

The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly

VOLUME XLI
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FALL 2024



LOCK AND KEY: Slavery and Incarceration in Louisiana

EVENT CALENDAR

For a full calendar of events, visit my.hnoc.org.

The Corner Pocket: History of a French Quarter Bar

This program is presented in partnership with the LGBT+ Archives Project of Louisiana.

Tuesday, October 8, 7–8:30 p.m.

410 Chartres Street

Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Life Means Life: Angola Prison Hospice

Quilt artists Steven Garner and Gary Tyler, who volunteered in the Louisiana State Penitentiary hospice program while incarcerated, will share their work and stories in this free program presented in conjunction with *Captive State*. Photographer Lori Waselchuk's powerful series *Grace Before Dying* documents the hospice program and explores how the men

Food Forum 2024: New Orleans Restaurants through Time

Co-organized by culinary historian and author Jessica B. Harris, the 2024 Food Forum will examine the places we gather to enjoy cuisine and companionship, high-level culinary artistry, and everyday stovetop craftsmanship. Attendees will discover the rich history behind Louisiana's significant eateries—from humble neighborhood joints to world-renowned establishments—that gave rise to America's foremost dining destination.

Saturday, November 9, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.,

with reception to follow

410 Chartres Street

\$45 for sessions only or \$75 for sessions and reception; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Presented by Magic Seasonings Blend



Antoine's Restaurant postcard

ca. 1975

1981.350.163

assert and affirm their humanity and creativity in this environment.

Wednesday, October 23, 6:30–8 p.m.

520 Royal Street

Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Chess Fest

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

Saturday, November 2, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

Holiday Market

Browse goods from local vendors at the Shop's holiday market. Members enjoy special perks: 20 percent off at the Shop, complimentary cookies and cocktails from the Café, and early market access beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, November 16, 10:30 a.m.–4 p.m.

520 Royal Street

TOURS

Piecing It Together: A Captive State Tour and Conversation

This 90-minute tour explores the threads connecting slavery to modern mass incarceration in Louisiana. Along the way, visitors are invited into a conversation about how incarceration impacts our communities today.

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 10 a.m.

Through January 18, 2025

Suggested price \$5; free for members

520 Royal Street

New Orleans Mosaic: Tour of the French Quarter Galleries

This 35-minute tour guides visitors through HNOC's suite of galleries devoted to the 300-year history of New Orleans's oldest neighborhood. Meet the artists, musicians, and immigrant communities that have called the French Quarter home, while exploring the complex legacies of slavery, civil rights activism, and historic preservation.

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11:30 a.m.

Ongoing

\$10; free for members

520 Royal Street

EXHIBITIONS

CURRENT

Unknown Sitters

Through October 6, 2024

520 Royal Street

Media partnership provided by The Times-Picayune | NOLA.com and WVUE-FOX 8

Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration

Through January 19, 2025

520 Royal Street

Media partnership provided by WWL-TV

OFF-SITE

The Trail They Blazed

November 14, 2024–March 7, 2025

REACH Center, 2022 St. Bernard Avenue, Building C

This traveling exhibition is part of HNOC's NOLA Resistance initiative, dedicated to preserving and sharing stories from the New Orleans Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s–70s. This project is supported through a grant from the African American Civil Rights grant program as administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. It is available at no charge to host sites in the community.

UPCOMING

Gesture to Home

Prospect.6 exhibition by Didier William

November 2, 2024–February 2, 2025

520 Royal Street

CONTINUING

A Vanishing Bounty: Louisiana's Coastal Environment and Culture

520 Royal Street

Lead sponsorship provided by Entergy

Media partnership provided by WVUE-FOX 8

French Quarter Galleries

520 Royal Street

GENERAL HOURS

520 Royal Street

Tricentennial Wing, French Quarter Galleries, and the Shop at the Collection

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Visit the Café at the Collection Wednesday through Sunday!

410 Chartres Street

Williams Research Center

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Appointments are encouraged. Please email reference@hnoc.org or call (504) 523-4662.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Although the summer months are often a quieter time in New Orleans, with fewer out-of-town visitors than we see at other times of the year, this season has been a busy one at the Collection. We proudly opened two exhibitions that have been years in the making: *A Vanishing Bounty: Louisiana's Coastal Environment and Culture* (ongoing) and *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration* (through January 19, 2025). These exhibitions are on display along with the French Quarter Galleries at our 520 Royal Street campus, a key destination to learn about Louisiana's fascinating and complicated history.

Among other summer events, members of the Collection's Laussat Society and Bienville Circle visited the Williams Research Center for a private show-and-tell of materials from the Gallier Family Collection. These remarkable drawings, letters, and photographs are an example of HNOC's critical collections that document the development and preservation of New Orleans's built environment. It was special to provide our most generous members with an opportunity to view them up close with our curators and research center staff.

As summer turns to fall, I'm reflecting on the successful expansion of our internship program over the past few years. We now offer internships year-round to qualified undergraduate and graduate students. Because we believe it's important that all students have access to these opportunities, all of our internships are paid. Interns come from a variety of academic backgrounds and may learn about collections care, become familiar with archival cataloging processes, or work with our communications team, among other areas of study. Our staff values the connections we make with these students and looks forward to seeing what they will bring to their professions in the future, whether in the museum field or elsewhere.

Finally, all of us at the Collection were saddened to hear of the recent passing of civil rights activist Tessie Prevost. She was best known as one of the "New Orleans four," a group of six-year-old girls who integrated the local public schools in 1960. In recent years, Prevost was also a founder of the Tate, Etienne, and Prevost (TEP) Center, a New Orleans institution established to provide anti-racist education, exhibitions, and programming to the public. The TEP Center has become a valued community partner of the Historic New Orleans Collection. We honor Prevost's legacy, and we support and share the TEP Center's commitment to this important work. —DANIEL HAMMER



ON THE COVER

The Joy of Freedom (detail)

2010; cloth, thread

by Steven Garner (lead quilter), Vashon Kelly, Robert Matthews, Scott Meyers, Diego Zapata

gift of Lori Waselchuk, 2016.0298.7

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Focus on Philanthropy

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Acquisition Spotlight: Tennessee Williams's family letters illuminate the life of the playwright's sister, Rose.

Recent Additions



A

EXHIBITION

Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration

Through January 19, 2025

520 Royal Street

Free

Media partnership provided by WWL-TV

A. Angola Hoers

1938

by Fonville Winans

2018.0513.9

A Long Arc of Injustice

A new exhibition explores the historical links between the institutions of slavery and mass incarceration in Louisiana.

When Curtis Davis arrived as a prisoner at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in 1992, he was sent directly to the fields. He picked cotton and fruit on a plantation property that has operated continuously with forced labor for nearly 200 years. Until his release in 2016, Davis never made more than 20 cents an hour for any of his labor. He spoke about his experience in a video interview, produced by the Promise of Justice Initiative, that is featured in the new exhibition *Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration*.

“Slavery has never been abolished in these United States of America,” Davis says. “It has been codified into law through the 13th Amendment and the Louisiana Constitution.”

Davis articulated the central thesis of *Captive State*: that the institutions of slavery and mass incarceration are historically linked. The 13th Amendment enshrined this connection

in the US Constitution in 1865, by abolishing slavery “except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” Once the hub of the domestic slave trade, Louisiana now leads the world in incarceration, with Black people disproportionately affected. *Captive State* traces the roots of this inequity all the way back to the founding of the colony.

“Since Louisiana’s colonial era, those in power have used the law to control, punish, and exploit others,” says Eric Seiferth, one of the exhibition’s curators. “*Captive State* documents how slavery and incarceration were mutually reinforcing in ways that have had long-term impacts on people in this state, particularly Black Louisianans.”

A six-member advisory board of people with experience inside and outside of the incarceration system have helped HNOCC staff develop *Captive State*, which occupies the second and third floors of the Tricentennial Wing at 520 Royal Street. Two landmark legal documents anchor its narrative. The first is a 1743 edition of the *Code noir*, a set of laws first issued by the French crown in 1724 that regulated the status, treatment, and behavior of enslaved and free Black people. The other document is an original copy of the Louisiana Constitution of 1898. Thomas J. Semmes, a leader at the 1898 constitutional convention, made clear that “our mission was, in the first place, to establish the supremacy of the white race in this State.” Among other things, this constitution codified forced convict labor into state law.

Curtis Davis’s story is one of many featured in *Captive State* that convey the human consequences of these laws throughout the state’s history. Visitors hear about Peggy, an enslaved woman found guilty of killing another enslaved woman, and see the 13.5-pound iron ball and chain that she wore for three years as punishment. There’s the story of Cezar, an enslaved man in New Orleans who confessed to crimes after being tortured and was sentenced to a brutal public execution. They also view a letter written by Rufus Kinsman, a free Black sailor who described the “hell” of being jailed, whipped, and forced to work on a chain gang after being falsely arrested as a fugitive slave. A circa 1821 lithograph on display is the earliest known depiction of a chain gang. New Orleans authorities imported the practice from the Caribbean, forcing both incarcerated and enslaved people (or free people accused of being enslaved) to wear chains and work on municipal projects. They often labored in public view wearing bright clothing—a humiliating punishment by design.

Colonial governments carried out torture and executions in the public square to make examples of the condemned, but in the 19th century the primary sites of incarceration moved farther from the city center and



B. Code noir
Paris: Libraires associez, 1743
80-654-RL

C. Catchin’ a Ride in the Roach Coach
1990
by Roy Ferdinand
2021.0097.1



D. *George Checks Jimmie's Breathing*

2008

by Lori Waselchuk

gift of Lori Waselchuk, 2016.0298.3

E. *Prison Guard Watches from the Levee*

2007

by Lori Waselchuk

2016.0299.1



D

out of public view into a network of segregated facilities. Louisiana began leasing out its prisoners for their labor in 1844. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, this system of convict leasing became the state's primary method for extracting cheap labor from a largely Black population. A map on display illustrates the brutal era of the convict lease, during which thousands of state prisoners died in custody.

The 1898 state constitution marked a turning point for incarceration in Louisiana. In addition to codifying forced convict labor, it ended convict leasing, returning custody of prisoners to the state. Three years after its passage, the state purchased the plantations owned by the last convict lessee and turned them into the new Louisiana State Penitentiary, which became known as Angola, after one of the plantations. Critically, the constitution also reduced the requirements for felony convictions in trials, requiring only 9 of 12 jurors, rather than a unanimous verdict, to send a defendant to places like Angola. The split-jury law led to more guilty pleas and verdicts, supplying a steady stream of prisoners to the state.

"Louisiana's 1898 constitution made racist Jim Crow practices the legal foundation of the state and had a direct impact on the rise of mass incarceration decades later," Seiferth says.

In the gallery, a large data graphic depicting incarceration rates over the last century shows the overwhelming extent to which Louisiana leads the US in locking up its citizens. The trendline locally and nationally is punctuated by exponential growth in the latter half



E



F. Incarcerated men at Orleans Parish Prison

1971
by Lee Delaune
2020.0084.10

G. *Field Line Workers*, from *One Big Self: Prisoners of Louisiana*

1999
by Deborah Luster
acquisition made possible by the
Laussat Society, 2023.0146.1.102

of the 20th century. With split-jury verdicts long entrenched as state law, legislators in the 1970s and subsequent decades began adding a litany of new “tough-on-crime” penalties that sent more Louisianans to prison for longer terms with fewer opportunities for parole than ever before.

Photographs on display in *Captive State* convey the notorious reputation Angola continued to carry into the 20th century. A time-lapse animation shows the buildup of the Orleans Parish jail complex at Tulane Avenue and Broad Street. Three-dimensional objects—including a bed, commode, and jail intake materials—bring the realities of the contemporary jail experience to the fore.

Throughout, human stories underscore the interpretation. Davis’s testimonial video is one of 10 on display in the gallery. Visitors can view 250 photographic portraits of people incarcerated at Louisiana prisons, taken by artist Deborah Luster for her piece *One Big Self: Prisoners of Louisiana*. The second-floor gallery is dedicated to Lori Waselchuk’s *Grace Before Dying* photographic series, which documents the hospice program at the Louisiana State Penitentiary. Hospice program volunteers Steven Garner and Gary Tyler were the lead artists behind quilts that welcome visitors at the second- and third-floor gallery entrances.

The exhibition concludes with the story of the 2018 amendment approved by Louisiana voters that finally abolished the nonunanimous jury provisions of the 1898 constitution. Visitors then exit through a gallery designed for engagement and reflection. A 90-minute tour titled “Piecing It Together: A *Captive State* Tour and Conversation” finishes in this space and offers visitors an opportunity to engage more deeply in the subject matter. At its core, *Captive State* encourages visitors to contemplate our shared responsibilities in this system—and our shared humanity.

“I just pray that people can realize that there are everyday people behind these walls who love, who get sad, who hurt, who are happy, who have dreams,” says Daryl Waters, the subject of a featured testimonial. “You can lock us up, but you can’t stop us from being human beings.” —NICK WELDON



G



A. **Cajun woman using a mortar and pestle to hull rice near Crowley, Louisiana**

1938
 by Russell Lee
image courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives, LC-USF34-031664-D

B. **Glass lantern slide of rice plant**

between 1879 and 1889
 by John Devron
 2013.0002.60

Hidden in Plain Sight

We came for the historic armoires, bedsteads, and textiles—but I left thinking about ground cornmeal.

Each year the Historic New Orleans Collection sends a team of interns to document and catalog the material culture of historic sites through the Decorative Arts of the Gulf South (DAGS) program. Interns learn how to identify, photograph, and describe historic objects in public and private collections. On this particular day we were doing fieldwork near Lafayette, Louisiana, in a home filled with 19th-century cherry and cypress furniture. But it was during a pause in our work, just as we put down the camera and laptop for a break in the kitchen, that we noticed a cylindrical trunk of hollowed cypress, wedged in between a long table and a pie safe. Standing in it were iron racks, a bread paddle, and various poles, including what resembled a colossal wooden cotton swab. My mind still in a cloud of armoires, I suddenly registered an oversized mortar and pestle.

Everyday household objects like the mortar and pestle have a way of hiding in plain sight. They can escape attention precisely because they are so commonplace. The same can hold true in historic preservation—we preserve what we prize, while time parts us from the rest. Author Jack D. Holden observes as much in the HNOC book *Furnishing Louisiana*, writing that “utilitarian objects are often the first to be discarded when a house changes hands. As a result, these functional—if underappreciated—artifacts are rare survivors.”

For millennia, humans relied on the mortar and pestle to crush and grind the cereals they needed to survive. Before the advent of industrial mechanization, manually separating the hard external shell from kernels of rice or corn to make bread, beer, or animal feed was a daily task, often done by groups of women. Because it could be grueling and monotonous work, using the mortar and pestle became the province of people at the lowest rungs of colonial society in North America: indentured and, especially, enslaved people. Enslaved women of African descent carried their cultural knowledge of rice preparation, which involved using a mortar and pestle to dehull the grains, to American shores from South Carolina to Louisiana. The native peoples they met, including the Choctaw, similarly used a mortar (*kitti*) and pestle (*kittush*) to grind maize and hominy into cornmeal.





C



D

C. Cypress *pilé et pilon* discovered near Lafayette, Louisiana

D. Bowl of cypress mortar discovered during DAGS fieldwork



E. **Women using a mortar and pestle to hull rice on Georgia's Sapelo Island** between 1900 and 1915
image courtesy of Georgia Archives, *Vanishing Georgia Collection*, sap093

F. **John Oswald Colson stands next to a sassafras tree**
by Dustin Fuqua

Back in the kitchen near Lafayette, our host referred to the mortar and pestle as a *pilé et pilon* from the Koasati (Coushatta) settlement near Elton, Louisiana. Both were hand-hewn cypress. The *pilé* was reinforced at the base; the *pilon*, with heavier, rounded ends, was tapered in the middle for an easy grip. Preservation efforts are often drawn toward the exceptional or pristine, but it was the utilitarian nature of the *pilé et pilon* that appealed to me—the dulled and worn grooves of the bowl and the roughly scored ends of the *pilon* signaled plenty of use. How many generations of people used it? I wondered how much cornmeal I might crush in a day. Would it taste any better because I did it myself? Just how long have objects like these been used in Louisiana?

Records from the 18th century date the daily pounding of rice and corn by enslaved Africans to the 1720s, but no large mortars and pestles from French colonial settlements are known to have survived. Some examples of mortars and pestles used by Indigenous people in the region—who used them long before the French established their first settlements along the Gulf Coast—still survive, especially in the Cane River corridor at sites like Oakland and Melrose plantations. The late John Oswald Colson, a Cane River Creole and culture bearer known as the Filé Man, drew from traditional Creole Indigenous foodways in his demonstrations of the traditional preparation of filé seasoning. Pounding sassafras leaves in a *pilé et pilon* handcrafted by Koasati elder Bel Abbey, Colson linked together family, kinship, and land ties.

The *pilé et pilon* sitting back in our host's Lafayette-area kitchen share the same Koasati origin as the pair used by Colson. Like Colson's, these utilitarian objects take on additional meaning for precisely the same reasons that they are likely to be seen as unimportant—because they are so well used. The more useful and ordinary an object is, the more *used*



it is, the more likely it is to be damaged, discarded, or forgotten, and the less likely it is to be preserved by professionals. But as Colson's traditional embrace of the *pilé et pilon* demonstrates, it was and is the use of the mortar and pestle—both to prepare the evening's meal, and to encounter the tradition of his ancestors—that is perhaps the best preservation we have. Shared use gives continuity to cultural practice. To use or shape with the tool is to be shaped by it in turn.

The story of the *pilé et pilon* I came across near Lafayette started in the break room, in the margins of a story about armoires. But something I've come to appreciate about storytelling and material culture during my time with the DAGS program is the way an object can help train you to distinguish between what you're looking for and what's right in front of you. —NICHOLAS PASKERT,

F 2023 DAGS FELLOW

OFF-SITE

Uncharted Waters

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



The **Minnesota Marine Art Museum** borrowed several items for the exhibition *A Nation Takes Place: Navigating Race and Water in Contemporary Art*, on view through March 2, 2025.

Rules and Regulations of the New-Orleans and Mobile Steam Packet Creole
between 1844 and 1846
2014.0451



The **Ohio State University** and the **Mardi Gras Council** requested images and film for use in the documentary film *Masked for Battle: Mardi Gras*



Shadows-on-the-Teche reproduced two images from the Collection in a set of new exhibitions that delve into the history of the plantation house and its occupants.

Sale of Estates, Pictures, and Slaves in the Rotunda, New Orleans
1842
by William Henry Brooke
1974.25-23.4



The Collection provided permission to **HarperCollins** for use of three images in the forthcoming book *How Women Made Music: A Revolutionary History from NPR Music*, edited by Alison Fensterstock.

Duke Ellington and Mahalia Jackson
1954
by Myron Davis
William Russell Jazz Collection at HNOC, acquisition made possible by the Clarisse Claiborne Grima Fund, MSS 520.3281



HNOC provided an image to **Archeophone Records** for use on the cover of *Genius of the Seventh Ward*, a seven-inch vinyl record that captures a rare cylinder recording of "Thompson's Old Gray Mule" by Louis Vasnier. Archeophone describes the 1891 recording as "arguably the oldest country music record in existence."

Musicians on wagon, New Orleans
ca. 1898
1977.112.42



ON THE JOB

Lydia Blackmore

POSITION: Decorative arts curator, on staff since 2014

ASSIGNMENT: Conduct a census of the portrait paintings in HNOC's collection

Every 10 years, the US government performs a census, gathering the country's demographic data to assess representation and the distribution of resources. Similarly, museums should conduct periodic assessments of their holdings to understand what they have and identify any gaps to fill through future collecting. To that end, I recently undertook a census of HNOC's portrait collection, surveying the demographic statistics of the people represented and the artists who created these works. By cataloging these details, the curatorial staff can gain a better understanding of our holdings and assess how they support our mission as stewards of the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South. Whose likenesses have we collected? Who is represented in our collections, and who is missing?

The portrait census surveyed 500 original paintings of individuals, the vast majority of the painted portraits in our holdings. The paintings span nearly 300 years of New Orleans history, with the earliest dating to the mid-18th century. There is a rough bell curve that peaks



around 1900; half of the paintings surveyed were created in the 1800s. For each portrait, I sought to determine the sitter's race, gender, age cohort, name, and occupation, as well as whether the person was an enslaver—although in many cases, not all of these details were available.

There is a nearly even split between apparent male and female sitters, with 250 depictions of women and 247 of men; in three portraits, the sitter's gender was unknown. In terms of race, 90 percent of the portrait sitters are white, 8 percent appear to be Black (including both enslaved Black people and free people of color), and 1 percent are Native American. Of the five portraits depicting Native Americans, one might be a white person in a costume, and the remaining four are idealized characters by an untrained artist.

Nearly a quarter of the surveyed portraits do not have known identities. These unidentified portraits inspired an interactive exhibition, *Unknown Sitters*, which is on view at 520 Royal Street through October 6. The demographics of these unknown sitters differ from those of the broader collection, skewing to larger proportions of minorities. Adult, white, male sitters are more likely to be identified, while portrayals of women and Black individuals are less likely to be named and more likely to be genre or caricature depictions. For example, of the 41 portraits of Black sitters in the census, only 17 are identified. All of the 19th-century depictions of Black people are unidentified.

When the portrait is of a known subject, historical research often supplied other personal details. I was able to pinpoint the occupations of nearly half of the sitters. The most common occupation among our portraits is artist—both through self-portraits and via depictions by fellow artists. Military and politics are the next most common fields, and many sitters, such as Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor, had careers in both arenas. Although they are not the most common careers, it is interesting to note that we have portraits of at least two pirates; four portraits of people who worked at building, captaining, or financing steamboats; and three portraits of historians.

Historical records also helped me to identify 30 percent of the known sitters as enslavers. Three of the Black sitters are listed as possible enslavers; it was not uncommon for elite free people of color in New Orleans—the people wealthy enough to have their portraits painted—to own slaves. Of the 500 portraits surveyed, there is just a single depiction of an enslaved person.

About 85 percent of the paintings are by known artists, comprising a total of 191 unique artists. Three-quarters of the works are by male artists, and almost all of the known artists are white. There are only four portraits known to be by Black artists, all of whom are male.

After performing this census, it is clear that there are gaps in HNOC's portrait collection. We have a disproportionate representation of 19th-century white male enslavers, painted by white male artists, which does not facilitate the full interpretation of our region's complex history. Acquiring works by artists of color, works by female artists, works with known Black sitters, and more representations of and works by people of Indigenous, Asian, and Latinx descent will help to fill these gaps. Just as the US Census helps determine how resources are allocated across the country, the portrait census will inform the Collection's future priorities for acquiring and preserving historic portraiture. —LYDIA BLACKMORE



A. Self-portrait

1845; oil on canvas
by Jacques Guillaume Lucien Amans
gift of M. Truman Woodward Jr., 1986.193

B. Portrait of Marilyn Barnett

1962; oil on canvas
by Eleanor Kohlmeyer
gift of Marilyn Barnett, 2009.0368.1

C. Man with glasses

1995; oil on canvas
by Douglas Bourgeois
gift of the estate of Dr. Jerah Johnson,
2018.0253.18

INTERN SPOTLIGHT

Jasmine Christopher, Cederick Ellis, and Kerry Woodard

PLACEMENT: Archives and Special Collections Practicum

SEASON: Summer 2024

HNOC's Williams Research Center recently welcomed three undergraduate interns, who contributed to two ongoing cataloging projects as part of our Archives and Special Collections Practicum. The practicum offers the next generation of collections professionals and archivists a unique opportunity to study, preserve, and engage with collections that represent the creative heritage and rich cultures of Louisiana. Under the tutorship of the Williams Research Center staff, students of Louisiana-based universities learn about the cataloging and organization of historic material housed in a special collections library.

Grambling State University history student Kerry Woodard worked with Curatorial Cataloger Emily Perkins and Library Cataloger Roxanne Guidry to describe historic menus from HNOC's permanent collection. A student at Grambling's Earl Lester Cole Honors College, Kerry has an interest in genealogical research and the African American cultural experience in Louisiana. He aspires to become a scholar of African American history.

Working with Curator of Rare Books Nina Bozak, Jasmine Christopher and Cederick Ellis helped to catalog a set of prayer books from the Ursuline Convent of New Orleans. Both students are aspiring theologians: Jasmine, who is interested in Black religious

influence on history and art, currently studies communications and theology at Xavier University. She is the president of Xavier's theology club and hopes to attend Yale Divinity School. Cederick is a theology and political science major at Louisiana State University who has held previous internships at St. Alban's Chapel in Baton Rouge and at the Mississippi State Department. He has an interest in religious iconography and plans to apply to Union Theological Seminary.

The interns learned a variety of skills including cataloging practices, virtual exhibition curation, and the handling of rare books. Their work will facilitate the digitization of these materials, and will make these items more accessible to researchers at the Williams Research Center.

As part of the practicum, the students also worked with Editor Terri Simon to create content for HNOC's First Draft A blog—pitching, researching, writing, and

A. Kerry Woodard, Jasmine Christopher, and Cederick Ellis



B. Jasmine Christopher, Cederick Ellis, and Curator of Rare Books Nina Bozak

revising articles on their archival discoveries. The publications department reviewed multiple drafts of each piece, giving detailed feedback designed to teach about standard practices in publishing. First Draft is the number-one driver of traffic to the HNOC website, and we're eager to share Kerry's, Jasmine's, and Cederick's research with our wide network of readers. —SIOBHÁN MCKIERNAN



STAFF NEWS

New Hires

Angele Daigrepoint, visitor services assistant. **Jennifer Moore**, sales associate. **Katy Murphy**, sales associate. **Mia Naipaul**, lead facilities attendant. **Paige Nulty**, administrative assistant.

Title Changes

Emory Ryals is now assistant manager of retail. **Jacob Williams**, interpreter.

Awards

Education Specialist **Chantell Nabonne** received the 2024 Museum Art Educator Award from the Louisiana Art Education Association.

Associate Curator **Libby Neidenbach** was honored as part of Hancock Whitney's "She Is . . ." series, which profiles the accomplishments of women who are leaders in the community.

Director of Institutional Advancement **Heather L. Hodges** was recognized as one of *New Orleans Magazine's* 2024 top female achievers.

Continuing Education

Visitor Services Assistant **Terri Rushing** received a graduate certificate in archival

studies from Louisiana State University's School of Information Studies.

Education and Outreach Specialist **Kendric J. Perkins** received a master's degree in history from the University of New Orleans.

Publications

Heather L. Hodges contributed an article, "What Does It Mean to Eat Black New Orleans?" to the summer issue of *Gravy*, the quarterly journal of the Southern Foodways Alliance.

Speaking Engagements

Director of Development **Mandi Cambre** gave a talk on grant writing at the annual conference of the New Orleans chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

At the Tessitura Learning and Community Conference in Washington, DC, CRM Administrator **Anne M. Robichaux** gave a presentation titled "Connections: Data across Our Ecosystem with Tessitura."

Collections Cataloger **Kevin T. Harrell** presented about HNOC's Spanish microfilm and land grant

collections at the 69th annual Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials.

Outreach Historian **Robert Ticknor** spoke to the Military Order of Foreign Wars about General Louis J. Fortier. He also gave a talk on Jean Laffite to the New Orleans chapter of the Colonial Dames of America in May.

In the Community

Curator **Aimee Everett** accepted a three-year term on the grant review committee for the Society of American Archivists Foundation's National Disaster Recovery Fund for Archives.

Chantell Nabonne and **Kendric J. Perkins** participated in Whitney Plantation's Juneteenth Freedom Festival, sharing information about HNOC's publications and programs with visitors.

Robert Ticknor was appointed to the Friends of the Cabildo's America 250 Committee.

Interim Director of Marketing and Communications **Amanda Frentz** was selected for the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute's class of 2025.

ON THE SCENE

Three Grand Openings



The 2024 **New Orleans Antiques Forum**, “New Lives for Old Things: Refashioning Southern Material Culture,” focused on creative reuse and adaptation.

A



B

A. Amy Azzarito and Tara Shaw

B. Kinsley Perkins, Theoangelo Perkins, President/CEO Daniel Hammer, and MaKayla Perkins

C. Mary Len Costa, Director of Audience Engagement Amanda McFillen, and Madeleine Crawford

D. Ann Luster Robichaux, Janie Verret Luster, and Brenda Dardar Robichaux

E. Decorative Arts Curator Lydia Blackmore, Johanna Brown, board member Alexandra Stafford, and Katie Hovas



C



D



E



F

In May, a family-friendly public reception celebrated the imaginations of the young writers who contributed to the creation of the **Unknown Sitters** exhibition.

F. Winners of HNOC’s annual Student Writing Contest

G. Reba Joy Billips, Stephanie Moody, Reign Tearney, and Mary Ann Moody



G



H

In June, teens came to HNOC for **Museum Lab**, a summer program for students who have always wanted to go behind the scenes at a museum.

H. Through daily hands-on workshops, this year’s participants were introduced to skills and ideas that brought history and museums to life.



Members of the Collection’s **Laussat Society** enjoyed a private show-and-tell at the Williams Research Center on June 22. The event included an exclusive viewing of rare items from HNOC’s Gallier Family Collection, as well as a presentation of recently acquired treasures.

I. Board member and Laussat Society chair Lisa Wilson and Ann Masson

I



Members gathered in June to commemorate the opening of a new ongoing exhibition, **A Vanishing Bounty: Louisiana's Coastal Environment and Culture**, which features a vibrant selection of wild-fowl decoys generously donated by the Anne and Dick Stephens family.

J. Bill Hanemann

K. Board member Mayra Pineda, Patty Riddlebarger, and board chair Bonnie Boyd

L. Lanor Curole, Travis Verdin Jr., and Lora Ann Chaisson



Q



R

A July 19 reception marked the opening of the new exhibition **Captive State: Louisiana and the Making of Mass Incarceration**.

M. Anthony Hingle and Steven Garner

N. Rachele Defillo and Regina Bartholomew Woods

O. Heidi Lovett Daniels, Daniel Hammer, Mary Howell, and Flozell Daniels

P. Lori Waselchuk, Curatorial Cataloger Kevin T. Harrell, Curatorial Cataloger Katherine Jolliff Dunn, and Curator/Historian Eric Seiferth



M



N



O



P

The Collection held a community meeting in cooperation with **VIET (Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training)** in the New Orleans East neighborhood.

Q. The meeting was attended by community elders who reviewed photographs that may be included in HNOC's 2025 exhibition **Making It Home: From Vietnam to New Orleans**.

R. Photographer Mark Sindler discussed his photo documentation project of the local Vietnamese community, which was recently acquired by the Collection.

Become a Member

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

There has never been a better time to join the Historic New Orleans Collection. All HNOC members enjoy the following benefits for one full year:

- a 10 percent discount at the Shop at the Collection and the Café at the Collection
- exclusive invitations to opening receptions for new exhibitions
- early registration privileges for HNOC events
- a subscription to the *Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly*
- free admission to select tours
- special invitations to events and trips

Members at the Merieult level and above receive benefits from the **North American Reciprocal Museum** program at more than 1,300 member institutions across the US, Canada, and Latin America. For more information, visit www.narmassociation.org.

HOW TO JOIN

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

For more information about membership levels, please contact HNOC's development office at (504) 598-7172 or visit www.hnoc.org/support/membership.

MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Founder Individual \$45
Founder Family \$75

Full membership benefits

Family memberships are for one or two adults and any children under 18 all residing in a single household, or for one member and a guest.

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Full Founder Family benefits plus:

- North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) benefits at more than 1,300 member institutions

Caillot Circle Individual \$125
Caillot Circle Couple \$200

(ages 21–45)

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- invitations to exclusive events throughout the year (both at the Collection and off-site)



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

Mahalia \$250–\$499

Full Founder Family benefits plus:

- NARM benefits at more than 1,300 member institutions
- private, guided tours of HNOC collections and exhibitions (by appointment)
- one additional guest admission for exhibition opening receptions

Jackson \$500–\$999

Full Founder Family benefits plus:

- NARM benefits at more than 1,300 member institutions
- private, guided tours of HNOC collections and exhibitions (by appointment)
- special members-only experiences
- two additional guest admissions for exhibition opening receptions

Laussat Society \$1,000–\$4,999

Full Founder Family benefits plus:

- NARM benefits at more than 1,300 member institutions
- private, guided tours of HNOC collections and exhibitions (by appointment)
- special members-only experiences
- invitation to annual gala evening and private patron event
- three additional guest admissions for exhibition opening receptions

Bienville Circle \$5,000+

Full Founder Family benefits plus:

- NARM benefits at more than 1,300 member institutions
- private, guided tours of HNOC collections and exhibitions (by appointment)
- special members-only experiences
- invitation to annual gala evening and private patron event
- three additional guest admissions for exhibition opening receptions
- annual recognition as sponsors of a premier exhibition



A



B

Members and guests of the **Bienville Circle** gathered at the home of Jennifer and Dennis Lauscha to commemorate the conclusion of *Mystery and Benevolence: Masonic and Odd Fellows Folk Art*, an exhibition proudly supported by the 2024 Bienville Circle.

A. Jennifer and Dennis Lauscha

B. Board member and Bienville Circle chair Lisa Wilson, Gayle Benson, and President/CEO Daniel Hammer

C. Kenya Smith and board member Tod Smith

D. Greg Giegucz and Nancy Sorak



C



D



FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

Sonny and Laura Shields

Entering the impeccably maintained home of Sonny and Laura Shields, one immediately senses their dedication to preservation. Every corner exudes elegance and care. Sonny and Laura, members of HNOC's Laussat Society, are not just history enthusiasts; they are pillars of the preservation community in New Orleans, involved in initiatives across the city including the Preservation Resource Center, the Historic District Landmarks Commission, the Louisiana Museum Foundation board, and the Ogden Museum.

"Growing up here, I always had a deep appreciation for our city's unique culture," says Laura, a New Orleans native who grew up in preservation work, watching her mother and sister pioneer the culinary programs at the Hermann-Grima House. "Sonny further ignited my passion for New Orleans history as well as the history of Louisiana."

Sonny's fascination with history began in northeast Texas but flourished when he

moved to New Orleans to attend Tulane University. "The city's rich history captivated me from the start," he says, his eyes lighting up.

The couple met through their church, where their respective children grew up together. "We've known each other for years," Laura says, smiling, "but if you had told me back then that Sonny and I would one day marry, I wouldn't have believed it. People change as they grow older, and we've now been happily married for 25 years."

Laura first became involved with HNOC through a family enterprise, the Bouligny Foundation, managed by her uncle and aunt. "Over time, we amassed a significant collection of historical papers, which we eventually donated to HNOC, and even sponsored a lectureship [the Bouligny Lecture series]." The records of the Bouligny Foundation are available to researchers at the Williams Research Center.

Sonny, who serves as vice president of the board of the Louisiana Museum Foundation

and as a board member of the Ogden Museum, says, "I've always been active in historic preservation, but the Historic New Orleans Collection stood out to me because of its variety and comprehensive approach to history, particularly with its blend of research, events, and exhibitions."

Sonny and Laura say that among their myriad endeavors, HNOC is unique because it not only preserves and interprets New Orleans's past but also enriches the ongoing vitality of one of America's most beloved historic districts. "Preservation is vital," Sonny says. "It defines our city's character. New Orleans, with its distinctive European influence, holds a unique place in American history. Preserving its heritage isn't just for tourists; it's crucial for our own connection to our roots."

The couple's involvement with the Collection transcends the boundaries of Orleans Parish. They recently participated in an HNOC study tour to Germany, a memorable and enriching experience. "I have a deep interest in World War II history," Sonny says. "Visiting Berlin, seeing the Berlin Cathedral, and hearing a Bach cantata played on a magnificent organ was unforgettable."

Reflecting on the impact of the study tour, Laura says, "Exploring the history of the Berlin Wall was eye-opening. Witnessing its physical remnants and understanding how it once divided East and West was profoundly moving. The opportunity to experience this history firsthand was truly remarkable."

Their philanthropic efforts underscore the vital role individual commitment plays in preserving cultural identity. Through their unwavering dedication, Sonny and Laura Shields embody the spirit of philanthropy in action, inspiring others to join them in preserving the architectural and cultural treasures of New Orleans. —SARAH DRAGO

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ACQUISITIONS

ACQUISITION SPOTLIGHT

A Rose in Bloom

Tennessee Williams family letters

2024.0070

This spring, HNOC's holdings related to the celebrated playwright Tennessee Williams—one of the largest Williams collections in the world—welcomed a new crown jewel: a collection of family letters written between 1920 (when Williams was nine years old) and 1977. Particularly significant are the letters written by his older sister, Rose Williams, before her tragic lobotomy in her early 30s. “We are actively building our Williams holdings, and Rose’s letters are a major acquisition,” reports Senior Historian Mark Cave.

Rose is best known for having inspired the iconic play *The Glass Menagerie*, but her

impact pervades Williams’s works, which insistently probe society’s intolerance of difference. Whether Rose’s particular difference stemmed from neurodivergence, mental illness, a traumatic childhood in a violent home, or some combination of the above cannot be known. Disturbed by Rose’s increasing rebellion, her parents shipped the young woman off to college and later tried to find suitors for her. She eventually became emotionally unstable and was committed to a sanitarium, where she was diagnosed with schizophrenia and, in 1943, lobotomized. She spent the remainder of her life—more than five decades—institutionalized. Rose outlived her famous brother, whose will directed the bulk of his estate’s earnings into a trust he had established for her.

Scholars identify Rose as one of the playwright’s most important influences: “Knowing her story expands what scholars see in his plays and what they can do with them,” Cave observes. “The more we know about Rose, the better we understand Williams’s work, and the more that work tells us about the era in which it was written.” Just over a year after Rose’s lobotomy, Williams would vault into playwrighting stardom with the success of *The Glass Menagerie*, a “memory play” in which a poet-narrator laments leaving behind his vulnerable, physically and mentally unconventional sister, who is unable to find her place in the world. Haunted by his inability to protect Rose, Williams immortalized her tragedy in his art repeatedly throughout his career, including in the famous ending of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which the fragile,





poetic Blanche DuBois is committed to an insane asylum.

The newly acquired letters do for Rose what Williams’s plays do for their characters: They center and bring to life a vibrant person who was more than her mental and emotional struggles. Rose comes across as chatty, bright, and observant, with an eye for evocative details: She recounts having dreamt about chicken salad, despairs of ever being able to dance the Charleston, and reports reading her teenaged brother’s letters out loud to friends, who thought them “quite the stuff.” Like her brother, Rose adorns her letters with doodles and sketches in the margins. Her documentation of dances she attends, of the treatment of “colored” domestic workers she encounters, and of her school reading add to what historians know about the world Williams grew up in—and about corners of it he did not see.

This acquisition, which underscores the Collection’s status as a hub for research on the playwright, will hold special appeal for participants in the annual Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference—organized and hosted by HNOC—and contributors to the *Tennessee Williams Annual Review*. The letters illuminate the larger context of mid-20th-century treatment of disability, and mental disability in particular. Williams’s perennially popular stage and film representations of people with mental illness and other forms of difference continue to demand that viewers pay attention to and value the lives and struggles of society’s most vulnerable outsiders. Together, Rose’s correspondence and Williams’s work can help researchers track the complicated, connected histories of disability, sexuality, race, and marginalized populations of all kinds. —MARGIT LONGBRAKE

Related Holdings



Portrait photograph of Rose Williams
ca. 1920
2006.0385.3



Film lobby card for *The Glass Menagerie*
1950
Fred W. Todd Tennessee Williams Collection,
2001-10-L.2211



Tennessee Williams passport photo
Fred W. Todd Tennessee Williams
Collection, 2001-10-L

Collections items featured in Acquisitions might not be immediately available to view online or in the Williams Research Center reading room. Researchers can inquire about availability by emailing reference@hnoc.org.

RECENT ADDITIONS

Inside Stories and a Groundbreaking Chef

Hospital Banner newsletters

2024.0028.1

In 1906, the Louisiana Hospital for the Insane of the State of Louisiana was established in Pineville “to accommodate the insane of both races,” relieving overcrowding in parish prisons. First proposed in 1902 as the Insane Asylum for Colored People of the State of Louisiana, it ultimately opened as a multiracial, segregated facility. It became known as Central Louisiana State Hospital (CLSH) in 1924, and by 1940 had a daily average of 2,000 patients from across the state. The hospital integrated in 1965 and is still in operation today.

The hospital’s founding reflected important strides in mental health care that began in the mid-19th century. The country’s first state-run mental hospitals

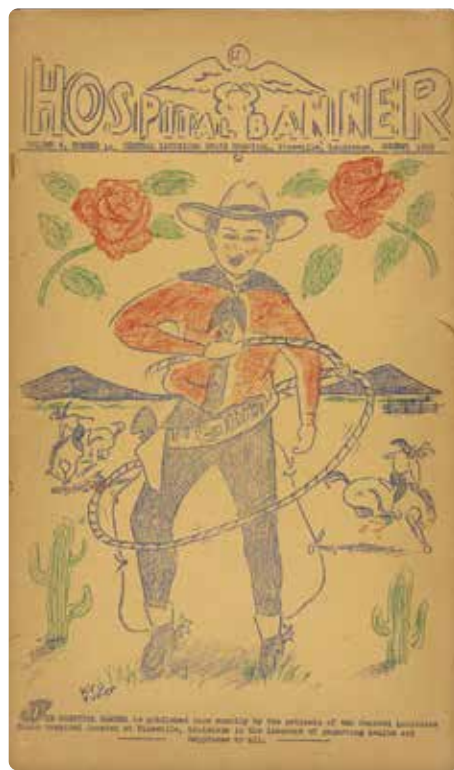
were built based on a plan by physician Thomas Story Kirkbride (1809–1883), which recommended patient wards that had communal spaces and private rooms for each patient. The Kirkbride Plan also called for extensive grounds for farming and physical activities that required patient participation as part of their therapy. In keeping with Kirkbride’s recommendations, CLSH provided many opportunities for patients to participate in occupational activities, including farming, cooking, sewing, and library work.

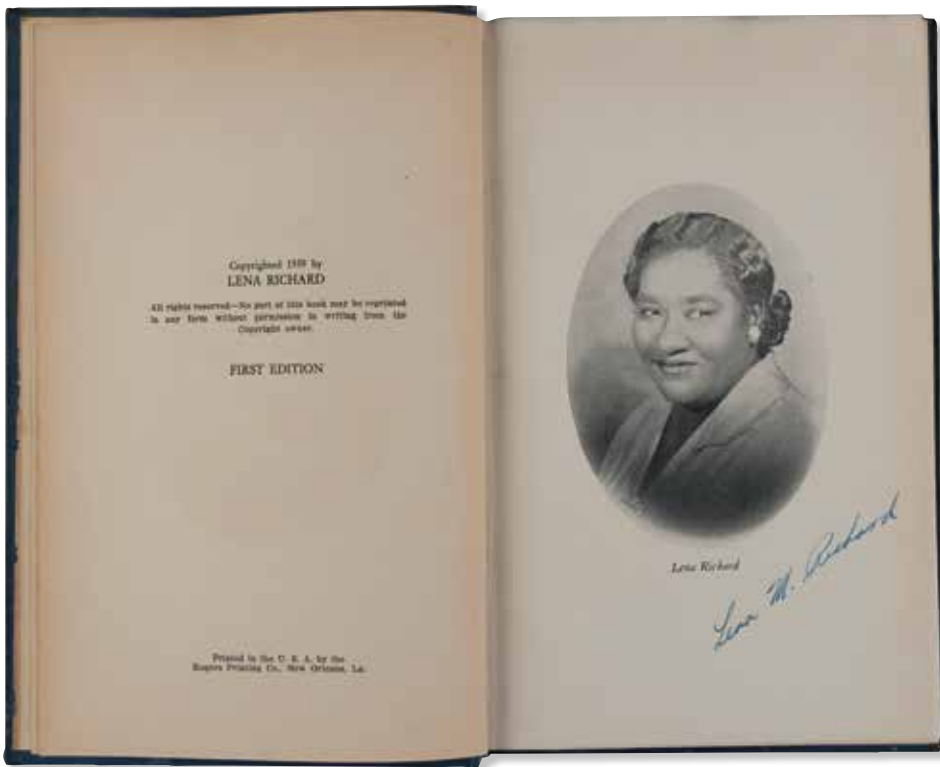
In 1951 the hospital began providing another occupational activity—*Hospital Banner*, a newsletter published by the facility’s patients. The Historic New Orleans Collection recently acquired 21 issues of the publication, which offer an extraordinary look at the hospital’s facilities, staff, and patients during the 1950s

and ’60s. *Hospital Banner* included editorials by staff, but the illustrations and articles were contributed by patients, who described their daily activities, submitted poetry, wrote jokes, and discussed hospital news including personnel changes and progress on new buildings. In one issue, a writer described the freedom of being placed in an unlocked ward of the hospital, saying, “To be on an open ward is to know that you are trusted.” A news item in another issue reads, “Mr. Levy, patient of Wd. 23, who was working as assistant librarian has left for home. Best of luck, Mr. Levy, we miss your kind smile and willing hand around here.”

This sort of patient-led periodical was not unique to CLSH; two other regional examples are the *Whit*, a publication of the Mississippi State Hospital that served as the inspiration for *Hospital Banner*, and the *Pelican* from the Louisiana Training Institute, a juvenile home for boys in Monroe. These titles carry on the tradition of the country’s first patient-led newsletter, the *Meteor*, published at the Alabama Insane Asylum from 1872 to 1881—but they can also be seen as related to prison publications such as the *Angolite*, which is created by incarcerated people at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola and remains in print today.

These publications are subject to the oversight of administration and may provide only a limited glimpse into the lives of their creators. Still, they serve many purposes: They provide meaningful activity for institutionalized people, demonstrate to administrators and government bodies how their money is being spent, and create a positive connection between the outside world and those who are hospitalized or incarcerated. —NINA BOZAK





publisher Houghton Mifflin to pick up the book for a second edition. After the success of her cookbook, Richard worked with the newly formed New Orleans television station WDSU to host a popular cooking show, beginning in 1949. The show aired on Tuesday and Thursday evenings until her sudden death in November 1950.

HNOC already owned a copy of the second edition of Richard’s cookbook but recently acquired the first edition as well. Though the recipes are the same in both editions, Richard’s identity as a Black woman was largely marginalized in the second edition, arguably to make the book more widely marketable: Houghton Mifflin changed the title from *Lena Richard’s Cook Book* to the more general *New Orleans Cook Book*, and they removed her portrait, which is featured prominently in the self-published edition. This portrait, which shows Richard wearing a blouse and pearl earrings, starkly contrasts with mainstream imagery of African American women during the Jim Crow era, which leaned heavily on the “mammy” stereotype. Because of these changes in presentation, HNOC believed it was important to make both editions of the cookbook accessible to the public. —KELLEY HINES

Space shuttle model

2024.0050.1

The Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans East has played a significant role in space exploration since it was acquired by NASA in 1961. In the 1960s Michoud was one of several NASA facilities that manufactured components of the Saturn rockets used in the Apollo space program, which first took humans to the moon. Following the end of the Apollo program, Michoud was utilized by NASA contractors Martin Marietta and later Lockheed Martin to

Lena Richard’s Cook Book

2024.0058

Lena Richard (1892–1950) was a professionally trained New Orleans chef who made a significant impact on American culinary and broadcast history. She was the first African American chef to author a book of Creole cuisine and became the first African American in the nation to host a televised cooking show.

Richard was born in New Roads, Louisiana, a small town north of Baton Rouge. Her family later moved to New Orleans, where, at 14 years old, she began helping her mother and aunt with domestic work at the residence of white socialite Alice Vairin. Recognizing that Richard was skilled in the kitchen, Vairin sponsored her to attend formal cooking school, first in New Orleans and then at Fannie

Farmer’s cooking school in Boston, where she completed the program in 1918.

After returning to New Orleans, Richard started a catering business and sweet shop in the 1920s and established the Lena M. Richard Catering School in 1937. The school sought to train young African American men and women and provide them with a certification that could be leveraged for higher wages. She later opened a second cooking school; owned a frozen-food business; worked as a head chef in New York and at Colonial Williamsburg, in Virginia; and established two restaurants, including Lena Richard’s Gumbo House on Louisiana Avenue in New Orleans.

In 1939 she self-published *Lena Richard’s Cook Book*, which features more than 300 recipes for both traditional Creole cuisine and Richard’s original creations. Praise from the famed food critic James Beard prompted

produce the largest physical element used in the space shuttle program: the single-use external fuel tank, which measured more than 154 feet in height and 27 feet in diameter. This fuel tank was the sole nonreusable component of a space shuttle. Between the 1970s and 2010, a total of 137 external fuel tanks were produced by the Michoud facility.

Robert G. Williams (1929–2004) was a native of Murphysboro, Illinois, who obtained a degree in mechanical engineering from Indiana Tech following his Army service in World War II and the Korean War. He worked on both the Saturn rocket program and the space shuttle program at the Michoud facility beginning in the 1960s, retiring in 1992 as chief facilities engineer. In 2021, an Illinois auction firm hosted an online sale featuring the contents of a Murphysboro home, which included numerous artifacts from Williams’s career with the space program. An eBay seller acquired

a small group of materials that included several NASA publications, news clippings related to the Michoud facility, certificates Williams received from NASA contractors Boeing and Martin Marietta, and a painted wooden model of the space shuttle. HNOC purchased the group in 2024.

This space shuttle model measures 24 inches in height and is made of four parts: the orbiter, the external fuel tank, and two rocket boosters. It is notable that the model’s external fuel tank is painted white, likely dating the model to early production of the single-use external fuel tanks. The tanks were painted white only for the first two shuttle launches, because engineers initially believed that the paint would protect the underlying structure from UV rays. They later realized that painting the tanks, which weighed more than 77,000 pounds when empty, added more than 600 extra pounds and proved unnecessary to protect the structure. —AIMEE EVERRETT



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The Tree of Life (detail)

2010; cloth, thread
by Lawrence Jenkins, Harun Sharif-El, and
Gary Tyler (lead quilter)
gift of Lori Waselchuk, 2016.0298.8



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