre-Dame de Paris: The Augmented Exhibition
November 15, 2022–March 1, 2023
520 Royal Street
An immersive reality experience about the history, construction, and post-fire restoration of the famed French landmark, developed by Histovery in collaboration with L'Oréal.

CONTINUING

French Quarter Galleries
520 Royal Street

Louisiana History Galleries
533 Royal Street

GENERAL HOURS

520 Royal Street
Tricentennial Wing, French Quarter Galleries, Café Cour, and The Shop
Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.;
Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

533 Royal Street
Louisiana History Galleries, Merieult Courtyard
Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.;
Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

410 Chartres Street
Williams Research Center Reading Room
Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Appointments are encouraged. Please email reference@hnoc.org or call (504) 523-4662.

ON THE COVER

Portrait of a free woman of color
1837; oil on canvas
by François Fleischbein
1985.212

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spend time behind the scenes of any museum, and you'll hear the word "interpretation" come up frequently. Some of our frontline staff members, formerly known as docents, are now called interpreters. But everyone participates in the act of interpretation.

Objects do not do anything on their own. They are inanimate. Meaning comes from the perspectives of the people who interact with those objects. Curators, catalogers, researchers, visitors, you name it—varied points of view, informed by varied experiences, shape the interpretation of an object. The result of all this interpretive work might be small, such as a simple wall label, or much bigger in scope, such as a guided tour or a video series. We are interlocutors between historical material and modern audiences, and it's a role we cherish.

This issue of *THNOC Quarterly* features two articles that illustrate how different points of view can impact interpretation. The first, by Senior Editor Molly Reid Cleaver, focuses on a painting THNOC acquired in 1985 and displayed for decades in a manner that perpetuated historical inaccuracies. Now, over 30 years later, with input from scholars and conservators, we have reexamined and reinterpreted the work. The other, by Chief Curator Jason Wiese, spotlights a pastel drawing by Jules Lion that THNOC acquired in December of last year. Among the most important acquisitions in the history of our institution, this object is now on display in our Louisiana History Galleries as part of a collaborative initiative with Le Musee de f.p.c., a McKenna Museum on Esplanade Avenue, and the new Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. Together, we're working to interpret and teach the history of New Orleans from multiple points of view.

Both case studies exemplify how we strive to expand understanding of the past through research and relationships. By always seeking new meanings of history and culture, we hope that all people will recognize something of themselves and their own experiences in our work and the work of our partners. —DANIEL HAMMER

CONTENTS

EXHIBITION

French Quarter Galleries
Continuous exhibition
520 Royal Street
Free

Identity Theft

Nearly 35 years ago, a heedless conservator changed a portrait of a free woman of color. Now, following its restoration, THNOC is telling the story.

Ever since the reopening of the French Quarter Galleries this past fall, a new text panel has accompanied one of THNOC's rarest artworks, an 1837 oil painting by the New Orleans artist François Fleischbein. It depicts a woman of color with a modest smile. She wears a golden tignon (headwrap), earrings, and an elaborate, tiered lace collar and golden bow over a black frock.

As the text panel explains, for 30 years, the painting bore a different aspect—the result of a bad conservation job performed in 1988 after the painting's 1985 acquisition. The conservator—Phyllis Hudson, an outside party hired by THNOC and well regarded in the local fine art community—decided that the sitter's ornate collar and bow were not original to the painting. Without THNOC's permission, she removed the lace ruff and bow, leaving a plain white collar in their stead.

A

B

A, B. Portrait shown before (1985, left) and after (1988, right) conservation by Phyllis Hudson

THNOC curators feared incurring further damage to the painting by seeking a restoration. And so, for decades, the portrait was exhibited in its altered state. Visitors to the museum might have heard the story of the tragic conservation from a docent, but THNOC did not disclose the mistake in any official capacity.

Moreover, for a period of time THNOC adopted a theory about the identity of the sitter—that she was the artist's housekeeper, Betsy—even though that identification had not been directly substantiated. That interpretation, as well as Hudson's denial of the authenticity of the sitter's adornments, seemed predicated on cavalier assumptions about the sitter's race and class. The subtext was that a woman of color at that time simply could not have worn such finery. "Our display and interpretation of the work made us complicit in the erasure of the sitter's identity and dignity," the new text panel states.

In 2016 Craig Crawford, a conservator new to town, heard the story about the portrait while touring THNOC. Looking at the painting, he remarked that it would have been difficult to remove the original white paint of the collar; he surmised that, instead, Hudson had "overpainted" the newer collar and that the original lay beneath.

He was right. After three decades, the portrait was returned to its original state and is on view once again.

The story of this erasure and its fortunate reversal has been a complicated one for The Collection, prompting us to reexamine our approach to conservation, our awareness of implicit bias in interpreting our holdings, and our disclosure of sensitive information. Hudson's actions misrepresented the sitter as Fleischbein saw her; by not publicly discussing the portrait's history, THNOC extended the arc of that misrepresentation.

"It was not clear for so long, simply by looking at the painting in our museum, what it truly was," says THNOC President/CEO Daniel Hammer. "That is part of the history of the painting, its decades in our care. It's a public part of it as well: when it was in our museum, it was a tool for the public to learn about the past, but it did not do so truthfully. That's something that we felt we had to explain with this new interpretation panel.

"This is a story that has real impact. It's part of a long history of perpetuating misunderstanding about the role of people of color in this country and their contributions to society."

Today, Judith H. Bonner is THNOC's senior curator of art, but in May 1988 she was a junior staffer less than one year into the job when her supervisor, Curator of Art John Mahé, received a call from Phyllis Hudson about the conservation of the Fleischbein painting. The portrait had been in her care for about 19 months by that point, and Mahé had resorted to issuing "polite 'threats'" warning Hudson that if she did not return the painting soon he would come and pick it up himself. Hudson called to give Mahé a progress report and mentioned that she intended to remove the sitter's lace collar and bow.

"John came in in a real flurry—upset," Bonner recalls.

Mahé asked Hudson to wait until they had a chance to consult a key piece of evidence: Fleischbein's sketchbook, on loan at the time to the New Orleans Museum of Art. Mahé directed Bonner to go there first thing in the morning, and she found the artist's original sketch from which he painted the portrait. "I looked at the drawing, and the collar was

C. **Artist's sketch for "Portrait of a free woman of color"**
1830s; graphite
by François Fleischbein
courtesy of NewsBank

D. ***Young Man with Bow and Arrow***
1832; graphite
by François Fleischbein
courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

there," Bonner says. "It wasn't as ornate as what Fleischbein put in his final version, but that's common. As any artist is working from pencil to paint, it's going to change."

Bonner immediately called Mahé to let him know that the lace collar must indeed be original to the painting. But when Mahé called Hudson with the confirmation, she informed him that she had already removed it and the bow.

"Everybody was upset," Bonner recalls. "She [the sitter] had a social standing that was obvious from that collar and jewelry and the tignon. What Phyllis did, it robbed her of her social standing."

The unknown identity of Fleischbein's sitter has been a source of speculation, conjecture, and outright myth since long before THNOC acquired the painting. "For years she had been rumored to be the infamous voodoo queen Marie Laveau," writes art historian Lucia Olubunmi R. Momoh in a 2017 *Iron Lattice* article about the painting and THNOC's stewardship of it. Mahé refers to this rumor in a 1988 memo: "Not believing this fable," he writes, "The Collection purchased it [the painting] after recognizing it to be one of only four extant antebellum portraits of a Black woman" known to exist at the time.

Another theory came from a 1976 *Times-Picayune* article written by New Orleans art critic and collector George Jordan, who had been able to study two of Fleischbein's sketchbooks, then held by the artist's great-grandchildren. In the article, Jordan mentions the drawing—the same one Bonner later consulted to confirm the lace collar's authenticity—and theorizes that the sitter belonged to Fleischbein and his wife: "probably their slave, Betsy."

Sanchez Antiques and Auction Galleries, which sold the artwork to The Collection in 1985, described it as "oil ptg. of young woman Quadroon dressed in her finery topped with a tignon."

As Momoh has written, both in her *Iron Lattice* piece as well as her 2019 master's thesis for Tulane University, these three presumptive identifications—slave, quadroon, and voodoo priestess—all represent different tropes attached to women of color throughout history. The servile slave, the hypersexed quadroon or "tragic mulatto," and the exotic voodoo queen are all racial lenses through which history has viewed these women of the past. The truth, however, especially in as demographically complex a place as early 19th-century New Orleans, is often more complicated.

"I personally thought she was a free woman of color employed as a high-level housekeeper, and she was clearly being paid," Bonner says. "How could you afford a beautiful pleated lace collar and a tignon like that without money? So to me, it was clear that she was not a servant, with the connotations that word entails, but a housekeeper."

Others believe that the wealth displayed in her jewelry and collar indicate that she was not under anyone's employment at all; perhaps she was one of the many free-woman-of-color landowners in 19th-century New Orleans. "While some free women of color participated in New Orleans's economy as nannies, tutors, seamstresses, housekeepers, and landlords, most of these women could still not have afforded a formal portrait by François Fleischbein, nor the elegant gold-leaf frame," Momoh writes in her thesis.

The sitter's collar and bow were not simply adornments; they were important clues about her identity, and Hudson's tampering had erased them. THNOC curators felt limited in their options going forward. Two days after his phone call with Hudson, Mahé drafted a memo to THNOC's board detailing the incident and calling on the institution to sever its professional relationship with Hudson, as well as to report her to the American Institute for Conservation, at which she was a fellow.

According to both Bonner and Momoh, Hudson's actions went far outside the scope of standard conservation practice, even leaving aside the fact that she was operating without THNOC's permission. "I don't know why she did it," Bonner says. "She just felt that it was not original, and she did not explain why she thought that."

The board took up the issue at its next meeting, where it was decided that The Collection would no longer use Hudson's services. Fearing a lawsuit, however, the board decided not to publicly censor her, citing an existing policy against divulging the names of specific appraisers or conservators. "It was a very small town," Bonner says of the local fine art community at the time.

Finally, there was the question of what to do about the painting. It had already sat at Hudson's studio for nearly two years, and now The Collection faced further delays and damage if it were to pursue a restoration. Another consideration was that, at the time, The Collection had no other portrait showing a free person of color to share with its visitors. Though the lace collar and bow were gone, Hudson had left the sitter's jewelry intact: a fine brooch at her collar and a delicate earring. These details and the gold tignon still would serve to identify the sitter as a free woman of color. THNOC decided to exhibit the painting as-is.

And so, after more than a century in private hands, the Fleischbein portrait entered the public realm. From 1988 through the mid-2010s THNOC exhibited it regularly, but "with no commentary that it had been altered through conservation," an internal report states. At some point, The Collection began using Jordan's unconfirmed identification, Betsy, as the formal title of the painting.

In her thesis, Momoh, who often refers to the painting as *Not-Betsy*, describes the portrait's reach beyond The Collection: "*Not-Betsy* has graced the covers of monographs on the history of the Crescent City and romance novels about the American quadroon. A much larger-than-life wall graphic depicting the portrait remains on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. HNOC sold copies of the portrait in their gift shop and the painting itself prominently graced their walls for over 30 years."

But, with the damage done and the story hidden, the painting and its interpretation were incomplete—a half-truth. "We knew what it was, that the painting as displayed was not representative of its original state, but we did not succeed in sharing that with the public," says Hammer. "Sometimes we did, through visitor interactions with our staff, but it wasn't

E. ***Portrait of a Free Woman of Color***
between 1833 and 1835; oil on canvas
by François Fleischbein
courtesy of the New Orleans Museum of Art, gift of William E. Groves, 66.29

F

F. The portrait, recently restored by conservator Craig Crawford, now hangs in the French Quarter Galleries at 520 Royal Street.

G. **Portrait of a free woman of color**
1837; oil on canvas
by François Fleischbein
1985.212

shared in the same way every time, as with a fully conceived, written interpretation. That became a problem."

If anyone at THNOC knows about the power of storytelling, it's the staff of the Visitor Services department. Every day, they watch guests walk through the galleries, field their questions, and hear their conversations. They know that people want a narrative, not just artifacts and artworks.

The Fleischbein portrait, which currently bears the descriptive title "Portrait of a free woman of color," is a rare painting made rarer by its mystery. Who was this woman? As viewers gaze at the sitter, following the folds of her tignon, the upward curve of her lips, the placidity of her mien, the flame of interest sparks to life. Such is the power of art to tell compelling history, but for 30 years The Collection provided no narrative beyond what individual docents were able or willing to share.

Now, with the new text panel, THNOC has learned that telling uncomfortable stories not only brings dignity to the art and its historical subjects—it also makes for a better visitor experience. "I'm walking through the galleries constantly and specifically paying attention to that space," says Visitor Services Assistant Dhani Adomaitis. "People not only stop—almost all of them do and really spend time with that panel."

According to Visitor Services Assistant Winston Ho, who specializes in local Chinese American history, obscured or tangled narratives behind historical artworks are not as uncommon as people might think. "I work in Chinese American history and have the same problem constantly," Ho says. "What you see with that painting, it happens all the time. So for us to talk about it, it's been a positive."

In Momoh's current work as the Constance E. Clayton Curatorial Fellow at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, she has been reinterpreting items related to the abolitionist movement, which, despite its liberal underpinnings, often traded in racist imagery and tropes. "Institutions in the North are wrestling with racism within the abolition movement," she says. "So this subject, it's affecting not just institutions in the South, but everywhere."

Just as bias-free interpretation has become a hot topic among institutions, the subject has proven to be a great icebreaker among museumgoers. "I've had probably dozens of comments from people thanking us, and a lot of great discussions about it there," Adomaitis says. "It's milking conversation between different people, consistently—and all ages, all demographics." —MOLLY REID CLEAVER

G

Square Shapes

Artist and urban planner Robert Tannen's *Jackson Square* uses architectural abstraction to honor a great American plaza.

A

EXHIBITION

Robert Tannen's "Jackson Square"
On view through August 28
520 Royal Street, 3rd floor
Free

A. ***Jackson Square***
1982; aluminum and weathering steel
by Robert Tannen, sculptor
acquisition made possible by David B. Workman and the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, 2020.0168

This summer and fall, visitors to THNOC's Tricentennial Wing can see New Orleans's famed Jackson Square without ever leaving the building.

A new installation in the third-floor Laura Simon Nelson Gallery features *Jackson Square*, a multicomponent sculpture by New Orleans artist and urban planner Robert Tannen. The artwork comprises abstract representations of all the structures surrounding the square—the Pontalba buildings, Cabildo, Presbytère, and St. Louis Cathedral—as well as the riverfront levee and the square's statue of Andrew Jackson.

Tannen originally created the sculpture in 1982 as a commission for Pan-American Life Insurance Co., two years after the opening of the Pan-American Life Center at 601 Poydras Street. "They commissioned a number of works primarily by Louisiana artists," Tannen said. Made of aluminum and weathering steel and fabricated from Tannen's design by the French Quarter–based firm Holzer Sheet Metal Works, *Jackson Square* sat in a large public space on the building's 11th floor, near its cafeteria and dining area.

"The idea was to create a three-dimensional model of Jackson Square, which I have always believed is one of the great urban spaces of the world—not just the United States, but the world—and including the levee, the surrounding landscape," said Tannen. "I've

always enjoyed going there and having a muffuletta sandwich ever since I moved to New Orleans 50-plus years ago."

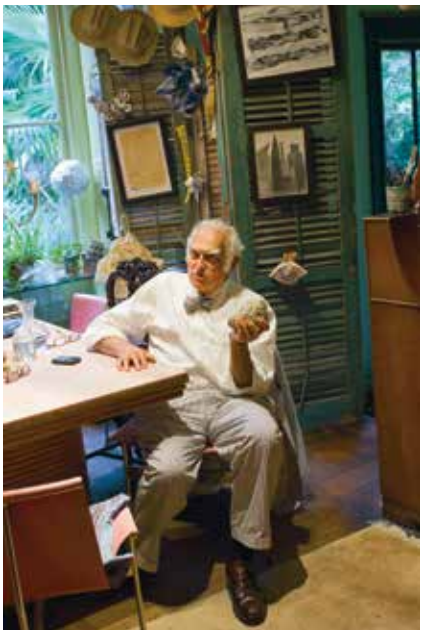
Tannen, who was born in Brooklyn and worked with the architect and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller in the 1960s, first came to the Gulf Coast to assist in planning-related recovery efforts following 1969's Hurricane Camille. After circulating in the experimental-architecture and post-avant-garde scenes in the Northeast, he moved to New Orleans permanently in the 1970s. An artist of many media, Tannen frequently uses architectural forms and principles to address concepts related to Louisiana's built and natural environments.

At the time of his Pan-American Life commission, "I was focused on making shotguns [houses] and other local forms and abstracting the forms, eliminating the windows, doors, filigree, et cetera. So they were basic sculptural forms, almost geometric forms," he said.

The entire sculpture has a footprint of about 10-by-12 feet, and the tallest structure, St. Louis Cathedral, stands 5 feet tall. The long levee form serves as a representative and literal retaining wall, forming the fourth side of the titular square and reminding the viewer of the city's deeply embedded relationship with the river and with water. While the piece is meant to honor the existing layout and design of the square, the statue of Andrew Jackson—a pigeon on his head—is an anomaly: "I'd always been aware of Jackson's role in the Trail of Tears, so the sculpture as it was done would allow that piece to be moved or removed—just as we are now removing monuments of such controversy," Tannen said.

Rounding out the installation is a text panel with a QR code linking to more information about the history of Jackson Square and its urban development over time.

"I think of the sculpture as giving appropriate importance to that urban space," Tannen said. "By abstracting the buildings, it's a way to convey to someone looking at the space and understanding it as a special urban experience." —MOLLY REID CLEAVER



B

C

B. **Robert Tannen in his Esplanade Avenue home**
2012
by Keely Merritt, THNOC head of photography
gift of Robert Tannen, MSS 629.50.8

C. ***Jackson Square* at the Pan-American Life Center**
1982
photograph courtesy of Robert Tannen and Jeanne P. Nathan

OFF-SITE

Making Mardi Gras Memories

Our roundup of holdings that have appeared outside The Collection, either on loan to other institutions or in noteworthy media projects

Footage of THNOC's exhibition *Making Mardi Gras* was featured in a **CBS Saturday Morning** segment about Mardi Gras Indians and the history of Super Sunday. Exhibition cocurator Lydia Blackmore was interviewed for the segment, which also featured archival footage and images from THNOC's holdings.

Mardi Gras Indians parading through the Vieux Carré at the first New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Big Chief Paul Longpre of the Golden Blades at left in white
1970; 16mm film
by Jules Cahn
Jules Cahn Collection at THNOC, 2000.78.4.112

THNOC facilitated four image reproductions of musician Clifton Chenier for a permanent exhibit honoring the "King of Zydeco" at the **Clifton Chenier Center** in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Clifton Chenier at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival
1977
by Jules Cahn
Jules Cahn Collection at THNOC, 2000.78.8.147

Clifton Chenier at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival
1981
photograph by Michael P. Smith © THNOC, 2007.0103.2.251

Louisiana's Old State Capitol museum in Baton Rouge has borrowed six objects for the exhibition *The Boggs Family Legacy*, on view through December 2022.

"Bee for Boggs" political button
between 1940 and 1990
gift of Robert, Nicole, and Gabrielle Stone, 2015.0506.111

NPR Music reproduced three images for a web feature about the history of Mardi Gras music, which ran on Fat Tuesday, March 1.

Danny Barker with the Onward Brass Band at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival
1974
photograph by Michael P. Smith © THNOC, 2007.0103.2.221

Larry Bannock, big chief of the Golden Star Hunters
1983
photograph by Michael P. Smith © THNOC, 2007.0103.3.30

A photograph from THNOC's 2021 publication *Enigmatic Stream: Industrial Landscapes of the Lower Mississippi River* was used to illustrate an essay in the spring 2022 issue of the ***Hedgehog Review***. Written by Angel Adams Parham, the essay is titled "A Tale of Two Stories: Meditations on the American Dream."

Ranch house adjacent to Valero oil refinery, Meraux
2015
by Richard Sexton
acquisition made possible by the G. Henry Pierson Jr. Photography Fund, 2015.0364.49

Hogs Wild

Feral hogs are threatening cities from Hong Kong to New Orleans. THNOC Editor Nick Weldon tells the story, 500 years in the making, of how they came to Louisiana.

They attacked Shakira in Barcelona. They're "rampaging" in San Francisco. In November, they appeared in New Orleans East, tearing up yards and putting residents on edge. Proliferative, destructive, and seemingly irrepressible, feral hogs have rapidly become one of the most challenging invasive species on the planet. Once primarily a nuisance in rural areas, the "pig bomb," as South Carolina–based feral hog expert Jack Mayer calls it, has arrived at the doorsteps of cities like New Orleans. "The urban incursion by wild pigs is kind of a global phenomenon right now," Mayer says. "Hong Kong has a major problem, Rome, cities across the globe—in part because populations have grown to the point that they've expanded into developed areas."

Approximately 900,000 feral hogs currently roam Louisiana, across all 64 parishes. They reach sexual maturity between six and eight months of age and can produce up to two litters of as many as a dozen piglets a year—meaning the latest population figures are outdated almost as soon as they're published. The Louisiana State University AgCenter estimates that feral hogs cause $76 million in agricultural damage annually in Louisiana, destroying everything from sugarcane to rice to corn, and their rooting behavior also damages levees. Known as "opportunistic omnivores," they outcompete many native species for resources, prey on animals as large as baby deer, and even threaten alligators by destroying their nests and eating their eggs. They also can carry dozens of viral and bacterial diseases, many of which can infect humans and livestock. On top of all that, feral hogs are highly intelligent animals that will defend themselves if threatened. Local hog hunter John Schmidt, better known as Trapper John, puts it succinctly: "They'll fight till their last breath." If they're not fighting, they're hiding, and they've proven quite adept at eluding capture in the forests and swamps of Louisiana—in part, because they've had a nearly 500-year head start.

The Long, Curly Tail of Colonialism

It began with an invasion of another kind, when in 1539 Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto brought soldiers, enslaved people, horses, and as many as 300 domestic hogs into the territories of various American Indian tribes in what is now the southeastern United States. Historians generally agree that this was the first time pigs (domesticated or otherwise) appeared on the North American continent. *Sus scrofa*—the scientific name for all wild and domestic swine—helped sustain many European colonization efforts due to their ability to reproduce quickly and adapt to a wide range of

This story is condensed from a post on The Historic New Orleans Collection's First Draft blog. Visit hnoc.org/firstdraft to read more.

A. ***De Soto's Discovery of the Mississippi***
between 1880 and 1921; lithograph based on an 1855 painting
by William Henry Powell, painter; Kurz & Allison, publisher
1982.247

A

environments. When de Soto died of an illness on the banks of the Mississippi River in either present-day Arkansas or Louisiana in 1542, his herd of pigs had already grown to 700, and along his 3,000-mile journey many of the animals had escaped or ended up in the possession of local tribes.

Spanish colonists knew they had a pig problem long before de Soto's ill-fated trek. The species had first been introduced to the Caribbean in 1493, when Christopher Columbus brought eight domestic swine to the island now known as Cuba. Columbus's hogs quickly multiplied and were used to stock islands throughout the Spanish West Indies. Their ever-growing herds soon began terrorizing the islands, destroying maize and sugarcane crops, killing cattle, and even attacking people. Still, de Soto and many colonists after him took hogs from this stock with them on their voyages throughout the region. The Spanish were joined in transporting hogs to North America in the coming centuries by English and French colonists, including René Robert Cavalier, sieur de La Salle, and Pierre Le Moyne, sieur d'Iberville, who brought hogs to Biloxi in January 1699. Many of these hogs and their offspring went feral because owners typically allowed them to range freely without fencing. These wild populations found cover in the forests, at the edges of human habitation, and reproduced unchecked.

A Royal Obsession

By the 19th century, feral hog populations in the southeastern US had become a well-established nuisance. The backyard pig once seen as a reliable source of food had evolved into something else: a mythical menace of the woods. Newspapers enhanced stories of close encounters on the home front with fantastical yarns of wild boar hunts carried out by European royalty. Those who could bag a boar with sizable "tushes"—slang for tusks—returned to a hero's welcome. The *Daily Picayune* described one such homecoming on its front page on February 2, 1876, detailing the "splendid capture" of a 275-pound boar near Fort Macomb. Its brave captors, identified as H. Montreuil and A. E. Livaudais, proudly displayed the boar's head

at the Gem Saloon on Royal Street. The paper promised, "There are doubtless many more wild boars on the prairie, and further splendid sport is expected."

In 1895 the Boston-based *Outing* magazine published an especially romanticized account of a boar hunt at an unnamed Louisiana plantation. "Of all sport none is more exciting, more abundant in surprises, more replete with dramatic situations, than hunting the wild boar in a Louisiana forest," wrote George Reno in his first-person retelling. "Compared with it, shooting birds becomes tame, killing deer seems murder, and fishing, as you think of the time wasted between bites, absolutely spiritless."

"Boar" is the technical term for all adult male swine, but the animals hunted by European royals were likely actual Eurasian wild boar—the progenitor of all domestic and feral hogs. Though it's the same species, the Eurasian boar bears notable physical differences from its descendants. Pure Eurasian boars tend to have darker and coarser fur, longer legs, larger heads, and, importantly, bigger tushes—er, tusks. "If you have a choice between shooting something that looks like a scrawny Hampshire boar or a Eurasian wild boar," Mayer says, "you're gonna want the Eurasian wild boar."

Despite the casual use of "wild boar" in media accounts of hog hunts in the US in the latter half of the 19th century, the first documented introduction of pure Eurasian wild boar in the country didn't occur until 1890, when millionaire Austin Corbin imported 13 boar from Germany to his private reserve in New Hampshire. Thus began a wave of wealthy white men importing Eurasian wild boar onto their vast estates. These wealthy hunters, ironically, became the feral hog's best friend, popularizing a sport that relied upon healthy populations. Meanwhile, their boars—as they are wont to do—got out. And multiplied.

B. ***Dogs Attacking Boar***
ca. 1650; engraving
by Peter Boel
courtesy of the Smithsonian American Art Museum

Breaking Loose

Free from their enclosures, these Eurasian boar met members of the established *S. scrofa* population in the US and, being almost genetically identical, began producing hybrids that over time picked up the best traits of their ancestors and spread like wildfire. "Hybrids get this two-part coat where they can survive in the snow and can live on the equator," says Buddy Goatcher, a wildlife biologist with more than four decades of experience trapping and hunting wild hogs in Louisiana and elsewhere. "They're super survivors."

To help fight back against suddenly booming feral hog populations in the early 20th century, eastern and southern states passed livestock fencing laws that in many areas ended free-ranging practices that dated to the early colonial eras. A 2014 federal report coauthored by Goatcher noted that "during the Great Depression (approximately 1930–40) and following decades, wild pigs were almost eradicated, except in those wards, parishes, and counties where government officials and local statutes protected pig free-range practices." By the early 1960s, there were only 7,500 feral hogs in Louisiana—less than one-hundredth of today's total—largely contained to areas with longstanding free-range populations, such as in the vicinities of Catahoula Lake and the Pearl River.

Despite these initiatives, feral swine found a way to bounce back, with some help. The Eurasian wild boar still enchanted wealthy sportsmen, and Leroy Denman's Powderhorn Ranch on the Texas Gulf Coast had plenty of them—too many, it turned out. Dennis

C

Good, an avid outdoorsman from Belle Chasse, recalls in the early 1970s being invited to hunt boar that had escaped from Powderhorn onto his friend's 10,000-acre ranch in Victoria, Texas. Good got more than a hunt: the friend offered to load up a cattle trailer and send Eurasian wild boar back to a pen Good had set up in Chalmette. Good, now 80 years old, says he intended to transfer the boar to another friend's private property in Mississippi, "but the majority of them escaped through the fence, and thus populated Verret, and the levee, and New Orleans East."

"That's how the Russian boar stock got over here," Good says. "I hate to say it, but it was me."

Though there has been significant interbreeding with feral hog populations at this point, experts agree that the approximately 17 Eurasian wild boar Good brought into Chalmette in 1973 account for essentially all the Eurasian wild boar and related hybrids in Louisiana today, most of which can be found in the marshes east of New Orleans East.

Many other hunters participated in spreading feral hogs descended from domestic stock throughout the state in the ensuing decades, as they realized they could have the thrill of the hunt on their own private property without having to travel long distances or deal with public land regulations. "You took an animal that can reproduce exponentially and just planted the seeds like Johnny Appleseed across the state," says Jim LaCour, state wildlife veterinarian for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Louisiana allowed free-ranging domestic hogs in 14 parishes until 2010 and didn't begin limiting the transportation of feral swine within the state until 2016. Even with tighter regulations today and looser restrictions on hunting, LaCour says that the state is

C. **Carved mantel featuring Louisiana wildlife**
between 1941 and 1955; cypress wood
by Enrique Alférez, sculptor
1978.204

D. ***Coming on with Open Jaws***
between 1850 and 1891; ink and Chinese white on bristol board
by Alfred Rudolph Waud
1977.137.18.63 i, ii

D

routinely falling well short of harvest benchmarks needed to keep numbers in check. Hunters would need to eradicate roughly 75 percent of the population annually, but in recent years the harvest has routinely been below 40 percent. Last year, however, Louisiana hunters took out 625,000 hogs, a spike LaCour says might be a temporary and unusual consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. More people off or out of work might mean more time spent in the wilds hunting.

Other mitigation efforts have fizzled. In 2016 a slaughterhouse in Springfield, Louisiana, became the first and only official purveyor of wild boar meat in the state, with the affiliated Two Run Farm seeking to increase enthusiasm and consumption of wild boar by distributing to restaurants including Carmo and Emeril's Delmonico. But the operation shut down in 2018, leaving no wild boar slaughterhouses in the state. (Hunters can still dress their own boar, and LDWF offers guidelines for safely preparing the meat.) Poison baiting campaigns have largely been ruled out because of the potential impacts on other species. Brute killing campaigns—including aerial gunning efforts from helicopters—have been deployed, and in 2020 the state passed a new law permitting licensed hunters to kill hogs on private property at night, when the swine tend to be most active.

E

E. **Feral hogs at a feeder in Louisiana**
2007
courtesy of Jim LaCour / Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

The matter is a bit more complicated for residents of New Orleans East, because of a longstanding Orleans Parish law against discharging firearms. (The statute lists some areas of exception, largely in the marshes east of the city.) In November WDSU's Sherman Desselle reported on feral hogs tearing up yards in Oak Island, a neighborhood once envisioned as the first of many eastward expansions of New Orleans East, now isolated between the abandoned Six Flags and the swamp. "A lot of deer and stuff run around here," says Oak Island resident John Adams. "The hogs run late at night." They're used to wildlife in Oak Island, but the increased property damage prompted a number of residents to reach out for help.

These encroachments at the eastern edges of the city might become more common as local experts like LaCour and Goatcher say there's still plenty of capacity for the hogs to increase their populations and range. The consequence is that the majority-Black residents of New Orleans East have been put on the front lines of a battle they didn't choose, facing a feral hog nuisance largely exacerbated by the choices of white hunters over the last 40 years. (As recently as 2016, the US Fish and Wildlife Service reported that 97 percent of hunters in the country were white, with Black and Asian Americans combining for less than 1 percent.)

"It's kind of been left up to the landowners," Desselle says, "and a lot of them can't afford to get that remediation."

After Desselle's report came out, he says he received a number of calls from local officials and feral hog hunters trying to learn more about the problem in Oak Island. The next day, a hunter came out and gave a trap to the resident that first reported the issue.

"Situations like that remind us that unfortunately people can't always rely on state and local officials to fix a problem," Desselle says. "Sometimes the best help somebody can get is from a neighbor." —NICK WELDON

ON THE JOB

Molly Reid Cleaver

POSITION: Senior editor, on staff since 2012

ASSIGNMENT: Edit and oversee production of *THNOC Quarterly*

When I was a schoolgirl, I spent all my free time making books. I'd write the story longhand, type it up on the class word processor, cut out lines of printed text, paste them onto different pages, add illustrations, and bind the pages together with a three-hole punch, brackets, and Scotch tape over the spine. Nothing made me prouder than holding the finished product.

Looking back, I realize I've turned that childhood obsession into a career. Ever since I joined The Collection 10 years ago, it has been my responsibility and pleasure to assemble *THNOC Quarterly*, our newsletter for members and friends of the institution. I oversee every aspect of the *Quarterly*, just as I did with my handmade books, but I have a lot more help now, chiefly in the form of Alison Cody, the magazine's art director and designer.

We are a team: I give her the ingredients for each issue—copy and images—and she assembles them into a cohesive whole, making sure the magazine is as beautiful to look at as it is interesting to read. The final result gets mailed out to nearly 9,000 recipients, with additional copies delivered to The Collection's staff and offices.

The planning of each issue starts with a story budget: a spreadsheet tracking all the content for the upcoming magazine. I write a short description of each feature and its author, make notes on art possibilities, and list the "department" to which the story belongs. (Departments are the thematic sections of the magazine—On View, Research, Books, Community, to name a few—seen in headers at the tops of pages.)

A series of columns on the spreadsheet functions as a checklist, helping me to track whether a story author has been assigned a deadline, whether the draft has been filed, what stage of edits the draft is in, and whether I've finalized captions, art, and headlines.

I love working on the *Quarterly* because it's a perfect blend of solo and collaborative work. Editing can be a solitary endeavor—all those hours in front of a Word doc—but because of the comprehensive scope of the *Quarterly*, I get to work with a variety of people across The Collection. Each issue aims to provide a snapshot of THNOC's far-ranging work at that moment in time, so I'm always learning about new developments, research, acquisitions, and programs at

ON VIEW

Jackson in Action

The Collection explores an American icon's legacy in *Andrew Jackson: Hero of New Orleans.*

EXHIBITION

Andrew Jackson: Hero of New Orleans

November 5, 2014–March 29, 2015

Williams Gallery, 533 Royal Street

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Free

For many, Andrew Jackson is a figure from a remote past, a portrait on a $20 bill, a statue in an old city square, or a lyric in a Johnny Horton song. Yet Jackson was the 19th-century equivalent of a rock star, one of our country's most famous heroes, as well as one of its most polarizing figures. A new exhibition, *Andrew Jackson: Hero of New Orleans*, will coincide with the 200th anniversary of Jackson's improbable victory over the British army below New Orleans—an outcome that effectively ended the War of 1812, ensured American control of the Mississippi River and western territories, and put Jackson on the road to the White House.

The show will invite visitors to follow the rise of an American icon, from his humble beginnings to immortality as a war hero and president. In addition to selections from The Collection's considerable holdings of original War of 1812 and Andrew Jackson materials, the exhibition will feature rare, one-of-a-kind objects—some that belonged to Jackson himself—on loan from the Hermitage, the Library of Congress, the National Archives and Records Administration, and other institutions.

Though he had served in the US Senate in the late 1790s, Jackson was a virtual unknown outside of Tennessee until he began appearing in newspaper accounts of the Creek War of 1813–14. In the wake of his victory over a large force of hostile Creek warriors at Horseshoe Bend, the frontier-militia general received a commission in the regular US army and was placed in command of the Seventh Military District, which included the Mississippi Territory and New Orleans.

The turning point in Jackson's life and career came with his stubborn resistance of British troops—many of them experienced veterans of European battles—sent to capture New Orleans in the waning days of the War of 1812, before the peace treaty was ratified in February 1815. News of the battle's outcome shocked the world and put Jackson front and center in the public eye. Jackson's celebrity exploded as news of his victory spread; suddenly everyone wanted to know more about him. The exhibition will trace how important early likenesses in paintings, prints, and published books began to satisfy the public's demand for "Old Hickory" stories and souvenirs.

Celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans and artistic depictions of Jackson formed part of an emerging national identity after the War of 1812. Frontier militiamen and their general became paragons of American masculinity and self-reliance, and observances of "the Glorious Eighth of January"—the anniversary of the battle—were closely tied to the prestige of the seventh American president and his Democratic Party for most of the 19th century.

Though he enjoyed enormous celebrity in his day, Jackson was also a controversial figure. His wartime defense of the southern territories and New Orleans was accomplished, in part, through a ruthless insistence on discipline and obedience—from troops and civilians alike. During the 1828 presidential election, supporters of Jackson's opponent, John Quincy Adams, printed a series of "coffin broadsides," which tarnished Jackson's military-hero reputation by spreading lurid tales of duels and bloody executions. Several examples of these broadsides will be on display, along with original documents exploring Jackson's controversial decision to declare martial law in New Orleans during the British invasion, a policy that led to the arrest of a

A. ***Battle of New Orleans***
1856; oil on canvas
by Dennis Malone Carter, painter
1960.22

B. ***The Brave Boy of the Washaws***
1876; hand-colored lithograph
by Currier and Ives, publisher
1963.22

C. **Cane with portrait-bust handle**
possibly between 1824 and 1850; carved ivory and hickory with bone and copper alloy
2014.0049.2

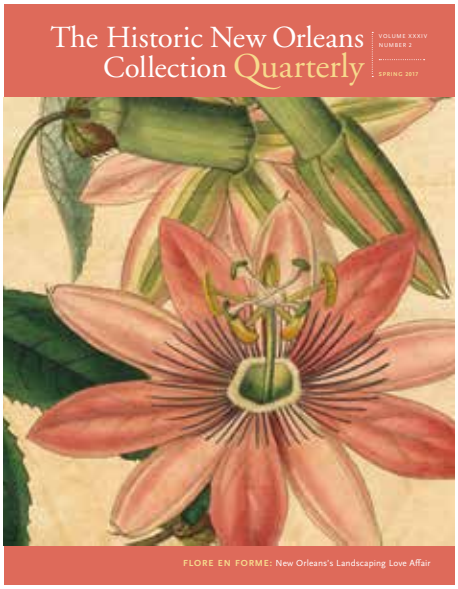
the institution. Basically, I get paid to be nosy, regularly checking in with my colleagues to see what they've been working on and what they're excited about.

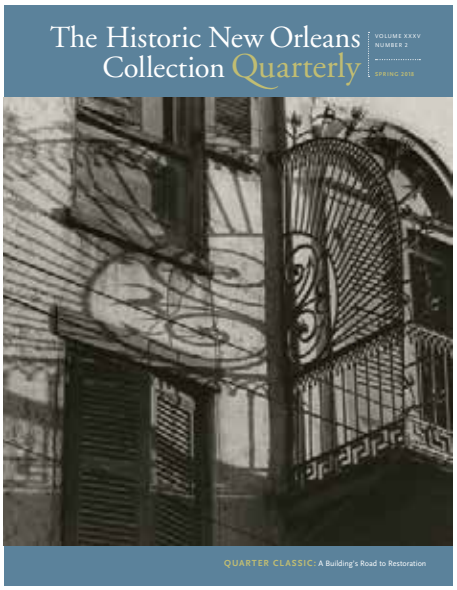
Sometimes, colleagues come to me with story ideas—as was the case, in this issue, for the article about the painting called "Portrait of a free woman of color," suggested to me by Chief Curator Jason Wiese and THNOC's IDEA Committee. Other times, I pitch articles to writers. I might read THNOC's quarterly acquisitions report and see something that sounds interesting, then reach out to the curator who accessioned it about writing a piece.

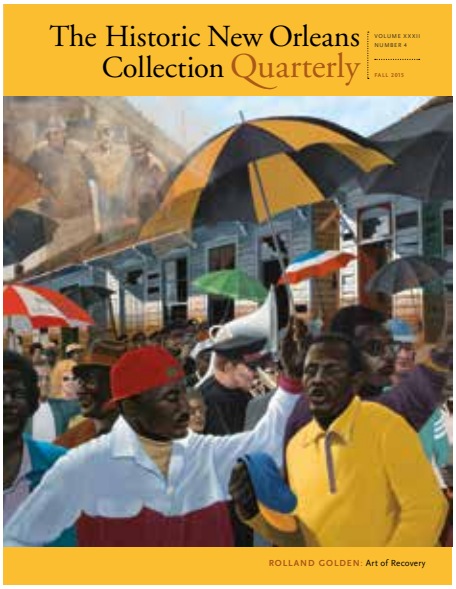
Sometimes, staff and I work together to develop a story: particularly for exhibition-related articles, I want to make sure we're providing a distinctive angle on the show's subject. The story shouldn't just be, "We have a new exhibition." As the literary maxim "show, don't tell" goes, the piece should illustrate for readers why the subject matters and why they should go see the exhibition.

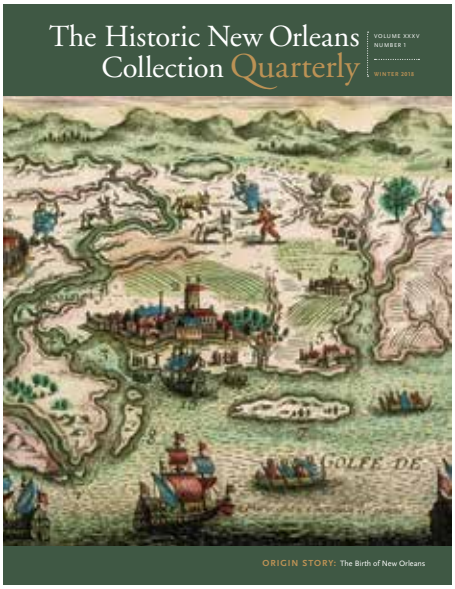
Helping me in this process are the staff members who review everything in the *Quarterly* before it goes to print, starting with my boss, Director of Publications Jessica Dorman. After her review, the content goes to a reader pool made up of different department heads, who look for any inaccuracies. For example, by the time a story about an exhibition has made its way through the editorial pipeline, an object mentioned in the story might have been removed from the show, so we then need to cut the reference. Finally, my eagle-eyed colleague Dorothy Ball, senior editor, gives the whole book a thorough proofread before it goes off to the printer, the locally based company Pel Hughes. There, our skilled rep, Calissa Bart, shepherds the issue through production.

My job title emphasizes my editorial responsibilities, but I also love to write for the magazine when I have the time. Even though I've been an editor by trade for a full decade now, I'm still a journalist at heart (my background pre-THNOC) with a love for archival research. Some of my favorite recent topics include colonial midwifery and H. Alvin Sharpe, inventor of the Mardi Gras doubloon.









One of the most exciting parts of each *Quarterly* cycle comes when Alison sends me her cover design. The cover is Alison's baby—and it's the first thing she works on, since her choices here will determine the color palette (which changes, issue to issue) and other interior details. I learned long ago not to even try to guess the cover image, because she always selects something unexpected and eye-catching. I simply tell her the cover story and give her an image pool, and she often does additional image research to select the perfect picture. Whenever a new issue drops, I hear from staff and readers about how beautiful it is, and I say, "Thanks! That's all Alison."

The Collection is fortunate to have members and fans spread out across the country and the globe. For people who cannot visit in person, whether because of distance, COVID, or any other reason, *THNOC Quarterly* is their window onto the institution. I'm always cognizant of that—the power of a simple little magazine to illuminate history, provide an aesthetic experience, and make lasting connections with our audience. —MOLLY REID CLEAVER

STAFF NEWS

New Staff

Olivia Gallo, assistant preparator. **Ashley Laguno**, sales associate. **Joshua McKendall**, web developer. **Cecilia Moscardó**, exhibition designer. **Ishmael Ross**, cataloger.

Changes

A number of staff received promotions and/or title changes in March. **Monika Cantin**, registrar. **Molly Reid Cleaver**, senior editor. **Cat Conner**, retail operations manager. **Rachel Ford**, registrar. **Robert Gates III**, preparator. **Michelle Gaynor**, head of retail development. **Cecilia Hock**, Visitor Services interpreter. **Peter Hoffman**, associate preparator. **Dylan Jordan**, Visitor Services interpreter. **Jane McKee**, Visitor Services supervisor. **Amanda McFillen**, director of public programs and interpretive services. **Libby Neidenbach**, interpretive training coordinator. **Tracy Norwood**, Shop digital media/sales associate. **Kurt Owens**, Visitor Services interpreter. **Joanna Robinson**, Visitor Services interpreter. **Catie Sampson**, cataloger. **George Schindler IV**, Visitor Services interpreter. **Rebecca Smith**, associate director, Williams Research Center. **Robert Ticknor**, senior reference associate.

Awards

The Shop at The Collection was a finalist for three awards presented by the Museum Store Association: best product development, best advertising or marketing, and best pop-up store or special event.

In April, THNOC's 2021 graphic history ***Monumental: Oscar Dunn and His Radical Fight in Reconstruction Louisiana*** received an honorable mention for the 2022 Civil War and Reconstruction Book Award given out by the Organization of American Historians.

Publications

Senior Editor **Molly Reid Cleaver** wrote an article for the NPR Music website on the history of Mardi Gras music.

Speaking Engagements

Curator of Decorative Arts **Lydia Blackmore** and **Sarah Duggan**, Decorative Arts of the Gulf South project manager, presented a talk to the National Trust for Historic Preservation about their work on THNOC's exhibition *Pieces of History*. Senior Editor **Molly Reid Cleaver** spoke on a panel at the Danny Barker Banjo and Guitar Festival, held in March at the New Orleans Jazz Museum at the Old US Mint.

At the annual conference of the Louisiana Historical Association, held in March in Baton Rouge, Curator of Education **Rachel Gaudry** participated in a roundtable discussion about museum education.

In May, Curator/Historian **Eric Seiferth** appeared on the *World Footprints* podcast with photographer Judy Cooper to discuss THNOC's 2021 book and exhibition *Dancing in the Streets: Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs of New Orleans*.

Senior Reference Associate **Robert Ticknor** spoke on a panel—"Medieval Perspectives on Modern Crises, Part Two: Teaching the Middle Ages in the Modern South"—at the annual conference of the American Historical Assocation, which took place virtually, in February.

In the Community

Head of Retail Development **Michelle Gaynor** has been elected to a three-year term as a South Atlantic Chapter officer for the Museum Store Association. She will serve the first year as secretary, the second as vice president, and the third as president.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON WOODLE

FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

Leslie and Larry Bouterie

If you ever visit James Monroe's Highland in Charlottesville, Virginia, you might spot two figures in beekeepers' suits, tending to the estate's apiary. That's THNOC members Larry and Leslie Lambour Bouterie, and beekeeping is just one of their many outlets for stewardship. They are regulars at Highland, as well as James Madison's Montpelier and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, and their work with bees isn't the half of it: Leslie is a renowned ceramics expert who has provided collections-management and curatorial assistance to multiple presidential sites, and Larry, a computer systems expert and retired US Army lieutenant colonel, currently provides photography services and also helps maintain apiary grounds and bear fences.

Though the Bouteries have lived in seven states and overseas, New Orleans remains their homeland. "Our soul is there," Leslie says. "We are native New Orleanians, born and raised in the city—high school sweethearts."

Leslie's mother introduced her to the city's history and culture early on, planting seeds that would last a lifetime. "My mother would take me to Jackson Square on Sunday afternoons to see the artists—I was convinced I was going to be an artist—and we would tour the Presbytère and the Cabildo.

"We have always been very embedded in the city, and Larry's family too. And when you are, it's in your soul. If you can contribute in some way too, I think it makes it more meaningful, and by being affiliated with the HNOC, we have this phenomenal opportunity to be more engaged with the history, the culture, and to contribute more to the place that we love."

For their first official date, Larry took Leslie out for drinks after a high school function: "I spent a whopping 52 cents to buy a couple of sodas at the McDonald's, and that was the best 52 cents I ever spent," he says.

Out on a walk in the French Quarter, Larry proposed in front of St. Louis Cathedral. "Then we went over to Café du Monde for coffee and donuts—café au lait and beignets," Leslie says, smiling. "We were just starting out, so it wasn't fancy, but it was *very* romantic."

Larry had planned to study electrical engineering in college, but a high school course in computer programming sparked his interest and set him on a new path. He attended Loyola University, one of the few colleges in 1970 to offer a computer science degree.

All these years later, "it has worked out well," he says. "It was a good time to get into the industry, very fortuitous."

Larry received a commission through ROTC and entered the US Army after college, and he and Leslie embarked on the life of a military family. After six years of active duty—and a master's degree in systems management thanks to the GI Bill—Larry became an army reservist and entered the corporate world. He retired from the armed forces in 2000 and, for the past 25 years, has worked as a systems engineer at a federally funded research and development center. Daughter Kate Bouterie-Sporcic and her husband, Ben Sporcic, live in Frederick, Maryland, about three hours away from Larry and Leslie's current home in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Virginia is "Thomas Jefferson country," as Leslie puts it, and it has turned out to be perfect terrain for her career.

"My area of specialty is British ceramics, specifically British printed transferware from the late 1700s and early 1800s," she says. In her work with Montpelier and Colonial Williamsburg, "I speak about the ceramics themselves, the production, the makers, the use of the ceramics, the dining at the time, importation, exportation—all aspects of the industry, and also the people."

Leslie also does pro bono consultation work for other museums and historic sites, and she's well-traveled on the lecture circuit—including at THNOC's Antiques Forum, of which she is a proud superfan. "The program is always beautifully orchestrated, beautifully coordinated," she raves. "I've been to a lot of forums, and New Orleans Antiques Forum is the best. There is a spirit, a joie de vivre, a collegiality among the people there who share a passion for the decorative arts and for history. It's truly palpable. I go every year, and I would not miss it. I can wear pearls and gloves and be in my element. I can't wait to go again this year."

As members of The Collection for over a decade, the Bouteries have deepened their relationship over the years as they've watched their contributions go to work.

"The first thing I would wonder, as a businessman, is, are you good stewards of your collections?" Larry says. "And whenever we visit and go through the galleries, we walk away thinking, 'These people know what they're doing.'"

But stewardship, Leslie explains, goes beyond dollars and cents: "It's not just money; it's time, talent, and treasure. There's a quote I love, from Sarah Bernhardt: 'Life begets life, energy creates energy. It is in spending oneself that one becomes rich.' I believe that if we do expend ourselves and our time, we do become rich. And The Collection has helped us to do that." —MOLLY REID CLEAVER

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January–March 2022

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Bookplates

Donations are used to purchase books that will be marked with a commemorative bookplate.

The board of directors and staff of The Historic New Orleans Collection in memory of Dr. Robert C. Judice—*Buildings of New Orleans*, by Karen Kingsley and Lake Douglas (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), *2018.0201*

The board of directors and staff of The Historic New Orleans Collection in memory of Mary Ann Valentino—*Religious Pioneers: Building the Faith in the Archdiocese of New Orleans*, edited by Dorothy Dawes and Charles Nolan (New Orleans: Archdiocese of New Orleans, 2004), *2021.0067*

Become a Member

NEW BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

There has never been a better time to join The Historic New Orleans Collection. Beginning this spring, members will enjoy:

- **New!** early registration privileges for THNOC events
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- free admission to exhibitions and select tours
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- special invitations to events, trips, and exhibition receptions

HOW TO JOIN

Visit www.hnoc.org and click the **Support Us** link or complete and return the enclosed envelope.

For more information about membership levels, please contact THNOC's Development Office at (504) 598-7155 or visit www.hnoc.org/support/membership.

North American Reciprocal Museum Program Members at the Merieult level and above receive reciprocal benefits at more than 1,200 member institutions across the US, Canada, and Latin America. For more information, visit www.narmassociation.org.

Gwen "Gigi" Carter (foreground) studies the Thomas Hart Benton classic *Poker Night* at a members-only reception for *Backstage at "A Streetcar Named Desire"* on April 27.

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- annual recognition as sponsors of a premier exhibition

NEW ORLEANS AUCTION GALLERIES

* The Caillot Circle is generously sponsored by New Orleans Auction Galleries.

ON THE SCENE

Onstage, Backstage, and in the Kitchen

The **Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference** returned to the stage, so to speak, on March 25. The day of panel discussions, presented both virtually and in person, was capped off by *Amor Perdido / Lost Love*, a series of Williams short stories adapted by Tom Mitchell for the stage and enacted by a theater troupe from the University of Illinois and the Celebration Company of Urbana.

A. Will Brantley and Bess Rowen

B. Scott Knier and Gary Ambler

C. Jordan Coughtry and Nisi Sturgis


A


B


C


D


E

The winter edition of THNOC's **2022 Food Forum**, held February 12 at the Broad Theater, focused on Mardi Gras king cake and the cuisine of Vietnamese New Year.

D. Matt Haines, author of *The Big Book of King Cake*

E. Director Bao Ngo and writer/producer Glen Pitre outside a screening of their film *Mary, Queen of Vietnam*

F. Denise Tran, CEO of Bun Mee


F


G


H


I


J

On April 27, THNOC celebrated the opening of ***Backstage at "A Streetcar Named Desire,"*** a show commemorating the 75th anniversary of the landmark play.

G. Phillip Lorio and Patricia Denechaud

H. Johnathan Howe Banker, Dorothy Klein, Katie Derby, and Joel Derby

I. Susan Talley, Jay Gulotta, Mary Albert, and Doug Albert

J. Gary and Olga Teplitsky

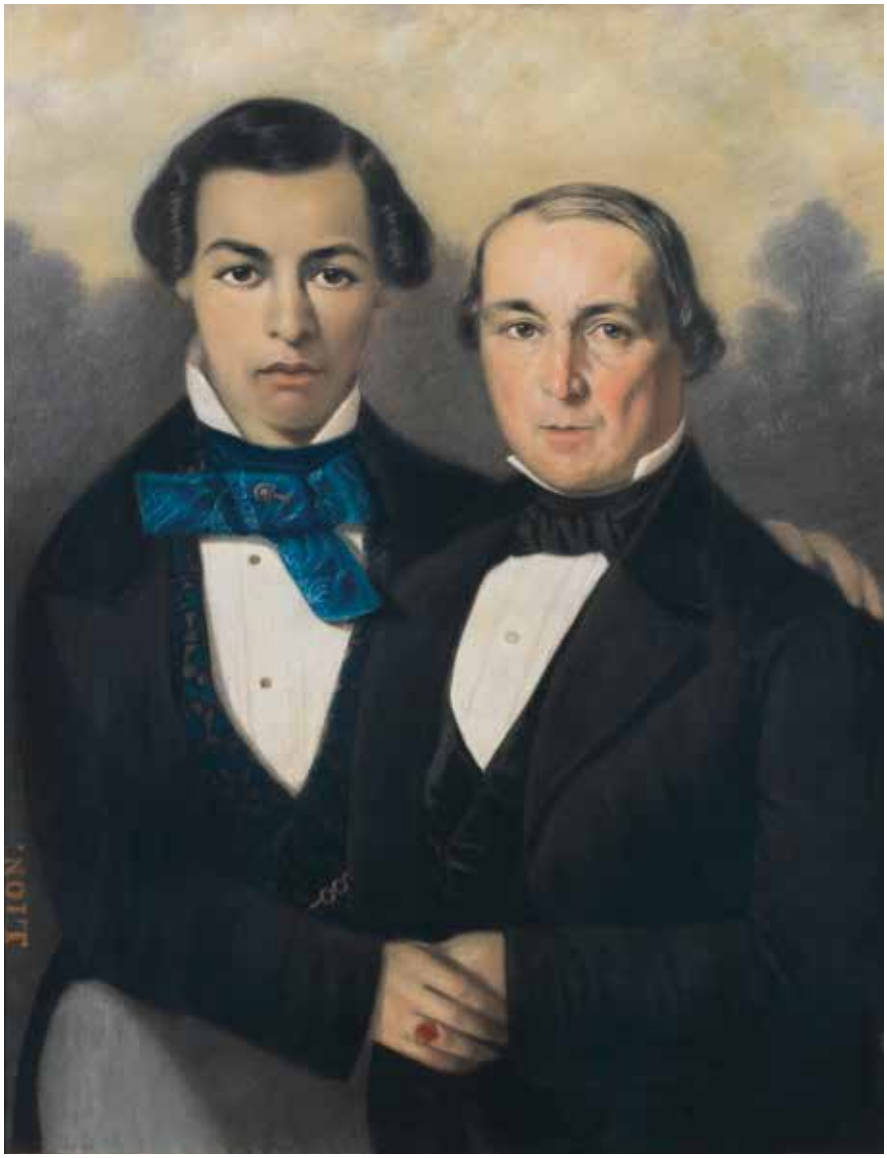

K

The 23rd **Bill Russell Lecture** was held April 21 at the Williams Research Center. Music professors Mark Burford and Valerie Francis joined vocalist Andaiye Alimayu to present a night of lecture and music to celebrate the extraordinary life and career of gospel singer Mahalia Jackson.


L

K. Frederick "Jay" East, Andaiye Alimayu, Richard Derbes, Kathy Derbes, and Daniel Hammer

L. Valerie Francis and Mark Burford



ACQUISITION SPOTLIGHT

Family Reunion

Double portrait of two men, possibly father and son

2021.0264

The Collection has embarked on a collaboration with other local institutions to study the subjects and origins of a famous portrait related to African American art history. The work in question is a pastel double portrait by Jules Lion, dated circa 1845; long held in a private collection, THNOC acquired it by purchase at auction in November 2021. The pastel shows what appears to be an older white man posed with a younger man of color in an affectionate embrace. Both sitters are elegantly attired, especially the younger man, who wears a colorful vest and tie, as well as a large ruby ring. The portrait is signed "Lion" in orange letters at the lower left edge.

Known for many years simply as *Father and Son*, the portrait was reinterpreted in the mid-1970s by the Virginia-based art historian Regenia A. Perry, PhD, who identified the sitters as Asher Moses Nathan and Achille Lion (no apparent relationship to the artist). Perry

Related Holdings

La Cathedrale
1842; lithograph
by Jules Lion, lithographer
The L. Kemper and Leila Moore Williams Founders Collection, 1940.1

William Freret
1839; lithograph
by Jules Lion, lithographer
1970.11.114

Three unidentified girls
1837; lithograph
by Jules Lion, lithographer
1970.11.38

described the pastel as "the only portrait in 19th-century American art in which a white father openly displays affection for his biracial son." The portrait—on loan from then-owner Francois Mignon—was exhibited with this interpretation at a 1976 show curated by Perry at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The work has since been used as an illustrative example in many books and articles on African American art history.

The artist, lithographer, and photographer Jules Lion is well represented in THNOC's holdings, most notably in an extensive collection of lithographic portraits of prominent Louisianans. Another recent acquisition is an early daguerreotype attributed to Lion that shows a young woman of color (2021.0080). Lion himself was long believed to be a free man of color, a notion recently challenged by art historian Sara M. Picard. She argues that he was actually a French-born Jew who may have been mistaken for a free man of color because of his relationship with Charlotte Armantine Broyard, a free woman of color. Though Picard's research is persuasive, a scholarly consensus remains elusive.

Perry identified the older sitter as Asher Moses Nathan, who was born in Amsterdam in 1785 and became a successful merchant in Louisiana. Born of Jewish heritage, Nathan converted to Roman Catholicism just before marrying Margarita Dalton in Baton Rouge in 1811. He continued to travel between Louisiana and Europe, and he would have been about 60 years old at the time the portrait is believed to have been created, circa 1845.

Perry identified the younger sitter as Achille Lion, which led subsequent researchers to one Achille Léon Lion, born in Paris in 1827 to Heloise Louise Marie Lion and an unnamed father. The boy had a younger sister, Anna Amelie Lion, also born in Paris, in 1829. He would have been about 17 or 18 at the time the portrait was made. Whether Achille Léon Lion was indeed the sitter, as Perry claimed, has yet to be proven. THNOC's preliminary research indicates that Achille visited Louisiana and briefly resided in New Orleans from about 1855 to 1861, but he does not appear to have been a long-term resident, and it's unclear whether he was in Louisiana in the 1840s.

Daguerreotype portrait of a young woman of color
ca. 1853; ninth-plate daguerreotype
attributed to Jules Lion, photographer
acquisition made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, 2021.0080

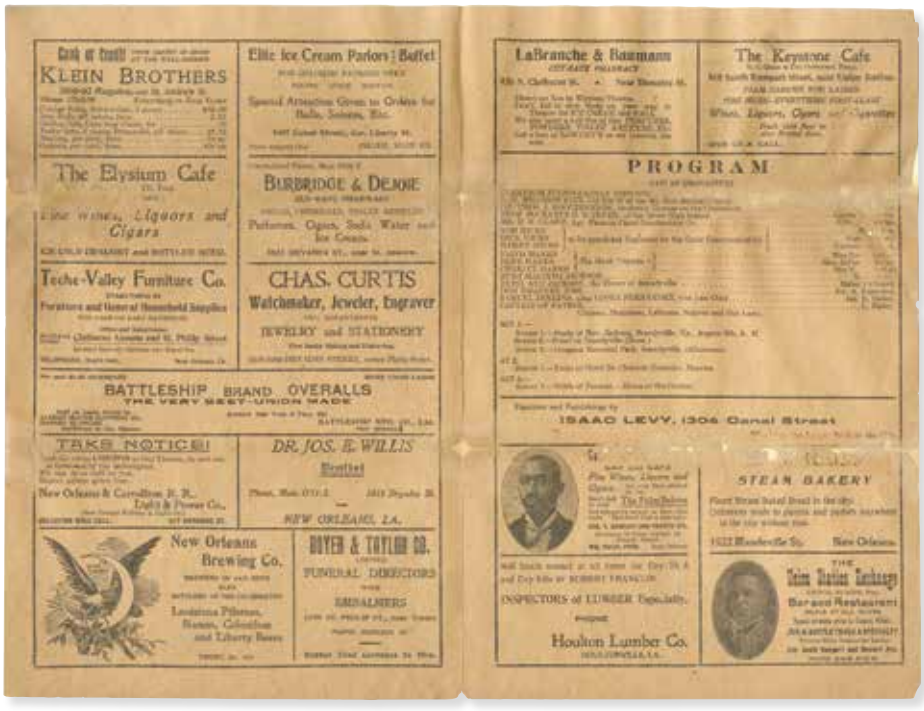
There are several pieces of documentary evidence linking Achille Lion to Asher Moses Nathan, including an 1859 legislative act granting Nathan's adoption of the young man, then 22 years old; an 1862 oleographic will filed in Orleans Parish; and French notarial records related to Achille's sister, Anna. It is believed that Nathan was Achille's biological father; THNOC staff have established that Nathan was in France in 1826, less than a year before Achille's birth. The 1860 census identified Achille as a French broker living in the Fourth Ward. However, while the younger sitter is deliberately presented as having a darker complexion than the older man, neither the census nor local notarial records identify Achille Léon Lion as a man of color. Achille returned to Europe in mid-1861 and is not known to have ever come back to Louisiana. He died in Paris in 1916. He and his sister, Anna, were both legatees of Asher Nathan's estate.

Also unknown is the provenance of the portrait between its circa-1845 creation and 1935, when New Orleans antiques dealer Albert Lieutaud wrote a letter to Lyle Saxon alerting him that the portrait had been brought to his Royal Street shop by an unidentified "mulatto family." Lieutaud soon thereafter shipped the painting to Saxon at Melrose Plantation, where it remained for the next 35 years. After Saxon's death, in 1945, the portrait's ownership passed to Saxon's friend Francois Mignon, who lived at Melrose until 1970. In about 1980, Mignon bequeathed the portrait to a member of the Brittain family of Natchitoches, and that family retained ownership until consigning the portrait to auction this past November.

Questions about the artwork abound: Perry did not disclose her sources for identifying the sitters, and even our understanding of the artist's racial and ethnic identity has shifted over the years. Because of the pastel's years in a private collection, access to it for study has been limited. That is no longer the case. The first step in The Collection's stewardship of the pastel has been to reach out to local museums including Le Musée de f.p.c. and the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience to jointly research, interpret, and share this important portrait with the people of New Orleans and Louisiana. The three institutions began meeting in January and will continue to share perspectives and programming initiatives into the future.
—JASON WIESE

RECENT ADDITIONS

Movement of the People



An Exodus to Panama theater program

2021.0242

An Exodus to Panama, a musical comedy written by Chicago-based African American theater producers Charles Hunter and Marion A. Brooks, centers on the inhabitants of a small Kentucky town who were swindled out of their money after they invested in a nonexistent piece of land in Panama. THNOC has acquired a program for a New Orleans performance of the musical, held at the Elysium Theatre on September 22; no year is listed, but based on a *Billboard* notice about the upcoming production, it was probably 1907.

There is little known about *Panama* producer Charles Hunter, but he likely met Marion A. Brooks in Chicago at the Pekin Theatre, the first African American–owned vaudeville stock theater in the United States. Music for *Panama* was written by James Tim Brymn, who later worked with the hugely popular Black minstrel duo Bert Williams and George Walker, and by H. Lawrence Freeman, who founded opera companies in Denver and New York. Little is known about most of the performers, save Abbie Pellebon. Pellebon, grandmother of the New Orleans singer Wanda Rouzan, had a career in vaudeville, most notably with the Black Patti Troubadours, an African American troupe founded by Sissieretta Jones.

An Exodus to Panama received national acclaim, with *Billboard* magazine declaring it "superior to any negro musical comedy yet produced." The show's plot and themes of racial and economic injustice were highly relevant at the time of the musical's release: by the end of the show's debut year, 1907, at least 20,000 Black laborers from the United States and the Caribbean had been recruited to help build the Panama Canal.

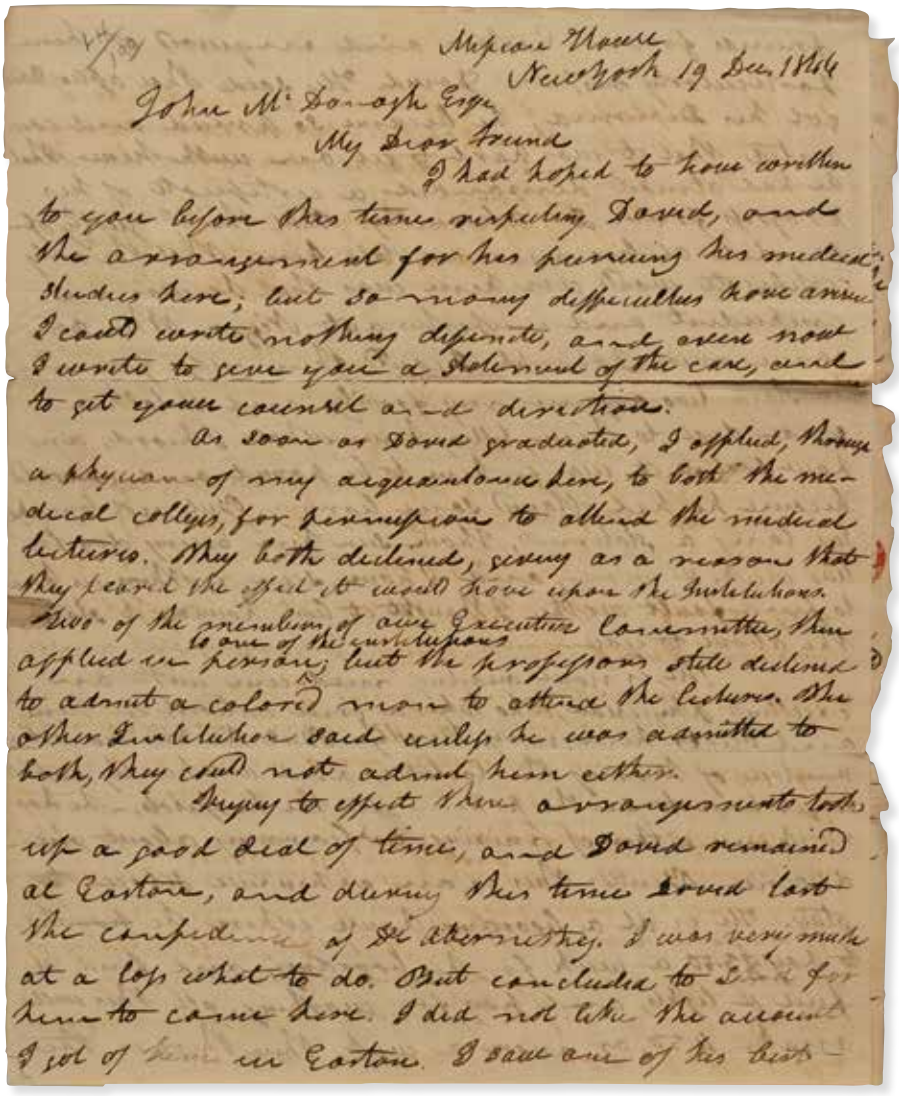
Theater programs from this era are scarce because of their ephemeral nature and the often poor quality of the paper on which they were printed. This program is all the more rare in that it was for an African American production, intended for an African American audience, during the Jim Crow era. It includes copious advertisements for Black-owned businesses in then-thriving commercial corridors such as North Claiborne Avenue, South Rampart Street, and Dryades Street. Restaurants and saloons, pharmacists and dentists, and furniture stores are all represented here, making it a concise directory of businesses either owned by African Americans or catering to a Black clientele. The advertisement for the Astoria Hotel and Restaurant at 235 S. Rampart, for example, bills itself as "the only first-class place [in the] south for the accommodation of colored people." Elite Ice Cream Parlors and Buffet, located at 1401 Canal under the Iroquois Club, was "for colored patrons only."

The Elysium Theatre opened in 1903 and in 1922 became Dreamland. It went from a vaudeville and music venue to a movie theater as early as the 1940s. In 1965 it became the Paris Theatre, which screened adult films until it closed in 1987. The building was vacant when it burned down in 1990. —NINA BOZAK

John McDonogh–Walter Lowrie correspondence

2022.0026.3.1–.2

David K. McDonough (ca. 1821–1893) and Washington Watts McDonogh (b. ca. 1827) were two young men who spent their early years enslaved by John McDonogh (1779–1850). In 1838 they began attending Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania,



Mexican House
New York 19 Dec 1844

John McDonogh Esqr.

My Dear Friend

I had hoped to have written to you before this time respecting David, and the arrangement for his pursuing his medical studies here; but so many difficulties have arisen I could write nothing definite, and even now I write to serve you a statement of the case, and to get your counsel and direction.

As soon as David graduated, I applied, through a physician of my acquaintance here, to both the medical colleges, for permission to attend the medical lectures. They both declined, giving as a reason that they feared the effect it would have upon the Institutions. Two of the members of our Executive Committee, then applied in person, to one of the Institutions but the professors still declined to admit a colored man to attend the lectures. The other Institution said while he was admitted to both, they could not admit him either.

Trying to effect these arrangements took up a good deal of time, and David remained at Easton, and during this time loved last the confidence of Dr Abercrombie. I was very much at a loss what to do. But concluded to send for him to come here. I did not like the account I got of him in Easton. I saw one of his last

as part of their enslaver's plan, in conjunction with the American Colonization Society (ACS), to free them on the condition that they agree to leave the United States for Liberia.

Founded in 1816, the ACS was a charitable organization rooted in the idea that a free Black population within the United States was a social ill. The organization's solution to this perceived problem was to transport this free Black population to the African continent. The ACS played an instrumental role in the founding of the Liberian colony, negotiating treaties in West Africa to acquire land and facilitating the transport of more than 13,000 free Black people between 1822 and 1867.

John McDonogh's emancipation scheme was rooted in his own financial interests: he developed a plan by which those he enslaved could do extra work over an extended period of time to earn funds to purchase their freedom, and he publicly boasted that enslaved persons given this opportunity were more productive, earned him more money, and allowed him to purchase new slaves to replace the ones that he freed. In the case of David and Washington it was John McDonogh's intention that they be educated and trained as clergy so that they could serve as leaders in Liberia.

David and Washington diverged in their views toward leaving the US. In 1842 Washington boarded a ship bound for Liberia, where he would spend the rest of his life as a missionary. He might have been motivated to join recently emancipated relatives who had already moved there. David, however, developed a keen determination to pursue higher education in the US and train as a physician. At some point he was manumitted and added a "u" to his surname (historians presume it was to distance himself from his enslaver). Against all odds, he persevered in his studies.

Two recently acquired letters offer insight into David's resolve. The letters were exchanged between John McDonogh and Walter Lowrie (1784–1868), a former senator from Pennsylvania and ACS official who served as David's guardian while he studied at Lafayette College.

One letter, dated December 1844, from Lowrie to McDonogh, paints a picture of the young man's growing opposition to the Liberian movement: "Now of two things I am satisfied," writes Lowrie. "1st that his present desire and intention is to go to Africa, and that he is not practicing any deceit, but his mind may change. 2nd that he has a deep desire to obtain a complete knowledge of medicine. If he does not get a good knowledge of it, there may be some doubt of his going."

Writing in January 1845, McDonogh criticizes David's "baseness of character," threatens to remove his financial support, and implores Lowrie to tell David that there is "one way for him to reinstate himself in my affection and regard, which way is, to depart immediately for his fatherland." In that same letter McDonogh characterizes David as having a "heart of stone and of pride."

David's "heart of pride" served him well: he succeeded in retaining McDonogh's financial support and went on to graduate from Lafayette. Although two medical colleges refused to allow him to attend lectures, he went on to train as a physician's apprentice at what is now Columbia University. He wasn't considered a formally enrolled student and therefore did not receive a diploma, but he did complete his medical training, in 1847, and went on to have a long, successful career as a physician and eye specialist in New York City. A hospital in Harlem named in his honor opened in 1898, and Columbia awarded him a posthumous diploma in 2017.

—AIMEE EVERRETT

The Collection's first-ever museum café offers an array of soups, salads, sandwiches, and hot and cold entrées, as well as espresso and pastries. Vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options abound, and the dishes are inspired by New Orleans's many culinary influences. Daily specials range from the tuna-based riff on a muffuletta to the Vietnamese chicken salad to the Haitian red bean soup.

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ISSN 0886-2109

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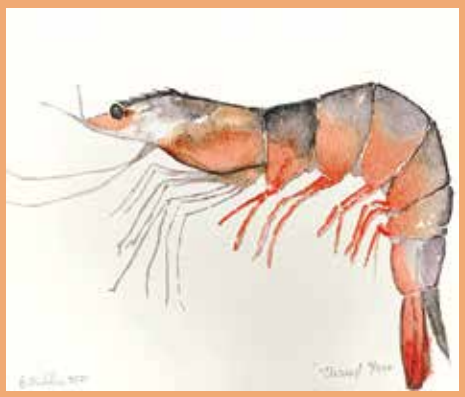
FROM THE SHOP

Small wonders

The colorful vortex of a hibiscus bloom, or the translucence of a shrimp's shell—artist Bonnie Miller captures these close-up details of Louisiana's natural beauty with her watercolor prints inspired by New Orleans and the Gulf South. Visit **shophnoc.com/products/bonnie-miller-print** to view the entire collection online, where the prints are available in a variety of sizes.



The Shop at The Collection
THE HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION

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SHOP HOURS: Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

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