The Slave Trade in Microcosm

Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, 1850-1855

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> "Intricate and interpersonal relationships between enslaved and free families were not unusual, nor were the circumstances surrounding the foregoing sale. However, neither is obvious if the research methodology calls for the simple extraction of slave sales and the interpretation of the data without genealogical context. Neither the circumstances of the sales, the effect they had on the slaves, nor the relationships between the parties were discernible without extensive research. Such hidden nuances produce effects that dramatically change the face of many slave sales—and of the slave trade itself."

Historians have by no means neglected the sale of human chattel in America. Focusing primarily upon demographics—sex, age, marital status, etc.—the best of them examine the trade's impact on slave life and family structure; the apparent motivation of sellers; and, to a lesser extent, the role of the trader. Some insight has been groundbreaking. Herbert Gutman and Ann Malone, for example, have worked to reconstruct slave families from plantation records. William Fogel and Stanley Engerman investigated the economics of slavery, while Michael Tadman has asserted the impact of the commercial trader.[1] Yet, there are many neglected areas to explore and much that could be learned by probing the evidence in other, deeper, ways.

A case at point is antebellum "upstate" Louisiana, a time and place for which relatively few works have examined the nature and impact of the slave trade. V. Alton Moody's 1924 article, "Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations," focused on New Orleans and the lower parishes. Keeping that focus, subsequent historians have accumulated a considerable body of knowledge about slavery in South Louisiana, with random sidelights on the central and northern parishes.[2] However, any presumption that patterns defined for the lower parishes can be applied statewide ignores radical differences between South

[1] Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery,* 2 vols. (Boston, 1974). Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York, 1976). Ann Patton Malone, *Sweet Chariot: Slave Family & Household Structure in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana* (Chapel Hill, 1992). Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison, 1989).

[2] V. Alton Moody, "Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* VII (1924): 191–301. Sue Eaken and Joseph Logsdon's edition of *Twelve Years a Slave* (Baton Rouge, 1968), spotlights a rural region in central Louisiana; and Malone reaches into some of central Louisiana's parishes. John M. Price's "Slavery in Winn Parish," *Louisiana History*, VIII (Spring 1967): 137–48, is the only source that focuses on slavery in the northern half of the state. Joe Gray Taylor has produced more works on the state, with his *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1974) standing as an old standard in need of replacement. More recent is Thomas N. Ingersoll's "The Slave Trade and the Ethnic Diversity of Louisiana's Slave Community," *Louisiana History* XXXVII (Spring 1996), 133-61, concentrates on New Orleans. All of these works are severely limited and must be used in conjunction with the more general studies of Fogel and Engerman, Malone, Tadman, etc.

Louisiana and the economy, people, and culture "upstate." This paper argues that a scrutiny of the slave trade outside New Orleans is long overdue and finds that one North Louisiana parish presents significant exceptions to current thought about the "Bayou State."

Far more slave-sale records survive for Louisiana than for most Southern states. Their richness permits a depth of investigation of the people involved, both slaves and masters, that can radically alter interpretations drawn from the limited details recorded within the sales themselves. This detailed probing significantly magnifies the amount of research involved, but it is not impractical if the time frame and geographic area are tightly focused. Quantifying transactions—a growing trend for the past quarter-century—helps to ensure that conclusions are statistically as well as anecdotally supported. But statistics are shallow when little is known about the people who created them. At issue are matters of culture and environment, direct and indirect financial influences, and kinship networks for slaves and masters. These social and genealogical components are time-consuming to acquire; but, when research slices into more-complex layers of the human lives involved, the result can be a far-better understanding of the South's internal slave trade.

The Region

Antebellum Natchitoches Parish is particularly fertile ground for study because of its antiquity, its cultural cleavages, its slave wealth, and its abundant historical resources. Founded in 1717—a year before New Orleans and some 400 winding river miles northwest of that city—Natchitoches's character differs in so many ways from the more-heavily studied lower parishes that it might well be called the "other" Louisiana. Throughout the colonial period, even during four decades of Spanish rule, its social structure remained French; and that element of the population would control political power there until after the Civil War. By contrast, colonial New Orleans and the lower parishes absorbed far more ethnic influences—not only Spanish, but Acadian, Canary Islander, Anglo, and a polyglot of others. Both New Orleans, with its commercial economy, and surrounding plantations developed wealth in the Spanish colonial period. The economy of colonial Natchitoches, however, remained an impoverished one built on Indian trade, hunting, and fur trapping.[3] By the time of the Louisiana Purchase, agricultural inventions had created yet another economic divide. The lower parishes had turned to sugar production—a labor-intensive enterprise that demanded and exhausted large numbers of slaves—while the invention of the gin enabled Natchitoches settlers to create a profitable plantation system based on slave labor of a more-

[3] The definitive study of colonial Natchitoches's economy and society is Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Family and Social Patterns on the Colonial Louisiana Frontier: A Quantitative Analysis, 1714–1803" (B.A. New College Thesis, University of Alabama, 1981); copy in Mills Collection, Northwestern State University Archives, Natchitoches digitized copy online at Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Historic Pathways* (http//www.historicpathways.com). See also Mills, "Social and Family Patterns in the Colonial Louisiana Frontier," *Sociological Spectrum* 2 (1982), 233–48; digital copy available at Mills, *Historic Pathways*.

stable nature.[4] By 1850, Natchitoches had developed into one of the wealthiest of Louisiana's rural parishes.[5] Yet its development was still a half-century or more behind that of New Orleans and the plantation society with which it is identified.

The Louisiana Purchase launched a period of tumultuous growth that radically altered the ethnic composition of Natchitoches and set the stage for cultural conflicts. Natchitoches, being strategically located where the Red River met the Kings Highway that led through Texas to Mexico City, became the hub for travel in and out of the newly opening West. Political unrest in Texas drove many Spaniards and Indio-Spaniards eastward across the Sabine River into the Natchitoches region, where most formed a peon class. Both economic and political problems abroad sent British and European immigrants to Louisiana, but relatively few of these trickled upstate. The 1830s-era clearing of a primordial, hundred-mile raft that ran from Natchitoches to present Shreveport opened nearly ten thousand square miles of previously flooded Northwest Louisiana to settlement—principally by Anglo migrants from the older Southern states who immediately challenged traditional French-Creole ways. Natchitoches straddled the dividing line between the old regime and the new, and stark cultural divisions developed along topographic contours. Given that the best lands had already been claimed by the Creole population, few Anglos and no Spaniards developed large-scale plantations. Most settled into the unclaimed hills, piney woods, and former swamp lands to the west and north of Natchitoches's old communities. However, the more ambitious of the newcomers, even from the time the first Anglos arrived in the Spanish period, recognized that the surest ticket to power and wealth was intermarriage with the Creole elite.[6]

The Economy

Even for the small-scale farmer, Natchitoches represented opportunity far in excess of what most newcomers had known on their worn-out lands in the east. The first U.S. Indian agent appointed to the frontier, Dr. John Sibley, reported to President Jefferson that cotton was already Louisiana's major export; in 1802, it had generated revenues of $1,344,000 to sugar cane's mere $302,400.[7] The success was so great that half of the state's slaves in 1860 were employed in cotton production—with 34 percent

[4] Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana,* 60, places the dividing line between sugar and cotton plantations at, roughly, the latitude of Baton Rouge. For further comparisons between the regions of Louisiana at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, see "Description of Louisiana," in *The Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States with an Appendix, containing Important State Papers and Public Documents and all the Laws of a Public Nature,* 8th cong., 2d sess., November 5, 1804–March 3, 1805 (Washington, 1852), 1506–26.

[5] For comparative statistics, see "Historical United States Census Data Browser," a project of the University of Virginia in co-operation with other institutions, http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl.

[6] For the impact of the Great Raft, see Gary B. Mills, *Of Men and Rivers: The Story of the Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers* (Washington, 1978), 1–22. No published literature treats the aspect of interaction between Creoles and Anglos in northern Louisiana. The present writer bases her observation on some two decades of research on these families in the original church and civil records of the parish.

[7] "Description of Louisiana," 1523.

devoted to sugar and 21 percent to a cotton-sugar combination. By this date, the Louisiana cotton belt lay along and north of the line formed by Natchitoches, DeSoto, Winn, Catahoula, and Concordia—the so-called "Red River Cotton Parishes." However, the "Mississippi River Cotton Parishes" of Concordia, Carroll, Madison, and Tensas dominated cotton production and slave ownership, producing more than all other parishes combined.[8]

Louisiana's slave population steadily increased throughout the antebellum period. By 1860, the state ranked seventh among all states in total number of slaves. In Natchitoches Parish itself, the black population had overtaken the white by 1850 (see table), at which time the parish ranked ninth in the state for its total number of slaves.[9] However, the rate of increase slowed somewhat during that decade. By 1860, Natchitoches had fallen behind twelve other parishes, even though its ratio of blacks to whites in both years was relatively the same.

Natchitoches Parish Population Statistics

	1820	**1830**	**1840**	**1850**	**1860**
Whites	4,976	3,802	7,042	5,466	7,265
Slaves	2,236	3,571	6,651	7,881	9,434
Free Color	415	532	657	881	959

When the spotlight turns to large slaveholdings—operations with more than 50 slaves—Louisiana ranked fourth behind Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The state's four Mississippi River parishes were primarily responsible for its ranking: 75 percent of their slaves were held on plantations with 50 or more slaves. The concentration in Natchitoches and other Red River parishes was notable but far less aberrational, ranging from 30.5 to 43.4 percent; of this group, Natchitoches ranked second. The parish therefore provides an excellent contrast to the large planter-culture that solidified elsewhere during the 1850s. Although Natchitoches boasted its share of columned mansions (mostly constructed in the prosperous fifties), its planter society was not an aristocracy. Even at the height of its prosperity in 1860, large operations accounted for only 5 percent of its so-called "plantations." Parish slaves were dispersed

[8] Economic historian Lewis C. Gray later supported this observation, pointing to a low capital investment and minimum acreage and slave requirements as the primary reasons for cotton's explosion. It quickly became antebellum Louisiana's most widely cultivated money crop. See Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern States to 1860,* 2 vols. (1933; reprinted Gloucester, Mass., 1958). At p. 688, Gray estimates that in the 1810s, an improved plantation of 600 acres and 30 slaves near the Mississippi represented an investment of about $21,000. The annual crops was estimated at 30,000 pounds with $6,000 and the expenses, including overseer, at $1265, leaving a net profit of $4,735, or 22.5 percent on the investment. See also Joseph Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana: 1860* (New Orleans, 1964), 2–3.

[9] Statistics are generated from "Historical United States Census Data Browser."

across the full range of large, moderate, and small farms—the latter of which averaged only 84 improved acres (and 172 unimproved) for a total value of $1,664.[10]

This, then, was the environs of the Natchitoches slave. How did this world of competing cultures, moderate farmers, and small chattel-holdings effect slave sales? How did sales alter this world, and what can they tell us about some of the unknowns surrounding the traffic in human lives?

THE FOCUS AND STUDY GROUP

This study concentrates upon a half-decade at mid-century and incorporates the 1850 federal census. The short study period permits a far more-intense scrutiny of transactions and individuals. The subject material is also tightly concentrated: it includes only transactions that involved compensation (most frequently monetary but sometimes livestock, land, plantations, personal items, expected inheritances, and even other slaves.) Eliminated are instances such as gifts, marriage contracts, and wills that did not generate revenue or other forms of increase for the seller, as well as mortgages that were redeemed without an actual transfer of slave property. In short, purely commercial transactions were considered. Within these parameters, the resources are rich.[11] This five-year period yielded 363 slave sales involving 890 slaves and 446 buyers or sellers who actually resided in the parish.[12] These numbers reflect the three foci of this study: sales, slaves, and owners.

THE SALES

The period under study was one of stability and prosperity, with the influx of migrants and new slaves occurring at a somewhat slower pace than in the previous four decades. Perhaps for these reasons, Natchitoches Parish supported a highly localized and internal slave trade. Despite its strategic location, it rarely attracted traders and seldom held large-scale auctions or other public offerings. As will be shown, residents used New Orleans factors as an outlet for their cotton but seldom acquired slaves through them. Almost without exception, both white and nonwhite participants in slave sales were at least acquaintances.

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[10] John Winters, "The Cotton Kingdom," in *Antebellum Northeast Louisiana* (Ruston, Louisiana, 1984), 49–50; Menn, *Large Slaveholders of Louisiana,* 6, 8–9; Taylor, *Louisiana,* 57–8; Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 61. In *Louisiana,* Taylor mentions in passing that the number of farms employing between 20 and 50 slaves was much greater than those with 50 or more, but he does not pursue the point or cite supporting evidence. For more farm averages based on the 1850 agricultural schedule, see Gary B. Mills, *The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 110.

[11] Most relevant primary sources are concentrated in the parish courthouse (conveyances, succession records, and notarial documents). Supplementing these are Catholic Church records; unrecorded manuscripts; federal population, slave, and agricultural census schedules; and published primary sources such as cemetery records and sacramental registers. Newspapers are not extant for the decade.

[12] There were actually 502 owners involved; however, 56 of them were not residents of the parish and so are not further examined.

Historians frequently maintain that the massive importations into the New Orleans market furnished much of Louisiana's slave population throughout the antebellum period. They point particularly to an influx from the older seaboard states, which viewed the Cotton Kingdom as a repository for surplus slaves.[13] The Natchitoches evidence does not support this generalization. Indeed, it aligns more closely with the work of Fogel and Engerman, who found that only 25 percent of slaves sold in New Orleans were imported, that 68 percent were owned by Louisiana residents, and that 7 percent belonged to western importer states. By comparison, in Natchitoches, 82 percent were owned by local residents, 11 percent involved New Orleans and other parishes, and just 7 percent involved other states to the east, west, or north.[14]

A long-standing debate over the nature of the New Orleans trade focuses on one question: did more slaves arrive in the hands of commercial traders or with migrating owners? Early authorities, such as Clement Eaton and U. B. Phillipps, contended that the majority of slaves were brought into the Cotton Kingdom by interstate traders, but acknowledged the sizeable numbers arriving with migrant owners. Fogel and Engerman were the first to effectively challenge this assertion, arguing that the commercial trade had much less impact than migrating families. Gutman and Tadman countered, supporting the earlier contentions that the commercial trade had a far more devastating effect on a larger number of slaves than previously thought. Taylor first denounced Fogel and Engerman, but later wrote that the overwhelming number of slaves entering Louisiana did so with migrating owners, with the commercial trader playing a crucial second.

Yet a curious anachronism exists in the literature on Louisiana's antebellum slave commerce: most historians who examine the role of the interstate trade rarely venture outside New Orleans and environs. Slave-manifest lists of the New Orleans port are the favored support for arguing a heavy trader dominance in the entire Deep South market. While this may be true for New Orleans, the premise is less convincing when applied to other regions of the state. Most settlers into central and northern Louisiana, for example, migrated overland, not through the port of New Orleans; and their experiences and contributions to slave movements are not represented in manifest lists at all. Thus, the endurance of the *trader* vs. *family* debate is curious, given its limited relevance to understanding the slave trade outside the lower parishes.

Natchitoches offers a different perspective for proponents of a trader-dominated slave system to consider. Purchases at New Orleans accounted for only 6 percent of the documentable Natchitoches

[13] See, for example, John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619–1869* (Lexington, Ky., 1983), 65–69; Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (New York, 1993), 96–98; Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 36, 46–48; and Tadman, *Speculations*, 5–7, 64–68. The movement of slaves westward from the eastern seaboard is a well documented standard.

[14] New Orleans transactions numbered 18, while those for the parishes of Sabine, Bienville, Caddo, Claiborne, Rapides, and Sabine totaled 22 sales. Of the out-of-state transactions, Texas accounted for more than half, followed by Arkansas, Mississippi, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Michigan. For Fogel and Engerman's numbers, see *Time on the Cross*, 53.

transactions. Of these New Orleans-based transactions, no less than 50 percent (n=19) involved family members, former neighbors, or business associates of the Natchitoches participants. For example, in 1853, Charles Petrovic purchased several slaves from his stepsister who was living in New Orleans.[15] In another transaction, William Plunkett Sr. sold thirteen slaves to Eleazer L. Hyams of New Orleans. Despite Hyams's stated residency, he owned a Natchitoches plantation jointly with his two brothers—Henry (then of New Orleans but sometimes of Natchitoches) and Samuel (a Natchitoches associate of Plunkett).[16] Such cases cast doubt as to how far-reaching the influence of the New Orleans trade actually was.

Passing references to Louisiana's slave trade outside New Orleans frequently mention the prosperous trader Isaac Franklin, who operated in Louisiana in the 1830s and 1840s. W. H. Stephenson, for example, credits Franklin with making many sales in Natchitoches.[17] Taylor claims that parish records in northern parishes show that planters *commonly* purchased Negroes in New Orleans, or instructed factors to do so for them.[18] Yet the role of the slave trader is minimal at Natchitoches in the prosperous 1850s. Only seven transactions seem to have involved a commercial trader. Of these, three concerned trading establishments. The firm of Burnard & Walter Campbell twice sold slaves to Natchitoches residents, while Soledano & Taylor transacted business with a Natchitochian on one occasion. The remaining sellers (residents of Arkansas, South Carolina, and Kentucky) appear to be of the petty or "itinerate" type described by Bancroft.[19]

Nor did factors play much of a role in the Natchitoches slave trade. It is generally accepted that Louisiana cotton planters relied heavily upon commissioners or factors to handle their crops at New Orleans; and most agree with Taylor's comment above about factors for acquiring slaves. As Bancroft put it, factors bought or disposed of slaves for their clients "according to whether the [clients] had a surplus or

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[15] Natchitoches Parish Conveyances (hereinafter cited as NPC) 46:371. The record does not state the relationship between the buyer and seller. For that information one must conduct additional research on the individuals; see particularly Register 12, entry for 28 September 1848, Parish of St. François (present Immaculate Conception), Natchitoches. As a general rule, conveyances of this place and time do expressly state the parish in which the sale took place and from where the slaves came. In some cases, a slave being sold from one Natchitoches resident to another is recorded as having been earlier purchased in or from New Orleans.

[16] NPC 42:59–60.

[17] W. H. Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin: Slave Trader and Planter of the Old South, with Plantation Records* (1938; reprint, Gloucester, Mass., 1968), 86. Stephenson offers no numbers or percentages so the actual extent of "frequent" purchases is unknown. He does note (p.81) that Peter "Petrovie" (i.e., Petrovic, the father of Charles mentioned above), purchased twelve Franklin slaves in New Orleans in 1834. Franklin died in 1846. For the connection between Charles and Peter, see 1850 U.S. census, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, free schedule, family 452, and numerous entries in the church parish registers.

[18] Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 47–48; emphasis added. He generically cites Concordia Conveyances, 1806–60; East Carroll Notarial Records (no years given or specific document locations); and two family manuscripts. He gives neither numbers nor examples.

[19] NPC 41:82–86, 44: 139, 46: 22–23; Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 51, 140. Two men from Hot Springs, Arkansas, sold slaves in separate transactions to a Natchitoches resident on the same day in 1850; Washington Rountree of South Carolina made a solitary appearance in Natchitoches in 1851, when he sold a teenage male; and Archibald Williams of Kentucky made an 1853 sale in New Orleans to Fidelio Hunt. None of these men had identifiable ties to Louisiana; and it was out of season to be delivering crops to the New Orleans market.

a marked deficit with [the factor]."[20] While the role of the factor in handling crops is not in dispute, the present project reveals minimal involvement of factors in securing slaves for upstate parishes—indeed, only four such sales were found. The Irish immigrant Elihu Criswell, whose brother was a Natchitoches merchant, supplied slaves to at least three Natchitoches clients.[21] The firm of McGee, Bulkley, & Company of New Orleans serviced the Owings brothers, planters of Natchitoches, in 1852. The two slaves the brothers sold McGee were valued at $1900, of which $1500 was to be applied to their debt and the remaining $400 was to be held as credit until the future cotton crop arrived in New Orleans.[22]

Natchitoches did have at least three small firms involved in the buying and selling of slaves. The degree to which each operated is unclear. The evidence indicates only that they were merchants in the town of Natchitoches and all seemed to have owned plantations or farms on which the slaves could have been employed. S. Bartlett & Company, Walmsley Brothers, and Hill & Airey were variously described as merchants, merchants and lenders, commercial partners, or commercial firms, but never "trader" or "factor." The Barlett brothers, Solon and Freeburn, were the most visible. Among other transactions, they purchased six slaves from five different Texas residents and an adult male from New Orleans in one three-month period. Walmsley Brothers bought and sold slaves on three occasions, while Hill & Airey did so twice.[23]

Extant evidence also indicates that Natchitoches had few large-scale slave auctions, aside from some wrought by death or debt. In the former case (which includes the vast majority of large-group transactions), most sales occurred at the home of the deceased. It was not unusual for seized property to be sold on the courthouse steps, but this involved less than 4 percent of all sales under study. No evidence was found of the proverbial hawking of shackled slaves on the city auction block. Only in the aforementioned case of the two Arkansans did sales to different individuals by the same vendor occur on the same day in the same community. Even more telling, the notarial records available for the period 1853–55 (which, unlike the recorded conveyances in the courthouse, state the specific place in the parish where the transaction took place) reveal that almost 75 percent of notarized sales took place at the home of either the buyer or seller.

Another common view expressed by Louisiana historians is that most slave conveyances were credit sales. Taylor went so far as to write "seldom were slave sales cash transactions."[24] Gray describes an

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[20] Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 319. Bancroft cited only one source for this: a 1902 interview with an elderly New Orleans factor. For the role of factors, see Gray, *History of Agriculture,* 2:113; Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 92; and Stephenson, *Isaac Franklin,* 115.

[21] NPC 41:331, 42:151; and 44:26.

[22] Notarial Book F: 13–14, Office of the Clerk of Court, Natchitoches.

[23] The number of sales is potentially higher, as all members of the firm transacted business in their own names; and in such cases, it was not possible to determine if the business was personal or professional. For the sales, see NPC 41:86, 246, 428; 42:14, 26, 41, 78, 84, 188; 44:49; 46:129, 220, 527; and 49:71.

[24] Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 27.

antebellum planter economy that relied upon, used, and abused credit more than its colonial predecessors.[25] Natchitoches offers a contrary view: a full 80 percent of the recorded conveyances were on cash terms; credit sales accounted for only 5 percent; and cash-credit combinations represented 4 percent. Payment terms on the remaining 11 percent were either not recorded or else they involved nonmonetary considerations. Despite the threat of default frequently described by historians, Natchitochians had sufficient confidence in their economic situation to part with $380,000 outright in these five years—foreshadowing the atmosphere late in the decade that Malone describes as "a confidence approaching arrogance."[26]

The majority of credit and cash-credit sales occurred between local residents and family members, as the following table suggests:

Credit Sale Patterns

	# OF CREDIT SALES	% OF TOTAL SALES
Residents	12	3.3 %
Family	8	2.2 %
Unknowns	6	1.6 %
Traders/outsiders	3	.8 %

Four credit cases involved other property as well as slaves: two plantations, a tract of land, and one cotton crop. Merchant John McKee swapped two New Orleans slaves for a Natchitoches family in 1852. The two males were immediately sold back to McKee, with the proceeds going toward the debt the Natchitoches party owed McKee's company.[27] In 1852, Isiah Miles accepted as payment for a young slave boy a combination of promissory notes and payments made to several of his creditors.[28] When the New Hampshire-born George Morse purchased his new father-in-law's Natchitoches plantation with nine slaves in 1850, Morse's lack of cash prompted him to pledge two-thirds of the cotton crop he might make on that plantation for the next three years, as well as two-thirds of the crop grown on Morse's own plantation.[29]

The heavy role attributed to credit, debt, and other financial woes perhaps explains the popular assertion among Louisiana historians that most local slaves were forced into the market by foreclosure or succession sales. Natchitoches evidence attests—to the contrary—that most slaves were conveyed by standard conveyances. Of the 363 cases under study, succession auctions accounted for only 27.4 percent, while sales of forfeited or seized property claimed less than 2 percent; together they represented 40

[25] Gray, *History of Agriculture,* 2: 712; for an expanded discussion of the southern credit system, see 713–15.
[26] The total amount spent in cash, credit, and cash/credit sales was more than $414,000. For the quote, see Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 37.
[27] Notarial Book F: 13–14.
[28] NPC 44:391.
[29] NPC 42:47–49.

percent of the 890 slaves under study. However, the debt-related sales were not of the magnitude typically cited—that is, a catastrophic foreclosure upon an entire plantation and its slaves.[30] A survey of indexed conveyances reveals that less than 3 percent of *all* recorded transfers were sheriff's sales (i.e., forced sales). In a more common type of default, the yeoman Balthazar Brevelle lost his modest farm to mortgage in 1853—but only four slaves were involved.[31]

Popular grist for the historical mill is the speculative nature of slave sales. Tadman has increased interest in the role speculation played in the trade and the extent to which owners bought and sold for profit. Countering the older theories of Bancroft, he seeks to erase the image of the reluctant master selling slaves for debt relief and insists that owners frequently engaged in the trade for financial gain. The dramatic inflation of prices through the 1850s, he contends, made speculation very profitable for those who bought early in the decade. Malone supports Tadman, contending that extraordinarily high prices after mid-decade made purchases more risky and forced buyers to more carefully select only prime laborers who were really needed. Tadman and others also assert that the days of buying entire lots of slaves for speculation ended in that decade because the continued increase in value encouraged owners to postpone sales—aside from estate divisions. Noteworthy among the reasons given by Tadman is this one: "If traders' purchases had come about essentially through the deaths of owners or through public sales for debt, this would surely have been directly reflected in traders' purchasing records." As only "about 4 or 5" percent seem to have come from all such sales in combination, he concludes that traders purchased very few slaves offered by owners troubled by debt.[32]

That conclusion seems illogically based on a premise that all debt-driven sales went through the judicial court system as forced auctions or sales of seized property. But what of those owners who sold to *avoid* reaching the point of having their property seized and put up at public auction? Without an investigation of the financial situation of each owner at the time of sale, Tadman's conclusion is at best shaky. He admits the large number of forced sales occurring in the local market, which are much more difficult to quantify and count than judicial sales. Yet he continues to use his lopsided sample of judicial sales to assert, for example, that slaves throughout the exporting states in 1850 had a 14 percent chance of being sold.[33] Unsound methodology and self-contradictory arguments over the reluctance of owners leaves the role of private speculation wholly unexplained.

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[30] Taylor, *Negro Slavery,* 27; Malone, *Sweet Chariot,* 213. Again, Taylor offers little evidence or statistics. He provides three examples of foreclosures on plantations in 1841, 1852, and 1861, citing only newspapers.

[31] Notarial Book F: 197–200.

[32] Bancroft, *Slave Trade,* 89–90; Tadman, *Speculators*, 11, 20, 113–15. For the quotes, see Tadman, 113.

[33] Tadman, *Speculators*, 114.

Natchitoches evidence contradicts Tadman and follows more closely the assessment of Fogel and Engerman. The latter maintain that slaves were generally purchased for use rather than speculation.[34] In only fourteen cases at Natchitoches was a family or single slave sold more than once. Four of these generated no profit; three cases involved swapping of inherited slaves among the heirs; and three were retrocessions. Therefore, only four sales (1.1 percent) were possibly speculative in nature.

THE SLAVES

Natchitoches slaves in the late antebellum period experienced a more stable and secure environment for their families than that reported for the sugar regions or the larger cotton parishes.[35] The size and number of slaveholdings increased at Natchitoches, but the rate of increase declined from 1840 to almost 35 percent. Population statistics for 1850 and 1860 show that the ratio of black to white population had stabilized, as did the sex ratio within the enslaved.

Age and Gender of Natchitoches Slaves, 1850[36]

	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60+
Males	1005	706	687	788	450	175	156
Females	1120	628	752	722	375	170	147

These are the slaves who formed the pool for the Natchitoches slave trade. Not surprisingly, the age and gender makeup of slaves transferred during 1850–55 mirrored the composition above; and the slave conveyances shed considerable light into the circumstances of both sets of bondsmen.

Given that the Natchitoches trade was chiefly internal, it follows that the majority of conveyed slaves were indigenous. Indeed only 7 percent of the 890 under study were imports. This is not to say that all of the remainder were Natchitoches natives, but that the overwhelming majority of those sold between 1850 and 1855 were not from outside the state. Extant sources in this parish do not offer detailed records of commercial traders or trading firms (as with New Orleans) or significant plantation records (as with the sugar district). Yet, there is one other means of verifying the resident slave assertion aside from strict calculation of sales by outsiders during this five year window—conveyances that note when a slave had been previously acquired by the seller. For example:

> 31 March 1851, Mistress Eliza Greneaux, wife of Charles E. Greneaux, of Natchitoches Parish, to John McGee of same, for $250 to be paid as soon as he takes possession, the

[34] Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross,* 1:53–54.
[35] Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 36–37, treats this subject.
[36] Statistics are generated online from the previously cited "Historical United States Census Data Browser."

> Negro Westley about 30, being the same purchased from Margaret E. Applewhite by act of sale dated 1 May 1848.[37]

Of the 363 conveyances under study, 33 carried such notations of previous sale. But only three of these concerned slaves brought in from outside areas (two from New Orleans and one from adjacent DeSoto Parish). These two verifications strengthen the assertion that the Natchitoches slaves sold between 1851 and 1855 were overwhelmingly resident ones.

Historical analyses of sex and age data for transferred slaves have generated all manner of conclusions and extrapolations. For Louisiana, Natchitoches may provide a more balanced view of demography. The most recent published estimates of those imports into the cotton districts assert an equal percentage of males and females (50 percent each), while imports into the sugar districts are said to be 60 percent male.[38] Natchitoches presents a slightly different picture. Of the 61 slaves imported into Natchitoches, the proportion of *females* is higher; and the sex ratio of resident slaves roughly equals that of total imports:

Sex Ratio of Slaves Conveyed

	FEMALE	MALE
New Orleans Imports	56 %	44 %
Total Imports	52 %	48 %
Total Residents	51 %	47 %

The following table provides a more-specific breakdown by age and gender, for imports and residents:

Ages and Genders of Slaves Conveyed

	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE
0–9	238 (31 %)	139 (58 %)	99 (42 %)
10–19	156 (18 %)	93 (60 %)	63 (40 %)
20–29	170 (19 %)	87 (51 %)	83 (49 %)
30–39	128 (14 %)	65 (51 %)	63 (49 %)
40–49	74 (8 %)	37 (50 %)	37 (50 %)
50–59	33 (4 %)	23 (70 %)	10 (30 %)
60+	23 (3 %)	11 (48 %)	12 (52 %)

[37] NPC 42:196–97.

[38] For example, Fogel and Engerman assert that the slaves funneled in from the Chesapeake were roughly 60 percent male to 40 percent female. Tadman counters that the more correct ratio between male and female imports was roughly equal. While both admit the particular nature of the region, they proceed with a methodology that ignores the more representative parishes to the north. See Fogel and Engerman, *Time on the Cross,* 1: 38–55, 2: 37–50; Tadman, *Speculators*, 22–23.

In this Natchitoches sample, females outnumbered males in all age group except two: there were slightly more males over the age of 60 and an equal number of males and females aged 40–49. The most dramatic difference between the sexes is evident in the youngest age groups: 59 percent females and 41 percent males. The largest age group facing transfer was also that of children under the age of ten, primarily because Louisiana law forbade the separation, by sale, of mothers and their children under ten.[39] Natchitoches clearly holds to the asserted pattern of owners buying more slaves of prime work or productive age. But it is difficult to explain why so many Natchitochians *sold* slaves in these age categories. One explanation might be the rate of natural increase and the slowdown of outmigration, which an increasingly stable society and family-oriented slave community would foster. Bancroft estimates the natural increase of the South (excluding Texas), as follows:[40]

Slave Increase (Southern States)

YEAR	RATE OF INCREASE
1820–1840	24.4 %
1830–1840	26.6 %
1840–1850	23.4 %

Studies of stability among slave families elsewhere have benefitted from the sustained prosperity of this era and the decrease in interstate movement of slaves. Gutman and Malone in particular have shown the importance of reconstructing family composition and, therefore, the effects of the trade upon those families. Malone expands into the neglected cotton regions of Louisiana to look at 236 slaves on three plantations. Her model shows that 7 percent of those slaves were "solitaires," while one fifth lived in multiple-family households. Her largest identifiable unit was the traditional two-parent household, accounting for some 80 percent. The slaves in her Natchitoches example (those on the 1852 "Vienna" plantation of A. Lecomte) were 17 percent solitaires, 75 percent simple families, and 8 percent multiple-family units. However, Malone used only plantation records, eschewing such equally valuable but less convenient sources as conveyances, successions, church records, and slave-schedule census data on housing. As a result, her findings are limited, particularly as two of the three plantations were atypical of

[39] This Louisiana law is given curious lip service in an 1851 transaction in which a female slave was sold away from her five-year-old-child, "who still remains the property of sd. vendor notwithstanding any law to the contrary which gives the purchaser of a mother a right to all children under the age of ten years." However, there is evidence that the slave child was an offspring of the owner family. See NPC 44:435.

[40] Bancroft, *Slave Trading*, 383.

the region (recent transplants from the sugar parishes); and the wealth of the cited Natchitoches planter was aberrational.[41]

Few Natchitoches sources provide the specific type of material Malone used in her reconstruction of household structures. Yet her representation is useful for comparing the family structure of parish slaves in general to those of sold slaves. In Natchitoches between 1850 and 1855, the ratio of slaves sold with family members to those sold as solitaires or with unidentifiable relationships is roughly equal:[42]

Sales of Slaves with Known Family Members

	% OF ALL SALES
Sold with Known Family Members	48.4 %
Sold As Solitares or as Unknown Status	51.6 %

Slaves sold with family members fall into several different types:

Sales of Slaves with Known Family Members

	# OF SALES	% OF TOTAL SALES
Women with Children	94	26 %
Parents with Children	28	8 %
Men with Children	2	1 %
Siblings Without Parents	8 *	2 %
Married Couples	6	2 %
Total Family Units	138	38 %

**This figure is most subject to change as relationships are not typically stated between siblings.*

The most-common family unit was that of a mother with children, representing 186 children and 94 mothers, among whom the maternal age at time of sale ranged from sixteen to fifty-seven. The sixteen-year-old, one Margaret, was sold with her infant daughter, Marie, in March 1854. (If both ages are correct, Margaret would have been only fourteen at the time of Marie's conception, but such young maternal ages was still common even among whites in Louisiana in this period.[43] At the other extreme of the age range was "Blind Hannah," who (at fifty-seven) was sold with her eleven-year old daughter

[41] Malone, *Sweet Chariot*, 58–59.

[42] There is potential for fluctuation in these figures. In several group sales, the relationships between slaves were not recorded and the arrangement of names did not follow the format of family group listings. Therefore, the number of slaves sold as family members could increase ten percent or higher.

[43] NPC 46:471. No other instance of such a young mother appears in this study. Margaret and Marie appear to have been conveyed as mortgaged property, unredeemed. The young widow who sold them and then brought them home again ten months later was from a notably pious and well-to-do family of color—eliminating speculation that Margaret was forcibly impregnated at such a tender age by an unconscionable white master, as portrayed in Melton A. McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (Athens, Ga., 1991).

Christiana, six other slaves, and a tract of land.[44] Between this range fall all manner of age, sex, and race combinations. There are simple groupings, such as the 1854 sale of Savory, age 27, and her daughter Harriet, 4 months.[45] But there are more-complex structures, as when one Irish immigrant sold to another the Negro woman Lear, thirty-one, and her children: mulatto Mary, fourteen; Negro Eliza, twelve; Negro Josephine, ten; mulatto William, four; and mulatto Warren, two.[46]

The second-most-common family unit—though it was a far-distant second—was that of parents with children. Twenty-eight such sales involved seventy-three slaves. Again, simple combinations were most common, such as the 1852 sale of Lewis and Cordelia, both twenty-two, and their infant child.[47] The more-complex combinations, in which several family units were involved, typically occurred in large-scale transfers, such as succession sales or conveyances of entire plantation operations. The 1854 succession sale of Robert McAlpin, for example, transferred eight standard units.[48] McAlpin—widely believed to be the model for the notorious Simon Legree—had been poisoned by one of his slaves, but his callousness and disregard apparently was not shared by his administrator, who sold his eighty-nine slaves in obvious or probable family units, with just six exceptions.[49]

The small number of men sold with wives and/or children (11 percent) leads to questions regarding the importance of slave fathers. At first glance, the Natchitoches evidence might suggest that fathers were not considered vital, or recognized; but it would be more accurate to conclude that the evidence simply does not permit any conclusion. One cannot assume that every mother-child unit was the result of a longstanding relationship or that each "missing" husbands (or consort) and father belonged to the same person who owned the women and children. Nor can one determine, in most cases, whether an owner did or did not recognize slave marriages or was conscientious about keeping such marriages intact. Without benefit of records explicitly stating relationships and composition of all slave units possessed by the owners under study, neither reliable statistics nor conclusions can be drawn about slave fathers.

At best, the Natchitoches evidence offers merely anecdotal evidence on the subject of slave marriages. In the extant church records for this half-decade, nine marriages appear—with owners identified in seven cases. In each of these seven instances, the bride and groom were owned by different

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[44] NPC 44:283–84; the other slaves consisted of an adult male and another mother-children unit; the document states no relationship between the male and the two women.

[45] NPC 49:51–52.

[46] NPC 42:28–29. All ages are prefaced by the word "about." There were possibly three fathers for the children of Lear: a white or mulatto father of the first child (born c.1836), a black father for the next two children (born c.1838–40), and a white or mulatto father for the last two children (born c.1846–48).

[47] NPC 44:496–7.

[48] NPC 44:215 (Lacour); 102 slaves were sold with 2,697 acres and all other items belonging to said plantation.

[49] For one treatment of the McAlpin–Simon Legree connection, see D. B. Corley, *A Visit to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Chicago, 1892).

masters.[50] If this is at all representative of slave families in general, a sizeable portion of female-headed families would not have been living with husband/father. On the other hand, it is clear that some Natchitochians went to noticeable lengths to keep fathers with their families. The succession of Robert McAlpin, aforementioned, is an excellent example.[51] The McDaniel, Plunkett, Prudhomme, and Scopini families are also representative of Natchitoches owners who recognized and helped preserve slave marriages and families. William Plunkett Sr. sold a standard family unit to his son in 1850. The following year, his daughter-in-law Martha (McDaniel) Plunkett resold that family, still intact, to N. F. Scopini. (The buyer's family was one of those who permitted slaves to solemnize marriages in the Catholic church.) Martha's brother also sold a complete family unit (man, wife, and child) that year. A sale by the Prudhommes included two sets of slaves in husband-wife-children units, each described by the phrase "which slaves form a family."[52]

The remaining family units were sold in considerably fewer numbers. In eight instances, identifiable or suspected siblings were sold without parents. Some of these children or young adults were called "orphans," as in the 1854 case of Julia, Roselia, Emily, and Isaac, ages fourteen to three, who were sold with the other plantation slaves to the brother and absentee partner of their deceased owner. The children were described as "orphans and brother and sister."[53] In a case of *suspected* relationship, Sarah Carroll sold to her unmarried daughter two young mulattoes, Cornelia and Francis.[54] In only six cases were known or probable couples sold without children. Three of these relationships are inferred ones, based upon their ages and sequence in the record that transferred an entire plantation in 1851—Henry and Milly, both fifty; Emanuel, thirty-eight, and Betsey thirty; and Jules, twenty-two, and Celia, seventeen. In each case, the pair were immediately surrounded by solitaires or family units to which the suspected couples could not fit.[55] The remaining three cases are more-easily categorized. In 1851, for example, Negroes Bachus and Rachel were transferred between free families of color in the famed Isle Brevelle settlement.[56]

Although children were usually sold with mothers, two cases were found in which minors were sold with a known or possible father. In 1850, William Plunkett Sr. sold thirteen slaves to a neighboring farm-partnership, including Negro Pete, twenty-eight, and "his two children" (Ellen, twelve, and Dinah, nine).[57] In a less clear case, three "Negroes" under the age of nine were sold along with a mulatto man, aged 40. If

[50] These nine marriages are recorded at the end of Register 20 (marriages of whites and free people of color), Parish of St. François.

[51] NPC 46: 454–56. For McAlpin, see Succession Book 23:128.

[52] NPC 42:54–55, 33:284–85, 496; 46: 456.

[53] NPC 46: 465–8.

[54] NPC 41:84–86, 238–39.

[55] NPC 44:215–19, 46:465–8; 43 other slaves were sold with the 2,607-acre plantation on Red River plantation. The deceased owner, René Victor Plauché, had operated this plantation with two partners, his father John B. of Natchitoches and brother John B. Jr. of New Orleans.

[56] NPC 50: 395–96 (George and Ann); 42: 92–93 (Bachus and Rachel); 46: 13–14 (Peter and Betsy).

[57] NPC 42:59–60.

these racial designations are precise, the mulatto man might or might not have been the father of the young blacks; the terms *mulatto* and *Negro* (i.e., *black*) were basically visual judgment calls.[58]

The number of slaves sold as solitaires is more difficult to calculate because relationships between unmarried adults were not typically noted. In many cases, kinship is plausible. Mothers with children were frequently sold with other slaves who could be family members. For example, an 1852 sale that conveyed three sets of mothers with children under age 12 also included three slaves aged 18, 15, and 14. Two of the mothers were old enough to have had children in this age range and the ages of all the younger children assigned to each mother would make them "stair-steps" to any of the older trio.[59] Another debatable case involves the transfer of a farm from a young Creole to his widowed mother. On the list of twenty slaves, the only stated relationships are those between mothers and children. However, the document first names six adult men, any of whom could be unidentified husbands or fathers.[60] More difficult to analyze are sales in which slaves are grouped by sex and arranged chronologically, as in an 1853 transfer of a farm with seventeen slaves: Jake, 40; Tailor, 26; Frankey, 28; Gillem, 28; Edward, 27; Maria, 24; Ned, 23; Henry, 30; Henry Sr., 38; Mary, 30; Louis, 29; Emma, 27; Betsey, 18; Richard, 15; Elias, 15; Mary, 15; and Laret, 3.[61]

Considering the efficacy of medical treatments in the mid-1800s, one might expect a significant percentage of any population group to be in less than prime physical condition or good health. In the Natchitoches sampling, almost 6 percent of the slaves sold between 1850 and 1855 were noted for some physical impairment, ranging from being "sickly" or blind to having hernias or fallen wombs. As an example, the eighty-nine slaves left by Robert McAlpin after his alleged poisoning far exceeded the

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[58] NPC 44:456. The record reads: Mr. Hypolite P. Gallien to Madam Philonise Gallien, wife of Dersilin Gallien, assisting, for $2500 cash: 160 acres and the Negro Suzette, about 9; Negro Emanuel, about 4; Desire, about 1; and mulatto Henry, about 40. In the colonial period, Louisiana's civil and ecclesiastical scribes at first attempted to base these labels upon actual parentage; not surprisingly, that effort was thwarted when planters began to discourage their slaves from marrying. For the latter point, see Elizabeth Shown Mills and Gary B. Mills, "Missionaries Compromised: Early Evangelization of Slaves and Free People of Color in North Louisiana," *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana* (Lafayette, 1993), 30–47; digital copy available at Mills, *Historic Pathways* (http//www.historicpathways.com).

[59] For the two mothers see NPC 44:312–3. The listing of slaves is as follows: Negro Fanny, about 40, and children: Negro Mary, about 10; Negro Mahala, about 6; Negro Jane, about 3; and mulatto Peter, about 2. Negro Maria, about 40, and children: mulatto Sophia, about 12: mulatto Dennis, about 9; mulatto The Old Man, about 7; and mulatto Clara, about 2. Negro Jane, about 30, and her children: Negro Adaline, about 9; Negro Angeline, about 6; and mulatto Georgiana, about 3. Negro Matilda about 18; Negro Lucinda about 15; and Negro Alexander about 14.

Age 12 is most frequently cited as the line between child and adult slaves, despite the reference to the legal age of ten that is cited in n. 40. See Jack Lenus Jr., "I Looked for Home Elsewhere: Black Southern Plantation Families, 1790–1940," in *Plantation Society and Race Relations: The Origins of Inequality*, Thomas J. Durant Jr. and J. David Knottnerus, eds. (Westport, 1999), 79; and Eugene Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York, 1976), 505.

[60] NPC 42:51–52, François Roubieu to Mistress Ausite Roubieu. The arrangement of slaves is as follows: Negro Stephen, 39; Negro Mac 39; Negro Peter, 31; Negro Davy, 39; Negro Isaac, 31; Negro Andrew, 31; Negro Fanny, 31; Negro Elizabeth, 25; mulatto Elizabeth, 30, and son George, 4; Negro Rachel, 34, and children Moses, 10, and unnamed infant; Negro Sally, 31; Negro Charlotte, 28, and children William, 8, Susan, 5, and Dyke, 2; Negro Frances, 30; Negro Harriett, 34.

[61] Notarial Book F: 219–22, Office of the Clerk of Court.

normal percentages—nearly one fourth of whom were afflicted. However their maladies did not significantly affect their salability. Ten of the fifteen buyers at this estate sale took home infirm slaves:[62]

Sample Sales of Afflicted Slaves: McAlpin Succession

PURCHASER	AFFLICTED SLAVES	# OF SLAVES BOUGHT
J. F. Culverson	Abraham: crippled hip Lucy: crippled ankle Judy: rheumatic Yellow Andrew: "fistula in the urithra" Mary: "prolapsis ut[er]in" Sam: crippled, diseased	16
John Bolling	Aleck: sore eyes, one thumb missing Ellen: crippled, one thumb missing Charles: two crippled fingers Mary: rheumatic Jim: chronic sore leg	15
Mary Colver	Westly: sickly, subject to nose bleeds Nancy: rheumatic	8
Charles Stewart	William: crippled hand Nancy: sick	7
Ponse Collomb	Nelson: rheumatic infant: crippled	6
John Stewart	Amaka: diseased, unsound	14
N. M. Luckett	Ned: syphillis	7
Jerome Messi	Sarah: diseased, crippled	2
John Carnnahan	Clarissa: "prolopais ut[er]in"	2
John McAlpin	Daby: sore eyes, rheumatic	5

Most of these purchasers were of limited means. However, the slaves were not necessarily bargains: the fifteen purchasers spent $60,161 for a group of slaves with a 24 percent affliction rate. Culverson alone spent almost $18,000 for his lot. In half of these cases, buyers kept families intact by purchasing an afflicted slave along with his/her healthy family members. In other cases in which infirm slaves were transferred, purchasers may have been buying spouses, from nearby plantations, for their own slaves. In a few cases, the price suggests that the purchaser may have been strapped for cash. Or the buyer may have had a labor need that the affliction would not affect.

[62] Succession Book 23:128.

OWNERS

Owners were, arguably, the most-critical determinant of the character of a slave transaction. Forced sales excepted, those owners exercised complete control from the initial decision to buy or sell to the final payment and actual transfer. Yet, insofar as owners are concerned, most details crucial to the nuances of the slave trade are hidden ones. While today's wealth of works dealing specifically with slaves has led to a greater knowledge of the daily existence and characteristics of slaves, little is known about masters outside the elite. Understanding who and what they were is crucial to understanding their actions and, in turn, to better understanding the trade as a whole.

This study focuses on age, class, ethnicity, gender, occupation, and wealth—as well as relationships between buyers and sellers, and sometimes their kinship to the slaves in question. Demographics are compared to the findings of James Oakes in *Ruling Race,* which offers the best account of the "average" southern slaveholder.[63] The relationships presented here between owners and slaves are derived from original research—as are the assignments of ethnicity, which can be a complex matter in a society where diverse ethnic groups complimented and competed with each other.

Demographics

This study subdivides ethnicity into six categories: Anglo, Creole, European, free people of color (FPC), other, and unknown.[64] The following table outlines the involvement of each in slave sales:

Ethnic Composition of Buyers and Sellers

ETHNICITY	% OF TOTAL OWNERS
Anglo	39 %
Creole	38 %
Free people of color	12 %
European	7 %
Unknown	3 %
Other	1 %

[63] James L. Oakes, The *Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York, 1982), 245–50. Oakes's sample consists of 505 owners randomly selected from the 1850 slave schedule of nine counties/parishes: Covington and Dallas Counties, Alabama; Coweta County, Georgia; Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana; Attala County, Mississippi; Georgetown [District], South Carolina; Sullivan and Weakley Counties, Tennessee; Red River County, Texas; and Halifax County, Virginia. Two of the four names Oakes cites for New Orleans FPC (p. 49) were actually Natchitoches people: Marie Metoyer and Charles Roques.

[64] Creoles represent all white New-world-born offspring and descendants of European immigrants; Anglos represent all settlers and descendants from U. S. colonies or states; Europeans were settlers directly from Europe. Free people of color were any mix of black with European, Anglo, or European. These designations are not based upon surname, because (1) spelling in this place and time often depended upon scribes and surnames were frequently Anglicized; and (2) within the studied population, families with Anglo surnames frequently represent early-nineteenth-century migrants into Louisiana who married into Creole families and raised their children as Creole. In such cases, those children are classed here as Creoles.

While Louisiana law included Native-Americans in its definition of free people of color, Natchitochians of Native-American descent chose to merge into either the white or African-American populations and were thereafter identified according to that choice.

The closely aligned components of social status and wealth are more difficult to discern. Taylor writes that class in antebellum Louisiana was "as much a matter of social standing and attitude as of economic status,"[65] and his conclusion applies across all class lines in Natchitoches. An individual of great wealth was not necessarily a member of the elite—particularly if he was an Anglo newcomer. Conversely, some old Creole families retained their social status long after they lost the wealth on which it was founded. The assignment of status in this project is admittedly subjective, but it is based on two decades of research on the population of the parish and a careful analysis of the cultural and political landscape. In balancing personal wealth against public influence, this study calculates wealth from the value of property and the size of slaveholdings enumerated on the 1850 census—a source that provides a more-constant and universal coverage than do conveyance and succession records. The combination of heritage, wealth, and influence are combined to create the categories of elite, common, and lower common.[66]

The slave wealth of the study group (both white and nonwhite) compares to Oakes, as follows:[67]

Comparative Slaveholdings: Natchitoches and South

SLAVES	OWNERS	
(# HELD)	(OAKES)	(NATCHITOCHES)
0–5	41 %	44 %
6–50	49 %	53 %
51+	10 %	3 %

The notable difference in the largest slaveholding group, between the Natchitoches study and Oakes's figures for the South at large, undoubtedly stems from the prosperity of the Natchitoches cotton economy. Oakes's sampling includes less-wealthy areas.

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[65] Taylor, *Louisiana,* 60.

[66] Tax rolls, another excellent source for determining comparative wealth, do not exist for antebellum Natchitoches. The categories are drawn from the following criteria:

Elite:	50+ or more slaves on 1850 census, *and/or* $45,000 in personal property on 1850 census, *and/or* holding high public office
Common:	10–50 slaves, *and/or* $1,000–$44,000 in personal property, *and/or* holding minor office
Lower common:	0–9 slave, *and/or* $0.00–$1,000 in personal property, *and* holding no public office

There is some flexibility within these parameters—for example, the parish judge who appears on the 1850 census with 7 slaves and "only" $12,000 worth of personal property, but whose family had been "movers and shakers" of the region for generations, is classed *elite.*

[67] 1850 U.S. census, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, free schedule and slave schedule, National Archives [hereinafter NA] microfilm publication M432, rolls 233 and 244, respectively; mortality schedule, NA microfilm publication T655, roll 21; and agricultural schedule, Duke University Special Collections Library.

Occupation-wise, the 426 Natchitochians who bought and sold slaves in this half-decade compare to Oakes's sampling as follows:[68]

Comparative Occupations of Slaveholders: Natchitoches and South

OCCUPATION	OAKES	NATCHITOCHES
Agricultural	79 %	53 %
Non-Agricultural	21 %	7 %
Unknown	——	30 %

The "unknown" category for Natchitoches is high because no speculation or assumptions have been made even when evidence is suggestive. However, given that Natchitoches was so heavily agricultural, it is probable that most of those with "unknown" occupations were also farmers.[69] Occupations in the nonagricultural category included those of baker, hotel keeper, lawyer, medical doctor, merchant, newspaper editor, priest, public office holder, non-skilled labor, skilled artisan, and "slave."

Demographics are also useful as a springboard to further studies—in this case, to the consideration of owners collectively as well as personally. Understanding how Anglos, Creoles, free people of color, and Europeans acted as groups helps to better understand how they operated as individuals. This project has addressed several key questions, including: *Were there differences in the slave transfers undertaken by each group? Are there patterns evident across all groups? Are there variations among group members?* Beyond this, the investigation has focused on another need peculiar to the area: in historical works of North Louisiana, each ethnic class—but especially the Anglos and Creoles—generally receive separate attention, while little is said about the interaction between them or the similarities and differences in their practices.[70]

Anglos participated slightly more often than Creoles in the Natchitoches slave transactions (as noted in the ethnic composition table), representing 39 and 38 percent of active owners, respectively. However, the wealth of the Creole owners vastly exceeded that of Anglo owners in 1850—$1,900,000 to

[68] Oakes, *The Ruling Race,* 247. For the Natchitoches statistics, married women who owned slaves in their own right are calculated under the occupation of the husband.

[69] In Oakes's Table C, "Regional Variations," p. 249, he reports that only 20 percent of Natchitoches owners were employed outside agriculture.

[70] There are a few exceptions. Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon explore the cultural development of New Orleans from Creole roots through dominance of the "Anglo-American" community; see *Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization* (Baton Rouge, 1992). Marie Dunn, A Comparative Study: Louisiana's French and Anglo-Saxon Cultures," *Louisiana Studies* (1971): 131–69, compares the "South Louisiana French" to north Louisiana's "Anglo-Saxon" culture, without differentiating between Creole and Acadian French. The various works by the Millses that have been previously cited in this study offer some comparative vignettes between Natchitoches classes, as well as between Natchitoches and studied groups elsewhere, but none are directly applicable to the present study. The same can be said of two other Mills works not previously mentioned in these notes: Gary B. Mills, "Piety and Prejudice: A Colored Catholic Community in the Antebellum South," in Jon L. Wakelyn and Randall M. Miller, eds., *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture* (Macon, Ga., 1983), 171–94; and Gary B. Mills, *"Liberté, Fraternité,* and Everything but *Egalité:* Cane River's *Citoyens de Couleur,"* in *North Louisiana,* vol. 1, To 1865: *Essays on the Region and Its History* (Ruston, La., 1984), 93–112.

$898,000—and within Anglos there was significantly greater economic disparity between elite and common owners.[71] Not surprisingly, male buyers and sellers radically outnumbered females (78:22 percent among both cultures). Married owners of both genders, across the board, also outnumbered their widowed and single counterparts. What was totally unexpected is the fact that married women were far less active among Creole wives than among Anglos: 58 percent of all female Anglo participants were married, as opposed to just 18 percent of Creole women. A similarly drastic difference appears in the relationships between buyers and sellers. Creoles turned frequently to family members for slaves and did considerable business with slaveowners who were free people of color. On the other hand, Anglos conveyed slaves to neighbors far more often than to relatives—undoubtedly because most had not been in the parish long enough to establish kinship networks—but they rarely dealt with FPC slaveholders. The following tables provide more-detailed comparisons between all ethnic groups:

Class Distinctions

ETHNICITY:	ELITE	COMMON	LOW-COMMON
Anglo	13 %	67 %	1 %
Creole	38 %	51 %	11 %
Free people of color	33 %	51 %	16 %
European	38 %	60 %	2 %
Unknown/Other	22 %	17 %	

Size of Slaveholdings

ETHNICITY	0–5	6–10	11–50	51–99	100+
Anglo	38 %	238 %	34 %	4 %	1 %
Creole	36 %	18 %	27 %	14 %	5 %
Free people of color	60 %	20 %	20 %	——	——
European	57 %	10 %	29 %	4 %	——
Unknown/Other	25 %	——	50 %	25 %	——

[71] Not all owners could be found on the 1850 census, primarily because of the number of Anglos who moved into the parish after the census was taken. To every extent possible, noneconomic census data (ages, marital status, occupations, etc.) has been gleaned from auxiliary sources. However, all calculations for slaveholdings and wealth are based *only* on those individuals enumerated in the 1850 census.

Gender Distribution among Owners

ETHNICITY	MALE	FEMALE
Anglo	78 %	22 %
Creole	71 %	29 %
Free people of color	59 %	41 %
European	91 %	9 %
Unknown/Other	83 %	17%

Marital Status Among Owners

ETHNICITY	MARRIED	SINGLE	WIDOWED	UNK/OTHER
Males:				
Anglo	47 %	14 %	5 %	34 %
Creole	59 %	8 %	2 %	31 %
Free people of color	55 %	——	4 %	41 %
European	69 %	28 %	——	3 %
Unknown/Other	33 %	——	6 %	60 %
Females:				
Anglo	58.0 %	.3 %	25.0 %	1.2 %
Creole	18.0 %	.8 %	7.0%	
Free people of color	30.0 %	30.0 %	5.0 %	35.0 %
European	33.3 %	33.3 %	——	33.3 %
Unknown/other	——	——	33.0 %	67.0 %

Age Distribution among Owners

ETHNICITY	18–35	36–54	55+	UNKNOWN
Males:				
Anglo	19 %	38 %	5 %	32 %
Creole	43 %	26 %	9 %	22 %
Free people of color	37 %	20 %	16 %	26 %
European	21 %	59 %	10 %	10 %
Unknown/Other				
Females				
Anglo	32%	45%	*	18%
Creole	33 %	35 %	18 %	14 %
Free people of color	26 %	31 %	——	43 %
European	62 %	33 %	——	——
Unknown/Other	——	33 %	——	67%

*One case in this category constitutes less than 1 percent.

Slaveholding among free people of color has received considerably less attention than slaveholding among whites; and a few elite owners of color are almost routinely used as representatives of the whole class: notably, William Ellison of South Carolina, William Johnson of Mississippi, and Andrew Durnford and the extended family of Metoyers in Louisiana. Most historical treatments tend to portray slaveholding among free people of color as inherently doomed attempts to gain equality by emulating the white elite.[72] There are notable exceptions. Larry Koger's work in South Carolina, which depicts FPC embracement of slavery as a viable economic system in which nonwhites did demonstrate attitudes remarkably similar to those of their white counterparts. Gary B. Mills's work in Natchitoches Parish demonstrates remarkable success in the political as well as economic arenas, even against the attempted imposition of increased restrictions by Anglo-Americans—a success doomed primarily by war and general emancipation.[73]

The focus on FPC slaveholders in Louisiana is equally limited. Taylor and Malone give the subject scant mention, while Oakes, John B. Boles, and Carl A. Brasseaux do not venture beyond the southern parishes.[74] Their limited coverage of slaveholding practices provides no usable base for comparison to Natchitoches's FPC slaveholders. Of greater value, on this point, is Mills's *Forgotten People*, a socioeconomic study of a famed community on Natchitoches's Isle Brevelle, whose central plantation is now a National Historical Landmark. Mills analyzes the community's slaveholding practices from its founding in the late-colonial period (when newly freed slaves struggled to purchase the land and slaves needed to prosper) to its zenith in the 1840s (when the Metoyers and their extended family owned over 500 slaves and some 18,000 acres of land). The industriousness and piousness, commitment to culture and education, and prosperity and civic generosity of these FPC linked them to their Creole counterparts to an unusual degree.

This Isle Brevelle clan accounts for 28 of the 55 FPC slaveowners in this study who actually resided in Natchitoches Parish—and for most of their wealth.[75] Together, they executed 12 percent of all studied

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[72] Representative of this genre is Ira Berlin, *Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York, 1974); Berlin, 273–75, makes much of FPC "scraping for these small honors" to curry white favor. His comments on FPC slaveholdings are quite limited, and various assertions about the relationships between whites and FPC in early Louisiana are erroneous; see particularly, pp.108–30.

For major treatments of Ellison, Johnson, and Durnford, see Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: 1984); William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1968); and David O. Whitten, *Andrew Durnford: A Black Sugar Planter in Antebellum Louisiana* (Natchitoches, 1981).

[73] Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790–1860* (Columbia, S.C., 1985); Mills, *Forgotten People*. Also see Gary B. Mills, "Patriotism Frustrated: The 'Native Guards' of Confederate Natchitoches," *Louisiana History* 18 (1977): 437–51; and Mills, "A Portrait of Achievement: Nicolas Augustin Metoyer, f.m.c.," *Red River Valley Historical Review* 2 (1975): 332–48. Also insightful is Joel Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York, 1980).

[74]John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1618–18*69 (Lexington, Ky., 1983). Carl A. Brasseaux, Keith P. Fontenot, and Claude F. Oubre, *Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country* (Jackson, Miss., 1994) does break new ground by venturing into South Louisiana's Acadian-FPC culture.

[75] The other FPC slaveowners were scattered throughout the parish, particularly in the Campti area, and did not generally enjoy the affluence or status of the Isle Brevelle residents. However, one family that intermarried with the Metoyers, the

sales, involving almost 9 percent of the slaves. All FPC who bought and sold slaves in this half-decade, however, economically paralleled the Isle Brevelle community (as the next table shows), although the immense wealth of some two dozen white planters uncharacteristically raised household wealth for the parish at large.[76]

1850 FPC Wealth: Comparative Statistics

	BUYERS/SELLERS	ISLE BREVELLE	THE PARISH
Total free population	55	400	14228
No. of households	55	84	1432
Total wealth reported[78]	$203,875	$382,800	$135,883,011
Average wealth of all households	4,530	$4,557	$94,926

FPC women were noticeably more active than their American and Creole counterparts, representing 41 percent of all sales involving their class. Their transactions were not large, and most dealt with solitaires or small families. They traded with other FPC only slightly more than with neighboring Creoles but rarely dealt with Anglos.[77]

Europeans and other ethnicities represented the least-active buyers and sellers. The majority of this group were French-born, with others hailing from such disparate locations as Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, and Martinique. Their 1850 census wealth was slightly less than $500,000. Only three women are represented—one a single head of family, one a widow, and one of unknown marital status. No striking patterns are evident in the business dealings of these two groups. They transacted their business primarily with Americans and Creoles—in equal proportions—and to a much lesser extent with FPC and other Europeans.

Condés, ranked among the few Natchitoches families that could legitimately claim noble ancestry, including an in-law relationship to Louis XIV. For Condé, whose white great-grandfather, Athanase-Christophe-Fortunat de Mezières, was a French-born lieutenant governor at Natchitoches during the Spanish regime and subsequently governor of Texas, and for the other Campti FPC, see Elizabeth Shown Mills, "(de) Mézières–Trichel–Grappe: A Study of a Tri-caste Lineage in the Old South," *The Genealogist* 6 (1985): 4–84.

[76] Mills, *Forgotten People,* 110, provides a more-realistic comparison of the wealth of Isle Brevelle FPC to "average" farms within the parish. His table includes the following, among many other statistics:

	AVERAGE FARM ON ISLE BREVELLE	AVERAGE FARM IN THE PARISH
Improved acres	113.30	84.00
Unimproved acres	138.90	172.00
Value of farm	$1,866.00	$1,664.00
Slaves	9.00	9.00
Ginned cotton (bales)	23.30	18.50

[77] The number of slaves transferred by FPC is potentially higher because several FPC documents in the Cane River Collection—which underwent deplorable storage conditions for many decades—are illegible or difficult to read.

As all these tables show, demographics and group analysis allow a more intimate image of owners from different backgrounds, cultures, and community standing. Such data is central to understanding the activities they pursued, the familial relationships they formed, and the sales they transacted.

Hidden Kinships

Beyond demographics, hidden kinships—even unidentified marriages—often disguise the true nature of slave sales and their actual effect on the human lives involved. An 1850 conveyance (briefly abstracted here) illustrates the point:

> Doctor Francis Johnson of Natchitoches Parish, attorney of Mrs. Hannah B. Terrett of Fairfax County, Virginia, to Poitevant Bludworth Junr. of Natchitoches Parish, for $650 cash: negro boy John, age not known; being the same boy in the employ of Mrs. M. Terrett of State of Louisiana.[78]

Three different surnames are involved in this document—with no apparent connection between them, except for the two Terretts. The seller's location in Virginia and the fact that the slave is in possession of someone vaguely said to be in the "state of Louisiana" rather than "Natchitoches Parish" (the specific location of the buyer), suggests that there is no connection between the buyer and the family in which John originates. Yet all of these assumptions would be wrong. All of the whites are related by blood or marriage.

The seller's son, Berdet Ashton Terrett, came to Natchitoches in the late 1830s as a captain and quartermaster in the U.S. Army, bringing John (his mother's slave) with him. In 1840, at Natchitoches, Terrett married Marianne Bludworth, the daughter of an Anglo opportunist who rose to prominence at Natchitoches by marrying an elite Creole. Terrett fathered two children by Marianne before his untimely death—after which John remained in the young widow's possession. When she prepared to remarry, several years later, her former mother-in-law (who still owned John) decided to convey the slave to the young widow's son. To represent her in this "friendly action," she chose Dr. Johnson, a Charleston native married to Marianne's sister. The nominal "purchaser" in the document was Marianne's brother, Poitevant Bludworth, who was to hold the slave title in trust for his Terrett nephew—thus ensuring the boy's inheritance against any potentially adverse action by his new stepfather. As for the slave, John's circumstances did not change with the sale—except to perhaps dash any hopes he may have harbored for returning to the Virginia home he left a decade before.[79]

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[78] NPC 41:17–19.

[79] For the Bludworth-Terrett and the Bludworth-Johnson marriages, with data on parents and residential origins of all spouses, see Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* nos. 398 and 462. For Francis Poitevant Bludworth as their sibling, see Register 6, no. 1818-146, Parish of St. François. For Terrett's military record and death, see Francis B. Heitman, *Historical*

Under different circumstances but with similar results, eleven slaves of the Janin family were sold but not relocated, in 1852. The conveyance states only that "Madame Marie Antoinette Prudhomme, wife of Monsr. Joseph Tousaint Janin," residents of Paris, France, through their "attorney" Hypolite Hertzog of Natchitoches, sold the named slaves to their son, Jean Comé Janin.[80] The slaves, however, never left Natchitoches Parish. The "Parisian" couple had wed at Natchitoches a quarter-century earlier, when the French-born Janin launched a medical practice there. The bride's wealthy family gifted the couple with slaves. When Janin decided to return home in the 1830s, taking his young family, the slaves stayed behind and continued their increase on the adjacent plantation of Mlle. Prudhomme's sister, Mme. Richard Hertzog. In 1852, when the eldest Janin son came of age, he chose to emigrate and take over the family holdings in Louisiana. Mme. Prudhomme-Janin then appointed her nephew, the Natchitoches-born Hypolite Hertzog (who was not a lawyer, as the document seems to imply, but a planter who held his aunt's power of attorney) to execute the paper work transferring the slave from the Hertzog possession back to the Janins.[81]

Numerous other paper transactions occurred in Natchitoches Parish, for these and similar reasons, without an actual change of domicile. For example, in 1851 François Agaisse sold to Remi Poissot a negro slave with three children, on a combination cash-credit sale. However, the document notes that the unpaid balance was to remain with Agaisse until his minor children came of age.[82] In this case, a brother and a sister of the Poissot family had married Agaisse siblings. Agaisse's wife (Poissot's sister) then died. To guarantee that her property would pass to her children, Agaisse gave his brother-in-law a *title* to the four slaves, for Poissot to hold until the minors reached their majority. Because the slaves were worth $1,000 and the children's inheritance amounted to only $600, a payment of $400 cash from Poissot to Agaisse evened the transaction.[83] Although the *title* temporarily changed hands, the slaves did not. In a different set of circumstances that same year, the Anglo Joseph Plunkett sold five adult slaves to the Creole Louis Puiraveau, for $2,600 cash, as two separate transactions. Those document hint at no connection between them.[84] However, the 1850 census reveals that Puiraveau, Plunkett, and the latter's

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Register and Dictionary of the United States Army from Its Organization, September 29, 1789 to March 2, 1903, 2 vols. (1903; reprint, Gaithersburg Maryland: Old Soldiers Books, 1988); and Succession 558, Clerk of Court's Office, Natchitoches. For the timing of Widow Terrett's remarriage, see Marriage Contract, G. W. Morse to Maryanne Terrett, NPC 37:387.

[80] NPC 46:34–35.

[81] For the Prudhomme-Janin and Prudhomme-Hertzog marriages, citing birth origins and parents, see Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* nos. 66 and 93. The 1830 and 1840 U.S. censuses, Natchitoches Parish, NA microfilm publication M19, roll 44, and M704, roll 127, place the removal of the Janins from Natchitoches Parish between those two dates.

[82] NPC 48:18–20.

[83] For the Poissot–Agaesse marriages, see Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* nos. 335, 604.

[84] NPC 42:142–43, 150–61.

brother were partners in the operation of a farm. Not surprisingly, when Puiraveau disposed of those slaves two years later, he sold them back to Plunkett.[85]

The dire conditions of several Natchitochians dispel common ideas about the financial circumstances of slaveholders in wealthy cotton regions. The widow Marie Theclé Brosset died in 1851, leaving an estate that consisted only of a "young slave and a few movables." All had been left to her by her husband, who had died two years earlier. The inventory of the Brosset estate appraised their household furnishings, farm implements, livestock, *and* crop at a mere $87. Yet Brosset also had owned five slaves—a woman and four children valued at $1,538.50—who had helped him farm the family's five arpents of land (value: $400). When Brosset's property was auctioned, the slave family was sold to a neighbor and his farm to a son-in-law. With her share of the proceeds, $235, the sickly widow had bought back the ten-year-old Prudence to help her tend her children still at home.[86] Equally modest were the belongings of the fifty-year-old Homer Asberry, auctioned after his death in 1853. Although he, too, owned a slave—his sole valuable property—his only other possessions deemed worthy of sale were three benches, two matched planes, and one "box with contents."[87]

The debate over commercial trader *vs.* migrating families overshadows other ways in which slaves were brought into a new area. Such instances typically revolve around inheritances, as an 1850 transaction illustrates. Peyton B. Bosley sold to one William Sprowl (both men said to be "of Natchitoches," a slave family *living in Tennessee* and identified as "formerly" in the possession of one Chloe Saunders of Sumner County. Sprowl was to take possession "from the hands of whomever he may find them."[88] No connection is stated between any of the parties. However, the Tennessee "possessor" of the slaves was Bosley's mother-in-law. Shortly after his marriage to Catherine Mary Jane Sanders in Sumner County, Tennessee, two decades earlier, the couple had removed to Natchitoches, where Catherine died in 1835, leaving two young sons. When those sons reached their majority in 1850, Bosley proceeded to settle their maternal inheritance with them; first by selling the slaves to his neighbor, Sprowl, and then by petitioning the Natchitoches court to approve the settlement he had made.[89]

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[85] 1850 U.S. census, Natchitoches Parish, free schedule, family no. 448; also see corresponding entries on the agricultural schedule. NPC 46:15.

[86] NPC 41:258–59; also Succession Book 20:211–12 and 22:62–63, Office of the Clerk of Court, Natchitoches. Mills, *Natchitoches Parish Marriages,* no. 411; and Mills, *From Chez Bienvenu to Cane River: Four Generations of the Pierre Brosset Family* (Gadsden, 1981): 35–36.

[87] NPC 46:266. The slave was a 40-year-old female; Asberry had no wife or children. See also 1850 U.S. census, Natchitoches Parish, free schedule, family 1053, where Homer "Ausberry" is enumerated, without property, in the dwelling of the wealthy but elderly bachelor planter, Nicolas Gracia. Given the number of slaves owned by the Gracia, it is likely that Asberry served him as an overseer.

[88] NPC 41:310–12. The slave woman and her six children sold for $3,000.

[89] For the Bosley-Sanders marriage, see Emmett Lucas and Ella Sheffield, *35,000 Tennessee Marriages,* 3 vols. (Easley, S.C., 1981), 126; Succession Book 22:30–31, Office of the Clerk of Court, Natchitoches. The 1850 census credits Bosley with $60,000 in property; see population schedule, family 442; also see *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwest Louisiana* (Nashville, 1890), 297.

Slaves sold with their home plantation did not face some of the uncertainties associated with a new owner—nor were they necessarily separated from their original owner. The Natchitochians under study tended to purchase whole plantations from family members or partial interests from related or unrelated business partners. In 1850, for example, James Bludworth sold his entire and extensive planting operation to one George W. Morse. Again, the document suggests no connection between the buyer and seller.[90] Auxiliary research on both reveals that Bludworth was aged and blind, that Morse was his new son-in-law—who already owned an adjacent plantation—and that Bludworth continued to live on the plantation under Morse's care.[91]

Natchitoches Parish was dominated by complex familial networks created through generations of intermarriage between established Creole families and out-group marriages with Anglo and European newcomers. The result was a plethora of different-surnamed kinsmen. Sorting through the web to determine possible connections between antebellum buyers and sellers is daunting, and the familial combinations evident in the 363 sales seems limitless. When widow Suzette (Hertzog) Buard sold an adult slave to Ambrose Lecomte, she was transferring him to her brother-in-law—LeComte's wife and Suzette's husband were siblings.[92] Sales between cousins by blood and affinity were also common, as with Theodule Lattier and Terence Chaler (first cousins) in 1852 and the FPC Charles N. Rocques and Jerome Sarpy, whose wives were first cousins.[93] Even less complex relationships are often difficult or time-consuming to discover. Elysée Rachal sold a teenaged slave to his neighbor and nephew-in-law, Dr. Jean Baptiste Chopin; Chopin's wife, Julia Benoist, was the daughter of Rachal's sister.[94] When Aurora Charleville sold a pair of Negroes in 1854 to Victor Rachal, they were not merely neighbors in the little, one-street village of Cloutierville. Victor was her brother, and she a new widow in straitened circumstances.[95] When Ausite Roubieu conveyed a thirteen-year-old girl in 1854 to "Mistress Pauline

[90] NPC 42:47–49.

[91] Morse was the second husband of the previously discussed Marianne Bludworth, widow of Berdet Ashton Terrett. A native of Massachusetts who had come to Natchitoches as a surveyor, Morse was already a wealthy planter and slaveowner. The 1850 census credits him with $20,000 in property; see free schedule, families 111 (James "Bloodworth," blind, aged 71) and 198 (for Morse, who also maintained a home in the town of Natchitoches).

[92] NPC 44:449–50. For the Buard-Hertzog and Buard-LeComte marriages, see Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* nos. 120 and 328.

[93] NPC 46:100 (Lattier-Chaler); and Cane River Collection, roll 4, doc. 1292 (Sarpy-Rocque). François Terence Dupre *dit* Chaler, was the natural son of Marie Victoire Dupre; her sister Marie Aurore married Joseph François Lattier and became the mother of Theodule Lattier; see Elizabeth Shown Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826: Translated Abstracts of Register Number Five of the Catholic Church Parish of St. François des Natchitoches in Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1980), no. 127; and Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* no. 23. Jerome Sarpy was married to Marie Adelayde Metoyer, daughter of François Metoyer; Charles Nerestan Rocques wed Marie Pompose Metoyer, daughter of François's brother Nicolas Augustin; see Mills, *Natchitoches, 1800–1826,* no. 103, and Mills, *Natchitoches Church Marriages,* no. 48, as well as Mills, *Forgotten People,* p. 74.

[94] NPC 46:104. Elysée Rachal was the son of Louis Julien Rachal; his sister Marie Suzette wed Charles François Benoist, by whom she bore Chopin's wife, Julia; see Mills, *Natchitoches Parish Marriages,* nos. 92, 318, 532.

[95] NPC 46:519–20. Aurora (Rachal) Charleville's husband and several of their children (along with the husband and several children of her sister Marie Suzette, wife of C. F. Benoist) were victims of Red River's late-1853 yellow fever epidemic; see Blaise C. D'Antoni, "Some 1853 Cloutierville Yellow Fever Deaths," *New Orleans Genesis* 35 (1970): 261–62.

Flanner, widow of Thomas J. Flanner," it was a case of a widowed mother providing her widowed daughter with household help.[96] When Charles A. Petrovic sold a woman and her two children to Samuel Smith Simmons in 1853, it was a transfer between in-laws. Simmons was the husband of Marie Anne Combs, whose mother was the second wife of Charles's father. Hence, Charles and Mrs. Simmons had grown up in the same household, with each one's living parent being the step parent of the other.[97] When Edward B. Flemming sold two slaves to "Mary Celeste Lafitte, widow of J. B. Perot" in the little town of Campti, 1854, that record likewise hinted at no connection; but Mary Celeste was his sister-in-law—the widow of his brother François.[98]

The importance of these family connections is magnified by the fact that these transactions were between members of highly localized and tightly knit communities. Even when the slaves changed residences, they seldom left their neighborhood or their church. One final example particularly expresses how easily circumstances can be misinterpreted if sales are evaluated without personal and genealogical context. In 1850, an elderly widow died leaving an estate that included 578 acres and 29 slaves then sold to pay debts and bequests. Legal proceedings supply the following detail:

> 5 February 1851. Sale of slaves belonging to the estate of Marie Françoise Rachal, widow of Louis Derbanne. Joseph Ferrier bought Suzette, Negress, aged 26, and her mulatto child, Philomene, aged 9 . . . [other sales intervene] . . . E. Daurat bought Gerant, mulatto boy, age 11.[99]

Again, the document hints at no connection between the buyers themselves, or between the two slave lots, or between the former owner and any of the purchasers. No surnames overlap (this being the most obvious, but sometimes misleading, suggestion of a possible relationship). A study of contemporary slaves sales and population censuses adds little—only that the buyers and sellers in this document were all white neighbors; and all but one were born in the region. The exception, Daurat, was a French immigrant, a seeming outsider, who would keep this "mulatto boy" just seven years before "disposing" of him. Yet, a complex web of relationships links all these people—black, white, and mulatto—into one family group that held together after the legal paperwork was done. Despite the sales, the slaves experienced little or no interruption in their daily lives or physical surroundings.

Ferrier, the man who bought Suzette and her daughter, actually lived on the Widow Derbanne's land. His wife, in fact, was a Derbanne niece, reared in the Derbanne home, where she had grown up with

[96] NPC 46:528–29. For the Flanner-Roubieu marriage, see Marriage Book M, no. 1850:2, Parish of St. François.

[97] Notarial Register F: 174–75, Mills, *Natchitoches Parish Marriages,* nos. 519; Mills, *Natchitoches Parish Marriages,* nos. 519, 656.

[98] NPC 46: 481–82; Mills, *Natchitoches Parish Marriages,* no. 237.

[99] Succession Book 21:396, Office of the Clerk of Court.

Suzette. The two women would remain together until the war severed their legal relationship, and they would remain neighbors thereafter.[100]

Eugene Daurat, who purchased the boy Gerant, was a Derbanne friend. His long-term relationship with Suzette had produced two children—the two who appear to be separately sold in the paper transaction above, although no separation occurred. When the Widow Derbanne died, Daurat's financial situation did not permit him to buy all of his family. Given the lifelong friendship between Suzette and the Derbanne heir whom Ferrier had married, he could feel relatively secure about Suzette's future. Given that Louisiana law forbade the separation of slave children under ten from their mother, Philomene's future was not threatened by the widow's death. Only the eleven-year-old son was at risk of being sold outside the family; Daurat's purchase eliminated that risk.

For the next seven years, this family remained in the same homes, roles, and relationships as before the sale—until Daurat was called back to France. To secure his son's future, Daurat transferred his title to a neighborhood friend who had purchased the widow's plantation and most of her slaves. Postwar, Suzette and her children remained in the neighborhood of their births, where Philomene used her white father's surname. She formed a long-term union with another Derbanne kinsman and neighbor; she raised her family in the shadows of the old plantation homes; and all worshipped in the same tiny church they had previously attended with their white masters and kinsmen.

Such intricate and interpersonal relationships between enslaved and free families were not unusual, nor were the circumstances surrounding the foregoing sale. However, neither is obvious if the research methodology calls for the simple extraction of slave sales and the interpretation of the data without genealogical context. Neither the circumstances of the sales, the effect they had on the slaves, nor the relationships between the parties were discernible without extensive research. Such hidden nuances produce effects that dramatically change the face of many slave sales—and of the slave trade itself.

This Natchitoches sampling supports the views of some historians but discounts many others. While not conclusive, present findings reveal multiple aspects of the trade that are rarely treated, much less endorsed, by recent scholarship. It points to a traffic that was local and internal, largely unaffected by New Orleans peculiarities or commercial enterprises. It reflects a system in which both free and enslaved participants were bound by far-reaching ties of association and kinship—resulting in slave transferences within familiar environs, a less-disruptive level of stability within slave families than that typically portrayed, and a measure of equilibrium between free and enslaved populations. At the least, Natchitoches has the potential to enhance the clarity of Clio's view of Louisiana slavery. At best, it could fuel spark further debate and challenge some accepted conventions about the South's peculiar institution.

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[100] The complexity of this case, with extensive documentation, in Report No. 5, Rachal M. Lennon to Ms. Lalita Tademy, 719 Vine Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025, 15 July 1997, and are the subject of Tademy's historical novel *Cane River*.

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