New Orleans' Squares 39 and 40: three centuries of change: an anthropological look at the social, economic and political effects on architecture

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by
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B.A., Louisiana State University, 1976
August, 2002
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Abstract

Buildings are a materialization of culture at a particular point in time. Subsequent modifications and new buildings express the culture at that time. The buildings of one city block, Squares 39 and 40, are examined at various points in time over the past three hundred years to document changes in the material expression of culture, and thereby, modification in the culture itself.

The history of the city is viewed from the perspective of the people and the buildings of this single city block. Some historic events only peripherally affected the block and are discussed for background. A significant portion of the history of New Orleans occurred in and around this block.

The three hundred years of history is divided into eight historic eras: Pioneering Period, French Colonial, Spanish Dominion, Early American Period, Economic Expansion, Antebellum and War Years, Reconstruction, and the Twentieth Century. Each era had a distinct effect on the buildings of Squares 39 and 40. The social, economic and political forces active in each historic era caused modifications in the buildings. These modifications can be read as the history of the block. Squares 39 and 40 are iconic of the city of New Orleans.
Introduction

Material culture is not only a reification of culture, reflective of beliefs and customs, it is also humanity’s attempt to control the diverse environments which we have encountered. These environments are constantly changing; it is their nature. This necessarily calls for continuous, periodic modifications and alterations in material culture which are designed to establish and maintain our control. Principally because of their value in terms of monetary expense and effort expended, houses and other buildings are more enduring and more culturally significant than most other material culture types.

Architectural manifestations are a living attempt to exercise control over the physical environment – to create a stable environment or to protect from the elements. Style – the manner in which architecture is manifested – is a culturally based attempt to influence or control the less tangible aspects of the environment – the social, economic, and political conditions which surround us. Buildings are substantial ideological statements: They say something, or they hide something. Architecture also serves as a means of control in the establishment and maintenance of the ever-changing ethnic identity.

Architectural history is the story of these culturally based attempts to control the myriad environments with which we must contend. It can be “read” in the changes over time manifested in buildings and other material culture types. This thesis proposes a reading of the history of the buildings of Squares 39 and 40 in the New Orleans Vieux Carré over the past three hundred years.
As a house is the manifestation of one’s culture, one particular block of a city is expected to be representative of the culture, and to some extent the history of the city. I hypothesize that the combined block of Squares 39 and 40 provides a rich and textured example of the continuing historical interaction between the culture and environment of New Orleans.

This project examines the changes over time of one discreet location in New Orleans. The block to be examined is in the heart of the Vieux Carré, just a few blocks away from Jackson Square (Figure 11). It is bounded by Chartres, Conti, Royal and St. Louis Streets. The goal of the intensive study of one particular site is to illustrate the significance of the site, as an example or icon of New Orleans’ history and culture.

The study of material culture is based on the premise that the values of societies are expressed in the things they make and build. Material culture studies provide a methodology for the reconstruction of the value systems of historic and in particular pre- or non-historic (without writing) peoples.

“Certain fundamental beliefs in any society are so generally accepted that they never need to be articulated. These basic cultural assumptions, the detection of which is essential for cultural understanding, are consequently not perceivable in what a society expresses. They can, however, be detected in the way in which a society expresses itself, in the configuration or form of things, in style. Stylistic evidence can be found in all modes of cultural expression, whether verbal, behavioral, or material. But a society puts a considerable amount of cultural spin on what it consciously says and does. Cultural expression is less self-conscious, and therefore potentially more truthful, in what a society produces, especially in such mundane, utilitarian objects as domestic buildings, furniture, or pots” (Emphases in the original. Prown 1988:20-21).

Fred B. Kniffen, cultural geographer, gives insight into the study of housing: “… housing, even considered alone, is a basic fact of human geography. It reflects cultural heritage, current fashion, functional needs, and the positive and negative aspects of noncultural environment.”(Kniffen 1990:49). Henry Glassie owes much of his initiation into his work on
material culture to Kniffen. Some statements from Henry Glassie’s recent book *Material Culture* expand our understanding of the significance and meaning of buildings, houses, and space. “Buildings, like pots and poems, realize culture” (1999:227) and “Material culture is the conventional name for the tangible yield of human conduct” (1999:41) As the material expression of culture,

> “Architecture works in space as history works in time. History interrupts time’s ceaseless flow, segmenting and reordering it on behalf of the human need for meaning. Architecture intrudes in the limitless expanse of space, dividing it into useful, comprehensive pieces. Converting space into places through disruption, architecture brings meaning to the spatial dimension” (Glassie 1999:231).

Only through an examination of history does material culture achieve significance.

Rotenberg (1993) explains the close and intricate relationship between the history of an artifact and the culture which created it.

> “History and culture are closely related analytical categories. All meanings are historically situated. That is, they can be fully understood only when they are seen as either changed or unchanged from some earlier understanding. Each generation reinterprets its world based on the inherited understandings of the past and the experiences of the present. Thus, all meaning, and hence culture itself, is in constant flux. To isolate a single moment and privilege it as somehow truer than other moments is misleading. Spatial meanings must be seen in this light. They are historically contingent. That is, they take the form they do because of the exigencies of the present-time conditions in which they form. Understanding the history of meaning requires reconstructing these conditions. This, in turn, directs us to the discourses about space in earlier periods of the cities we study.”

Yi-Fu Tuan provides insight into the nature of “city” and the inclusive/exclusive nature of society. The understanding of these aspects of New Orleans are invaluable in our perception of the culture of the Vieux Carré, in the past and in the present.

> “The traditional city aspires to become a cosmos, that is, a unity that embraces heterogeneity and transcends local passions. To the extent that it succeeds, the success owes much to the presence of threats from beyond the city walls. Without the threat, during times of peace, the city - despite the unifying symbolisms of architecture and of
ritual - tends to dissolve into, on the one hand, discrete neighborhoods, and, on the other, rootless strangers” (Tuan 1992:51).

New Orleans was formed and consolidated by several kinds of exterior forces which we will consider.

The initial population of New Orleans was French. The majority had come from France although a few were from Canada. The ships from France ported at Saint-Domingue for days or weeks to re-supply their ships and to lade goods to be taken to Louisiana. Occasionally additional passengers from Saint-Domingue also embarked on the trip to Louisiana (Edwards 1999:38).

The term creole, originally from the Spanish criollo and the Portuguese crioulo has been in use since the early years of colonization of the New World (Edwards 2002). Initially the term referred to locally born persons of non-native origin. Later the term came to refer to native Louisianians of French and/or Spanish descent. Here, as a noun, the term is used to indicate whites of either French or Spanish ancestry or both. As an adjective the term is used to imply native born of non-native origin, as in creole Negroes, creole tomatoes, et cetera. Although “creole” has been in use since the earliest years of New Orleans, it was not popularly used until the Spanish era. Creolization is the process of synthesis of the features and adaptations of features of two or more different cultures, normally associated with the syncretization of European and non-European cultures. With respects to the initial creolization of architecture in New Orleans, this is the reformulation of the architectural expression of preferences and imperatives through a process of amalgamation and adaptation of European and non-European cultures during the period of colonialism. Creole architecture is therefore “nativized, non-indigenous vernacular architecture” (Edwards 2001:90, 114-115).
The forces of the river, the nature of the land, the disease-laden mosquitos comprised only a portion of the external pressures which forged New Orleans. There were also less physical forces involved: The political, economic and social relations between the French, the Indians, the Africans and the Spanish, and the Creoles and the Americans. The Civil War, the national and global economies, and industrialization and technological advances all had a hand in the shaping of New Orleans. The history of New Orleans is a story of “us against them”, whether “them” was the river and flooding or the machinations of national and international political bodies in the geopolitical struggles of the eighteenth century and the political tragedies of the nineteenth. The inclusive and exclusive nature of “the city” is revealed at nearly every stage of the expansion and development of New Orleans. The words of Yi-Fu Tuan on the concept of city aid us in our understanding of the processes working with and against each other which made New Orleans what it is today.

Practically every book on New Orleans begins with a summary of the history and origin of the city (Bacot 2000; Basso 1948; Carter 1968; Castellanos 1978; Clark 1970; Colton 2000; Harrison 1961; Hirsch and Logsdon 1992; Huber 1980a, 1980b; Lewis 1976; Wilson 1974; etc.). Basically these “histories” are much the same, however each has its own perspective. Various perspectives and styles include Bacot’s art historian, Basso’s social vignettes, Carter’s historical, Colton’s ecological, Harrison’s physical geographic, Hirsch’s and Logsdon’s ethno-historical, Lewis’s geographic and Wilson’s architectural historic. By all accounts the early years of the colony in Louisiana were precarious – fires, famines, floods, and fevers – to name a few of the dangers.
New Orleans was conceived and built to be a city early in the eighteenth century. The birth of New Orleans was one of protracted labor, stretching across nearly two hundred years, before the land was tamed. Three hundred years later, the river with all of its power is still both friend and foe. Notwithstanding the census definition of frontier as two persons or less per square mile, as Frederick Jackson Turner writes, the frontier is more than a matter of population density: The frontier is that place which exists in the land between savagery and civilization (Turner 1947:3). By this definition New Orleans continued, in a sense, to be a frontier until the beginning of the twentieth century.

“The development of a mainland city, planted for commercial purposes by a colonial power, demands the utilization and exploitation of a hinterland. In the case of New Orleans one can define two hinterlands, the natural and the artificial. The natural would include those areas settled by or under the hegemony of the various Indian societies present at the time of the initial settlement. The artificial hinterland refers to those rural settlements and posts established and sustained by the French” (Clark 1970:11).

The initial residences of the Pioneering Period were simple huts made of a variety of local materials. Larger “public” buildings were more substantially made of local materials, but in the style of French military buildings. These were constructed of *colombage* (heavy timbering), placed on wood sills, and with *bousillage* in-fill. Roofs were hipped and steeply pitched. Openings were covered by batten shutters. Only the most important buildings had casement windows, which were either glazed, or more often, covered with oiled cloth. The majority of these earliest structures were demolished by the 1722 hurricane.

Building in the French Colonial Period was generally more substantial. Creolization of the French and Saint-Domingue buildings began almost immediately. In deference to environmental differences between New Orleans and either France or Saint-Domingue certain adaptations and adjustments were made to enhance the durability and the comfort-factors of the
houses. Brick foundation walls and as the in-fill between the large timbers provided greater stability, increased insulation, removed the house from the dampness of the soil, and impeded access to the house by things that crawl or slither. Galleries were added to provide shade and protection of the walls from rain.

Significant developments in the buildings occurred toward the end of Spanish Dominion, when construction regulations were promulgated and enforced after the fire of 1794. Primarily fire-preventative, these mandated changes included relatively flat, tiled roofs, and cement or stucco covering of exterior, usually brick, walls. Additionally, the buildings were relocated flush with the *banquettes* (sidewalks) with only narrow passageways between some of them. Dependencies for kitchen and storage remained at the rear or to one side of the rear of the residences in the now enclosed courtyard, which was used as a work-space (Bruce 1977:21). Also appearing at this time are molded door and window surrounds and the increasing use of wrought iron, which was used for both decorative and security purposes, evidence of the increasing sophistication of the populace. Especially as combined commercial-residential structures, the *porte cochère* (carriage entryway) and *entresol* (a low-ceilinged floor, between the ground floor and the living floor, usually used for storage) versions of the Creole townhouse became popular in this period. The single-story Creole cottage predominated in less commercial and less wealthy areas of the city.

The Americans brought with them the sliding sash window and the enclosed hallway, usually passing through the center of the building. The increased commercialism of the period resulted in a proliferation of combined commercial-residential Creole and American townhouses.
Antedating their period of popularity by nearly twenty years, the earliest buildings in the Greek Revival style began to appear in the third decade of the nineteenth century.

During Economic Expansion a large number of buildings were constructed in the Greek Revival style with accents evoking the classicism of the democratic and enlightened ancient Greeks. Trabeated doorframes and pillars of granite updated many older Vieux Carré buildings. It was during this period that Squares 39 and 40 were formed by the extension of a street through the center of the block.

In the Antebellum and War Years, after the Pontalba buildings were erected in 1849-1850, cast-iron was the mode and many buildings had balconies installed. Some pre-existing balconies of wrought-iron were replaced with the more delicate-appearing cast ironwork. Existing commercial and commercial-residential buildings added third, fourth, and, in some cases, fifth floors.

Although little was changed on Square 39 and 40 during the Civil War or Reconstruction, the remainder of New Orleans took on additional expressions of building styles. Shotgun houses, bungalows, and great mansions cropped up in different parts of the city. Victorian façades on the less expensive cottages and shotgun houses were affordable after the invention of the steam-powered circular saw, the turning lathe, and the band saw. However, the current early twentieth century building on Squares 39 and 40 is in the monumental Beaux Arts style.

Methods

Legal transactions involving ownership of all properties of Squares 39 and 40 were researched and documented in the Vieux Carré Survey prepared by the Tulane School of Architecture back to the time of the Louisiana Purchase. Several properties were documented
back to the early and mid-1700s. The majority of the photographs of the buildings were taken in 1905 by Nina King. The affiches, the plans and architectural drawings of the elevations of the buildings, were made in the 1800s, when the property was for sale or up for auction. All of the buildings in both types of illustrations are either Creole Townhouses or stores of three or four stories. Aside from the particular difficulties of researching buildings which are no longer surviving, this research posed its own extra challenges. These included, but were not limited to: 1) errors in city plans - from the beginning of the eighteenth century through the latter part of the twentieth century; 2) transposition of street names; 3) changes in street names; and 4) multiple changes of lot numbers and street numbers of buildings.

For nearly three centuries New Orleans has had its own personae, each created and maintained by the various social and economic classes and ethnic groups which comprise the city. It is loved by its people and beckons with a distinctive allure to others. New Orleans is known throughout the world for its French-and-Spanish culture, Creole cuisine, Dixie-land jazz, Mardi Gras celebrations, “European” architecture, and wrought- and cast-iron balustrades. Culturally unique, this city also has been, throughout its history, a hub of economic activity due to its location. “The lower [Mississippi] valley contains the only truly cosmopolitan city, New Orleans, itself in turn a product of its geographical position.” (Walker and Detro 1990:3). The introduction of African slaves, free persons of color, and French, Spanish and other European immigrants provided the early city with additional opportunities for the cultural diversity which color the New Orleans of today.

Squares 39 and 40 constitute one block of the French Quarter, now that Exchange Alley no longer bisects them. Who would have imagined the romance and drama of life to be found in
two hundred years of conveyance records? They contain love and hate, riches and bankruptcy, births, marriages and deaths, and duplicity. This project began as a cultural history of that piece of New Orleans on which stands the former Wildlife and Fisheries Building, soon to house (again) the Louisiana Supreme Court. I found cultural history, romance, and a part of the real New Orleans, a New Orleans on the order of a James Mitchner novel like *Hawaii* or *Texas*. This block, Squares 39 and 40, are steeped in the steaminess and seaminess that is New Orleans.

End Notes

1. This is a copy of the map of the Vieux Carré which is maintained by the Vieux Carré Commission. The buildings are color-coded, based on the Commission’s designation of each’s significance. When the original building evaluations were done, the former Wildlife and Fisheries Building was designated as of no importance or objectionable (Bureau of Governmental Research 1968a:45-47). Since that time, additional categories have been added to the color coding and this building has been upgraded thrice. Colors indicate the following classifications of buildings: Purple – of national architectural/historical importance; Blue – of major architectural/historical importance; Green – of local architectural/historical importance; Pink – of potential local or major architectural importance, but with detrimental modifications; Yellow – contributes to the character of the district; Orange – unrated 20th century construction (since 1946); and Brown – objectionable or of no architectural/historical importance. Currently the building is designated as green.

2. See Domínguez 1986, Brasseaux 1992, and Huber 1980a and 1980b for more complete discussions of “Creole” and insights into this ethnic group.

3. More recent, modern terminology is “native culture” and “European civilization”.

11
Review of the Literature


expressions. The increasing sophistication and depth of Glassie’s interpretations is readily apparent.

Among works of landscape and its meanings are Daniels (1993) and Bacot, Bacot, Reeves, Magill, and Lawrence (2000). Ethnicity and material culture, and the manifestations of their interrelationships and meanings are explored in several settings by Upton (1988, 1992, 1994, 1996): Modified landscape is prescriptive of behavior appropriate to the society, and is equally prescriptive of socially hierarchical behavior. Hubka (1986) and Vlach (1986) both discuss origins of specific house types. The meaning of material culture is discussed by Prown (1988), Clark (1988), and St. George (1988). This work by Prown is more theoretical than that of Clark, who associates selected architectural features to particular aspects of society’s ideology and values.

The settlement pattern studies of Donald Meinig (1962, 1968) illustrate cultural preference in the organization and development of settlements. The urban planning studies by John Reps (1965, 1979, and 1994) discuss the early settlement development of New Orleans and provide a comparative view of the development of a large number of other American cities. New City Patterns by Sanders and Rabuck (1946) analyzes the cause and effects of slums. Stelter (1993) explores the military aspects of early French colonial settlements.


introduction is helpful. Insights into the history and cultural history of creole New Orleans are

Racial relationships and conflict are discussed and documented in Hennesey (2000) and

O’Neal’s (1964) remembrances of late nineteenth century New Orleans provides a “feel”
and a view of the city. Also Pritchard, Kniffen and Brown (1945) give a look at the city through
Cathecart’s journal. Street names and their histories are discussed in Chase (1949) and O’Neill
(1998). George Washington Cable’s (1948) descriptive writings provide a colorful view of New
Orleans, as does Tallent’s (1950) The Romantic New Orleanians. Brasseaux’s (1979) work aids
in the understanding of French and Creole cultures. Dominguez’s White By Definition (1986)
reviews the changes in the definitions and use of the term “creole”, as well as these differences
from the white Creole and the non-white Creole perspectives.

The Work Projects Administration publication (1941), Louisiana, Guide to the State,
discusses some of the history and the “myths” of New Orleans. Early New Orleans newspapers
are examined by Marino (1966) and Holmes (1966). Clark’s (1970) economic history and
Kendall’s (1922a) political history are invaluable to the study of New Orleans.
Pioneering Period 1718-1722

The struggle for survival during the first years of the settlement was uppermost in the minds of the inhabitants, these aristocrat-adventurers, convicts and slaves. Using local materials the larger buildings were of French military design, while the smaller, individual residences copied the huts of the local Indians or military tents. These temporary shelters were destroyed by the hurricane at the end of the period in 1722. The inhabitants recognized that French building types would require some adaptations to be suited to this environment.

New Orleans was officially founded in 1718 in a strategic move to protect the French economic interests in the New World (Clark 1970:10). Both Samuel Wilson and John G. Clark interpret the strategic location of New Orleans as primarily for trading purposes, rather than as political or military (Wilson 1965; Clark 1970). “The earliest French settlements along the lower Mississippi were intensely commercial” (Harrison 1961:38).

Colonists began to arrive in New Orleans in 1718. Early eighteenth-century New Orleans was primarily populated by French trappers, traders, and administrators who mingled more or less freely with the local Indians. The social relations between the French and the Indians has a number of similarities to the settlement of Canada by the French. Marriages between the French and the Indians were initially encouraged by the French government. In the expanded socialization and acculturation policy of Canada, the French government funded dowries for French women upon marriage to Indian men. In Louisiana, the “French-Indian alliances did not work as well as administrators had hoped, however, and marriages or
concubinage with Indian women came to be seen as a detriment to colonial progress” (Baker 1990:35).

“In 1717 the Company [Company of the West, later to become the Company of the Indies] directed that a city to be named New Orleans, in honor of the Prince Regent, should be established on the banks of the Mississippi ‘at thirty leagues up the river’. The following year, 1718, Bienville, Commandant General of the Colony, selected the present site at the river end of an old Indian portage, a well worn trail by which the natives had transported their canoes from the headwaters of Bayou St. John to the river. Here, near the Bayou end of the portage, a few Frenchmen from Mobile had established themselves on concessions granted to them as early as 1708. A few French squatters from the Illinois country were probably also settled near the river end of the portage when Bienville founded New Orleans there in 1718” (Wilson 1965).1

The French first imported convicts to build New Orleans in the very early 1720s. Slaves were imported soon afterwards. Bienville laid out the line for the direction of the streets in 1718 (Wilson 1987a:4). By 1719 the approximately fifty workers (primarily carpenters and convicts) that Bienville had left in New Orleans had only built four houses and the company’s warehouses (Kendall 1922:5). The December 10, 1720 drawing of New Biloxi by Jean-Baptiste Michel Le Bouteux (Figure 2) is described by Samuel Wilson in “Architecture in Eighteenth-Century West Florida”. The illustration shows tents and “tentlike palmetto covered structures, no doubt based on Indian precedent”(Wilson 1987f:74). The structures in this drawing are representative of the earliest ones of New Orleans. Note in particular the large building in the background. The drawing and description by Alexandre de Batz, dated June 22, 1732, is of an Indian temple and the chief’s residence in a Colopissa village near New Orleans. The temple is constructed of posts in the ground, covered and roofed with cane mats. The house of the chief is of posts in the ground and plastered with mud or earth mortar and covered with mats. Although one of these particular structures is round and the other is oblong, others are described by Antoine Le Page du
Pratz during the same period “are all perfect squares” (translation from Wilson’s “Indian Construction Methods” from “Gulf Coast Architecture” in Spain and Her Rivals on the Gulf Coast, Earle W. Newton and Ernest F. Dibble, eds. Pensacola, Florida, 1971). These houses are described as being of posts in the ground with thick cane wicker walls with clay and moss mortar and covered with mats of cane. It is from the use of this mud and moss mortar that the French adapted their bousillage (in-fill in lieu of bricks). The roofs are thatched with long grass attached with cane and cane wicker and covered with cane mats (Wilson 1987e:101-102). In another variation of the early houses, cabins or huts were constructed of cypress boards with cypress bark roofing; the houses “were separated from one another by willow copses and weed-grown ponds swarming with reptiles” (Kendall 1922:7). The initial buildings of the Colonial Period are described by Vogt (1985:29):

“Bienville landed a reluctant work crew of convicts and carpenters and began the task of cutting the dense vegetation that surrounded the chosen site. The first structures the
colonists built were very basic and rather crude, patterned after the local Choctaw huts and constructed entirely of wood, which was readily available in the area. Many of these early houses, intended for use only until more permanent dwellings could be built, rotted, settled and cracked in the damp, soft soil, or were destroyed by the hurricanes that hit the city in 1719 and 1722. Within a few years construction methods improved as the settlers sought to build more permanent dwellings. The first brickyard was established about 1725, and brick foundations soon replaced decaying wooden sills.

The large, early public buildings were built on wooden sills placed directly on the ground and were of heavy timber framing - *colombage* - covered with wide horizontal weather boards. The roofs were steeply pitched, hipped, and covered with wood shingles or strips of cypress bark. Similar structures are drawn and described in the legend of Gonichon’s 1731 plan of the city. The drawing of New Orleans from the other side of the river, done in 1765 by Captain Philip Pittman, illustrates the extensive use of galleries on the buildings – with the exception of the two magazines, all of the structures have galleries.

During the flood of 1719 the river rose to such a height as to cause the site to be completely inundated. Around 100 colonists arrived in 1719 (Dufour 1968:25). It appears that the inundation was only a few inches in depth, but it offered a plausible argument against building the new city on this site.

The plan of New Orleans of 1721, with the grid patterns as designed by Pierre Leblond de la Tour, and laid out by his assistant Adrien de Pauger in that year, shows the settlement with existing buildings (Figure 3). De la Tour’s original plan of a bastide called for fortification of the city. However, the fortifications were never completed. The Indians were not initially perceived as a threat. “Only after the terrible Natchez massacre of November, 1729, was any
Figure 3 Plan of New Orleans by de La Tour, signed and dated April 23, 1722. Illustration from “Architecture in Eighteenth-Century West Florida” by Samuel Wilson (Wilson 1987f:84).

By the time Adrien de Pauger, Second Engineer, arrived on March 29, 1721, to lay out the grid plan that had been agreed upon at Biloxi, approximately thirty-five or forty houses, mainly huts, had been built, and the only public building was the company’s store (de Villiers 1920:227). He was not pleased with either the houses or their positioning. In 1722 one house, constructed before the plan for the city was approved, was torn down on de Pauger’s orders. When the owner, Traverse, objected and petitioned for an indemnity to rebuild, de Pauger beat the man with a stick until he was nearly blind and had him shackled and incarcerated (de Villiers 1920:226-227). The September, 1722 hurricane alleviated the misalignment problems, and de Pauger could more or less start from the beginning in building New Orleans.

“De Pauger laid it out on lines reminiscent of La Rochelle, in France. It was approximately a parallelogram, 4,000 feet long on the river, by 1,800 feet in depth, divided into regular squares 300 feet on each side. The streets were not named till 1724. The dwellings were rude cabins of split cypress boards, roofed with cypress bark.” (Kendall 1922:5-7).
The first French-imported female colonists arrived in 1721. Through the mid-1720s, males and females, criminals from the prisons and others from brothels or abducted from the streets of Paris were shipped to the New World to settle in the new city. In 1721 the French “imported eighty-eight girls, most of whom had been inmates of La Salpetrière, a house of correction in Paris... These girls are often referred to as ‘correction girls’, as distinguished from the filles à la cassette, or casket girls,” who began to arrive in 1728 (Asbury 1936:12). Crozat implies that none of the “correction girls” were imported to New Orleans, rather she states they were sent to Pascagoula (1918:76-77). Bienville wanted only colonists who would advance the colony, and to this end an ordinance was passed in France prohibiting the importation of criminals to New Orleans.

Hurricanes struck in 1719, 1721 and 1722. Clark notes that in 1721 and 1722 there were very destructive hurricanes which destroyed both buildings and crops.

“In 1721 a month’s supply of flour remained and – even more intolerable – there was no wine in the colony. The Indians’ corn crops had failed and no aid could be expected from that source. The same conditions prevailed throughout the decade” (Clark 1970:10).

The hurricane of 1722 destroyed most of the buildings from this initial development of the settlement (Wilson 1999). “Frequent desertions plagued the resident engineers; and hurricanes in 1721 and 1722 destroyed a new church, hospital, and thirty other buildings while demolishing most of the vessels then in port.”(Clark 1970:4).

The willingness of the French to experiment with various adaptations ensured their survival. They tried new methods and new materials. Nature’s waves of destruction were countered by the resiliency and adaptability of the French, each ensuing adaptation more successful than the last.
End Notes

1. This reference is unpaginated.

2. This 1721 plan has street names.
Like the imposition of the plan of the city, the grid plan of the *bastide*, the French of New Orleans began to develop their own social hierarchy. From the dregs of French society and opportunists, a local elite began to evolve. Mimicking the homes of the aristocracy of their native France, the new New Orleans’ elite built their homes in a French design, of local construction materials, in the midst of “formal” gardens. Initially these buildings were constructed based on wood sills placed directly on the ground, but the dampness of the soil caused rapid deterioration. Further, although the walls were covered, additional protection was needed to slow their deterioration due to the heavy rains. Wide roof overhangs or galleries also provided protection from the blazing sunlight and the heat of the summer. Creolization of the buildings had begun almost immediately, employing some of the adaptations in use in the West Indies (Edwards 1999:38-39).

New Orleans served as a frontier market town, a seaport, provincial capital, and military center. As such, its French-speaking population, even while small, was hardly homogeneous or tranquil.

“Tavern owners sold their drink to all comers. Slaves peddled their wares openly at day and assembled for song and dance at night. Some slaves carried weapons and defended themselves against the insolence of whites; others, runaways called *marrons*, hid in the woods and raided plantations at night” (Clark 1970:51).

Gambling, racetracks, prostitution and other entertainments led to the city’s development of a risqué reputation. Even though they loved pleasure and diversion, extravagance was not indulged. The wealthier element of the inhabitants of New Orleans, attended by slaves and servants, began to develop their own colonial aristocracy.
In June, 1722 Bienville obtained permission to transfer the capital of Louisiana from
Biloxi to New Orleans. Although the move was begun immediately, it was not completed until
August, 1722 (Kendall 1922:5).

In December, 1722 two commissioners from France, De La Chaise and De Saunoy (who
died shortly after arrival) were to tend to the Company’s affairs (Dart 1919:93). De La Chaise
managed the police, commerce, and finance of the Lower Mississippi Valley. De La Chaise was
answerable only to the Intendant, who was in Canada (Kendall 1922:16). Sieurs Bru and Bruslé,
two more members of the Council, were later sent from France. According to the Superior
Council records, Bruslé was in New Orleans by at least 1723, as documented by his appearance
before the Superior Council on November 15, 1723 to pursue a claim with regard to repairs on a
house (Louisiana Historical Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 3, January, 1918:225). Both Bru and Bruslé
were members of the Council at least by 1724 (Kendall 1922:16). After the departure of the
Company of the West, the Superior Council was reorganized to remove Company
representatives in May 1732. Bruslé remained as a member of the Council after this
reorganization (Dart 1919:98).

Vogt puts the population at 470 in 1721; Kendall (1922:5) estimates it to be 500; Clark
(1970:4-5), based on Beer (1908) using figures from the 1721 census, notes the population to be
250. In 1731, when Louisiana was retroceded to the French crown, the population of the city of
New Orleans was about one thousand. The population of the city and vicinity was
approximately 5000, including 3000 slaves. Immigration more than offset mortality, and by the
end of the French Colonial Period, the population of the city had swelled to approximately 5000.
Free persons of color appeared in New Orleans practically as early as did the African slaves. In a petition before the Superior Council on July 26, 1724, a free Negro petitioned for payment of contracted services. Female African slaves were viewed by French administrators as a stabilizing force through the development of slave families and were in demand in the early stages of the colony (Baker 1990:34).

In one of his final acts before departing for France in 1724, Bienville signed and put into effect the *Code Noir* (Black Code), adapted from that of Saint-Domingue (Dart 1919:94). Principally, the *Code Noir* proscribed the management and treatment of slaves to minimize their danger to the community and provided the slaves with certain protections. Among the other regulations included were restrictions on the manumission of slaves, prohibition of the practice of any religion other than Roman Catholic, and the expulsion of any Jews (Dart 1919:94; Kendall 1922:12; Asbury 1936:24-25).

Although many of the colonists came voluntarily, not all of the colonists were free. Thousands of African slaves were imported, some of the colonists were indentured, though in less numbers than in the English colonies (Baker 1990:26); and possibly some wives of the male French colonists were re-located involuntarily, as under eighteenth century law women were required to reside with their husbands (Baker 1990:27). Some women did achieve a degree of economic independence. The Louisiana charter transferred to Antoine Crozat in 1712, established the laws or rules under which the colony was to be managed. The legal code of Paris, termed the *Coutume de Paris*, provided some economic protection for wives in that it gave them considerable control over their inherited property, established community property, and provided for the wife’s inheritance of at least a portion of a deceased husband’s estate. Further
the *Coutume de Paris* forbade the husband to sell or indebt his wife’s separate property (Baker 1990:29). Unfortunately, this law did not provide protections to the wife other than in the economic sphere, she was otherwise completely under the husband’s domination. A wife could obtain a separation of divorce from her husband only under the direst of circumstances: if he failed to provide the “necessities of life”, if he admitted heresy, or if he were extremely cruel (Baker 1990:31). The wife was required to provide “adequate” proof of his abuse of her; and the abuse had to be deemed sufficiently severe to warrant the separation or divorce. In particular, the case between Madame Louise Jousset La Loire de Manadé and her husband the surgeon Pierre de Manadé, residents of this block in a house fronting Conti Street, and neighbors of Sieur Bruslé, illustrates the difficulties in obtaining a marital separation in 1728. After a number of appearances before the Superior Council, Madame Manadé was awarded a separation of goods and reimbursement of her dowry. Numerous cases are documented in the records of the Superior Council.³

The *filles à la cassette* (casket girls), not to be confused with the ‘corrections girls’, began to arrive in New Orleans in 1728. “The casket girls, girls of good families, were so named because of the small chest ‘containing two coats, two shirts and undershirts, six headdresses and various other articles of clothing”, which was provided to each by the Company (Asbury 1936:12). The importations continued until 1751. Asbury continues about the female immigrants:

“By some queer physiological mischance none of the correction girls, apparently, ever bore a child. On the other hand, the casket girls would seem to have been extraordinarily fertile, each becoming the mother of at least a hundred children, who in turn were likewise blessed with enormous families. Proof of these biological miracles is furnished by the fact that practically every native family of Louisiana is able to trace its descent in an unbroken line from one of the filles à la cassette” (Asbury 1936:13).
In 1725 the ship *Bellone* carrying indigo, the colony’s cash crop, sank off Dauphin Island, leaving the colony no way to purchase much needed supplies (Clark 1970:10). The following decade, 1730-1740, was fraught with distress: devastating hurricanes, heavy rains, and flooding in 1732, 1734, and 1740 alternated with years of drought to destroy promising crops (Clark 1970:46). The city was flooded for six months in 1735, but little was done to repair, reinforce, or extend the levees (Harrison 1961:55). Life in the early years of the colony was precarious.

The 1723 sketch of New Orleans does not have any street names indicated, although it is assumed that they were assigned by both Le Blond de La Tour and de Pauger. O’Neill indicates St. Louis and Conti streets were probably named for Louis-Henri de Bourbon de Conti, a member of the Regency council and prime minister at the time, as Rue Royale was already named for the monarch, whose patron saint was Louis IX. Likewise, Rue de Chartres was named to honor Louis d’Orléans, duc de Chartres, the son of Louis XIV (O’Neill 1998:211-212).

The houses of a number of the officials and wealthier colonists were located on Chartres and Royal Streets, rather than directly fronting the levee. Many of these houses were raised on brick piers (Kendall 1922:12). The less affluent built their homes in the areas of Orleans Street and in the back of town, past Bourbon Street. These houses, according to Kendall (1922:9) were mainly of cypress boards, but some were of brick or brick and plaster. Also by this time some of the houses were two stories in height, but the majority were one story.

Madeline Hachard, who traveled to Louisiana with the early Ursuline nuns in 1727, described her first view of New Orleans in a letter to her father. Hachard describes the town as well constructed and regularly built with large straight streets. The houses are well built with
upright posts and braces, filled with bousillage between the interstices. The exteriors are
whitewashed with lime and the interiors are wainscoted (King 1968:65-66). Bienville’s hotel (a
large city house) was rented for them until the convent being built by the Company could be
finished. Madeline describes it to her father:

“The finest house in the town; a two-story building with an attic,... with six doors in the
first story. In all the stories there are large windows, but with no glass; the frames are
closed with very thin linen, which admits as much light as glass.”

This is quite similar to the description of the building on the property which later was
called 409-413 Chartres Street. According to French Colonial Records, the house was purchased
October 24, 1725 by Sieur Bruslé from Sieur de la Marque, who had acquired it from Sieur
Francois Duval. The following description is from the Contract of Acquisition of the House of
M. de la Marque for 4000# (livres):5

“A piece of ground on Chartres St. consisting of ten toises6 front by a depth of
twenty...on which there is a house built on ground sills, about forty feet long, surrounded
by a gallery, the whole roofed with bark, composed of a large salle with chimney, a
chamber and two cabinets, planked above and below, attic above, in the yard at the right,
a wing serving as a kitchen and three chambers, and at the left another wing serving as
cellar and store-room, similarly roofed with bark...”

Although the term “wing” is used in the translation of the document, these structures were not
attached, and therefore, should be termed “dependencies”. Also the cellar is probably an above-
ground wine cellar. This house with dependencies is depicted on Gonichon’s color-coded plan
of the city of 1731 (Figure 4).7
Sr. Bruslé experienced some difficulty in obtaining title to his house. It should be noted that the economic situation in New Orleans was dire and that many of the population were formerly criminals. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that a good number of this population was continually appearing before the Council to pursue payment of debts. The members of the Superior Council were not above participation in this type of dispute. Not only was Bruslé a member of the Council, but he appeared before the Council on a number of occasions both in order to obtain payment from others and when others were pursuing payments from him. On December 20, 1724 Bruslé purchased a lot adjoining the properties of Perry and de la Marque on the block of Squares 39 and 40. On March 6, 1725 he purchased three lots (lots numbered 44, 45, and 46, Figure 5) from Baron d’Hombourg (Figure 6). Again the sale is in the
records of the Council on May 2, 1725, and the proceeds of the sale were to be used to pay Baron d’Hombourg’s debts.

On May 24 Bruslé requested that the Council approve the sale of the property.

On June 10, 1725 Bruslé again appeared before the Council to request that the purchase of the house and lots from d’Hombourg be cancelled, as all the properties of d’Hombourg were encumbered by d’Hombourg’s debts, and that he would return the key to the house if d’Hombourg would refund the amount he had already paid to him. On June 17, the Council ordered the sale of the house to proceed, and advised that they would sort out the debts. On June 21 all creditors of d’Hombourg were ordered to appear before the Council for determination of how the debts were to be liquidated.

On June 23 Baron d’Hombourg was ordered to give the titles of the house and the three lots to Bruslé. On June 26 d’Hombourg was again ordered to surrender the titles to all properties in question to Bruslé. On August 20 d’Hombourg’s funds were seized to pay some of his debt. On August 30, the seizure of d’Hombourg’s funds was validated, and creditors were advised that the house and lots purchased by Bruslé could not be attached for remuneration of d’Hombourg’s debts. Further, d’Hombourg was required to surrender the titles of the properties to Bruslé. A

Figure 5 Numbered lots by de La Tour, 1722. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
letter dated September 29, 1725 from Captain La Marque written to Bruslé indicates La Marque’s agreement to sell a house to Bruslé for 4000 francs. October 24 Bruslé again appeared before the Council to request a loan from the Company in the amount of 4000 francs to buy the house on Chartres. In his plea for the loan, Bruslé reminded the Council it was understood before he left France that the Company would provide a residence for him. The Company had not provided a residence since there was insufficient room in the Company house on Square 40 near the corner of St. Louis and Chartres Streets, which was occupied by de la Chaise and “official rooms”. The Council approved a secured loan of 4000 francs, of which 3000 francs were to be applied to La Marque’s account with the Company. On January 29, 1726 Duval sold the house and properties on Chartres to La Marque. On February 1, 1726 La Marque sold the house and properties to Bruslé. Apparently d’Hombourg did not own the house or properties, and La Marque did not own them at the time he negotiated the sale.

The earliest brick foundry of New Orleans was established in 1724 or 1725. Later buildings used brick to in-fill the spaces between the timber framework of the walls – briqueté-entre-poteaux. This provided not only insulation, but also made for a more substantial structure.
In lieu of bricks, often mud and moss was used as in-fill – *bousillage*. Three-batten shutters were used on windows and doors, some buildings also had window casements which were usually covered with a thin semi-transparent cloth or oiled paper inside the frame. By 1728 most of the public buildings were built with brick (Kendall 1922:9). Brick-only was often used in the *rez-de-chaussée* (ground floor story) with *briqueté-entre-poteaux* used for the *premier étage* (the first floor, which is above the *rez-de-chaussée*). Galleries were not usually found on the earliest houses, but became common by 1728.

The soft and porous local bricks did not weather well and were later covered with wood siding or lime stucco. In addition to the porosity and softness of the brick, an insufficient amount of lime and the use of sandy soil rather than sand in the cement contributed to the rapid deterioration of buildings with these exposed surfaces. Therefore, brick-only buildings were not found to be structurally sound for buildings over one story. Wilson (1990:169-176), citing correspondence between Bienville and Salmon, a member of the Superior Council, points out that the all-brick buildings built in approximately 1730 on a plantation on the West Bank, directly across the Mississippi from New Orleans, required repairs in 1735, and by 1736 were again in need of “urgent repairs”. Periodic repairs slowed the deterioration, but by 1749 it was determined that new buildings had to be constructed.

The house and outbuildings of the property at 409-413 Chartres, based both on interpretation of Gonichon’s accurate city plan and on the description found in Sieur Bruslé’s Contract of Acquisition indicate that they conform to the house type termed “raised Creole Plantation” house. The raised Creole plantation house was a distinctive architectural form in Louisiana and appeared very early in the French Colonial period, although not each house of this
type exhibits all characteristics of the type. Broad galleries were used as additional living space and were found at either at the front and rear or on all four sides of the building. Rooms of the house open onto the front and rear galleries with double French doors. The house may be either one or two stories, but the premier étage was used for the principal living area. The single-story house was raised on piers, often sufficiently elevated so as to permit room for another story underneath the house. If rez-de-chaussée is present, it is usually used for service areas and storage. Staircase(s) to the upper story are found on the gallery on the exterior of the house. The rear gallery usually, but not always, has one or two small rooms termed cabinets, a West Indian trait. Interior hallways are practically unknown, one moves directly from one room to another or may use the gallery. Walls generally have a solid in-fill between posts. This in-fill may be either brick or in many cases, bousillage, a mixture made of mud and Spanish moss. Generally, the exterior and the interior walls are plastered or stuccoed over.

Although it has been generally assumed for some time that the raised Creole plantation house is a Louisiana innovation, this has been hotly debated (See Edwards 1999). While some elements or features of the house may be related to specific local climatic adaptation, and other elements or features are quite similar to those of rural farmsteads found in northern France during the same historical period, namely the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, the basic feature complex is probably related to adaptations imported from Saint-Domingue. The house purchased by Sieur Bruslé in early 1726, which he had already occupied for a year was built after the hurricane of 1722. The plan of New Orleans showing the houses built by the end of December, 1722 does not show any houses on Squares 39 and 40° (Wilson 1987d:117). To
attribute the raised Creole plantation house to local innovation in this short period is much less plausible than that this feature complex of the house type was an importation.

End Notes


3. Translation of these records for the years 1728-1730 may be found in Louisiana Historical Quarterly, in particular see Volume 4, Number 2, pages 218-249, April, 1921 and Volume 5, Number 1, pages 76-117, January, 1922.

4. The sketch of early 1723, without street names, may have been the one referenced by O’Neill in his article (see References Cited). O’Neill writes: “So the laying out and the naming of the gridwork of streets came about probably soon after September 1722” (1998:208). However, the Plan of New Orleans as projected in March 1721 does have street names indicated. This unsigned plan was included in Pauger’s letter to Paris dated August 9, 1721 (Wilson 1987:7).

5. The currency which predated the French franc.

6. A toise is equal to 6 pieds de Paris, or 6.4 English feet.

7. The notes at the top of the plan, probably translated by Samuel Wilson, are:
   “The red lines mark the separation of the land possessed by each individual... The ditch which runs around the city is only a work begun and has only 10 or 12 inches of depth... The houses washed red are all of brick, those which are washed slate color are all of good carpentry covered with shingles and those wood colored are huts covered with cypress bark” (Wilson 1987:10).

8. According to de la Tour’s grid plan of the city, each block is divided into twelve lots, each of which is numbered (Figure 5).

9. Although unsigned, this plan accompanied the letter dated January 15, 1723 from Pierre Leblond de La Tour to the Company of the Indies.
Spanish Dominion  1763-1803

Under the strict administrative control of the Spanish, the French eventually adapted to their new situation. Social and economic pressures increased with the burgeoning population and Spanish restrictions on trade with France. Spanish influences in architecture were not evident until the end of the period. Cataclysmic events, the devastating fires of 1788 and 1794, made an almost complete rebuilding of the city necessary. These events facilitated Spanish regulation of the architecture of the city. New Spanish regulations mandated the construction materials as well as the placement of buildings. The more urban plan focused the house inward, forced the Creoles into discrete, bounded households, and effectively confined household activities to the courtyard. The inward orientation was consistent with forms of Parisian townhouses, including the liberal use of wrought-iron, and was not un-familiar to the residents of New Orleans. The urban house types of the wealthier residents, the entresol and the porte-cochère, accommodated both the Spanish and the French aesthetics and eased social pressures associated with the increasing population. The smaller houses of working-class residents on the fringes and in the back of the settlement were further modified versions of the vernacular types to meet the Spanish regulations.

Louisiana was transferred to Spain by the secret Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1762 and confirmed by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. New Orleans was returned to the French in 1800 by the secret Treaty of San Ildefonso (Kendall 1922:39) for the brief period prior to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. However, the Spanish policies were no longer in force upon retrocession to the French. The years of French influence greatly out-weighted the nearly forty years of Spanish
Figure 7 Properties discussed in Spanish Dominion: 1. Site of origin of 1788 fire. 2. 419-423 Chartres Street. 3. 424-426 Royal Street. 4. De Boré house.

control in many aspects of the development of New Orleans’ culture. Only a few Spanish influences are detectable in the architectural records and in the customs and attitudes of its
peoples as they are historically documented. Under the Spanish, the Louisianans “resisted all
efforts to convert them into Spaniards.”(Kendall 1922:39). Many refused to learn Spanish.

The early years of Spanish rule were characterized the widespread lack of necessities of
life due to fires, floods, hurricanes and the restrictive Spanish rule. The years at the end of the
Spanish period were much improved; however, this prosperity was only enjoyed by the planter-
merchant-official class. This wealthier class of Creoles controlled the economic resources of the
city and may explain the “prevalence and popularity of French Revolutionary propaganda in the
last years of Spanish New Orleans” (Wood 1939:36). In 1763 there were only about 20 free
female persons of color in New Orleans (Baker 1990:34).

Don Antonio de Ulloa was sent to take possession of Louisiana in 1766, however he was
not backed by a military force sufficient to effect control. He was accompanied by only thirty
soldiers. Furthermore, he had been instructed not to make any administrative changes other than
the cessation of direct trade with France (Stone 1968:48). Don Alexander, Conde de O’Reilly,
the Irish second Spanish governor of Louisiana, arrived in New Orleans in 1769. In order to take
immediate control of the colony, O’Reilly disbanded the Superior Council, which had ordered
the departure of Ulloa, and established the Cabildo, the Supreme Council, in its place as the
judicial and regulatory body (Dimitry 1920:58). O’Reilly presided at the first session of the
Cabildo on December 1, 1769 (Kendall 1922:29). The arrival of the Spanish tour de force was
immediately felt in the shortage of supplies. The sudden, although temporary, increase in
population put a strain on the far from abundant provisions of the colony (Kendall 1922:29).
O’Reilly introduced Spanish law to Louisiana through his ordinance of November 25, 1769
which abrogated all French law with the exception of the modified Code Noir (Stone 1968:51).
During his tenure O’Reilly issued a number of decrees and regulations, though these did not greatly alter the lives of the colonists, as both French and Spanish law were based on Roman law. Spanish became the official language of the province, but French remained the langue ordinaire. Further, he did “little to change the physical form of the capital” (Holmes 1973:271).

Upon acquisition of Louisiana during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish government enacted policies in opposition to mixed marriages. The European-Indian mixed marriages initially encouraged by the French were banned by the Spanish (Johnson 1992:23, 34-35). The Spanish laws and attitudes interjected another facet of dichotomy in relations between the Europeans and Indians, including the fact that Indians could no longer be held as slaves (Asbury 1936:48). The prevalence of Indian-African intermarriage further intensified unease, due to the fear of an Indian-African alliance in opposition to the European domination of the territory (Johnson 1992:38). Later, this dichotomy was only emphasized by the influx of African slaves and immigration of free persons of color. The introduction of large numbers of African slaves, free persons of color, and French, Spanish and other European immigrants provided the early city with additional opportunities for the cultural diversity which colors the New Orleans of today.

Cimarrones (fugitive slaves) had represented a problem from the earliest days of the colony. It is supposed that inhumane treatment caused many of these slaves to flee their masters. In 1784 their numbers and depredations reached the point of crisis. Depredations in the form of robbery and the slaughter of cattle for food became daily occurrences. Restrictions on slaves were increased. Slaves found off their plantations without a note from the master were to be given lashes; free persons of color were required to carry on their persons papers attesting to
their freedom; liquor could not be sold to slaves without the master’s permission; nothing could be purchased from slaves without the master’s written permission; the sale of arms and/or ammunition to slaves was prohibited; night assembly of slaves was banned; and all Negroes, slave and free, were forbidden to ride horses (Din 1980:246).

When one group of cimarrones murdered five Americans, planters became seriously alarmed and “the New Orleans Cabildo was almost hysterical with fear” (Din 1980:249). The Cabildo accused the cimarrones of inciting the slaves to rebellion. Concerted action by the white inhabitants led to the capture, arrest and punishment of many of the fugitive slaves, and a number of them were executed. Although the presence of fugitives and the fear of robbery, murder and slave revolt never disappeared, panic did not again reach the height that it did in 1784 (Din 1980:262).

In 1786 Governor Estévan Miró issued a manifesto, un Bando de Buen Gobierno, rules for the people. In this document he forbade females of color to wear jewels or valuables, and it was further ordered that the tignon (a handkerchief or bandanna) would be worn (Castellanos 1978:315-316).

Crevasses in the levees resulted in the flooding of parts of the city in 1780, 1785, 1791 and 1799 (Kendall 1922:167). As Squares 39 and 40 are in the higher section of the city, the properties were probably not flooded.

“There were rich and poor in New Orleans as in any other city in the world. Also, as one might expect in a city still in a frontier stage, the streets were in wretched condition, unlighted during most of the period and filled with mud or chuckholes depending upon the season. When floodwaters topped or penetrated the levees in front of the town, the waters spilled into the streets. When they receded, tons of fish were left to decay along with other garbage, providing a proper environment for the microscopic and macroscopic carriers of contagion that abound in a city, as well as contributing a variety of smells to offend the sensitive nostrils of visitors. The Cabildo devoted considerable energy and
substantial portions of a limited budget to dealing with such problems with but qualified success. The same was true with fire prevention, crime, and other hazards of urban dwelling.”(Clark 1970:252-253).

Based on the census of New Orleans taken right after O‘Reilly assumed governorship, 468 houses were located within four streets of the river. The total population was 3,190 including 1,225 Negro slaves, 68 mixed blood, 60 Indians, and 31 free Negroes (Asbury 1936:48). During the Spanish dominion Protestant immigration was not encouraged, and in fact, though earlier British traders had been expelled, by 1769 they had either returned or been replaced by others. Trade concessions in 1782 drew more French merchants to New Orleans. The 1785 census counted a total population of 4,980. A number of Royalists fleeing the French Revolution sought haven in the city. Some Germans and some Italians were drawn to the bustling and prosperous seaport. In 1785, the year in which Governor Miró’s administration began, the largest contingent of the Acadians arrived, they had reached Louisiana via refuge in France after their expulsion from Nova Scotia by the British in 1755 (Dufour 1968:33). The 1788 census, taken after twenty years of Spanish possession, showed the population of the province had more than tripled while that of New Orleans had almost doubled. The number of inhabitants in the entire province was 42,346, including 1,700 free Negroes and about 18,000 slaves, while the population of New Orleans was reported as 5,338. The 1791 slave revolt in Saint Domingue provided additional refugees. “Nevertheless, the population remained essentially Creole. Outside of official circles there were few Spaniards, and a number of them were identified with the dominant element through marriage”(Kendall 1922:59).

“So far as population and commercial importance were concerned, New Orleans had assumed the semblance of a bustling city, but its physical aspect was still that of a dirty, poorly built frontier settlement. Most of the houses were rude cabins constructed of rough-hewn cypress planks and logs, and large areas of swamp land remained within the
city limits, the breeding-places of insects and reptiles. Practically all of the town’s structural eyesores, however, were destroyed by two great fires which devastated New Orleans during the last fifteen years of the eighteenth century” (Asbury 1936:53).

Demographic analysis by Hanger (1989) of the Spanish house census of 1788 indicates 1,694 free individuals living in 421 households, the majority of which were nuclear, as opposed to single-person or extended-family households. The purposes of the Spanish census were to evaluate progress toward the goal of population increase and to have an accurate count of free males available to muster in the event of war. Only the stable population was enumerated, transients were not counted. Slaves, who could not be called to war, were undercounted, and possibly free blacks and free mulattos were undercounted as well. The sex ratio of slaves, free blacks, and mulattos was decidedly imbalanced: less than 20 males for every 100 females. Female slaves outnumbered male slaves within the city for several reasons, including the fact that many male slaves of city residents were housed where they worked – on plantations outside of the city. Also female slaves were more likely to be manumitted, and when freed, females were more likely to remain in the city than freed males. Although specified by street, but not by house number, Hanger’s map of New Orleans shows that on Squares 39 and 40, there was a relatively low proportion of whites living on Conti Street (Hanger 1989:78). On Royal Street the population was mostly white, while on Chartres and St. Louis Streets the population was nearly all white. Hanger notes that the centrally located, older areas of town tended to be more racially segregated. However, during this period (and through much of New Orleans’ history) New Orleans is generally considered to be integrated, with only thirty-five percent of the total number of streets in New Orleans being all white (1989:77). Sixty five percent of all streets in New Orleans had at least some free persons of color residents.
Although a few governmental buildings were erected in the Spanish Colonial style, the architecture of the rest of the city remained French Colonial. Not until ordinances relative to reconstruction subsequent to the two great fires of New Orleans were the other buildings of the city altered by the Spanish.

In 1788 the city was largely destroyed by the first conflagration (Figure 8). Of the approximately eleven hundred buildings, 856 were reduced to ashes, including the buildings on the block of Squares 39 and 40. The fire began at the corner of Chartres and St. Louis Streets in the home of the military treasurer, Don Vincente Nuñez, on the evening of Good Friday, March 21, 1788, when the lighted candle on the altar in the chapel caught fire to the draperies. As it was Good Friday, the priests would not allow the church bells to be rung, as they normally would have been to sound the alarm of fire. Pushed onward by a strong south wind, most of the city was afire within an hour, and within five hours most of the
city was burned. Miró earned the gratitude of the Creoles by his prompt handling of food and temporary shelter provisioning in the aftermath (Asbury 1936:53-54; Castellanos 1978:238-244).

March, 1794 heralded the publication of Louisiana’s first newspaper, Moniteur de la Louisiane, a small four-page paper in French. It was used to promulgate the decrees and regulations of the Spanish government, as well as foreign affairs and local news, particularly the local news relating to escaped slaves (Holmes 1966:133-134).

On December 8, 1794, while the city was still being rebuilt, the second great fire of the city began when some children were playing with flint and tinder in the courtyard of a building in the 500 block of Royal Street (Asbury 1936:59). Over two hundred buildings were destroyed, including all of the those on the block of Squares 39 and 40, once again.

A number of authors writing about the architecture of the rebuilt city give Spanish influence the credit for its beauty and serviceability. Actually, the Spanish influence was of very little impact on the architecture, but it did impact on the use of space. By mandating that houses must be flush with the banquette, a rear courtyard was created. The courtyard was bounded by walls and neighboring buildings, and outside household activities were confined in this space. King, in her interpretation of the re-building of New Orleans after this conflagration, finds that the city was aesthetically benefitted by the Spanish influences: “What lay in the ashes was, at best, but an irregular, ill-built, French town. What arose from them was a stately Spanish city, proportioned with grace and built with solidarity”(King 1968:129). Architects rather than military engineers were employed in the rebuilding of the city and contributed to a less vernacular appearance.
An urban adaptation of the French Colonial Plantation house was very likely typical of the larger houses in the Vieux Carré during both the French and Spanish periods. Madame John’s Legacy was one of the first houses to be built in the Vieux Carré after the 1788 fire (Figure 9). It is said to be a replica of the house which stood on the site prior to the fire. The walls of the rez-de-chaussée are brick, stuccoed over, the premier étage is briquette-entre-poteaux covered with wide, horizontal, beaded boards. There is a broad first floor gallery with exposed ceiling joists and with a wooden balustrade with slender colonnettes which were bracketed. The double-pitched roof has two symmetrically placed roof dormers which are detailed with pilasters. The dormers were added after the rebuilding. Vertical-board shutters with wrought iron hinges cover the openings of doors and casement windows. Multi-light French doors and the multi-light transoms are topped by the low segmental arch, an indication of 18th century French colonial tastes.

Subsequent to this second fire in 1794, the Spanish mandated the use of bricks (Wood 1939:7). Roofs were to be tiled rather than shingled. Tiles were either rounded or flat. The
rounded Spanish roof tiles, were termed “mission tiles”. The flat tiles were either completely flat, or had a lip on the side. Nearly flat roofs covered with flat tiles were often used as terraces (King 1968:148). However, due to leaks, most were replaced with pent roofs.

The Creole townhouse was common in the Vieux Carré after the fires of 1788 and 1794. There are two basic types of Creole Townhouse: the Creole Entresol Townhouse and the Creole Porte-cochère Townhouse (Figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10 Entresol Townhouse. Illustration from Vogt 1985:18.

The latter was popular between 1794 and 1840. The townhouses were detached, semi-detached or row-houses from two to four stories, often with a balcony on the second and sometimes the third floors. Generally, the townhouse was of stucco-covered brick which was painted a pastel color. Early Creole townhouses exhibited the following features: arched openings on the ground level with multi-light French doors and semi-circular transoms with vertical iron bars. Shutters, vertical-board on the ground level and louvered on upper levels, were used on all openings. Iron or wooden balconies were attached to nearly every building of more than one story high; the

Figure 11 Porte-Cochère Townhouse. Illustration from Vogt 1985:18.
balconies were not only practical (in the heat), but they were also attractive (Castellanos 1978). On wealthier houses, balconies generally had wrought-iron railings. Roof dormers on the front and on the back of the steep roof allowed light and ventilation to the attic. Dormer windows usually had segmental arches or rounded heads until about 1815. Double chimneys extended from the fire-wall of the roof edge.

In the *entresol* townhouse, which may be a Spanish creole contribution to New Orleans’ architecture, the ground floor was usually commercial. This type had a low-ceilinged second floor that was not defined on the exterior of the building. This floor was used for storage, an important feature to merchants. The arc of the ground floor arched openings, the distinctive feature of the type, served as windows to this level.

The *porte-cochère* was the main entrance, and beyond it, a staircase led to the upper rooms. This type could have an *entresol* floor. In the American townhouse, popular from the 1820s to the 1850s, the doorway on one side was a pedestrian passage, similar to but much more narrow than the *porte-cochère* style, which led to the rear stairs. A wide arch at the end of the main house opened onto the courtyard.

Service buildings were usually two or three stories and sometimes completely detached from the main house until the 1830s (Figure 12). The service

![Figure 12 Creole townhouse dependency. Illustration from Vogt 1985:19. dependency.](image)
buildings, often “slave quarters”, were located at the property line, either at the back of the property and parallel to the main house, or on the side of the rear property and perpendicular to the house. The remainder of the property usually enclosed a patio with a high wall. The patio in French houses is used as a work area.

In the service building, the kitchen was on the ground floor, and dining area was usually also on the ground floor or, occasionally, on the floor above. Storage and small bedrooms for servants or older children were on the upper floors. Often the back wall of the outbuilding was shared with that of the neighbor’s outbuilding, a “party wall”. The parapets, gable ends higher than the roof line, provided some fire-wall protection. Usually there was a wooden upper-level balcony which extended a few feet beyond the front (court-facing) wall and functioned to provide access to upper front rooms.

Thus, French Creole patio houses are divided into three zones: the corps de logis (the living body of the house, the loggia (the area with the stairway), and the garçonnière (slave quarters), kitchen and service.

On December 17, 1794, nine days after this second conflagration, Maria Francisca Roben, the widow of sea captain Andres Bernard and the wife of Georges Daugherty, sold a number of properties to Francisco Facquetete for $1,000. The lots she sold included those with “modern” addresses of 419, 421, and 423 Chartres Street (Figure 7). No buildings were standing on the properties at the time. On February 26, 1795 she bought back 421 and 423 Chartres, still without buildings, from Facquetete for $1,000 and a slave girl. The Vieux Carré Survey indicates that Mme. Roben had originally acquired the properties through the succession of her deceased husband, Andres Bernard, in 1790. However, these records indicate that no act of
succession was found in the notarial documents, and that court records of the Cabildo as late as 1791 indicate that Don Andres Bernard was still living. The notary of record on three transactions – the succession, the sale and the re-sale of the properties – was Carlos Ximenes.

A number of changes in New Orleans were made during the administration of Baron Carondelet, in 1794. One was the scheme of uniting New Orleans by means of a navigable canal with the Bayou St. John which was not completed. The drainage canal, which had been extended from Bourbon street, had gradually been enlarged and prolonged through the cypress forest (Castellanos 1978:333). This canal was filled in about 1932. Another change under Carondelet was the erection of five fortifications. However, the general condition of the city remained deplorable. The streets were “wide, straight, and well aligned”, but they were also “unpaved, ill lighted, unposted and filled with mud and filth” (Wood 1939:6).

“Some of the streets were agreeably lined with sour orange trees, and the back and sides of the town were laid out in gardens. The main thoroughfares, with their narrow plank walks in bad repair, were excessively filthy. Hogs wandered about them and they were full of holes and rough with crayfish mounds in dry weather. In the wet months they became a sea of mud, impassible even for carriages, and straining teams of mules pulled wagons through the mud. The lack of drainage made veritable cesspools in the town’s center, for refuse of all sorts and the dung of horses and cows which was never carted away presented a sea of filth and slime a foot deep to separate neighbors and produce a stench when half dry.”(Wood 1939:6-7).

The property at the modern address of 424-426 Royal is a two-and-a-half story row of two houses with a central porte-cochère which was certainly built after the fire of 1794. The affiche (Plan Book 63A, Folio 63) of this building was done by A. R. Dantonet and is dated February 27, 1853 (Figures 7 and 13). There is a gap in the records of property ownership, and the earliest transaction noted in the Vieux Carré Survey is April 14, 1809 when Hardy Boisblanc...
sold or gave the property to Rosalie Jung. This may be the same property mentioned in Hilaire Boutté’s will (Wilson 1982:69-70). Boutté was an architect-builder in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Apparently Rosette Jung had sold this and another property across the street (next to the Bank of Louisiana) to Boutté in March 1806, so that he could mortgage the properties to finance security for the completion of a contract with the Navigation Company. The transaction between Boutté and Jung was recorded only on “private signature papers” (Wilson 1982:70). In addition, Boutté acknowledged in his will that he owed Jung $2,553, which she had loaned to him by private note. Further, the will specified that a slave Negress and her three children and another little Negro girl also belong to Jung. He bequeathed to Jung his furniture, dishes, silverware,
table and body linens, beds, kitchen utensils, and his *cabriolet* (a light two-wheeled carriage with a convertible top) and horse. He also made provision in his will in the amount of one fifth of the clear value of all his estate for the daughter of Jung (Wilson 1982:71). It appears that Jung and Boutté had a close relationship.³

Etienne de Boré was appointed Mayor of New Orleans in 1803, during the remarkably short period of French sovereignty. De Boré owned a great plantation a few miles above the City of New Orleans. On this estate he set up a sugar mill and there, in 1795, had, with the aid of two Cubans, Mendez and Lopez, succeeded in producing the first granulated sugar ever known in the colony, with the result that agriculture was completely revolutionized (Kendall 1922:49). De Boré also owned a townhouse on the corner of Chartres and Conti Streets (Figure 7).

“The De Boré town house was on Chartres and Conti streets, a massive brick building, with a large courtyard opening on Conti street, a true Spanish building; broad doorways, window, rooms, hall, a staircase fit for a palace and beautiful enough for one, with its elaboration, fantastic, handwrought iron railing; the roof was a solid terrace, surrounded by a stone balustrade. It was afterwards owned by Madame de La Chaise. The Des Tréhans hotel stood opposite. Both have been demolished to make room for business buildings” (King 1968:264-265).

The introduction of cotton and the cotton gin in 1795 further improved the economic situation (Goodwin 1920:9). In these final and more prosperous years of the Spanish Dominion, vertical social mobility in the newly developing classes of *nouveau riches* and white Creole aristocracy of New Orleans was less constrained by rigid rules of eligibility than would be supposed. To a great extent economic success opened the doors of the elite to formerly less wealthy Creoles. While for many, who were deemed ineligible for reasons other than economic, no amount of wealth could open these doors (Wood 1939). The possibility of vertical social
mobility was annually renewed by the thinning of the ranks of the elite. Death from disease, including yellow fever and leprosy, and numerous other hazards provided vacancies in what would have otherwise been a relatively closed cadre. Many of the relatively small number of Spanish officials gained social acceptability through marriage with eligible Creoles. At the same time, since they were ineligible for entry into the Creole elite, economically successful free persons of color constructed their own aristocracy. The relatively small contingent of Indians gave a touch of barbarism to the scene. The ever-present fears of slave revolt and criminal actions of fugitive slaves added to the tension of the populace. Economic prosperity gave form to the internal social divisions of society, which along with the color lines, in turn facilitated a reduction in the generalized tension between the French and the Spanish.

The first documented outbreak of yellow fever, which was also called “Yellow Jack” and the deadly “black vomit”, in New Orleans occurred in 1796. Between the years 1796 and 1905 yellow fever to some degree struck New Orleans almost annually, including at least thirty severe outbreaks. The role of the mosquito in the proliferation of the disease was not known until 1900-1901, when discovered by Walter Reed at the head of a United States Army Commission in Havana, Cuba. Prior to this discovery, with no discernable pattern as to who would contract the disease, physicians were baffled as to its spread (Carrigan 1963:5, 11).

Early zoning action was pursued in 1797 by Nicolás Vidal, lieutenant-governor of Louisiana and resident of New Orleans. The zoning petition was prompted by the fact that Dumaine, the blacksmith, was building another house and expanding his business. Vidal expected the noise of the smithy would disturb him (Holmes 1973:274).
Infant mortality was high in the unhealthy city, more than fifteen hundred children died in 1802 from smallpox, yellow fever, measles, and other childhood diseases. By 1803 the population was at least 8,000, largely due to immigration. The majority of the population was French-speaking.

After thirty-four years of Spanish control and influence, New Orleans basically remained a French Creole city. The city rejoiced at the imminent return of French control, after news reached them of the retrocession of New Orleans to France in 1800.

The introduction of Americans at this point, these last years of Spanish reign, further complicated the social system of New Orleans. As they were a socially unacceptable population, the exclusion of the Americans from Creole aristocracy represented a focus for the cohesion of the identity of this elite class. American wealth could not open the doors of the Creoles. American males were ridiculed for their manners and business practices, while American women were shunned. This animosity was later intensified by American possession of New Orleans as a result of the Louisiana Purchase (Asbury 1936:92-93). Américain was, in effect, a four-letter word.

Spanish architectural regulations imposed on the rebuilding city resulted in a more urban environment. Superficially (flat, tiled roofs, stucco façades, and houses built flush with the banquettes) New Orleans took on an appearance closer to that of a Spanish colonial town. The increased commerce of the period favored the increased popularity of the combined commercial-residential buildings on Squares 39 and 40.

End Notes

1. Possibly the earliest documented entresol house in New Orleans was La Direction on Decatur Street (then Quay). Leblond de La Tour’s drawing of the house, designed to be a model to the
inhabitants of the city, is dated January 3, 1723. Over the paneled doors of the entrance was a curved transom with ornamental wrought iron grille, probably the first iron craftsmanship in New Orleans. Although necessarily originally used as a warehouse (the actual warehouse having been destroyed by the September 1722 hurricane), it was intended, and by the summer of 1726 was ready, for use as the council chamber and offices and the residence of persons of distinction. The original plan did not include galleries, but Pauger added one on the river-side of the house before it was finished (Wilson 1987b: 387-389).

2. Castellanos describes the importance of flood control and of managing the river to the city’s advantage (1978:330):

“[Bienville’s] will prevailed over all opposition and the carré de la ville was laid out. It was a cesspool. The streets, few in number, had to be filled with the sand taken from the battures in front, and a sort of breastwork or dike was thrown up along the margin of the river to stem the force of the current....I believe that the project of introducing, by a system of sluices and canals, the Mississippi river waters into our city, was seriously contemplated, and this fact is best proved by the prospectus of the company, which was incorporated under the name of the Navigation Company, one of whose achievements was to have conducted through Broad street the waters of the river into the basin of Canal Carondelet. But this scheme was never carried out, owing both to financial depression and the opposition of speculators or interested parties.” (Castellanos 1978:330).

3. It is not clear whether Jung was white or a free woman of color. While marriage between whites and non-whites was forbidden by law, it was possible for a white to will up to one-half of his estate to a free person of color (Daspit 1996:140-141).
American authoritarianism was resented by the Creoles, but the economic benefits of association could not be denied. Architectural themes from the later Spanish period continued, but stimulated by the presence of the Americans, commercialism prompted modifications of the Creole townhouse. The commercial-residential row-houses with a store on the ground floor and living areas above served to accommodate the increasing population as well as the mercantilism of the Early American Period.

Although retroceded to France on October 1, 1800, the French did not take re-possession of Louisiana until November 20, 1803. The United States took possession on December 30 (Kendall 1922:48). For the period 1800 to 1803 Louisiana was in a position administratively similar to that immediately following the Treaties of Fontainebleau and Paris prior to assumption of possession by Spain: abandoned by one country and not yet claimed by another. During this period of nominal Spanish control there was a lessening enforcement of law. As a consequence, the criminal elements which included “a larger proportion of the city’s population, gained a foothold in New Orleans from which it was not dislodged for more than a hundred years” (Asbury 1936:67-68). Legitimate business suffered in the politically and economically uncertain times. While bands of robbers openly ranged throughout the city, businesses such as taverns, cabarets, coffee-houses and gambling-halls thrived (Asbury 1936:68).

“Like most cities, New Orleans offered a variety of the innocent and not-so-innocent of life’s diversions. Indeed, to certain ascetic visitors to the city, New Orleans represented almost the epitome of human vice.”(Clark 1970:252). Among men, gambling was nearly universal, and
it was not uncommon for the entire fortune of planters, ship-masters, travelers and members of the Creole elite (including Bernard de Marigny) to change hands in a game of chance. Losers were at the mercy of usurers who were rife in the city. Quadroons and the notorious quadroon balls had an established reputation. Few diversions were available for respectable white women. The relaxed law enforcement policies between 1800 and 1803 contributed to public indifference to the law. “Smuggling was so generally practiced as to be regarded almost as a profession.” (Kendall 1922:62). In fact, smuggling was the profession of several infamous persons of the time, including Jean Lafitte and Dominique You.¹

New Orleans’ reputation as “a city of sin” began in the eighteenth century, as the city developed past the initial struggles for survival in the wilderness. Political corruption combined with lavish social functions to engender the increasing frequency of lapses of moral character. In the early years of American possession New Orleans acquired her reputation for “spectacular wickedness” (Asbury 1936:3). Not all New Orleans participated in the pastimes of luxury, idleness and indulgence. Within a few blocks from the Mississippi River the scene was very different: Abject poverty also abounded in the city.

“Urban growth called for a large number of petty tradesmen to service the needs of each other and other citizens. Including tailors, carpenters, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, and a variety of other occupations and skills, the class of petit bourgeois probably accounted for the vast majority of the town’s white population. This group, including a number of free men of color who could own property and pursue a trade, ran the gamut from the wealthy if socially unacceptable bartender or cabaret owner to the peddler wandering about the town or set up in temporary headquarters upon the levees. This class of trader tailed off into the marginal economic groups, primarily city slaves engaged in selling the surplus of their gardens and loot from nocturnal activities, or Indians peddling vegetables, fish, blankets, and trinkets. With the expansion of the port and market at New Orleans, transients such as sailors and upriver boatmen composed an increasing number of the more lively if temporary inhabitants of the town.”(Clark 1970:255-256).
By 1800 only a few Indians, who had never been very populous, remained in the area. The increasingly crowded city was largely populated by Creoles, Americans, slaves and free persons of color (Clark 1970:254). The majority of the population was French-speaking, including most of the slaves (Lachance 1992:117). New Orleans was a sizeable city by the time of American possession in 1803: it was the fifth largest city in the United States, the largest south of Baltimore (Clark 1970:275). The significant population increases by 1803, and definitely by 1810, are attributed to immigration. “Despite the city’s widespread reputation in the early nineteenth century as the Necropolis of the South, with a death rate exceeding the birth rate, its population increased by leaps and bounds” (Carrigan 1963:7).

In January, 1804, only two weeks into American possession of the city, a number of Saint-Domingue refugees began to arrive by ship. The city, already in upheaval over the recent changes in government – Spanish to French to American in the month of December – represented a potentially explosive situation. The addition of the refugees complicated the transition to American government. The American authorities feared less the influx of the “People of Color”, who viewed American possession more positively than the whites, than they did the arrival of additional white Creoles, who did not pretend to hide their love of France (Debien and Gardeur 1992:193-195). Furthermore, there was a certain degree of envy between the Louisianians and the arriving refugees. Saint-Domingue had the reputation of being “a land of audacious wealth and grandiose plantations” (Debien and Gardeur 1992:173).

“No doubt also, the Louisianians did not look favorably upon these colonists who were able to have a few slaves enter the country and to be able to rent them out in town in order to make a quick profit from them as domestics, as cooks, wig makers, or coachmen. With the assurance that these slaves were in their personal service, the authorities looked the other way. However, they were often leased out according to the custom used in Saint-Domingue where, in the city, the master allowed their slaves to be free to seek
work at their convenience in exchange for a flat weekly or monthly rate. This practice was in opposition to certain local habits” (Debien and Gardeur 1992:173-174).

The increasing use of the cotton gin was responsible for a significant change in the concept and practical application of slavery at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Although most plantations were “slave powered”, the cotton gin spurred cotton production to near monoculture. It was this aspect which changed slavery from a more or less “paternalistic” practice to a more anonymous economic institution. Slavery, thus more securely than ever, became the basis for production and thereby economic prosperity (Fitch 1968:81).

Etienne de Boré (appointed Mayor in December, 1803 under rule by the French) resigned his position in May, 1804, saying that his private affairs required his attention (Kendall 1922:68). De Boré was a well-known planter, a man of wealth, education, and distinguished social position.

Economic success was usually the key to upward social mobility in the Creole society, however, it was not a guarantee. To the society in general, a wealthy free person of color was not socially acceptable and not all whites were either. “Besides race, occupation and wealth served to differentiate the population of early nineteenth century New Orleans” (Lachance 1988:129). There was some flexibility to allow upward social mobility, especially in reference to the high mortality associated with class-unconscious diseases, which continually made room for changes in the personnel of the society. “Hurricanes and floods wiped out planters; fires burned out merchants in 1788 and 1794; and epidemics carried off people of all classes. Opportunities and risks assured the existence of an upper crust but also guaranteed changes in personnel.” (Clark 1970:255). The manners and morals of the elite remained relatively stable, and supported the cultural enclave in its aversion to intrusion by the Americans. Lachance
(1992:125) finds that “the primary social cleavage in New Orleans was racial. Whether foreign- or native-born, free persons of color were at the bottom of the social ladder.” This, of course, completely discounts the position of slaves in the social order. They were not even on the social ladder.

John Reps writes that by the very early nineteenth century the city had already outgrown the original plans for the city (Reps 1994:8). Faubourg Marigny was created in 1805, when the Creole Bernard Marigny subdivided his plantation downriver from the Vieux Carré. In the early development the houses were simple Creole cottages inhabited by artisans and workers, most of whom were free persons of color. This faubourg was greatly expanded in the 1830s (Vogt 1985).

Americans began significant migration into an already-crowded New Orleans at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. However, the Creole society did not welcome them with open arms. The Americans had been economic competitors for too long, and the American culture was too different for the Creoles to readily accept the Americans. The Creoles perceived the Americans as boisterous brawlers who would loot the city (Tregle 1992:135). Relations between the Creole French and the Americans were tense, occasionally erupting into riots. In general the Americans were unwelcome in the Creole portions of the city. When the Americans were denied purchase of property in Faubourg Marigny, they began to build upriver, in a new housing development, Faubourg Ste. Marie, which was later called St. Mary (Tregle 1992:135). This American sector differed from that of the Creoles in a basic way: The Creole Vieux Carré was a mixed residential-commercial area, while residences and commercial buildings were
separated in the two portions of the American sector of the city, Faubourg Ste. Marie and Lafayette (later called the Garden District), respectively.

“Faubourg Ste. Marie was outvoted by the city below Canal street, which always elected the mayor and the majority of the council. The consequence was that the revenues of the city were all expended upon improvements in the Creole section, and every effort of nepotism was made by the city government to assure its superiority over its upstart rival” (King 1968:273).

Including the new faubourgs Marigny and Ste. Marie, the city was by this time stretched nearly three miles along the levee. Also the Faubourg Trémé had developed behind the Vieux Carré as far as Rue Marais (Swamp Street) “and all the rest, as far back as the lake, was what was called la Cyprière, a trackless and almost impenetrable morass” (Castellanos 1978:147).

Efforts of the American government and private citizens to “Americanize” New Orleans and her population were staunchly resisted by the Creoles (Clark 1970:276). French immigrants, some from France who had fled the French Revolution, continued to arrive in New Orleans. But anti-Americanization of the Creole society was strengthened by the moral and physical support of the great numbers of white French immigrants from the West Indies. Having fled to eastern Cuba due to the 1791 slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue, and then from Cuba to New Orleans, following their expulsion, approximately 10,000 whites, free persons of color and slaves flooded New Orleans in 1809 and 1810 (Lachance 1988:109): This was enough to double the population of New Orleans (Lachance 1988:112). The numbers of whites, slaves and free persons of color were roughly equal and were in approximately the same proportions as the New Orleans’ population before their arrival. As the immigrants were accustomed to a three-caste society, they were not disruptive to the existing social system in New Orleans. Therefore, their arrival tended to reinforce the established social structure of the city (Lachance 1988:128). The
Americans, ever cognizant of the chronic tensions between themselves and the Creoles, reacted negatively to the mass immigration, which they expected would reinforce Creole ethnicity, and thereby, delay Americanization of the Creole population (Lachance 1988:117) – which of course it did. The Creole positive reaction to the influx of these immigrants was not expressed in ethnic terms, but rather in terms of potential productivity of the immigrants which would enhance the economic development of Louisiana (Lachance 1988:118).

“The city expanded immensely to take in this flood of new inhabitants. Times couldn’t have been better for architects, builders, and the construction business in general. Expansion, however, was strictly dictated by geographical facts of life; most of New Orleans was below sea level, and all of it was below the level of the river. Firm ground lay in a relatively narrow strip along the river, bounded in the rear by miles of gloomy swamps, called by the French ‘drowned woods’” (Brady 1999:xxi).

The effect of the Saint-Domingue immigrants on New Orleans was felt in areas other than housing and economics. The “love of luxury and display” of the new female immigrants, combined with the overall sense of economic prosperity and an “atmosphere of tropical ease and languor” deeply affected the Creole women. “Within a few years the plain muslins and modest veils had given way to bright-colored silks, transparent taffetas, velvets, richly embroidered cloths, expensive laces, and gay bonnets and turbans” (Asbury 1936:121).

In 1800 Don Jose Pavie had two identical buildings erected, 437 and 441 Royal Street. On the corner of Royal and St. Louis Streets, 441 Royal is the Tremoulet-Pavie House (Figures 14 and 15). Next door is 437 Royal Street, Pharmacie Peychaud, operated by the pharmacist Antoine Amédée Peychaud. It was in this pharmacy that the “cocktail” originated. The brandy-cocktail concoction made by Peychaud is similar to the brandy-toddy, which consists of a small amount of water, a little sugar, and enough brandy to fill a tumbler, but the cocktail has the addition of a very small amount of bitters. Peychaud brought the secret recipe for the bitters
with him when he immigrated from Saint-Domingue in 1795. He served the drink in a double-ended egg cup, the coquetier. The English mispronunciation of the term changed it to “cocktail” (Arthur 1937:53-55).

Although Spanish law was interpreted at the time by the French as quite restrictive, in his review of the records of the Superior Council and the Cabildo, Dart finds that the administration of government in the two eras did not differ materially (Dart 1919). He further found that it was this legal heritage that prevented the American imposition of Common Law which was “urged upon the territorial legislature by President Jefferson and Governor Claiborne” (1919:102-103).

In 1812 Louisiana achieved statehood; New Orleans was its capital. The French and Spanish laws as codified in A Digest of the Civil Laws Now in Force in the Territory of Orleans (1808) were largely retained as the Louisiana Civil Code.

Particularly severe outbreaks of disease, especially yellow fever, followed significant disturbance of the soil, as in 1811, 1812, and 1822 when the Carondelet Canal was cleaned. In each of these outbreaks the death toll amounted to nearly seven percent of the total population (Kendall 1922:132). Breaks in the Macarty levee in 1813 and the Kenner levee in May 1816 both inundated the lower areas of the city. In 1816 the
city was flooded for nearly a month. The rear of town was flooded to a depth of five feet. One could row a boat to within 3 blocks of Squares 39 and 40. The year immediately following was an exceptionally healthy one for New Orleans (Kendall 1922:167).

Two themes recur in the literature about yellow fever in nineteenth century New Orleans. Firstly, there is the “city’s passive acceptance of periodic epidemics” (Carrigan 1963:6). The thousands of deaths due to epidemics mainly represented deaths of poor, recent immigrants, and not the “acclimated” natives, or those who had previously experienced a bout and were immune. Therefore, to the New Orleanians, these deaths were merely statistics, relatively impersonal, as the deaths were not of family or friends. Secondly, “almost every commentator noted the impact of the pestilence on commercial activity whenever and wherever an epidemic appeared. During severe outbreaks, business in New Orleans slowed to an almost complete standstill” (Carrigan 1963:8-9). People generally fled the city during these periods, shops closed, and very little business was transacted.

Much patronized by the American and Creole merchants and other business men, “most of the popular cafés and coffee-houses were on Royal and Chartres Streets, the principal thoroughfares of the French Quarter” (Asbury 1936:135). Maspero’s, the most famous coffee-house and exchange (a place of business at which any number of types of other business could be transacted) at the intersection of Chartres and St. Louis Streets, was the site of many Creole business transactions, including auctions (Wilson 1989:191).

Pierre Maspero operated Maspero’s Exchange from 1814 to his death in 1822. The Exchange was located at approximately the modern address of 501 Chartres Street (Figure 14). The architect-builders Claude Gurlié and Joseph Guillot purchased the property on March 21,
1810. This vacant lot measured approximately 75 feet on Chartres and 120 feet on St. Louis.

Gurlié and Guillot designed and constructed the buildings on the lot and leased them to Bernard Tremoulet on March 22, 1811. According to the lease the building was described as a large house which fronted 45 feet on Chartres with all dependencies. It was a two-story wooden building with the entrance on Chartres (Asbury 1936:137). Their smaller building adjacent to this one, fronting 30 feet on Chartres was leased to Maspero on May 1, 1811, where he opened a mirror and picture-framing shop and also sold imports. Tremoulet, in partnership with his son-in-law Turpin, opened the Commercial Coffee House on April 1, 1811 and referred to it as the “New Exchange”. In August, 1811 the Exchange Coffee House on Conti (one building riverside of the intersection of Chartres) transferred their business to the Commercial Coffee House.

Included among the many businesses housed and transacted at the Exchange Coffee House were brokerages, the office of the secretary of the New Orleans Insurance Company, meetings of the Chamber of Commerce, an auction mart, and sheriff sales. The New Exchange, in addition to hosting these businesses also maintained current information on commerce and the arrival and departure of ships. The handling of letter bags from merchants and ship’s captains was also available for a fee. Refreshments were provided for day boarders (Wilson 1989:195-199).

On November 4, 1811 the convention which resulted in the admission of Louisiana as the eighteenth state of the United States met here (Wilson 1989:200). Also in November, 1811 one man was killed here, but later his assailant was found not guilty of murder (Wilson 1989:199).

The February 8, 1812 issue of the *Louisiana Gazette* reported on the effects of an earthquake,³ as felt at Tremoulet’s the day before: Shortly after 3:00 a.m. the shock occurred.
Only a few ladies and a number of gentlemen were still present at the time. The glasses and furniture shook, as well as the chandeliers. Clocks were stopped (Wilson 1989:199).

In 1813 a financial panic caused a run on Planter’s Bank and the Bank of Orleans (Figure 14). The meeting of interested parties met at the Exchange, and after a report by Vincent Nolte on the financial situation, a duel was arranged between him and the cashier of Planter’s Bank (Wilson 1989:200).

On September 15, 1814 a meeting was held at the Exchange in reference to the British capture of Washington and the burning of the Capitol and White House. A few days later another meeting was held there in which a call was made for “unity between the French and American segments of the population” in the time of crisis (Wilson 1989:204). American authorities’ doubts in 1804 about the loyalties of the Creole population of New Orleans and that of the Creole refugees from Saint-Domingue were alleviated by the Creole participation with the Americans in the War of 1812 at the Battle of New Orleans. Both Creoles and Americans were sufficiently anti-British to put aside the internal (to New Orleans) differences and join hands in their united repel of the invaders.

Maspero took over the Exchange in late September, 1814 with the management assistance of Philip Alvarez. At this time in addition to business activities, including sheriff sales, a reading room was established (Wilson 1989:205). The principal activities at the Exchange were billiards and gambling (Wilson 1989:208). There was a meeting room on the second floor, but the whole of the first story was a café and the kitchen with a bar running the length of the room. There were a number of small tables for patrons, but one corner of the room was reserved for the newspapermen who met there daily (Asbury 1936:137-138).
Girod House, also known as Napoleon House at 500 Chartres Street and across the street from Maspero’s Exchange, was the home of Nicholas Girod, who was the Mayor of New Orleans at the time of the construction of the building in 1814 (Figures 14 and 16). The three-story building was probably designed by Hyacinthe Laclotte (Wilson 1987:359; Daspit 1996:206-207; New Orleans Chapter of the American Institute of Architects 1974:11).

Napoleon House, now one of the better known bars in New Orleans, gets the name from the legend that it was intended to be the home of Napoleon after his rescue from St. Helena by Dominique You and a band of Baratarians.

However, a few days before Captain Dominique was to depart on his mission, it was learned that Napoleon had died in exile.

Figure 16 500 Chartres Street, Girod House (Napoleon House). Illustration from Poesch and Bacot 1997:369.

Figure 17 416-418 Royal Street, General Andrew Jackson’s first headquarters in New Orleans. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Upon his arrival in New Orleans in December, 1814, General Andrew Jackson set up his first headquarters in the building located at the approximate modern address of 416-418 Royal Street, described in the Vieux Carré Survey as a large and commodious 3-story brick dwelling house with 3-story dependencies (Figures 14 and 17). This is directly across the street from the *Banque de la Louisiane*, which has the modern address of 417 Royal Street (later this building was the Morphy house and is currently occupied by Brennan’s Restaurant) (Figures 14 and 18).

Jackson’s headquarters was the site of Jackson’s meeting with the Louisiana Legislature appointed Committee of Defense. The members of the Committee were Bernard Marigny, Louis Philippe Joseph de Rofignac⁴ and Louis Louailler. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss with Jackson his refusal to enlist the aid of the Baratarians in the upcoming battle. Jackson did not wish to have dealings with the Baratarians as he considered them criminals, and, as a matter of fact, Dominique You and a number of others were in prison at the time. Jackson was unswayed by the Committee. Marigny and Rofignac therefore went to the house of Judge Dominic Hall who, upon hearing the nature of the problem, instructed Marigny and Rofignac to prepare a resolution for the Legislature demanding that the procedures against the Baratarians be

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*Figure 18* 417 Royal Street, Banque de la Louisiane, Morphy House. Illustration from Daspit 1996:75.
suspended for four months. The resolution was presented the next day and it was “passed unanimously” by the Legislature. The prosecution was ceased and the Baratarians were released. Jackson was now free to enlist their aid in the Battle of New Orleans (Marigny 1923:64-66).

On December 15, 1814 General Andrew Jackson declared martial law in New Orleans. Due to the strong possibility of British invasion, and the need for many to take up arms in defense of the city, on December 18, 1814 Governor C. C. Claiborne signed an act of moratorium on financial transactions (Wilson 1989:206). Maspero’s Exchange is one of the many places where it is purported that Jackson planned the Battle of New Orleans (Asbury 1936:137). On January 23, 1815 a grand ball was held at Maspero’s Exchange to celebrate General Andrew Jackson’s victory at the Battle of New Orleans (Wilson 1989:206).

On March 3, 1815 Louisiana State Representative Louis Louailler published an article in the *Louisiana Courier* which was highly critical of General Andrew Jackson (Wilson 1989:207). According to documents reviewed by the Louisiana State Senate Committee in 1843, in early March, 1815, after the Battle of New Orleans in January, and after the British had been driven from the immediate area of New Orleans, Louailler, a spokesperson of the people, confronted Jackson to complain about the extended continuance of martial law which Jackson had declared on December 15, 1814. On March 5 Jackson had Louailler arrested on the charge of being a spy for the British. In the course of his arrest on the steps of or on the sidewalk across the street from the Exchange, his pleas for legal assistance were heard by P. L. Morel, an attorney, who was coming out of the Exchange. Morel prepared a writ of *habeas corpus*, which he presented to Judge Dominick A. Hall on the behalf of Louailler. Judge Hall signed the writ. There was some
discrepancy about the date of the writ, variously reported as write-overs or strike-throughs. Regardless, the writ was served to Jackson on March 6 by the Clerk of Court. Jackson obtained possession of the writ, which was supposed to remain in the possession of the Clerk, and the actual writ disappeared. Jackson maintained that the judge had no authority over him as martial law was in effect. On this same date Jackson had Judge Hall arrested. Hall was held in jail for approximately a week before he was removed to some miles from New Orleans and released. He was instructed not to return to the city until there was no further threat from the British and martial law had been rescinded. Judge Hall immediately made his way back to New Orleans and heard and ruled favorably on a motion made by the Attorney for the United States. The ruling called for Jackson to present himself to the Court and to present cause as to why he should not be held in contempt of court. On March 31, accompanied by a large number of supporters, Jackson presented himself to the Court, where he was fined $1,000. (The Louisiana Legislature of 1843 found that a fine of $10 to $25 would have been more appropriate.) Jackson paid the fine before leaving the Courthouse. Jackson’s ardent supporters unhitched the horses from Jackson’s carriage and pulled the carriage containing Jackson to the New Exchange for a celebration. In 1843, after review of all documents and testimony pertinent to the case, the U. S. Congress refunded the fine.

In 1815 Bernard Marigny contracted with Henry Latrobe⁶ to build a house on the corner of Chartres and St. Louis Street, on Squares 39 and 40 (Figure 14). The contract describes the house and specifics desired by Marigny – the doors should be one and one-half inches thick and fold to open like those of The Exchange (Maspero’s), and that the wrought iron balcony should be like “the one on the new house of Mr. Girod opposite the Exchange” (Wilson 1987c:360).
Maspero’s Exchange resumed normal business of auctions of land, buildings, slaves, etc. after the furor of war died down. After Maspero’s death in 1822, it was discovered that his debts exceeded his assets and Maspero’s Exchange was closed. The Exchange was reopened later in 1822 by Harvey Elkins. Later the Exchange was taken over by James Hewlett who made some improvements which “enlarged and beautified” the building (Wilson 1989:214). The Exchange was now called “Hewlett’s Exchange”, the “Exchange Coffee-House”, the “New Exchange”, “la bourse de Hewlett” or “la nouvelle bourse” (Wilson 1989:215).

Progress in flood control made significant strides after American possession. In 1810 the city’s first waterworks was basically a system of hollow cypress logs through which slaves pumped river water. However, most people continued to rely on cisterns for potable water. It was this system which was used to alleviate the flooding of 1816 from the crevasse at Macarty’s Point (Castellanos 1978:333-334). A levee and road law of 1816 continued the French and Spanish requirements that individual property owners were responsible to build and maintain levees on their properties (Harrison 1961:56-57). After numerous financial setbacks and delays in obtaining equipment, the waterworks system designed by Benjamin Latrobe was finally completed in 1820, just after his death from yellow fever. His son Henry Latrobe, who had also worked on this project for years, had died exactly three years earlier, also from yellow fever (Donaldson 1987:389, 395).

Kemp characterizes French-American relations in a quote from the January, 1819 journal entry by architect Benjamin Henry B. Latrobe:

“The state of society at any time here is puzzling. There are in fact three societies here: 1. the French; 2. the American; and 3. the mixed. The French society is not exactly what it was at the change of government, and the American is not strictly what it is in the Atlantic cities. The opportunities of growing rich by more active, extensive and
intelligent modes of agriculture and commerce diminished the hospitality, destroyed the leisure, and added more selfishness to the character of the Creoles. The Americans, coming hither to make money... are in an eternal bustle. Their limbs, their heads, and their hearts, move to that sole object, cotton and tobacco, buying and selling, and all the rest of the occupations of a money-making community” (Kemp 1981:78).

One of the last buildings designed by Benjamin Latrobe was the Louisiana State Bank building on the corner of Royal and Conti (Figures 14 and 19). The bank, formerly La Banque de l’État de la Louisiane at 417 Royal Street (now Brennan’s Restaurant, and formerly “Patio Royal”), moved to the corner location and opened for business in December, 1821 (Arthur 1937:42-43). The Louisiana State Bank, with the initials L. S. B. conspicuous on the original, projecting, wrought-iron balcony, was the first bank established under the American rule. Originally the building had a central porte-cochère opening to a courtyard. The first cashier was Mr. Zacharie, who resided in the upper story. Mr. Zacharie was described as a “man of wit, humor, and thorough business habits” (Castellanos 1978:150-151).

By the 1820s many of the buildings on Squares 39 and 40 were the combination commercial-residential townhouses. The ground floor of this type of establishment was often a store, bank, saloon or restaurant. Also the manufacture of goods such as perfume, liquor, or tobacco products took place on the ground floor or in the rear of the building.
Next door adjoining to the Louisiana State Bank at 409 Royal Street, was the townhouse of Jean Blanque, who died in 1816 (Figure 14). “Merchant, lawyer, banker, legislator, and – this was told in whispers – the ‘man higher up’ in certain transactions relative to the importation of ‘black ivory’ and goods upon which customs duty was not collected” (Arthur 1937:43-45). He was also the second husband of the infamous Delphine Macarty, who bore him four children while living in this home. Rumors of Delphine Macarty’s treatment of slaves did not arise until the 1830s when she was by then the wife of Louis Lalaurie (Arthur 1937:44-45, 147-151).

The building at 339 Royal Street, also on the corner of Royal and Conti, was built in 1800 by Don Pablo Lanusse, the senior judge of the Cabildo at the time (Figures 14 and 20). The first business documented to take place here was Thomas Elmes’ dry goods emporium in 1805. In May, 1811 the building housed La Banque des Habitants, also called Planters’ Bank. In 1820 this bank was sold to the Bank of the United States of Philadelphia. In 1836 property was sold to and occupied by the New Orleans Gas Light & Banking Company, during which time it became known as La Banque du Gaz, or “Gas Bank” to the Americans. This bank closed in 1838, after

![Figure 20 Planter’s Bank. Illustration from New Orleans Chapter of AIA 1974:8.](image)
the financial crisis of 1837. In 1881 this building became Waldhorn’s, a jewelry and loan business, later an antique business.

Known as the “Old Mortgage Office”, the bank at 344 Royal Street, on the corner of Royal and Conti, was built by the Bank of Louisiana and called the Louisiana Bank (Figures 14 and 21). Benjamin F. Fox designed the building, and Tobias Bickle and Philip Hamblet constructed it. The entrance portico was burned in the 1840s, and it was rebuilt based on design by James Gallier (Times-Picayune 1997). After World War I this building was occupied by the American Legion (Arthur 1937:40-41). Since that time it has also served as the Louisiana Statehouse, a merchant exchange, a philharmonic hall, a saloon, and a music hall. Currently the 8th District Station of the New Orleans Police Department and the Vieux Carré Commission are housed here (Times-Picayune 1997).

Adjoining the Old Mortgage Office at 624 Conti was, from 1811-1833, the Banque d’Orléans (Figure 14). In 1833 the property was sold to Louisiana Bank and became the residence of the bank’s cashier (Arthur 1937:41). The intersection of Royal and Conti Streets was the financial heart of New Orleans.

Figure 21 Bank of Louisiana. Illustration from New Orleans Chapter of AIA 1974:7.
The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 put an end to New Orleans’ monopoly on trade between the Northeast and the Midwest. In addition, soon thereafter, the Mississippi Valley cargo transportation activities were greatly diminished when railroads reached Chicago and St. Louis (Vogt 1985).

The smells of rose blossoms and oranges mingle with those of crawfish etouffée, and fried catfish, and red beans, all overlying the stench of sewerage, the river, and decaying vegetable matter. The stagnant water of the back-swamps made New Orleans also the home of the mosquito. It is no wonder that disease, particularly in the summer months, was rife in the city. The majority of those who had other properties outside of the city, and those who could afford to travel and visit friends or relations, left the city during these months of the year. Many, even those of moderate income, did in fact have out-lying plantations or a “summer place” across the Lake. The summer population of New Orleans was largely comprised of working males (regardless of their avocation) and the poor. The flavor (and smell!) of New Orleans is well-described in anecdotal histories, as exemplified by those of Asbury (1936), Basso (1948), Huber (1980a and 1980b), Ripley (1912), and Warner (1948). Warner’s description of New Orleans is very evoking:

“The glimpses of street life are always entertaining, because unconscious, while full of character. It may be a Creole court-yard, the walls draped with vines, flowers blooming in haphazard disarray, and a group of pretty girls sewing and chatting, and stabbing the passer-by with a charmed glance. It may be a cotton team in the street, the mules, the rollicking driver, the creaking cart. It may be a single figure, or a group in the market or on the levee – a slender yellow girl sweeping up the grains of rice, a colored gleaner recalling Ruth; a group of levee hands about a rickety table, taking their noon-day meal of pork and greens; the blind man, capable of sitting more patiently than an American Congressman, with a dog trained to hold his basket for the pennies of the charitable; the black stalwart vender of tin and iron utensils, who totes in a basket, and piled on his head, and strung on his back, a weight over two hundred and fifty pounds; and Negro women who walk erect with baskets of clothes or enormous bundles balanced on their heads,
unconscious of their burdens. These are the familiar figures of a street life as varied and picturesque as the artist can desire.” (Warner 1948:14).

Not all of these anecdotes reflect on the best of New Orleans. Quoted from Basso’s *The World from Jackson Square*, John James Audubon, the artist, on his second day in New Orleans, January 9, 1821, wrote in his journal:

“My Spirits very Low - Weather Cloudy & Sultry - begun raining - Wrote to My Wife - Wished I had remained at Natchez - having found No Work to do remained on Board the Keel Boat opposite the French Market, the Dirtiest place in all the Cities of the United States.” (Audubon 1948:113).

Through the 1820s the concentration of the commercial activity stretched “from approximately Rue Conti in the old quarter, up past Canal Street into Faubourg St. Mary. Here one found the banks, insurance companies, exchanges, specialty retail stores...etc.”(Tregle 1992:154-155). By the late 1820s through the mid-1830s, the Americans had pushed their commercial area even farther into the Creole section, to St. Louis Street and possibly even Toulouse. During this period newspapers used the terms “commercial quarter and American sector almost interchangeably” (Tregle 1992:155). King also discusses the animosity between the Creoles and the Americans:

“It was a hare and tortoise race between the Americans and the Creoles, and in the United States it is always the hare that wins. Before the Creoles were aware of it, the Faubourg St. Marie was not only a commercial rival of the Vieux Carré, but was proving a close competitor over her undisputed birthright, the expression of the religious and social life of the place; claiming separate churches, cemeteries, fine residences, and theatres” (King 1968:27).

However, the Vieux Carré remained the center of commerce for the Creoles, a great deal of which took place not only in the area of the French Market, but also in the commercial area of Royal and Chartres Streets. Land was at a premium during the 1830s.
“Some of the larger buildings were substantially constructed of brick and roofed with slate. Those on the three or four streets nearest the river were sometimes two or even two and a half stories in height. Those farther back were usually one story high, of wood, roofed with shingles, and often elevated on wooden pillars from eight to fifteen feet above the ground. The homes of the poor were scattered in all parts of the city, but especially on the rear streets. Even among the most prosperous classes there were many whose domiciles were small and rude....The streets were straight and tolerably wide, but none of them were paved. In bad weather they were often impassable to vehicles. There were few sidewalks; such as existed were made of wooden planks pegged down to the earth, except in the heart of the town, where there were some narrow brick ‘banquettes.’ The streets were not lighted. At night it was a difficult operation to find one’s way about. All the refuse of the city found its way into the gutters, which were filthy and emitted an unspeakable stench. Business was concentrated largely on Toulouse, St. Peter, Conti, St. Louis, Royal and Chartres streets along the levee. The French were for the most part content to invest their savings in real estate. They were the proprietors of the retail establishments. They lent money – often at one or two per cent per month. The Spanish, who, except for those in Government employ, were mainly Catalans, kept the lesser shops and the cheap drinking places, which infested all parts of the town. The wholesale business, in fact, almost all of the larger commercial establishments of every description, were in the hands of the Americans, English and Irish. In society and politics, however, the conditions were reversed. There the Creole was dominant. Creoles held many important governmental employments; they sought commissions in the military forces; they influenced very largely the government of the city” (Kendall 1922:61).

Yellow fever claimed the lives of newcomers much more often than the lives of long-time residents. Nearly annual epidemics contributed to the laissez-faire attitude of the Creoles toward life. They were indulgent with respect to any pleasurable activity, complacent with respect to disease, protective of their families, society and culture, and disdainful, if not denigrating, towards “outsiders”. Epidemics of historic proportions struck in 1827, 1828, and 1829. So deeply seated was the prejudice against Americans and anything American that yellow fever, in particular, was looked upon “almost with affection”, as it attacked strangers almost exclusively (Kendall 1922:67).

“The homes of the wealthier citizens of New Orleans at the beginning of the nineteenth century were generally of stucco over wood, although many were of brick roofed with slate or tiles. They were from one to three stories in height and were built in the Spanish style, around courtyards or patios..... The houses of the middle and poorer classes, farther
back from the river, were of wood, with shingled roofs, and many were elevated on posts from eight to fifteen feet above the ground, a practice which was originally begun to keep frogs, snakes, and alligators out of the family’s living-quarters. In the courtyard of every dwelling was a well from five to fifteen feet deep, and many of the wealthier residents possessed two or three, but the water obtained from them was decidedly not potable. Nor was it fit for many other uses. Drinking-water, and that used for washing clothes, was brought into the city from the Mississippi River and sold from carts and wagons, at the rate of four buckets for six and a quarter cents, or fifty cents a hogshead. It was either filtered through porous stone or poured into large earthenware jars and cleared by lime, alum, or charcoal” (Asbury 1936:70-71).

Fugitive slaves remained a problem throughout the period. In addition to their depredations, the possibility of their instigation, or at least participation, in the fomenting of slave revolt was a constant fear.

“...But always over the white population hung the threat of danger, which was slavery’s menace to the slave-holding class” (Kendall 1922:132).

As there was no canal-digging machinery, canals were dug primarily by hand. The majority of these laborers were Irish.9 In September, 1832, following the digging of the New Basin to Lake Pontchartrain Canal, a severe outbreak of yellow fever struck the city. In October, before the yellow fever had disappeared, cholera grasped the city in its clutches (Kendall 1922:132-133).

“...The diseased visited the city both before and after that date, but never was the mortality such as to compare with that of this terrible year. The conditions described above favored in exceptional ways the spread of the plague. The defective water supply had much to do with it. The disease appeared in October of that year. The regular annual epidemic of yellow fever had been that summer very severe; it had not yet entirely disappeared, when on the morning of the 25th persons walking along the levee were surprised to find stretched out on the ground the bodies of two dying men. An hour or so later they were dead. They perished of cholera. The disease had reached the city the previous day on two ships among the passengers of which the disease had developed during the voyage from Europe... On the 26th the alarm became general, and from that time forward, with fearful rapidity, the terrible pest swept over the city and through all

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ranks of society. Many fled at once: the population was thus reduced to about 35,000 persons, yet 6,000 perished within twenty days. On some days the death rate was 500” (Kendall 1922:133).

There were so many bodies that the grave-diggers could not inter them quickly enough. Many were buried in shallow trenches by chain-gangs. Hundreds of bodies were weighted and sunk in the river (Kendall 1922:134). All means of conveyance remaining in the city were used to transport the dead. One hospital, filled only with corpses was ordered burned, along with all the bodies. “Tar and pitch were kept burning to purify the heavy atmosphere” (Kendall 1922:134). Cannon were also fired. The disease struck heavily among the canal laborers, many of whom were Irish. Cholera again struck a hard blow to the city in 1833. Approximately 10,000 persons died from cholera in a twelve month period.

“Corpses were found all along the streets, particularly in the early morning... the same epidemics returned the following summer, killing in the twelve months ten thousand out of a population of fifty-five thousand. In 1847, 1848, and 1849, eight per cent of the people died” (King 1968:285).

The Creoles had a basic dislike and distrust of the Americans who came down the river. Stemming from the Spanish period, the fear of looting and depredation by these barbarians persisted though the early years of American rule. Due to economic necessity, Creoles tolerated these vulgar and coarse men who were generically termed “Kaintocks” (Kentuckians). The Kaintocks were the “boogie-men” used to frighten misbehaving children (Asbury 1936:93). These boisterous and dangerous rivermen came to New Orleans by the thousands every year and “caused more trouble than any other class in the history of the city”(Asbury 1936:93).

“The invasion of the river men probably stimulated the growth of the New Orleans underworld to a greater degree than any other economic reason or population movement in its history. During the first twenty years of the American occupation, the number of inhabitants in New Orleans more than quadrupled, and it has been estimated that from one-third to one-fourth of the increase was composed of thieves, ruffians, vagabonds, and
prostitutes who, with the removal of all restrictions upon immigration, had flocked into the city from the four corners of the earth. For a period of some thirty years or more the lowest and most vicious elements of New Orleans’ population specialized in catering to the vices and appetites of the Kaintocks; after three or four months on the river, the flatboat crews came ashore demanding women and liquor, and the underworld saw to it that there was always an ample supply of both commodities” (Asbury 1936:98-99).

Early in the nineteenth century, due to a shortage of currency, it was not uncommon for banks to issue their own specie based on their deposits. The term “Dixie” was originally applied only to New Orleans and came about in the early years after the Louisiana Purchase, when one of the banks began to issue ten-dollar notes, which were traded as far north as St. Louis (Figure 22). One side was printed in English and the other in French. Dix, French for “ten” was printed in large letters. The riverboat men, unfamiliar with French pronunciation, called the note a “dix”, the plural was “dixies”. During the Civil War when D. D. Emmett’s song, written in 1859, became popular, the term “Dixie” came to refer to all of the South (Asbury 1936:80-81).

The American section above Canal Street was the home of “the most sordid and vicious of the underworld districts” (Asbury 1936:114). In the Vieux Carré more refined diversions predominated: pits for cockfighting, expensive gambling-halls, the best cafés and coffee-houses, the most exclusive bordellos, the most beautiful ballrooms, and the finest restaurants, whose cuisine brought world-wide fame to New Orleans (Asbury 1936:114).

Under Mayor Rofignac some attempt was made to initiate the paving of streets in 1821 and 1822, but the results were not widespread until much later. The drainage of sewerage was performed by gutters on the sides of the unpaved streets. The sewerage was not confined to the gutters in the rainy season, when the gutters overflowed.
Figure 22 A “Dix”, English on one side and French on the other. Courtesy of Jay D. Edwards. This particular bank note is unsigned and the design was patented by the National Bank Note Company, April 23, 1860.
“The banquettes, or sidewalks, were simply planks, or sometimes a single log, pegged into the ground. In some streets wooden drains served as gutters, while in others open ditches on either side answered the same purpose. Into them were thrown garbage and refuse of every description, the result being that except in times of high wind an almost unbearable stench hung over the town. The drains and ditches were supposed to be cleaned daily by Negro convicts from the calaboose, who performed their labor under the burden of iron collars, and heavy chains attached to their ankles” (Asbury 1936:115).

During the rainy seasons the unpaved streets became impassable by vehicles, and it was necessary to make long detours to reach a destination on foot. Strangers and other travelers often realized themselves lost in the city during these periods as the official street names were not posted, and the streets often were known locally only by the names of notable residents. As often as not, locals were of little assistance to these lost strangers (and not because they did not know the correct directions to any particular destination!) (Asbury 1936:115-116). The city streets were barely illuminated by oil lamps until about 1837. Prudent residents carried lanterns when they went out at night. During the winter season, masquerades and balls were held almost nightly until Lent.

“When a family of early New Orleans went out in the evening to a ball or other social function, it presented a picturesque spectacle as it slowly made its uncertain way through the streets. First came the slaves bearing lanterns, and the shoes, silk stockings, and other articles of full dress which were donned only when the destination had been reached; and lastly the members of the family in boots and raincoats, each gentleman carrying his own personal lantern” (Asbury 1936:115-116).

After the state house was burned, the legislature had no regular meeting place, and the distractions of New Orleans were deemed non-conducive to the execution of legislative business, so the state capital was moved from New Orleans to Donaldsonville in 1829. However, the exile was short-lived, and the capital was re-established in New Orleans in 1831, when the Americans had gained more political strength (Kendall 1922:132).
In the midst of their confrontations, some close business associations were formed and some inter-marriages were contracted between the Creoles and the Americans. In the meantime, the Americans were establishing their own sector of the city. The antagonism and animosity between the Creoles and the Americans was suspended for a time due to New Orleans’ involvement in the War of 1812. The outside threat of British invasion superceded the rivalry between the two groups and it was necessary for them to join forces to repel the common enemy. However, soon afterward, the Creoles and the Americans were back to their former stances in their continuing rivalry for control of the economic, political and social affairs of New Orleans. The bonding of Americans and Creoles, the temporary acceptance of complete American control, foreshadowed the significant mainstream-American impact on the society, economy, politics and architecture of the city. More cosmopolitan, national trends were introduced in New Orleans and were seen in the beginnings of construction of buildings in the Greek Revival style of architecture. Other American influences were expressed in the American version of the townhouse with its central hall, the extensive use of brick façades, especially on commercial and commercial-residential buildings, and the replacement of casement windows with sliding sash windows. In other areas of the Vieux Carré the three-bay Creole cottage proliferated.

End Notes

1. Although Dominique You was well-known and popular in New Orleans, he died in abject poverty at the age of fifty-five on November 15, 1830. He was interred with full military honors in St. Louis Cemetery No.1. On the day of his funeral all businesses were closed and the flags were hung at half-staff (Asbury 1936:169-170).

2. Euphemistically called coffee-houses, these places of business also offered a variety of foods and liquors.

3. The New Madrid Earthquake of 1811-1812 was centered near the head of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley and was more serious than either the Charleston or San Francisco earthquakes.
“The New Madrid disturbance began in the early morning hours of December 16, 1811, and continued at irregular intervals for more than a year. The severe shocks came on December 16 and 17 and on January 23 and February 7. The shock of February 7 probably equaled or exceeded the earlier disturbances” (Harrison 1961:16-17).

4. Rofignac was the godson of the Duke and Duchess of Orleans, parents of King Louis Philippe. He was mayor of New Orleans from approximately 1820 to 1828, and he was also a director of the Bank of Louisiana. Circumstances of his death in France in 1846 are somewhat peculiar. It was reported that he had a stroke, which caused him to drop a gun, which discharged and hit him in the head. Additional information is available at www.enlou.com/no_people/roffignaclpj-bio.htm.

5. These documents are reprinted in Louisiana Historical Quarterly Vol.5, No. 4, October, 1922.

6. Latrobe is often credited with originating the Greek Revival style in American architecture (Davidson 1981:35)

7. The yellow fever epidemic of 1817 was “the most violent up to that time” and may have been a driving force behind the French physicians’ formation of the first professional organization, La Société Médicale de la Nouvelle-Orléans in that year (Carrigan 1963:17).

8. Moise Waldhorn donated the antique sugar bowl which became the annual trophy for the “Sugar Bowl” football game held on New Year’s Day in New Orleans (Arthur 1937:38-39).

9. Due to the very real threat of disease associated with canal work, slaves were considered too valuable to risk.

10. Another source cites Citizen’s Bank as the bank which issued these banknotes, but reference the bank as located on Toulouse Street, adjoining the back of the St. Louis Hotel, which would make the date of issuance of the notes closer to 1840 rather than early in the American period (Workers of the Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Louisiana 1941:324).
Economic Expansion 1835-1850

The Creoles struggled for economic survival in the face of the American version of business. New buildings were constructed and old ones were updated in the excitement and tension of the competition for business. “Modern” features of the commercial store-house, including trabeated doorframes and pillars of granite from the North, were intended to appeal to the American customer. By demonstrating a more cosmopolitan appearance, and thereby, a more sophisticated approach to business, Creoles hoped to continue to dominate the economy of the city.

Other than in the summer months, when they are likely to have left the city, the women and children of New Orleans were evident. Women managed and tended their households, went shopping (most accompanied by a female slave), visited friends and relatives, etc. Children made the rounds of their education - dancing lessons, French lessons, Spanish classes, music lessons, drawing lessons, deportment and etiquette lessons (Ripley 1912). On the streets you heard and saw and smelled the products of the strolling vendors of coffee, fruits, cakes and other sweets - like pralines. Fresh vegetables and meat or seafood could be obtained from the old French Market, but one had to shop early - it usually closed by 10:00 a.m.. The stalls of the French Market were worked mainly by Indian and mulatto women. Other than the French Market, shopping was more or less confined to Chartres and Royal Streets. The Vieux Carré remained the center of commerce for the Creoles. In the early part of the century there were no places for a Creole lady to rest in the course of her errands.
“Between 1820 and 1840 the commerce of New Orleans expanded marvelously.” (Kendall 1922:139). Trade with Mexico developed significantly, as did trade from Europe to Mexico which was conducted through New Orleans. The economic effects of the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 began to have serious impact on international and domestic trade through New Orleans by about 1830. In the later 1830s as east-west railroads were completed, New Orleans lost its monopoly on cargo transportation. The dangerous prospect of epidemics, ever-present in New Orleans, contributed to the gradual change in trading patterns. However, importation of coffee and cocoa was not severely affected. Also during this period the exportation of cotton began to outpace that of sugar.

Most of the owners of property on Squares 39 and 40 did not reside on the block. It was too valuable as rental property to be used for single-family residences. As property values increased so did the rents of the commercial establishments on the ground floors. In some cases the rents increased above that which the proprietors of businesses were willing to pay, causing them to re-locate to less expensive accommodations. Eventually, this movement took its toll in declining property values (Kendall 1922:140).

Banking flourished during the prosperity of 1820-1840. Credit, secured by mortgage, was extended to practically every cotton plantation owner. Unfortunately, this depleted the capital available for use in New Orleans. In 1824 the Bank of Louisiana1 was chartered2 by the State of Louisiana as a land bank. In 1827 the Consolidated Association of Planter’s (Planters’ Bank) was likewise chartered (Figure 23). The State-secured land banks liquidated the value of property through the issuance and sale of bonds, which in turn generated cash for such banking endeavors as the making of loans secured by mortgage. The mortgages were liquidated by bond
sale to generate additional funds for the making of more loans, etc, etc. In 1828 the State of
Louisiana adopted the policy of securing repayment of capital as well as interest on the capital in
exchange for the issuance of credit to the State. The first bank to take advantage of the State’s
new policy was the Planters’ Bank. Other banks and other types of institutions were chartered
and quickly followed suit. This policy was also adopted by the United States government in
1833. While the loan-and-credit agreements did provide addition capital to spur development, it
also accounted for much of the concurrent unwise speculation of the period. Numerous less
reputable institutions, also chartered with improvement provisions, were established to take their
advantage of the economy.

The coffee-house and exchange at the intersection of Chartres and St. Louis Streets was
the site of many Creole business transactions, including auctions (Figure 23). The commercial
district of the Americans was centered more in the area of Canal Street. There remained a
“competitive” spirit to the relations between the Creoles and the Americans.

In 1836 the Americans won legislative approval for the division of New Orleans into
three separate municipalities. This was an enormous victory for the American sector of the city.
Prior to this time the Creoles had maintained political supremacy and had expended the city’s
revenues largely in the Vieux Carré. The division into separate municipalities meant that for the
first time the Americans had control over how and where their tax revenues were spent. And
they spent them on improvements, such as city railroads, streets and drainage projects in
Faubourg Ste. Marie and further upriver. “The New Orleans and Carrollton Railroad, which
staged its maiden trip on September 26, 1834, served as the catalyst for growth ‘uptown’” (Vogt
1985:60). Although they tried, the Americans could not divest the French of their history and
status. The “old city”, became the First Municipality, and Canal Street became a “Rubicon” with its “neutral ground”. The former animosity between the French and the Americans escalated and remained heightened for years (Tregle 1992:156-157). Later, the Americans influenced the State Legislature to amend the city charter for the purpose of debt liquidation (Kendall 1922:173).
The areas were re-named: the Vieux Carré then became part of the 2nd Municipal District (Brady 1999:xxiii). The Faubourg Ste. Marie, now the First Municipal District, expended the city tax revenues for the area’s development: streets were paved, warehouses built, quays constructed, and a quagmire was filled in to build the St. Charles Hotel (King 1968:273-274).

By 1836 the American trade deficit with England had reached $20,000,000 (Reed 1963:50). By tightening credit, the Bank of England put pressure on the United States in an attempt to force the exportation of gold to Europe. In order to maintain a sufficient level of cash-flow, the sales of mortgages to Europeans continued in an upward spiral. The increased property values generated through these mortgage sales coupled with the abundance of under-secured locally-issued specie lead to a precarious, although on the surface, prosperous, economic situation.

Most of the banking institutions were authorized to issue bills of varying denominations at the protection ratio of $1 on hand for each $3 issued. The bulk of the capital used in this economy was European, through the sale of bonds and mortgages. The bank or other institution chartered usually incorporated a designated project to finance. Such was the way the Improvement Bank was able to finance the new City Exchange, later called the St. Louis Hotel, in the amount of $900,000. The St. Charles Hotel had also been financed in this manner by the Exchange Bank; the Commercial Bank underwrote the waterworks and drainage systems projects. However, not many of the developments so chartered and financed came to fruition.

There was an abundance of under-secured cash in the city by about 1836. Not only were many of the banks issuing paper money, but each of the city’s three municipalities were also issuing specie. The municipality-issued specie were called “shinplasters”, and though actually
unsecured, were acceptable as payment to the municipalities employees, payment of the municipality’s bills, etc. The shinplasters were accepted everywhere but banks, as they were not legal tender. As they increased in abundance, the value of specie decreased accordingly. Complicating the situation of “authorized” specie was the ease with which these specie were counterfeited.

In this inflationary atmosphere property values also rose. On May 13, 1837 fourteen banking institutions suspended payment on specie. Without adequate security, liquidation and bankruptcy inevitably ensued.

The year 1837 marked the founding of one of New Orleans most notable benevolent societies, the Howard Association, which was “established specifically to relieve the sick and destitute in epidemic seasons” (Carrigan 1963:25). In addition to the tremendous amount of unremunerated medical services rendered by the city’s physicians during periods of epidemic, there were others who took financial advantage by charging dearly for their services, and yet others, who in collusion with apothecaries, prescribed (overly) expensive medications. During the 1840s and 1850s, dozens of benevolent societies were established in New Orleans to provide emergency relief in times epidemics (Carrigan 1963:19, 24).

The Exchange was sold to Dominique Seghers on January 18, 1830 (Figure 23). Under Hewlett’s management all aspects of the Exchange were enlarged, including the kitchen, the restaurant, the bar and the auction mart. Auctions of stocks and real estate and other properties were held every afternoon, while slaves were auctioned on Saturdays (Asbury 1936:138). Upstairs was gambling, dominoes and a billiard-hall. Next door, in the adjoining building on Chartres, Hewlett’s partner opened a cockfighting pit.
American businessmen soon found The Exchange “too small and too antiquated for the commercial needs of the city” (Wilson 1989:216). In March, 1835 they contracted for the Merchant’s Exchange to be built on Royal Street near Canal. The architects Gallier and Dakin, who were in the process of drawing the plans for the St. Charles Exchange Hotel, were chosen to design the building (Wilson 1989:216-217). “The Creoles, fearing an exodus of business from the old center of the city to the newer American section, decided that they, too, must build a new exchange” (Wilson 1989:217). The Creoles countered with the St. Louis Hotel (or City Exchange Hotel, as it was often called by the non-French) on St. Louis Street, across from squares 39 and 40 (Figures 23 and 24). The site is now occupied by the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel.

The Exchange and coffee-house on the corner of St. Louis and Chartres had been popular among the traders, planters, and businessmen for years, thus this block was the obvious site of choice. The exchange and coffee-house were not demolished, until the very later stages of the building of the Hotel. Both the Improvement Bank and the New Orleans Improvement Company were organized to accomplish this task. The New Orleans Improvement Company purchased all the properties on St. Louis Street between Chartres and Royal from Dominique Seghers in May, 1835, as the site of the new City Exchange. In September, 1835 Edward Sewell was contracted to provide all the carpentry work. Among the amenities of the new City Exchange were private stores, a hotel, a bank, ball rooms, and a restaurant. The City Exchange was planned to be executed in two stages, so as not to disrupt the business of the old Exchange. The first stage was the construction of the new building from Royal Street to the rear of the old Exchange. Only
after this was completed and the operations of the Exchange re-located to the new building was
the old Exchange to be demolished and rebuilt (Wilson 1989:217).

“The original plans of the City Exchange, as prepared by the Architect J. N. de Pouilly,
called for the construction of an enormous building to cover the entire block bounded by
Royal, Toulouse, Chartres and St. Louis Streets. Work on the structure was begun in
1836 with materials imported from France, but the money crisis of 1837 compelled the
promoters to modify their plans, and the size
of the building was greatly reduced. When
the Exchange opened, in the summer of
1838, it occupied only the St. Louis Street
side of the square. The principal entrance,
on St. Louis Street, opened into a vestibule
127 feet wide and 40 feet deep. The
ballrooms were on the second floor, with
separate entrances on both Royal and St.
Louis Streets. The main feature of the hotel,
however, was the Rotunda, a circular
apartment with a high domed ceiling, in the
center of the building. The Rotunda soon
replaced Hewlett’s Exchange as the
principal auction mart of the city and until
the Civil War was also a favorite place for
political mass meetings” (Asbury 1936:138-139).

The St. Louis Hotel opened in
January, 1838. To emphasize the
importance of the building, Exchange Street
was extended through the block
immediately in front of the hotel, dividing
the block between Royal and Chartres
(Figure 25). The Exchange extension,
designed by J. N. B. de Pouilly, was called

Figure 24 Drawing of the St. Louis Hotel and
Rotunda. Illustration from Cable 1980:117.
Exchange Alley (*Allee*), and thus, Squares 39 and 40 were formed from a single square. One could look down Exchange Street from Canal Street and see the St. Louis Hotel. The entire project - St. Louis Hotel, the extension of Exchange Alley, the development of buildings on Exchange - was contrived to effect the revitalization of the decaying Creole commercial district. The commercial aspect of Exchange Alley was pre-ordained. The New Orleans Improvement Company contracted with Edward Sewell in 1836 to construct the majority of the buildings. In addition to the numerous types of stores for the purchase of goods and services, the offices of many of the city’s architects and engineers found a home on this block of the street.

A number of the properties involved in the development of the Exchange Alley extension through Squares 39 and 40 were owned by Philippe Auguste Delachaise. Thomas and David Urquhart had owned several more of the properties from 1805, when purchased from the heirs of the
Widow de la Ronde, until 1833, when Thomas Urquhart sold it to Tricou, Delacrois and Hiligsberg. Tricou, Delacrois and Hiligsberg owned the majority of the property available on the block in 1833. Tricou, Delacrois and Hiligsberg divested themselves of the properties in 1835, Hiligsberg bought out Tricou’s and Delacrois’ shares of ownership in some lots. The rest were sold to Alonzo Morphy and John McDonough among others. In 1848 Christian Roselius bought into the project by the purchase of properties from Hiligsberg’s estate.

Although the St. Louis Hotel was soon destroyed by fire, it was quickly re-built (Cable 1980:116). In the center of the Rotunda was a large slave block. The slave auctions held in the Rotunda were among the largest and best-known in the South. The dome, coffered with insets painted by Dominique Canova, was copper-covered and ingeniously built of hollow terra cotta cylinders or inverted pots (Heard 1997:77; Cable 1980:119; Caldwell 1975:207-215). The hotel not only was quite grand, it even had a Ladies Exchange, naturally with a separate entrance, which was on Royal Street. Until the building of the St. Louis Hotel, there were no restaurants, cafés, coffeehouses, tea rooms or “women’s exchange” that a woman could enter and keep her reputation - assuming, of course, that she would even be admitted!

Among the businesses found on the block of Squares 39 and 40 were a number of saloons, restaurants, coffee-houses, or combination coffee-house-saloon-restaurants. There are two drawings of the Café des Colonnes by de Pouilly both from his sketchbooks of the St. Louis Hotel/Exchange Alley project, one is from 1837 and the other is from 1838. The 1837 sketch is incomplete, but it appears to be two-and-a-half stories. The 1838 sketch is more complete and shows the building with an additional story (Figure 26). In addition, the affiche (Plan Book 10, Folio 15), dated March 14, 1855, by Gualdi is equally famous (Figure 27). The building is
three-and-a-half stories with an arcade with recessed panels, which was popular in the 1830s, on both the St. Louis and Exchange Alley faces of the building. In

**Figure 26** Sketch of Café des Colonnes by de Pouilly, 1838. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.

In addition the windows of the upper levels are recessed. The affiche shows a wrought iron bridge spanning Exchange Alley. This

**Figure 27** Affiche of Café des Colonnes by Gualdi. Illustration from the Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Figure 28 “Bridge” across Exchange Alley, photograph #378 by Mugnier. Louisiana State Museum, Photographic Archive and Gallery, The Mint, New Orleans, La.
“bridge” is also evident in a photograph (print # 378) by George François Mugnier, taken between 1880 and 1903, but the wrought iron has been replaced with wood (Figure 28). In this photograph it is apparent that the bridge is actually an extended living area of two apartments which it connects. The “bridge” was apparently removed sometime before the final photographs of Exchange Alley were made, most done in 1903.

In the words of Phil Johnson (1968:233), “Thank God the French got here first.” The French instilled a love of food, fun, and life in New Orleans. The cuisine of New Orleans has enjoyed world-renown since at least the middle of the nineteenth century. Famous for its gumbos, etouffées, and creoles, it was also the home of the cocktail. Although probably not the inventor of New Orleans Creole gumbo, the restaurant at the City Exchange (St. Louis Hotel) was one of the earliest to have gumbo on the menu. The City Exchange restaurant is credited with being the first in New Orleans, if not the first in the United States to offer patrons a free lunch.

“The menu consisted of soup, a piece of beef or ham with potatoes, meat pie, and oyster patties. At first a plate of lunch was handed to the customer with whatever drink he had ordered, but later the food was placed on a separate counter and anyone could help himself to as much as he desired. The innovation proved so popular that it was quickly copied by all the first-class bars in New Orleans and soon spread to other cities. Before many years bar-rooms all over the country were serving free elaborate repasts which compared favorably with the menus of the best restaurants” (Asbury 1936:139).

In the early 1840s subscription balls were initiated at the St. Louis Hotel. Some were also held at the St. Charles, but as the management at the St. Charles insisted that all hotel guests be invited, they were soon discontinued. This was not the case at the St. Louis Hotel, where exclusive functions with the guest list under the firm control of the host were permitted. One of the most famous of these subscriptions balls was held at the St. Louis Hotel during the winter of
1842-1843 in honor of Henry Clay. Although the number of guests present at this gala is reported by Asbury (1936:141) as two hundred and reported by Mary Cable (1980:118) as six hundred, the per person price of $100 made this one of the most expensive affairs of the era.

The services and the amenities, and to some extent the quality of the food, of the St. Louis Hotel, the St. Charles Hotel, and the other bars and restaurants of the time were comparable. While the St. Charles catered to a more American clientele, the St. Louis Hotel was the center of the social activities of the Creoles and visiting Europeans.

In 1840 Antoine’s Restaurant, at the modern address of 626-628 St. Louis Street, then 50 St. Louis Street, was opened as a *pension* (boarding house) by Antoine Alciatore, a sixteen-year-old, recent arrival to New Orleans (Figures 23 and 29). At the time the property, including the Creole townhouse, was owned by Louis Frederick Foucher de Circe or his widow. From Marseille, France, Antoine had been apprenticed to the owner of the Hotel de Noailles and had become a chef. His first job in New Orleans was at the recently opened St. Charles Hotel. After five years of operating his *pension*, he was sufficiently successful to be able to afford to marry. Increasingly more restaurant than boarding house, business at the *pension* flourished. By 1860 the restaurant business had outgrown the Creole townhouse on St. Louis Street and moved to a larger location in the seven hundred block of St. Louis Street (Guste 1978:19-20).

The Sauvé crevasse occurred in May, 1849 upriver from New Orleans. Most of New Orleans was flooded. A Delta Survey conducted by Captain A. A. Humphrey and Lieutenant H. L. Abbot in 1851 was published in 1861 as *Report upon the Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River; upon the Protection of the Alluvial Region against overflow and upon the Deepening of the Mouths, etc.* This report led to the development of the “levee only” policy for
Figure 29 626 St. Louis Street, Antoine’s. Illustration from Guste 1978:17-18.
flood control which continued until the flood of 1927 broke the levees in several places (Harrison 1961:59).

Despite the heavy tolls taken by disease, the population of New Orleans was rapidly increasing during the 1830s. It more than doubled in the ten-year period between censuses: from 49,826 in 1830 it blossomed into 102,193 in 1840, making it the third largest city in the United States after New York and Baltimore, and second to New York as a port. According to the 1840 census, for the first time since the very earliest days of the city, whites outnumbered non-whites. Population density also doubled. Land was at a premium.

The four-story brick store at 613-619 Conti Street exhibits fenestration which dates the building to the late 1830s (Figures 23 and 30). The affiche (Plan Book 58, Folio 35) of the four-story brick store is dated February 6, 1861. The granite pillars were probably added to the building in the early 1840s. The owner Philip A. Delachaise contracted with the builder Edward William Sewell May 13, 1836 for the construction of six houses, including this building. In the later 1830s and during the 1840s, ornamentation such as dentils in the Greek Revival Style were sometimes added. Granite pillars were introduced on the ground level facade of some commercial buildings, and many buildings were updated with these rectangular pillars with trabeated lintels replacing the arched openings.

The majority of the houses built during the Antebellum Period were either of the one-story Creole cottage or the two- or three-story townhouse style. As squares 39 and 40 were more urban and commercial, the Creole townhouses, built between 1794 and 1840, were the mode.
There are a number of extant drawings (the majority done in the mid-1800s) and photographs (primarily from 1903) of the Creole townhouse and store style. Sally Reeves of the New Orleans

**Figure 30** 613-619 Conti Street, Affiche, Plan Book 58, Folio 35. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Notarial Archives estimates the majority of the buildings of Squares 39 and 40 were built between the later 1820s and before 1860 (Reeves personal communication, 2001).

From the earliest days of the city, dueling was a popular method of dispute resolution, fisticuffs were definitely déclassé. The height of dueling, especially fencing as an art, was in the short period between 1830 and the Civil War. Among the Creoles dueling was a matter of maintaining honor, and serious injuries rarely occurred. Among the Americans, however, the intent was to kill the opponent. From their rented rooms on Exchange Alley, approximately fifty maitres d’armes (fencing masters) gave instructions to the Creole elite (Figure 23). The maitres d’armes, many of whom had received their training in France, were well-respected by the young men of New Orleans who tried to emulate their methods, manners and dress. These romantic figures, basking in admiration, were, nonetheless, not of a social status that would enable entry into the elite themselves. A number of them were free men of color, representing a gulf that could never be crossed to attain elite status in white Creole society.

“Among the most celebrated of these dangerous dandies were Marcel Dauphin, whose skill availed him but little in the end, for he was killed in a duel with shotguns; Pépé Lulla, a Spaniard; Gilbert Rosière, called Titi by his pupils; and Bastile Croquère. The last named, who lived in an old house on the corner of Conti Street and Exchange Alley, was a mulatto and is said to have been the handsomest man in New Orleans. He habitually wore a suit of the finest green broadcloth, snow-white shirts, and a wide black stock about his throat. He possessed a notable collection of cameos and was considered an authority upon the subject; when in gala attire his raiment was embellished by cameo rings, breast-pins, and bracelets. He fought many duels in France, where he was educated, but none in New Orleans; because he was a man of color no white man would have accepted his challenge or even quarreled with him. But he was a miraculous swordsman and a wonderful teacher, and men of the best Creole families went to him for instruction and crossed swords with him in private bouts. Pépé Lulla is said to have been even more accomplished than Croquère and was perhaps the finest swordsman who ever drew blade in New Orleans” (Asbury 1936:151-152).
Another factor barred entry into the Creole elite, even for the white fencing master. In contradiction to the admiration they received due to their profession, mâitres d’armes not socially acceptable, could never be introduced to the Creole females, because of their profession. Social standing, and its appearance, did not permit the men of the Creole elite to be engaged in manual labor. Only white collar jobs, those jobs that required a coat and collar to be worn all day, were considered suitable employment: positions in business, a profession, or governmental office. Appropriate employment included the gamut from lawyers and doctors to shipping clerks and bookkeepers. While to some extent economically mobile, Creole society was, in other aspects, socially rigid. The boundaries of the relatively new Creole elite, less than a hundred years in the making, were circumscribed by color, family heritage, and wealth.

The beginnings of the Americanization of the Creoles of New Orleans was expressed by their participation in the national architectural trends of Greek Revival and the use of specific decorative architectural embellishments. The purpose of the Creoles in architectural modification and modernization was twofold – to secure economic survival by the enhancement of business and to demonstrate and maintain their cosmopolitan social superiority over the Americans. The planned commercial district of the St. Louis Hotel and Exchange and the Exchange Alley extension was a large scale urban renewal project in direct response to the economic and ethnic challenges posed by the Anglos.

End Notes

1. It is unclear exactly which bank is meant by “Bank of Louisiana” and references are inconsistent.

2. Banks and other institutions were normally chartered with a provision which specified some civic improvement toward which profits were to be dedicated.
3. Banking services were to be provided by Citizens’ Bank, but due to the economic situation at the time, the plans for the City Exchange were downsized, and Citizens’ Bank built its own building fronting Toulouse Street, but adjoining the back of the hotel.
Cotton was high and the living was easy, for many if not for all. The economy was booming. New Orleans had recovered from the financial crises of the 1837 cash-crunch and its echo in 1839. Financial opportunity abounded in the port city. Building and modernizing of existing buildings flourished in the abundant prosperity, more housing and more stores were needed in the growing city. New Orleans drew new inhabitants who disregarded the dangers of flood and disease.

“But the river’s promise, not its danger, drew the thousands upon thousands who flocked to the city. Besides successful American (and some European) businessmen who came with capital to start at the top, there were many others with get-rich-quick schemes, professionals seeking wider clienteles, and countless ambitious young men eager to work their way up, starting as clerks and office assistants” (Brady 1999:xxi).

The city was filled with transients. Most had come to New Orleans to get rich as quickly as possible. By 1860, two-thirds of the population was Protestant, and only 3 out of 25 attended any church. “The commercial transient population made New Orleans a rather irreligious city” (Winters 1947:28). Lawlessness continued – bands of thieves, robbers and worse roved the city. The police force was insufficient to maintain adequate protection throughout the city.

Most of the city was below sea level, and when the river was high, all of it was below the level of the river. Nevertheless, even with its geographical restrictions to physical growth, the city expanded, snake-like, along the firm ground parallel to the river; rear development was hemmed-in by the swamps. Construction was booming, making some builders and architects extremely wealthy. New faubourgs, the suburbs, cropped up in both upriver and downriver areas of the city, which, in 1850, was still focused on the Vieux Carré. The three distinct
municipalities of New Orleans were reunited to a single entity in 1852. The Americans gained political dominance, and Faubourg Ste. Marie gained the economic focus of American commercial activity. It was now the center of New Orleans, ... “the American had conquered the Creole, and the Cabildo yielded precedence to the City Hall” (King 1968:282). At this time also, a 4th District, Lafayette (today known as the Garden District) was added to the city. This area was most popular with wealthy American businessmen. The property was divided into spacious and inexpensive lots.

The American pattern of separation of residential and commercial areas continued. The majority of Creoles with their slaves and a good number of free persons of color still lived mainly in the old portion of the city. A few of the Creoles had built mansions in the downriver neighborhood on Esplanade Avenue. The majority of free persons of color tended to inhabit Faubourg Trémé and Faubourg Marigny. Americans in their large houses and mansions centered on large lots and white-immigrant servants in their smaller houses on the back streets and alleys tended to live upriver in Faubourg Ste. Marie. Unlike the Creoles, Americans tended to have white-immigrant servants rather than slaves or colored servants. Other than those employed as house-servants, immigrants tended to cluster in the older parts of town, along the wharves or “back of town where the city dissolved into quagmires” (Brady 1999:xxii). Modern transportation in the form of horse-drawn coaches (omnibuses) had arrived. They followed regular routes through the city. There were also street railroads with passenger cars. These were first pulled by mules rather than steam engines. They carried passengers to Lake Pontchartrain for 5 cents. Transients lived wherever there was room in a boardinghouse, and there were boardinghouses throughout the city.
“Most parts of town were filled with boarding houses, occupied by winter visitors, couples who hadn’t yet set up housekeeping, and the several thousand single men who resided in the city, as well as the many transients – ship captains, entertainers, gamblers, painters, writers, adventurers, exiles, salesmen, and all other manner of travelers. New Yorker A. Oakley Hall wrote superciliously that New Orleans was called ‘the boarding house of these United States,’ estimating that every tenth house rented furnished rooms” (Brady 1999:xxi).

Slavery in the plantation economy of the South was changed by the cotton gin, but the slave experience in New Orleans was almost totally different. The general attitudes of many Northerners and many Southerners towards slaves and slavery was similarly dichotomous. Slaves, because they were slaves, were constantly exposed to hostility and derision in the North, and strict segregation was the rule (Schweninger 1979:308-309). In the South slaves were valuable property. In New Orleans this attitude was carried to extremes, unlike any other place in the United States. Though New Orleans was considered to be the slave center of the South and many slaves feared being “sold down the river”, it was, in fact, an oasis of near-freedom for many (Schweninger 1979:305). While there was a wariness, occasionally heightened to outright fear due to rumors of slave insurrection or bands of fugitive slaves intent on depredation, much of the era was characterized by an acknowledgment of individuality and humanity and courtesy unknown to Northerners.

Two principal conditions of the North account for attitudes of Northerners to slaves and free persons of color. The first is that they were a relative rarity. In the South, and especially in New Orleans, slaves and free persons of color were ubiquitous, and had been from the earliest days of settlement. It was more uncommon, if not unknown, for a day to pass without some kind of contact with either slaves or free persons of color. In the North, the all-white and non-English-speaking immigrant population of the North was the lowest social class. Poverty and
near-poverty was coincidental with social class for many of the immigrants. In New Orleans the shared language and shared cultural experiences of the slaves, free persons of color and whites made the non-whites an integral part of the social and economic fabric of life. In addition, the social class of free persons of color in New Orleans was not necessarily closely associated with poverty, as was the case of the immigrant class of the North.

Because the institution of slavery was necessary to the plantation economy, the abolitionist movement was a blow to the economic foundation of the South. As support increased for the abolitionist movement, the Southern hold on its livelihood, the plantation system supported and represented by the institution of slavery, became more tenacious.

It had long been the custom in New Orleans for masters to hire out their slaves. It was only a small step farther in this direction for slaves to hire themselves out for wages. In New Orleans, not only did slaves freely roam the streets of the city, at least until their 9:00 p.m. curfew, but many were employed. Most did odd jobs or were engaged in small-scale business. Slaves were not under the constant supervision of their masters, and a large number did not even reside with their masters. While remitting a portion of their earned income to their masters, a large number of these slaves were in the position to accumulate sufficient money to purchase their freedom and that of members of their families (Schweninger 1979:311; Reinders 1965:282). Thus, it was not unusual for a free person of color to be a slave-holder in his own right. Financial independence also made it possible for these slaves and former slaves to establish small businesses and invest in property. “The best known rooming houses in the city [New Orleans] were owned and operated by free Negro women” (Reinders 1965:278). Free
persons of color tended to invest their earnings in property. There were more non-whites in New Orleans who were more economically prosperous than others anywhere else in the United States.

“Real estate was owned by free Negro women to a far greater extent than among their white sisters....more important under the placage system free Negro women were rewarded with land and homes by their white lovers. It is not surprising therefore that several of the largest Negro landholders were women, a few having taxable property valued at over $20,000” (Reinders 1965:281).

Although the Black Code was still in force and free persons of color did not enjoy the full range of rights and freedoms that whites did, this did not preclude their participation in social activities. Gambling, horse-racing, sports, attendance at the quadroon balls, the Sunday afternoons at Congo Square, evenings spent at restaurants, theatres, and the opera were all accessible to those who could afford it. While there were laws restricting manumission, and non-Louisiana-native free persons of color were not legally permitted to enter Louisiana, many slaves and free persons of color from outside of Louisiana made their way, often assisted by forged documents, to New Orleans. A number even came to New Orleans for vacation. As the beginning of the Civil War approached, the mounting tension generated by the increasingly supported abolitionist movement served to lessen the freedoms permitted in New Orleans, though to a lesser extent than in other portions of the South. Rumors of slave insurrection instigated and supported by free persons of color generated a high degree of fear among the inhabitants. A large number of free persons of color were arrested for fomenting insurrection among the slaves (Winters 1947:20).

“As abolitionists fought to end slavery and slaves sought their freedom by flight or violence, southern defense of the plantations system hardened. Its apologists justified enslavement by the supposed inferiority of the black race. Laws controlling slaves grew more severe, punishments more draconian, and manumission was forbidden. Because successful free people of color were a living rebuttal to racist ideology, their very
existence a rebuke, their rights were progressively curtailed and their lot worsened in the South” (Brady 1999:xxvi).

Both skilled and unskilled free persons of color felt stiff competition in the employment market from the influx of European immigrants which continued to flood the city. However, as a group, the skilled free persons of color fared better than those in the unskilled portion of the population. The Germans and, especially, the Irish replaced many of the free persons of color in unskilled, common labor jobs, particularly those controlled by Americans. “Europeans tended to replace free Negroes as domestic servants, waiters, and hotel workers. The St. Charles Hotel, which once employed free Negroes, by the 1850s had an almost all-Irish staff” (Reinders 1965:276).

Vella (1997:269) considers that much that has been written about the animosity between the Creoles and the Americans is over-emphasized. She interprets this portion of the cultural history of New Orleans as being no different from that of any other major American city. During this same antebellum period New York, Chicago and St. Louis all had “similar proportions” of immigrants.

“Both the Americans and the Creoles looked upon these new people as brawling, drunken, oafish, and superstitious; they were more estranged from them, and from the population they courteously referred to as ‘colored people’, than they were from each other. Throughout the 1850s in New Orleans there were bloody riots and murders, not between Creoles and Americans, but between the immigrant groups who, it was felt, were metastasizing over the city and American chauvinists who had gravitated to the Know-Nothing Party. The one armed standoff that did occur between Creoles and Americans in 1858 was essentially a contest over which politicians would control the immigrant vote” (Vella 1997:269).

The unskilled immigrants, most of whom were Irish, supplied the labor necessary to development in the areas of canal digging and dredging, installation of gas and water mains, etc. As in the past, all this soil disturbance was inevitably followed by disease. Epidemics of historic
proportions of cholera, yellow fever, and even Asiatic flu struck the populace in a number of years – 1827, 1828, 1829, 1832, 1833, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1853, 1854, 1855. Almost 9,000 died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1853 (Brady 1999:xxiii).

“In the summer of 1853 the climax of death was reached. Over five thousand raw emigrants, Irish, English, and German, landed during the year, and the city was in a state of upheaval – canals being widened and deepened, ditches dug, gas and water mains extended, new road beds constructed. Street cleaning being yet in an experimental condition, the levees, back streets, slums, were foul and swarming with demoralized, filthy humanity. In May the yellow fever broke out on an English ship newly loaded with Irish emigrants, and spread through the shipping in port; only twenty-five deaths were reported for the closing week of June, the disease prowling still in obscure corners. By the middle of July the week’s deaths were two hundred and four. Thousands left the city in the panic that ensued, blocking every route and mode of travelling. The weather changed to daily rains and hot suns. The floors of the Charity Hospital were covered with pauper sick. For a week, one died every half hour. Every day the death rate rolled up higher, and on the 22nd of August, from midnight to midnight, the city yielded a fresh victim every five minutes. The horrors of 1833 were repeated. Out of a sixty thousand population, forty thousand were attacked, eleven thousand died. In 1854 and 1855 the fever returned with cholera, with a death rate of seventy-two and seventy-three per thousand. In 1853 it was one hundred and eleven per thousand” (King 1968:287-289).

The New Orleanians responded to the epidemic crisis with admirable fortitude. It was during this period that many of the charitable and benevolent organizations of New Orleans were founded. Orphanages were opened to care for the many children who had lost their parents. The Louisiana State Board of Health, established in 1855, “the first state board in the United States, was a direct outgrowth of the epidemics of 1853 and 1854” (Carrigan 1963:33).

Still, the influx of new inhabitants to New Orleans did not slacken. In April (24th or 25th) of 1854, approximately two thousand foreigners arrived in two days (Brady 1999:xxv).

Throughout the antebellum period water was a primary problem. There was too much of it and, just as in colonial times, it was contaminated. “In fact, filth of every kind characterized New Orleans” (Vella 1997:255). Turkeys wandered freely all over town, but it was the starving
dogs who roamed the city in packs that caused a great deal of distress. The city tried to eliminate the dogs by offering bounties on dead strays, but they soon found that the policemen of the city were neglecting other duties to hunt dogs to collect the bounties. Later the city tried putting out poisoned sausages for the dogs, but then the shop keepers complained about the decomposing bodies of dogs all over the streets. Even when the bodies were disposed by throwing them in the river, they were not dumped in the middle of the river where they would wash away, but rather they were just thrown in from the riverbank – where they washed ashore or were sucked into the city water supply. Public concern about rabies, or hydrophobia as it was then called, was rampant. But the great “perennial leading killer was cholera... people died like dogs from it every year” (Vella 1997:256-257).

Prosperity and the hopes and expectations of continued economic growth permitted the addition of a fourth floor to many of the buildings on Squares 39 and 40. It was not until the Baroness Pontalba’s apartments were built in 1849-1850 that cast iron was introduced in New Orleans. Already popular throughout the large cities of the North, cast iron was added to a great many buildings and in some cases replaced existing wrought iron. The Creoles’ exuberance for life and their expectations for the future were suitably expressed in the proliferation of decorative cast-iron as balconies and other embellishments to their buildings. This to some extent foreshadowed the much less expensive wooden embellishments on all but the most modest of homes in the Victorian styles.

After the early 1850s the kitchen and dining functions of the outbuildings were usually incorporated into the main house. The Irish, English and German immigrants who arrived in 1853 had been immediately put to work dredging canals, digging ditches, constructing roads, and
gas and water mains were extended (King 1968:285). These amenities made the kitchen incorporation more practicable. Also during this period, in the 1850s, New Orleans was plagued by fires (Brady 1999:xxv). The incorporation of the kitchen into the main portion of the house was hastened by the new amenities and the necessity for rebuilding after fire.

The building at 417 Royal Street, formerly *La Banque de la Louisiane*, was purchased by Judge Alonzo Morphy in 1841 (Figures 31 and 32). Judge Morphy, a member of Louisiana’s high court, former prominent member of the bar and formerly state Attorney General, is now primarily known as the father of Paul Charles Morphy,¹ who became an accomplished chess master while still in his teens (Workers of the Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Louisiana 1941:146). Although too young to be admitted to the bar at the time, Paul finished law school at the age of twenty. At twenty-two years old, Paul was acknowledged the chess world champion. It was in this house, at a very young age, sitting on accounting ledgers and commercial books to reach the chessboard, downstairs in his grandfather’s countinghouse, that Paul Morphy learned how to play chess. The chess world champion died in this house while taking a bath on a hot day in 1884 (Arthur 1937:51).

The formation, for the Mardi Gras of February 24, 1857, of the Mistick Krewe of Comus marked the beginnings of the parades and balls of the Mardi Gras celebrations as they are known today in New Orleans (Forman 1973:41). Although masked processions had been initiated in 1827, and in 1837 floats were added to the parade, it was not until the formation of Krewes that the carnival was organized by social clubs. For a number of years many of the more important Mardi Gras balls were held in the public rooms of the St. Louis Hotel. During the years when the
Civil War was upon New Orleans – 1862, 1863, 1864 and 1865 – Mardi Gras was not formally celebrated. In 1862 the populace was concerned over the course of the war and the imminent

Figure 31 Properties discussed in Antebellum and War Years. 1. Morphy House. 2. 428 Royal Street. 3. 424-426 Royal Street. 4. St. Louis Hotel. 5. Bank of Louisiana.
possibility of Yankee occupation. The Mayor issued a proclamation forbidding masking, due to the possibility of spies entering the city. In 1863 General Banks prohibited the celebration of Mardi Gras. In early 1865 the city was only beginning to again show signs of life (Capers 1965:198). The Mardi Gras celebrations resumed in 1866 (Asbury 1936:141).

Periodic fires continued throughout the early 1860s, sometimes more than one per night. At approximately 2:30 a.m. on May 5, 1861 No. 98 Royal, modern address 428 Royal Street, caught fire in the rear, and the building was almost totally destroyed (Figures 31 and 33). The rez-de-chaussée was occupied by Mademoiselle Justine’s Millinery, while the upper floors were occupied by Mr. D. Seche and his family, and Madame Comte Brochard, the prima donna of the opera company. The day before, also at about 2:00 a.m., the building next door and adjoining (424-426 Royal Street) had also caught fire, and the
upper story destroyed. This building was occupied by Mr. Wiss, an agent for Pleyel and Erard pianos, and by a free woman of color who kept boarders (*New Orleans Daily Crescent* May 6, 1861). The buildings were two of several owned by Delphine Macarty, the wife of Louis Lalaurie. Madame Lalaurie was also the mistress of the Lalaurie mansion on Royal Street which became known as haunted due to (possibly erroneous) tales of Mme. Lalaurie’s torture of slaves (Arthur 1937:43-45, 147-151).

“By 1860 New Orleans was the largest cotton market in the world with port trade totaling $324 million and wharf tonnage double that of New York City. Louisiana’s per-capita wealth was second only to Connecticut’s” (Vogt 1985:61).

The legislative discussions over the question of Louisiana’s secession from the Union were hotly debated. Christian Roselius, one of the leading German lawyers and politicians, was one of ten legislators who held firm their objection to the secession of Louisiana and “steadfastly refused” to sign the Act of Secession which was passed by the Louisiana Legislature January 26, 1861 (Kendall 1922:234). Secession would mean that New Orleans was cut off from the trade connections upriver. The mouth of the river was blockaded in late March, 1861. For the first six months of the blockade, trade was not significantly curtailed. The blockade was easily run and the populace was excited by the coming and going of troops through the city, which was a recruitment center (Capers 1965:21).

The city was plagued with swindlers and counterfeiters, in addition to the rougher criminals who were always present. “The *Daily Crescent* of March 25, 1861, reported arrest of a gang of counterfeiters passing off thousands of dollars in twenty dollar bills drawn on the Bank of New Orleans (Winters 1947:47). Paper money, issued by the Confederacy, the State of Louisiana and the City of New Orleans, and shinplasters, issued by local businesses, continued
as the primary currency of small denominations, as less and less of gold and silver coins were seen. A joke of the period, reported by Cable, was that “you could pass the label of an olive-oil bottle, because it was greasy, smelt bad, and bore an autograph” (Johnson 1941:17).

The tenor of social life in 1861 was changed. During the war years, the gaiety which characterized New Orleans was suppressed. While social activities continued, they were now dedicated to “The Cause”. These affairs, as they had been in the past, were socially exclusive: Yankees were not invited. Many balls, bazaars, and lotteries, all given to support the soldiers and their families, were held at the St. Louis Hotel (Figure 31).

“Charity balls, theatre performances, concerts, picnics, and bazaars were given to raise money for the soldiers and their families. A bazaar organized by the elite of the city opened in April, 1861, at the St. Louis Hotel. All surplus coal, groceries, Severes china, clocks, furniture, pianos, and other offerings were donated to this noble charity meeting. The ladies operating this bazaar collected more than $60,000 for cloth and needles. After cutting out the garments they hired hundreds of poor women who needed work desperately, to sew them into garments for the soldiers.” (Winters 1947:33-34).

Americans and Creoles united once again to fight against the common enemy – this time it was the Yankees. Fears of war began to be realized in the city. The blockade was tightened in the spring of 1862, and the affect was immediately felt in the absence of trade, the shortage of foodstuffs, and the lack of gold and silver (Johnson 1941:17). After only a few hours of bombardment, the forts protecting the city were breached on the morning of April 24, 1862. The Confederate military authorities ordered that all the cotton and goods on the docks, wharves and warehouses be burned, so that they would be of no use to the Union forces. Smoke hung over the city for days, molasses ran in the streets and gutters. The poor carried away as many of the foodstuffs as possible. The forts formally surrendered on April 28, and Captain David G. Farragut took possession of the city on April 29, 1862. General Benjamin Butler arrived at New
Orleans early in the day on May 1, 1862, but delayed coming shore until evening, when less attention would be drawn. On May 2, General Butler had the St. Charles Hotel opened and he and his wife resided there, until he had located (and confiscated) still yet “more comfortable” accommodations (Asbury 1936:140; Hearn 1997:76-77).

Although the war did not officially end until April, 1865, for all intents and purposes, reconstruction in New Orleans began May 1, 1862, when General “Beast” (also known as “Spoons”) Butler walked into the city (Capers 1965:120). Butler’s detestation of the wealthy, the powerful, and anyone who had attended West Point (This was a hatred he had harbored since his application for appointment as a cadet had been denied [Hearn 1997:9-10].), was immediately felt by the upper classes of New Orleans.

Butler, ever in sympathy with the impoverished, continued the “Free Market” to feed the poor that had been instituted by the wealthy citizens of New Orleans. Additionally, he opened the river to trade which both brought in sorely needed supplies and employment. Butler emphasized to the public, in his issuance of General Order No. 25 on May 9, 1862, their destitution was directly and entirely due to selfishness on the part of the wealthy of New Orleans (Hearn 1997:97).

Under martial law, the patrolling troops did serve to suppress the overt criminal elements of the city. However, tensions between free persons of color and the impoverished newly-immigrated whites escalated, sometimes to riots, as these poor whites displaced free men of color, especially those in unskilled labor, from their jobs. Butler’s preferential employment of whites in the city maintenance projects did not alleviate this tension. Butler, fearing the instigation of slave insurrection by the economically displaced and unemployed free men of
color, in an effort to get these men off the streets, encouraged their enlistment in the Free Negro unit of the Federal army (Hearn 1997:204-212). In further divisive action, Butler also promised freedom to any slaves who informed the military courts of any anti-Union activities on the part of their masters (Kendall 1922:284). Thus, Butler not only divided the city along economic lines but along racial ones as well.

Concerned with the proliferation of paper currency unsecured by gold and silver, and upon hearing that many of the banks and some private individuals had cached large amounts of monies with the foreign consuls of the city, Butler issued another order which prohibited the use of specie or Confederate notes and bonds after May 27. The only bank to voice its protest, however, was the Bank of Louisiana. When threatened by Butler, this dissent was quickly hushed, and this bank, too, complied with the order. This order, plus those of requiring oaths of allegiance to the United States of foreigners in New Orleans, had international repercussions and nearly plunged the United States into a diplomatic crisis with practically all of Europe. The international reactions to Butler's policies heavily influenced the United States, in the interests of its own diplomatic relations with Europe, to replace Butler in December, 1862 (Hearn 1997:142-166; Kendall 1922, 281-287; Johnson 1941, 49-51, 61-66).

Giving a "free hand" to his brother Andrew, the two Butlers delved deeply into the pockets of the wealthy. General Orders relating to taxation and confiscation for resistance to the Union were heartily resented. But, among all of the General Orders issued, General Order No. 28, the order which allegedly dealt with comportment of Federal soldiers more than the deportment of the ladies of New Orleans, struck the hearts of New Orleanians and shocked the
rest of the world (Winters 1947; Hearn 1997). The upper classes of New Orleans held their collective breaths, while the poor praised Butler for his generosity and caring (Hearn 1997:4).

“By May 20, 1862, New Orleans was completely under Federal domination. Butler had silenced the women; he controlled the commerce and finances of the city; he dictated the policies of the press; he repressed all public display of Confederate sympathy; Federal authorities ran the city government and courts” (Winters 1947:132).

Due to New Orleans’ heavy reliance on external markets as the base of its specialized economy, the tightened blockade severely hindered trade and capital inflow. Many in the city were hungry. During the brief weeks it took to effect the military capture of the city, the only destruction of property and goods suffered by New Orleans was perpetrated by the citizens of the city themselves to prevent confiscation of the goods by the invading forces. Otherwise, New Orleans was not physically damaged during the war. In fact, in 1863, after the fall of Vicksburg, external trade resumed and began recovery. However, the profits did not accrue to those upper classes of New Orleanians who would have otherwise in pre-war years economically benefitted. The older commercial houses of the city had been forced out of business in 1863 for resistance to Federal authorities, leaving commercial enterprise, and its profits, to northerners who had recently arrived in the city. This is, of course, in addition to the depredations suffered by the wealthy of New Orleans at the hands of Andrew Butler, and indirectly (and also possibly directly) his brother, General Benjamin Butler, who, in December, 1862, left New Orleans millions of dollars richer than they had entered it. Although Capers maintains that losses sustained by the wealthy of New Orleans were not “the result of arbitrary Federal confiscation”, he also states that some of the taxations and confiscations were, in fact, arbitrary (1965:154, 156). For the most part, he attributes blame for the losses suffered by the wealthy as the result of their own failures to respond appropriately to the Federal authorities by consenting to take the
oaths of loyalty to the Union, as Butler had offered to them. The deprivations were justly
deserved (Capers 1965:147-156). Capers’ analysis of the economic situation views the
economic devastation of New Orleans as “clearly a myth fostered by its upper classes because of
their own heavy losses” (Capers 1965:147). Nevertheless, trade was sharply curtailed in late
1861 and in 1862, and economically, the people of New Orleans were hard hit by this aspect of
the war. “The occupation by Federal troops, the abolition of slavery, the chaos of the
Reconstruction era, and the loss of river trade brought an end to the flamboyant life of

The elite of New Orleans eagerly anticipated the coming of summer with its usual
epidemic of yellow fever, in the expectation that many of the Yankees would succumb to the
disease. Butler, also fearing the disease, set about the cleaning of the city, hiring a large number
of the European immigrants to perform the work. Although, due to the cleansing of the city,
yellow fever and cholera did not make the usual, nearly-annual, epidemic-proportion visits to the
city during the war years, the other diseases, always present in some degree, were unaffected.
Persecution of the wealthy coupled with employment and the distribution of free food to the
poor, ingratiated Butler to the poor of the city, effectively dividing the loyalties of the city along
economic lines.

“The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction left New Orleans a city where many of the
citizens knew poverty – genteel poverty among some and abject, almost degrading,
poverty among others.... Delicate ironwork which had graced French Quarter buildings
rusted to a dirty brown and along the streets open drains created a nauseating stench.
Disease, particularly yellow fever, small pox and even leprosy were present in menacing
proportions. Red beans and rice, a cheap and filling combination, threatened to replace
the Creole cuisine which had delighted the effete gourmet and the working man alike.”
(Dyer 1968:132).
General Nathaniel P. Banks relieved General Butler of duty on December 14, 1862 (Johnson 1941:94). New Orleans breathed a sigh of relief at Butler’s departure. While Banks’ command of the city was to some extent milder than Butler’s, and a number of Butler’s more oppressive General Orders were rescinded, the city remained under the heavy hand of martial law imposed by the occupying forces. The hope of the ouster of the Federal troops and the city’s return to Confederate control remained until the spring of 1865, when it was realized that all was lost. “But the old way of life was gone, and the bitter years of Reconstruction lay ahead” (Johnson 1941:100). The dynamism and vitality of New Orleans and its people had been squelched by the occupation. The architectural stagnation of Squares 39 and 40 had begun.

End Notes

1. Paul Morphy, one of the greatest chess players of all time, was born in New Orleans on June 27, 1837. At the age of twenty, he was recognized as the foremost American player by his play at the American Chess Congress in 1857. He declined to accept the $300 first prize (Accepting money for playing chess simply was not done!), but he did accept a silver chalice, four goblets and a salver. He toured Europe for the following two years, vanquished the best chess players of France and England, and established himself as world champion. He played some (as many as eight at a time) of the Europeans games blindfolded. Additional information is available at www.angelfire.com/games/SBChess/Morphy (Accessed April 25, 2002).
Reconstruction 1865-1900

Large numbers of newly emancipated blacks, homeless and unemployed, poured into New Orleans. The proliferation of rental housing, principally shotgun houses but also many in the bungalow style, resulted in a lumber boom in the city. National architectural styles and embellishments embraced the Victorianisms of the era, but most of New Orleans remained in the grip of poverty. Disappointment, disillusionment, desperation, and dread were shared by the New Orleanians. The struggles for social, political and economic survival were divided along racial lines. Architecturally, on squares 39 and 40, no hope of an economic upturn in the near future was expressed. Antebellum was a boom period, but Reconstruction was bust and rust.

The Creoles and the Americans had maintained political separation from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Civil War. The feelings between these two factions constitute the “motive which colors the municipal history” until, “when under pressure of common misfortune, during the reconstruction Era, these contending peoples were fused and made one” (Kendall 1922a: 357). Reconstruction in New Orleans effectively began on May 1, 1862, when General Benjamin Butler entered New Orleans. It technically ended April 24, 1877 when the Federal troops were at last withdrawn from the city.

In comparison to other cities of the South, New Orleans had always been crowded, due to the high rates of population increase, the physical geographic limitations on expansion, and the European architectural tradition. Although the city had spilled across the river to the West Bank to the newly incorporated Algiers and to Gretna, by the beginning of the twentieth-century New Orleans was booming, and space was running out. The East Bank of the city had always been
preferred over the West Bank, and the development of street cars, which began to be run on
electricity in 1893, made it possible to live farther from work-places in the faubourgs on the East
Bank.

“New foreign immigrants increased the pressures still more. Irish and German
immigration had subsided after the Civil War, but presently a new wave surged forward –
this time Italians who took up the menial jobs that their predecessors were abandoning as
they moved up the social and economic ladder. Eventually these Italians were to
constitute the city’s largest white ethnic minority and they continued to set New Orleans
apart as the only Southern city with a substantial number of unassimilated European
migrants. Meantime, they added more people to an already crowded city” (Lewis

The burgeoning population forced New Orleans to make a choice: expansion of the city
toward the lake (which really was not feasible until the “modern” drainage and reclamation
projects were begun in the early 1900s); extension along the upriver and downriver levees
(which meant moving into areas less protected); or crowding more people into the existing city
(Lewis 1970:57). In complete disregard of the three- and four-storied row townhouses, both in
the Creole and in the American styles, which filled Squares 39 and 40 as well as a number of
other blocks in the Vieux Carré beginning at least as early as the 1830s, Lewis (1976) describes
his reasoning on the manner of population density intensification in New Orleans:

“The remaining option was to pack more and more people into the same space. That feat
was accomplished as land costs rose and the owners of large suburban lots were
persuaded to sub-divide their holdings into increasingly narrow slices. It did not have to
be that way, of course, for there are other obvious ways of increasing urban densities.
Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston, for example, had built three story row houses for
decades, and New York had begun erecting walk up tenements that were even higher.
But New Orleans was suspicious of multiistory residential quarters – perhaps because she
feared that foundation material was inadequate to support big buildings; perhaps because
she was just Southern enough to insist on keeping houses separated from each other by
some kind of yard, no matter how small. Furthermore, the city never took to apartment
living, and even row houses were not much favored – this despite the shortage of land.
(The famous Pontalba buildings on Jackson Square, sixteen individual row houses under
a single roof, are much admired by Orleanians, but their form was rarely imitated.)
Given the physical constraints and cultural prejudices, however, there was little option but to build long narrow houses to fit the long narrow lots” (Lewis 1976:58).

Butler had removed the stinger from the bee and no overt anti-Federal opinion or action was tolerated. Social ostracism of the Yankees was the only avenue of resistance permitted.

During her tenure in New Orleans, General Banks’ wife was the hostess of a number of balls, some at the St. Charles Hotel, providing some social life for the Federal officers and their wives (Capers 1965:165).

From an anti-Federal and pro-Confederate stance, a number of banks had rejected Federal conciliatory measures and had been dealing in their own issued specie rather than United States Treasury notes. Because of this policy, and as a warning to the other banks, General Banks signed an order in 1864, which forced the Bank of Louisiana and the Louisiana State Bank into receivership. When the other banks still refused to comply with the use of U. S. Treasury notes, Banks, in March, 1864, appointed a commission to audit the banks (Capers 1965:159).

Over the President’s veto, in 1867 a Reconstruction Bill was passed. In Louisiana this effectively debarred all of the white population from citizenship, depriving them of rights, including the right to trial by jury in the civil courts, and placed them under the domination of Negroes. A supplement to the bill ordered voter registration of all males of at least twenty-one years of age without regard to race, color, or previous condition of servitude, who had been a resident of the state for at least one year, and had not been disenfranchised for participation in the “rebellion”. Suffrage provisions formulated during the State Constitutional Convention of 1868 were intended to exclude the largest possible number of whites. Although the population in New Orleans at the time was roughly five whites for every black, the number of registered
voters at the end of July, 1868 was nearly equally divided between blacks and whites, just over 14,000 each (Kendall 1922a:312-313, 318, 322).

Military authority in the form of General Phil Sheridan appointed new councilmen in New Orleans, only a few of whom were white, the majority being blacks or mulattos, but none were members of the newly enfranchised, freed slaves. The city deficit increased annually under this City Council. Because of the lack of security on deposit, paper money issued by the city was to be removed from circulation, as it came back into the possession of the city government. This was done by burning the notes at the city gas works. Unfortunately, at the same time, the city hall was continuing to issue city notes at nearly the same rate as the destruction by burning (Kendall 1922a:316-317).

In 1874 the White League, “a secret society aimed at uniting the white people of the entire state in opposition to the radical regime” was founded in Opelousas. This society was more successful than its predecessors, such as the Society of the White Camelia. The Crescent City Democratic Club, which soon changed its name to the Crescent City White League, was organized in New Orleans, ostensibly to assist in the restoration of order to the city. Crime was rampant. “The situation in the city was deplorable. Citizens were being robbed in open daylight,” sometimes in the presence of policemen who rendered no assistance to the victim (Kendall 1922a:359).

In the years following the Civil War, the St. Louis Hotel changed ownership several times and continued to operate, but unprofitably. In 1874 Citizen’s Bank sold the building to the National Building Association which promptly re-sold it to the State of Louisiana for $253,000, significantly less than the amount paid to build it. From 1874 to 1882, which was also the era of
Reconstruction during which the notorious “black-and-tan” Legislature operated, the St. Louis Hotel, which less than fifteen years earlier had housed one of the foremost slave auction blocks in the South, was the State Capitol of Louisiana (Asbury 1936:141-142).

In 1882 Michael Musson formulated a plan to widen the entire length of Exchange Alley to approximately 60 feet and to build a park in front of the St. Louis Hotel. The purpose of the proposed plan was to restore the former prominence of the block. This plan did not receive sufficient support for it to be enacted (Daily Picayune July 22, 1882:1).

In the presidential election year of 1876, the elections of Louisiana state officials, including the governorship, members of the state legislature and state representatives to the electoral college, resulted in both the Democrats and the Republicans claiming victory in the election. The two separate cadres each established “the official” Louisiana governmental administration, both of which submitted report of the Louisiana representatives to the electoral college to the U. S. Congress for certification. One cadre, that of Democrats and Moderate Republicans, maintained their candidate Francis Tillou Nicholls had won the governorship, while the other, composed of Radical Republicans reported their candidate, the Carpetbagger Stephen Packard, to be the governor. Congress appointed a committee to investigate and determine the actual victors in the election. In the interim Louisiana had two governors, two legislatures, and two State Capitols in New Orleans. Later, not until 1878, the Congressional committee determined the Radical Republican Carpetbag administration was invalid (Deutsch 1968:310-311).

In the meantime, prior to Congressional certification of either party’s administration, the opening of the new legislative session and inaugurations approached. As early as December 25,
1876 the elected officials of both parties converged on New Orleans. The Democratic administration prepared to meet at St. Patrick’s Hall, and the Republican administration ensconced itself in its State Capitol, the St. Louis Hotel (Figure 34). In order to prevent seizure

Figure 34 Properties discussed in Reconstruction. 1. St. Louis Hotel. 2. 416-418 Royal, French Consulat. 3. 406 Royal. 4. Louisiana State Bank. 5. Louisiana Bank. 6. Sarrazin’s Tobacco Manufactory. 7. Keno Establishment.
of the Capitol by the Democrats, the Republicans, guarded by police, barricaded themselves in the Hotel.

On the opening day of the legislative session, January 1, 1877, the officials of the Democratic administration marched *en masse* to the St. Louis Hotel and demanded, but were denied admission, for all but those officials also certified as state officials by the Republican administration. The Democrats returned to St. Patrick’s Hall and began their legislative session. The crisis of this day had been averted, and after a few days the public which had gathered around the St. Louis Hotel began to disperse and resume ordinary affairs; the police vigilance relaxed.

The impending dual inaugurations approached and the public again grew apprehensive. The Republican administration announced their inauguration would occur at the St. Louis Hotel at the same time as Nicholls was to be inaugurated to the governorship of the Democratic administration, whose governmental seat had been moved to the Odd Fellows Hall. On January 8, Inauguration Day, the police, guarding both administrations, and the Federal troops, in the event intervention in crowd-control was necessary, stood at the ready. Nicholls took his oath of office on the balcony of the Odd Fellows Hall at 1:00 p.m., in view of 10,000 spectators and amid celebratory cannon fire. At the same time, within the St. Louis Hotel, Packard was inaugurated, however, the public gathered in the streets outside the Hotel was excluded and began to grow restive. Nicholls’ message to the crowd urging dispersal went unheeded. The decreasing orderliness of the crowd outside the Hotel held the Republican administration captive, until the crowd was cleared by police. Some gunfire from the Hotel and some rocks from the crowd were exchanged, but a more serious confrontation was avoided, only a few
windows were broken. On January 9, the Nicholls administration seized the Cabildo, the judicial branch of the government, while armed citizens surrounded the St. Louis Hotel.

“Packard’s forces prepared for the defense of the building. Policemen armed with Winchester rifles took position at the windows, and a Gatling gun was mounted on the veranda looking down Exchange Alley towards Canal Street. The garrison included about 150 negro militiamen. These were formed in line in front of the building, in St. Louis Street” (Kendall 1922:403).

Other than a few shots fired from the balconies of the Hotel, the peace was maintained. Nicholls forces were withdrawn, but the Hotel remained under surveillance throughout the night, keeping the Republicans from leaving the building. Within a week the City Council officially recognized the Nicholls administration as the official governing body of the state. Within six weeks, only those of the Packard administration who were still in the St. Louis Hotel had not recognized Nicholls as the governor. Packard implored the Federal government to step in, but Grant declined to act until the Congressional committee had completed its determination of the official results of the election. Large crowds continued to surround the Hotel. By March 4 over one-half, approximately two hundred fifty, of the Republican faction had defected, they had slipped from the Hotel and made their way to the Odd Fellows Hall to join with the Nicholls’ administration. On April 24, 1877, the same date Federal troops were withdrawn and Reconstruction officially came to an end in New Orleans, the matter was resolved. Nicholls and the Democrats were in power, and they took possession of the St. Louis Hotel (Kendall 1922:395-406; Deutsch 1968:311).

The New Orleans of these decades was not a modern city. “It was, in fact, a provincial town, just struggling to its feet after an experience of war and the consequences of way which would have destroyed a less vital community” (Kendall 1922:428). Property values in the Vieux
Carré, which had begun a slow decline in the 1850s with the exodus of the American commercial enterprises, continued to fall during the Civil War. During the Reconstruction period, without economic impetus, Squares 39 and 40 gradually degenerated and fell into disrepair.

The St. Louis Hotel building was closed in 1882, when the state capital was moved to Baton Rouge. After remodeling, it was re-opened by R. J. Rivers, formerly the manager of the St. Charles Hotel. In 1892 the property was again sold, but it never again re-opened as a hotel. The Rotunda with the slave auction block was a tourist attraction, until 1914-1915, when due to a fear of bubonic plague from the great number of rats which inhabited the otherwise vacant and hurricane-damaged building, the building was condemned and razed (Asbury 1936:142; Cable, M. 1980:120).

In 1884 Royal Street was the first street in New Orleans to be permanently lighted by electricity. Through subscriptions, this was a privately funded improvement project. It was not until 1886 that the city funded the change from gas to electric lighting for the remainder of the city (Kendall 1922:455,477).

Although prohibited by the State Constitution, gambling in New Orleans could not be suppressed, and the police were paid for their “protection”. In 1881 Mayor Joseph Shakespeare formulated a plan, the “Shakespeare Plan”. While licensing of gambling was forbidden, prominent gamblers paid a fixed monthly sum to the Mayor, ensuring both an “honest” game and protection from the graft and harassment of the police. Gambling was limited to the area bounded by Camp, Chartres, St. Louis, Bourbon, Carondelet and Gravier Streets. Disreputable gambling houses were thus forced out of business, leaving only 16 “contributing” establishments, most of which were concentrated on Royal Street (Kendall 1922:432-433). The
1876 Sanborn Insurance Map of Squares 39 and 40 show a large keno establishment on Exchange Alley (Figure 35).

The property at 403-407 Chartres Street, consisting of three lots on the corner of Chartres and Conti Streets, was the location of Sarrazin’s Tobacco Manufactory between 1861-1886 (Figures 34, 36 and 37). The *affiche* of the property (Plan Book 58, Folio 36, dated February 6, 1861) shows two four-story bare-brick stores with a bay window and coffered doors. The property had been divided into two lots and was acquired in two separate purchases from two of
Figure 36 Advertisement for Sarrazin’s. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
The three heirs of Marie Antoine Foucher, the widow of Philippe Auguste Delachaise. One of the lots, with a four-story brick store, old number 99 Chartres Street, modern address 415-417 Chartres, was purchased by Jules Pierre Sarrazin from Pierre Auguste Delachaise on February 28, 1861. The store had been built (or remodeled) after a fire on April 21, 1837. Shortly after this purchase in February, the store burned again on June 15, 1861. The 1861 fire also destroyed Risenfield’s Clothing and Furnishings House and Chauviere’s Hat Store, making it possible for Sarrazin to purchase the second lot on August 6, 1861 from Elizabeth Lucienne Aline Delachaise, wife of François Marin Enoul Dugue Livaudais. This property also had a four-story brick store, albeit damaged at the time of purchase.

The richest of the free persons of color were called *cordon bleus*. The most famous of the *cordon bleus* in New Orleans was Thomy Lafon, a merchant and financier, with real estate

Figure 37 Affiche of Sarrazin’s Tobacco Manufactory (Plan Book 58, Folio 36, dated February 6, 1861). Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
holdings valued at one-half million dollars (Winters 1947:20). Sarrazin’s widow, Marcelite Kiebs, sold the store, Sarrazin’s Tobacco Manufactory, and some other property in September, 1886 for $11,200, less than two-thirds of the price Sarrazin had paid for the property, to Thomy Lafon.

At least as early as 1883, the prolific, Southern, female author, Molly Moore Davis, resided in an apartment at old No. 84 Royal Street, modern address 406 Royal (Figure 34). Ms. Davis, along with her husband Tom, daughter May and nephew Charles continued to live here and are recorded on the census of 1900. According to the map prepared for D. H. Holmes and Co. in 1883, a few doors down the street was the French Consulate, headed by Consul P. D’Abzac, at approximately the modern address of 416-418 Royal Street, the same building which had housed General Jackson in 1814 (Figure 38).

According to the Sanborn Insurance map of 1896, Squares 39 and 40 were completely covered with buildings (Figure 39). A printing office, offices of architects and engineers and other professionals, a furniture store, a tailor, a wood yard, drug stores, a liquor store, a barber shop, a Chinese laundry, a machine shop, a tobacco manufactory, restaurants, cafés, a perfumery...
Figure 39  Sanborn Insurance Map of 1896.
coffee-houses, and several tenements were all to be found on Squares 39 and 40. It was still quite common for the street level of the building to be used as a business location and for the upper story or stories to be rented as living quarters. Few of the property owners actually resided on the block.

In 1895 public apathy toward the sordid and poverty-stricken Vieux Carré was so great that only the efforts of an architect, Allison Owen, thwarted the city’s plans to demolish the Cabildo and Presbytère (Irvin 1998).

Lack of economic impetus had left its mark. By the end of the nineteenth century, Squares 39 and 40 were a slum draped with rusted cast-iron.

End Notes

1. The last session of the Legislature in New Orleans adjourned January 4, 1882. Thereafter, the seat of Louisiana state government has been Baton Rouge (Kendall 1922:437-438).

2. The funds were originally used for the establishment and maintenance of an almshouse and the salaries of the private detectives who “policed” the “legitimate” gambling houses. However, later the funds were diverted to political contingency funds and used for other purposes. The plan was abandoned in 1887, when the grand jury indicted a number of the individuals involved (Kendall 1922:452-453).
At the dawn of the twentieth century, New Orleans was ready for a new image, one that
could recover her status as a major American city at the forefront of American capitalism. It was
time to throw out the old to make way for the new. The old, dilapidated buildings with their
rusty cast iron had to go. Cast iron had been at the height of modernity fifty years earlier: it had
graced the balconies in the major American cities, including New York, Baltimore and
Philadelphia. Now, it was a testimony of New Orleans’ poverty. Not until the 1920s did the
remaining cast iron in the Vieux Carré come to be seen as “quaint” or “picturesque”. The race
riots of the preceding decades were over (for the time being). The slum on Squares 39 and 40
was removed. In its place a statement of a return to law, order, and power was erected, literally.

This crowded and deteriorating, mixed commercial-and-residential block was highly
populated in 1900. The census of that year indicates 203 persons, many of whose parents were
immigrants, lived in the rented rooms and apartments above the stores. This calculates to a
population density of roughly fifty-five thousand people per square mile.¹

Only five of the households on Squares 39 and 40 had owner-residents; the remaining
162 residents rented apartments or were boarders. Across the street on Chartres, the residents
were practically all immigrants and none owned their residence. 406 Chartres was rented by a
Frenchman and his six children ages 22-12, all of whom were born in Louisiana (Figures 40 and
41). 408 Chartres was rented by a Chinese man and his boarder. They both worked at the
laundry. 410 Chartres was rented by a woman from Denmark who had two boarders, one a
tailor, the other a Turk. The Turk did not speak or read English. He worked downstairs at the
Figure 40 Properties discussed in Twentieth Century. 1. 406 Chartres. 2. 410 Chartres. 3. 412 Chartres. 4. 414 Chartres. 5. 400 Royal. 6. St. Louis Hotel, Royal Orleans Hotel.

Turkish restaurant. All the residents of 412 Chartres were Chinese. The upper floor was rented by a Chinese man who was a shrimp factor. One of his boarders was also a shrimp factor while the other thirteen boarders (one of whom was a woman) were dry shrimp packers. 414 Chartres was rented by a Chinese man who worked at a china store, and his wife.

Early in the century more sophisticated drainage projects, accompanied by land reclamation, were instituted. The city now could grow into the areas which had previously been swamp. New waterworks providing cleaner and purer water were installed. The mosquito was discovered to be a vector in the transmission of yellow fever. The relatively minor yellow fever epidemic of 1905 was the last to strike, not only in New Orleans, but also in the medical history of the United States (Duffy 1968:114-115). The city had never been healthier.

The city was focused on modernization. To accomplish the creation of this modern image, it was necessary to remove the slums in the Vieux Carré. Few objections were raised to the planned developments, other than those of a very small number of the property owners who
**Figure 41** 406-412 Chartres Street. Photograph owned by Richard Koch. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey, historic New Orleans Collection.
legally contested the forced purchases. All of the court cases were decided in favor of the city’s purchase.

The entire block of Squares 39 and 40 was purchased by the City of New Orleans in 1903 (Tulane 1961) (Figures 42-46, Appendix). By 1908, the block was entirely razed. The current Wildlife and Fisheries building was built during 1908 and 1909 at a cost of $1 million (Tulane 1961). The Louisiana Supreme Court moved into their new building in 1910 (Figure 40).

The exterior of the building resembles the Old French Opera House, previously located at the corner of Bourbon and Toulouse. The Civil Courts building is approximately four times the size of the French Opera House. The Beaux Arts style building was designed by Frederick W. Brown, A. Ten Eyck Brown, P. Thorton Marya, Associated Architects (New Orleans Chapter of the American Institute of Architects 1974:10) (Figures 47 and 48).

By 1912 the St. Louis Hotel had been more or less abandoned: It became a minor tourist attraction for its Rotunda and slave block. As a result of the bubonic plague scare in 1915, and the fact that the abandoned and hurricane-damaged building was overrun with rats, the old St. Louis Hotel building was demolished (Cable, M. 1980; BGR 1968a:98). The St. Louis Hotel, as a French contre-point to Americans and the Americanization of their city, had served its purpose: it had been a grand hotel and exchange. The St. Louis Hotel (Royal Hotel) lot served as a lumber yard and later, as a parking lot.

The two-story Creole townhouse at 410 Chartres was purchased by the City of New Orleans in 1914 and the townhouse and dependencies were removed. They were replaced in 1915 by the building which initially housed the Second City Criminal Court and the Third
Figure 48. 400 Royal Street, Squares 39 and 40. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Precinct Police Station. This inscription is still on the upper level façade. The building is now home to the Williams Research Center of Historical New Orleans Collection (Figure 49).

There is no evidence that any of the buildings extant in 1903, the time of their purchase by the City of New Orleans, had been built prior to 1820. It was opinion of many of the architectural community that the buildings were not worth salvaging. It was also the opinion of many, including politicians of New Orleans, that the new building would revitalize the French Quarter. The removal of the slum served to raise the property values on the surrounding blocks. In fact the replacement of the slum with the new building did contribute to the beginnings of revitalization of the Vieux Carré. The bright, new, white marble facade, reflecting the sunlight, gleamed with the hopes of the city. The dilapidated structures of the former slum and the few attempts by historic preservationists to salvage the buildings were swept away to clear the way for a new era in the history of the block. No longer divided by ethnicity, Americans and Creoles were united in the development efforts, just as the building itself served to reunite Squares 39 and 40.

The removal of the slum cleared the way for the revitalization of the Vieux Carré, but it was a slow process to awaken the area from its lethargy. Samuel Wilson considers the revitalization efforts to have been unsuccessful (Bureau of Governmental Research 1968a:19). Further, he finds it regrettable that:

“This new Courts Building afforded an opportunity to get rid of an entire block of what would now be considered superb landmarks and replace them with the incongruous, white marble and white terra cotta, somewhat Beaux Arts style building” (BGR 1968a:35).
A preservation movement began in the early 1920s, possibly prompted by the shock of the destruction of the French Opera House, which burned on December 4, 1919. At the time, the Vieux Carré was a rather Bohemian community of artists, writers, and other intellectuals. The

![Figure 49](image)

**Figure 49** 410 Chartres Street. Photograph by Dan S. Leyier, 1964. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
sordid and poverty-stricken area was appreciated by them for its quaint multi-cultural ambiance and as source-material for their creativity. No doubt cheap rent added to the charm of the French Quarter.

This “art colony” philosophically bonded with the preservationist attitudes of the architectural community, and it was during this era that a gentrification movement began in the Quarter. It was now fashionable to buy a historic building, repair and clean it to be used as studios or apartments. Richard Koch, a member of the original Vieux Carré Commission of the mid- to late 1920s, participated in these early restorations. As purely an advisory body to the municipal administration, the original VCC had no legal authority and was generally ineffective.

In 1936 Elizabeth Werlein, a noted preservationist, spearheaded the movement to persuade the Louisiana legislature to amend the 1921 state constitution to enable the establishment of a body with the purpose of protection of historic buildings in the Vieux Carré. The current Vieux Carré Commission was created by New Orleans municipal ordinance (No. 14,538 C. C. S.) on March 3, 1937, which also endowed the body with police powers. The Commission now had the authority to enforce its preservation policies. However, there were no guidelines, and the decision-making of the VCC was purely arbitrary. The ordinance charged the VCC with “the preservation and regulation of all private property with historic or architectural value within the confines of the designated district” (Irvin 1998). The relative passivity and inertia of the Commission spurred preservationists to action again. In 1938 Elizabeth Werlein, backed by the newly formed Vieux Carré Property Owners Association which she headed, convinced Mayor Robert Maestri to the preservationist point of view. Maestri forced the VCC to wield its authority in his announcement that no demolition permits would be
approved without the prior approval of the Commission. The following year, 1939, the VCC did
approve the demolition of some buildings on Bourbon Street. Werlein and the Property Owners
Association “forced” the VCC to rescind the approval and to join in a lawsuit to prevent the
demolition. The lawsuit was successful and the VCC gained confidence in its authority. Later in
1939 several of the members of the VCC were indicted for their participation in the “‘double-
dip’ sale of the Bienville Hotel to Louisiana State University (Irvin 1998). It was “business as
usual” in New Orleans. New members of the VCC were appointed. One of the new members
was Roy L. Alciatore, proprietor of Antoine’s Restaurant, and the grandson of Antoine
Alciatore, the founder of the restaurant. Backed by Werlein and the Property Owners
Association, the reorganized VCC now basked in favorable public opinion. The New Orleans
States, in an editorial on September 18, 1939, applauded the preservationist tendencies of the
reformed Commission: “Destruction of the St. Louis Hotel would be an impossibility in these
times.”

In 1941 the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld the VCC ordinance and the VCC’s
authority over modifications in the Vieux Carré in the lawsuit City of New Orleans v. Impastato.
Impastato, the owner-operator of Napoleon House at 500 Chartres Street, had had restrooms
constructed in the courtyard of his building, for the facility of his customers. In this same year
the VCC also won a lawsuit7 which affirmed their authority over non-historic and non-
architecturally significant buildings in the French Quarter, resulting in the tout ensemble concept
currently employed by the Vieux Carré Commission. The decision rested on the basis that “such
structures contribute to the overall character of the district” (Irvin 1998).
After World War II a progressive spirit gripped New Orleans, and a number of
development projects throughout the city were proposed. Under the heightened commercialism
of the later 1940s, the VCC ceded its authority over portions of the fringe areas of the district.
Not until 1964, after many buildings had been demolished, did the VCC re-assume authority
over these areas.

In 1946, turmoil again divided New Orleans. Although only indirectly affecting Squares
39 and 40, the proposed project to construct an elevated riverfront expressway called for a direct
egress and exit within the Vieux Carré. The Commission unanimously approved the project
with the proviso that the expressway not be elevated. The VCC began to lose public confidence.

According to the former chairman of the VCC, I. William Ricciuti, the public was
divided during this period: one faction was opposed to preservation as a roadblock to economic
development and the other, staunch preservationists, who wanted no change at all (Irvin 1998).
The issue assumed national importance and the matter was eventually settled in Washington,
D.C. The expressway was intended to be part of the interstate highway system. This meant that
federal funding would be used in the project, and therefore, compliance with federal regulations
was required. Furthermore, as a National Historic Landmark, compliance with federal
regulations relating to preservation and maintenance was required. The plan for the expressway
was cancelled in 1969 (Baumbach and Borah 1981:241-243).

In the years 1958-1960 the VCC undertook a block-by-block photographic survey of the
Vieux Carré. Each building in the area was rated. The building on Squares 39 and 40 was
initially rated in the lowest category – “of no importance or objectionable” (BGR 1968a:46-47).
It was not until the 1950s that the economic activity in the area began to approach the heights of the earlier prosperous periods of Economic Expansion and the Antebellum Years. One of the principal projects of the Commission was the redevelopment of Squares 39 and 40 and the creation of “Place Royal” (Figure 50). Fortunately the destruction of the building to put in a concrete plaza with underground stores did not gain support (BGR 1968a:xiii, 97-99).

The first new hotel in the area, the Royal Orleans, was built on the site at the corner of Royal and St. Louis Streets about 1960. The design of the building was consistent with the “character” of the Vieux Carré and had been approved by the VCC.

The Vieux Carré Commission adopted guidelines in 1984, which gave more predictability to the administrative decisions of the Commission relating to construction, remodeling, renovation and other modification of the use of space and the built environment. The police authority of the VCC makes this enforcement body the qualitative equivalent of any other combination of city ordinances and subdivision requirements of any urbanized setting in the United States. Property owners do not have full decision-making authority.

The Supreme Court Building at 400 Royal also has been home to the New Orleans’ Civil District Court, the Civil Sheriff’s office, other city and state agencies, and most recently, the state Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The building has been under renovation since it was vacated in 1994. The Louisiana Supreme Court is to be re-located to this building at 400 Royal Street after all renovations have been completed. The current Vieux Carré Commission rating of the building is “of local architectural/historical importance”. The former courthouse is to be renamed the Louisiana Judicial Center (Gyan 1998). Renovations are expected to be complete in the fall of 2002, at a cost of more than $38 million (The Advocate 2000). Once again the
Figure 50 Model of “Place Royal”, Squares 39 and 40. Illustration from Bureau of Government Research 1968a:98.
building is to serve as a statement of law and order, a unifying force in the political, social and economic affairs of New Orleans and Louisiana.

End Notes

1. The most recent calculation of the population density of New Orleans is from the census of 1990. As of 1990 the total population of the New Orleans Metropolitan Area was 536.6 persons per square mile. The total 1990 population was 1,238,816. The census data of 2000 has not yet been analyzed. The total population of the New Orleans Metropolitan Area in 2000 was 1,337,726.

2. In 1900 Walter Reed and his associates at the Havana Yellow Fever Commission proved that the mosquito *Aedes aegypti* was responsible for the transmission of the disease. Once identified, mosquito control measures were initiated by the New Orleans Board of Health. It was not until the imminent threat of another epidemic in 1905 that the local Boards of Health coordinated with the United States Public Health Service and launched a significant mosquito suppression campaign (Duffy 1968:113-114).

3. A number of buildings on Chartres across the street were also razed purportedly to make way for the new building on Squares 39 and 40, although this was actually done much later. It is more likely that this was a continuation of the slum-removal efforts of the city.

4. Although of significant impact on the social life of New Orleans, the French Opera House did not last very long; it opened December 1, 1859 and was destroyed by fire December 4, 1919 (Bacot 2000).

5. A hurricane in September, 1915 severely damaged the building.

6. Under pressure from the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a city ordinance was passed in 1924 establishing the Vieux Carré as a historic district, but it was never enforced. The 1931 establishment of a historic district in Charleston is, therefore, hailed as the first to be enforced in the United States (Bureau of Governmental Research 1968:vii).


8. This project would have significantly increased traffic on Royal and Chartres Streets.

9. For a blow-by-blow description and discussion of the years of controversy over the expressway issue, see Baumbach and Borah’s *The Second Battle of New Orleans: A History of the Vieux Carré Riverfront-Expressway Controversy*.
Summary and Conclusion

As we have seen over the previous chapters, the buildings of Squares 39 and 40 have responded to the pressures which characterize each historical era. They are human attempts to control the diverse, constantly changing, myriad environments with which they are confronted. Through the changes in these buildings over the past three hundred years, we can read the history of New Orleans, we can see the cultural evolution of the ethnic identity of the French and their Creole descendants. We know a great deal about the history and the culture of the peoples who lived on the block. Much of the written history is confirmed by the buildings themselves.

The remarks by Yi-Fu Tuan noted earlier seem particularly relevant in our study of New Orleans. The stresses of potential, and probable, disaster in the forms of hurricanes, floods, fires, disease, and war all aided in the development of New Orleans as a unified whole. However, in periods of relative peace, economic, social and political competition and the divisive forces of divergent cultures do lead to a certain tension between and among various culture groups, especially when juxtaposed in a relatively confined area. Americans, Creoles, Negroes, slaves, Irishmen, Germans, Chinese, and Sicilians – each with distinctive cultures and each required to articulate with the others to a certain degree – adapted to each other through a series of conflicts and accommodations. The impact of the Saint-Domingue refugees on the population of Louisiana, doubling of the population of New Orleans, at a formative period in the history of both Louisiana and New Orleans should not be underestimated.

“Consequently, it is the exceptional character of Saint-Domingue society – a composite and synthesis of elements accumulated from pre-colonial Africa, from the indigenous West Indies, and from distinct French regions – that accounts in large measure for Louisiana’s celebrated cultural singularity.” (Fiehrer 1992:7).
By bolstering the Creole population, the Saint-Domingue immigrants effectively delayed the Americanization of New Orleans. Furthermore the strengthened Creole culture prevented the imposition of English Common Law on Louisiana by the Americans: a legal legacy which was temporarily compromised during the period of Reconstruction.

The inclusive/exclusive nature of society as discussed by Tuan enhances our understanding of the peoples of New Orleans through our study of squares 39 and 40. The tensions and pressures of each era acted in the adaptations and maintenance of ethnic identities. The adapting identities were given substance in the buildings and modifications to the buildings throughout the history of the block.

The title “Squares 39 and 40" stems from the physical division of the block in the period of Economic Expansion, although each historic period exhibits identifiable architectural changes. In addition to the structural architectural changes, use of space issues are particularly significant in two other periods: the end of the Spanish Dominion and the beginning of the Twentieth Century.

During the Pioneering Period, all the energies of the inhabitants were focused on survival. The temporary structures of French and West Indian importation of the Pioneering Period soon gave way to the Creolized versions of more substantial buildings. The French Colonial period saw the beginnings of an improved economy and consequent leisure. Decorative gardens are a sign of affluence and leisure (Clifford 1966:16). Formal gardens emulated those of the French aristocracy and comfort-related adaptations further modified the already Creolized buildings. Steep roofs with attic dormers, broad galleries, and raised houses contributed to the increased comfort provided by the buildings.
The end of the Spanish Dominion institutionalized specific modifications in the buildings, and the behavior of the inhabitants was likewise affected. The alignment of the buildings abutting the *banquette*, the exterior stucco of the walls, the enclosed courtyard, the tiled roofs all worked to “regularize” and urbanize the image of the city. During the 1790s there was a growing recognition that architecture was a means of social and behavioral control (Upton 1992:64-65). According to Rapoport, institutionalization of houses and settlement may be viewed as a result of the breakdown of consensus which gives authority to tradition, and he specifically cites this occurrence of institutionalization in Latin America during the Spanish Colonial period (1969:6-7). However, it appears that the instance of such institutionalization by the Spanish at the end of the Spanish Dominion in New Orleans is less a breakdown of the French and Creole traditions than that it may be more closely related to the unease or discomfort of the Spanish when confronted with traditions at variance with their cultural expectations of “how a town should look”. Not only was variation in the house types and their placement on the property aesthetically alien to the Spanish, it also may have represented to them a lack of control over the French and Creoles of New Orleans. By exercising rights of sovereignty through regulations, the Spanish were able to take control of the cultural and ethnic identity of the city. Concurrently, there was a growing recognition by Western European cultures that behavior was responsive to the environment, especially with respect to the built environment. It was during this period that institutions such as prisons and mental hospitals (actually less “hospitals” than sites of incarceration) began to actively modify the behavior of inmates by construction facilities designed to promote appropriate behavior and prevent or discourage inappropriate behavior. The architect Benjamin H. Latrobe participated in the early stages of this architectural design
movement. The first public building he designed in the United States was the penitentiary in Richmond, Virginia in 1797. In the early 1800s Latrobe published an essay on architectural effects on acoustics with special attention to those aspects of the built environment which related to the desired modification of inmates’ behavior and the enhancement and perceived enhancement of control over the inmates (Upton 1992:63-69).

The Early American period was a time of adjustment and transition. The era brought accommodations to the Americans and their ways of living. The Creole townhouses were made of bricks imported from the North (Philadelphia and Baltimore) or were locally made and painted to protect them from the elements and make them appear to be the imported bricks. The increased population density lessened the room between buildings. Similar to those of eastern American cities and separated by brick firewalls, row houses were popular in the crowded, combined commercial-residential section of the city. Balconies, some purely decorative and not accessible, were common. A number of houses combined the American style and the Creole style of building – selecting some features of each type.

Economic Expansion saw the most drastic changes which led directly to a significant period in the history and development of the block. Specifically, the extension of Exchange Alley to divide the block into two separate squares would likely not have occurred at all, but for the rivalry and animosity between the Creoles and the Americans. The Creoles were fighting for their economic survival. The planned development of Exchange Alley as an area of Creole commercialism served to materialize the division between the two societies. Greek Revival buildings, granite pilasters, pillars, and lintels modernized Squares 39 and 40.
The Antebellum Years were a time of prosperity, yet most of the actual construction of new buildings was done by the Americans outside of the Vieux Carré. On Squares 39 and 40, the only new construction was to replace those buildings destroyed by fire or other calamities. Formed in practical or in romantic, naturalistic patterns, cast iron replaced the granite and was used extensively to modernize buildings. Cast iron galleries and additional stories were added to the existing Greek Revival buildings.

No changes were made, and practically no maintenance was done, on the buildings of Squares 39 and 40 during the War Years or during Reconstruction. The population of the entire city was divided along racial lines, and many of the white Creoles moved out of the Vieux Carré.

The Twentieth Century ushered in a new optimism, a hope for the future. The building of the Courthouse at 400 Royal Street, encompassing the whole block of both the former Squares 39 and 40, is a material expression of the unification of the Creole and American forces in the city. The removal of the commercial-residential, multi-ethnic slum and the ensuing construction of a monumental judicial building radically changed the use of space and the cultural meaning of that space. Ultimate institutionalization was effected by the erection of the current building which encompasses the whole block. Americanization of Squares 39 and 40, albeit modified by the continuance of the Napoleonic Code, was architecturally complete. The judicial building on Squares 39 and 40 expresses a combined ideology, much like that of New Orleans as a whole: historically culturally diverse while concurrently participating fully in a national ethnos.

Just like it was in the past under the various governments, the material expressions of the culture of this block and the whole of the Vieux Carré is not solely that of the property owners. Under the restrictive control of the Vieux Carré Commission, dedicated to the preservation of the
character of the area, the Commission regulates construction and remodeling of buildings in the district. As a popular international tourist attraction, preservation activities in New Orleans focuses both on the commercial benefits and “to enrich and give meaning to the daily life of the people of the community” (BGR 1968a:1).

“The past creates the present which, in turn, shapes the future. Because contemporary identity can best be understood as the product of historical continuity, the purpose of preservation planning can be viewed as channelling change to assure the extension of a past continuity into the future” (BGR 1968a:4).

Political pressures can modify the shape and orientation of buildings. Social and economic pressures can alter the embellishments and the exterior “presence” of buildings. Cultural changes can affect the meaning and symbolism. The aesthetic continuity of the tout ensemble of the Vieux Carré has eased the shock of change. From the slums of the late nineteenth century this block has grown to be a bush on which the economic enterprise of tourism blossoms around it.

The scent of orange blossoms and roses is gone, but the smell of an old New Orleans remains, on some streets more than others. On the streets bounding our block, Squares 39 and 40, there is less the stench of old streets than the odor of money.

End Notes

1. However, Martinez, in Uptown/Downtown; Growing Up in New Orleans, tells us that through the mid-twentieth century, New Orleans socially and culturally still maintains a certain degree of separation between the French Quarter and the rest of the city (Martinez 1986).
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Appendix

Figure 42. Chartres Street. Photographed by Nina King, 1905. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Figure 43  Conti Street. Photographed by Nina King, 1905. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Figure 44 Royal Street. Photographed by Nina King, 1905. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Figure 45 St. Louis Street. Photographed by Nina King, 1905. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Figure 46 Exchange Alley. Photographed by Nina King, 1905. Illustration from Vieux Carré Survey by Tulane, Historic New Orleans Collection.
Vita

Mrs. Mince, a native of Louisiana, resident of Baton Rouge, mother of three and grandmother, attended public school as a class-member of the pilot honors program in East Baton Rouge Parish. She graduated from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in 1976. The retired president and chief executive officer of her health care management consulting corporation, she has also served as member and as officer of a number of local charitable, service and civic organizations. She re-entered graduate school in the fall of 2000. It is her intention to pursue a doctoral degree with the ultimate goal of research and writing.